



The Pine Warbler

Pine Woods Audubon Society

May 2014

Volume 2013/2014

2014-2015 Officers

President
Joshua Hodge

Vice-President
Kelly O'Neal

Secretary
Larry Basden

Treasurer
Lin Harper

Committees

Newsletter
Larry Basden

Field Trips
Diane Lafferty

Education
Diane Lafferty

Conservation
Joshua Hodge

Hospitality
Emily Nelson

Membership
Kelly O'Neal

Historian
Linda Basden

May Meeting—Joshua Hodge

May 1—Banquet and Installation of New Officers

The biennial banquet and installation of new officers for our Chapter will take place on our regular meeting night (Thursday, May 10) at the Golden Corral restaurant in Hattiesburg. The beginning time for the event is 6:30pm. The choice of meal (or other refreshments) is the responsibility of each attendee. We are scheduled to have a private room for our banquet.

The new slate of officers elected at our April meeting are:

President—Joshua Hodge
Vice-President—Kelly O'Neal
Secretary—Larry Basden
Treasurer—Lin Harper

These new volunteer officers will be installed into their offices at our banquet. As always they will be looking for ideas and help with our chapter activities over the next year.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Please note that this meeting (only) will not be held at our regular location but instead at the Golden Corral restaurant in Hattiesburg.

May (& Summer) Field Trips—Diane Lafferty

May 3 (Saturday)—Joint field trip with MS Coast group to Seaman's Lagoons. We will leave from Midtown Market at 6am to meet the coast group in Ocean Springs at 7:30am.

May 10 (Saturday)—Field trip to find spring birds at the McSwain property in south Forrest County. Meet at Midtown Market to leave for McSwain's at 7am.

May 24 (Saturday)—Field trip to Mammoth Springs (Tom Rhea Phillips property) along the Bouie River. Meet at Midtown Market to leave for Mammoth Springs at 7am.

June 28 (Saturday)—Butterfly count for Hattiesburg. Diane Lafferty will lead the count and is looking for at least 4 counters for this event. Contact Diane directly at (601) 264-9654 for more information about meeting place, meeting time, etc.

July 18-20 (Friday-Sunday)—This is the weekend designated for the NABA butterfly count in the Delta forest (out from Vicksburg). This annual count can tally butterflies in the multiple thousands. Contact Diane Lafferty directly at (601) 264-9654 for information about accommodations for this weekend and any other questions you might have about the count.

Meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month (September through May) in the Education Building at the Hattiesburg Zoo. Refreshments at 6:30 pm. Meetings begin at 7:00 pm and are open to the public.

Pine Woods Audubon Society is a chapter of National Audubon Society, Inc.



President's "Swan Song" Message—Ron Blackwell

One of the most frustrating things about being a bird watcher is the fact that once a bird is identified by species, and perhaps gender, there is not much more to differentiate one particular bird from another. It makes it hard to follow the lives of the backyard inhabitants and their habits.

True, a birder can apprentice to a master bander, maybe one of the Hummer/Bird Study Group headquartered in Clay, Alabama. And if you take that path, I imagine that you will start your apprenticeship standing in the cold chill of pre-dawn, coffee cup in hand, listening to the calls of birds above. Those calls are only used by migrating birds and the experienced banders can listen and tell the newbies what birds they will be banding at dawn and whether the birds will arrive in droves or trickles. And be prepared for a very long day!

Yes, I've contemplated throwing my hat in that ring. I've stood and watched every move the banders make. I've helped carry birds from the nets to the tents where the banders do their measurements. I've run errands, ferried new recruits, and escorted researchers, but I could not pull the trigger and join the team. Each time I see a bander carefully untangle a House Wren, a Northern Parula, or a gangly Black-billed Cuckoo, I am stunned at the delicate art and the miracle found in a bird's feather.

Yes, I contemplated trying to join up with Bob and Martha Sargent's outfit. But I realized that I could never be able to wake every morning in time to see the stars, unless I was just getting in from a late night.

There are a few individuals that do stand out from the anonymous crowds of birds. Some birds can be distinguished by scars or injuries. I knew a Brown Thrasher that was missing a toe. It seemed to get along fine. At least once a decade a tail-less Mockingbird will show up in my yard. And once in a while I find an injured bird as I walk around Hattiesburg. But I have noticed that, with the advent of coyotes in Hattiesburg, neighborhood injuries have all but disappeared.

And I often have Cardinals with one or two white primary feathers.

There are individual birds that are recognizable by their behavior too. Right now an old friend has come back to visit. Two years ago I called him the Ambulance Thrasher. He nested in my side yard. And his rendition of a Fourth Street ambulance in full cry was spot on! But he and his mate didn't like the rearranging that the Hattiesburg tornado did for us. And I couldn't disagree with the bird.

But just this week I heard my old friend giving his ambulance call from down a the foot of the block. I haven't searched for his nest yet, but it is good to know he is close at hand once more.

The most salient example of an outstanding individual bird behavior that I know of is the Convertible Parula. For at least three summers a male Northern Parula haunted Dauphin Island's Shell Mound Park.

When cars turned into the park this tiny bird would attack the hoods of the cars along the circular parking area. The little guy attacked windshields and hopped onto the tops of the cars where he sang his Parula victory song. Before long, it became apparent that the bird liked the colors blue and red. And he truly loved convertibles. He would literally dive into an open convertible and run across the dashboard before launching into the trees above where he would sing his Parula victory song.

Once, one of the banders drove her convertible to the park, and when the Parula was running across the dash, she reached out and caught the bird expertly in her hand. Sitting in the car she measured, weighed, and banded the Convertible Parula. When the bird was released, he flew high into the live oaks. We heard his song, and then here he came again: right back to the convertible.

Now, I have never had a Convertible Parula. But I try to keep up with the birds in my yard. Right now I have one of those Cardinals with a stray white feather. And you can never tell what beauty might show up in the yard tomorrow!

A big THANK YOU to the Chapter for their help and support during my tenure as President. Your contributions made the term fairly fly by. I have been associated with this group long enough to say with confidence that Joshua will receive the same sort of help and support. All he needs do is ask.

See you soon,

Ron



Welcome, New Members!—Joshua Hodge

Here are the new members who have joined the National Audubon Society since the last issue of The Pine Warbler. If you know any of these people, please take a few minutes to welcome them, to tell them about PWAS, and to invite them to join us at a meeting, field trip, or other activity.

Allison Campbell—Hattiesburg

Mary Lu Wardle—Brooklyn

Maris P. Swanberg—Laurel

Christy Buckley—Laurel

Darlene Jones—Soso

Monica Parker—Sumrall

Jennifer Mraz—Hattiesburg

Aubin St. Clair—Hattiesburg

Will Lewis—Hattiesburg

Tammy Ingram—Hattiesburg

Eulalyn W. Clark—Laurel

Bernard A. Desantis—Lumberton

Woodrow Rustin—Neely

Nell Leggett—Purvis



Dauphin Island Field Trip, April 2014—Lin Harper

Our final tally for the Spring Migration trip to DIAL was 147. At the compilation on Saturday night, we were at 139, but stalwart birders continued to call or text in sightings not on the early list.

Notable sightings included a Northern Gannet, not common but it has been seen regularly from the island; American Crow, a bird that is almost completely indistinguishable from its cousin the Fish Crow and identifiable only if you hear the call; a Black-chinned Hummingbird and a Least Bittern, both sighted by our Florida friends Peggy and Sammy, a regular part of our troop; and a Great Horned Owl, complete with owl chicks found on the Sanctuary beach on an Osprey platform!

Notable absences from our list include birds very commonly seen around the Hattiesburg area, such as Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, American Robin, Red-headed Woodpecker, and raptors (Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, and Red-shouldered Hawk). That's right! We saw almost no hawks! We saw no White-winged Dove or Black Skimmer, both of which have become somewhat standard finds on the island. We did have 20 Warblers including, Orange-crowned, Magnolia, Cape May, Prairie, Black-and-White, Prothonotary, Hooded, Worm-eating, Swainson's, Kentucky, and a much-contested Northern Waterthrush.

The weather was beautiful with highs in the 70s and lows in the 50s: the local food was great; the people were friendly; and Diane's beach walk on Saturday morning was well-attended (and I hope reported on here). As for the count, it was pretty good for our group. We have had higher counts, but not by much: our highest count was 156, recorded in 2008, only three years after Hurricane Katrina, and our next highest was 153, reported in 2004, the year before Katrina. Since then, we've ranged from the low 120s to the mid-140s. That puts this year's count solidly as #3 in the last 15 years, all the data I have compiled for the Chapter (Special Note: I have some years that I have not recorded in my spreadsheet, so I'll have to let you know sometime in the future if I'm right about #3!).

So, when it comes time to go to DIAL next spring for Migration Count, don't hesitate. Between the birds, the island milieu, and the great companionship, you will be sure to have a great time!

Have a great summer

Keep birding

See you in the fall at our September meeting

We're on the Web!

www.pinewoodsaudubon.com

The Pine Warbler

Pine Woods Audubon Society
544 West 4th Street
Hattiesburg, MS 39401

Address Service Requested

IMPORTANT NOTE:

The May meeting will NOT be held at our regular meeting place. The May meeting (only) will be held at the Golden Corral restaurant in Hattiesburg.

Bird Sightings & Field Trips



The report on our Dauphin Island trip to look for migrating birds is summarized inside.

Locally, many of our winter residents have already departed for their summer grounds. A few remain—the occasional American Goldfinch (in its brilliant yellow plumage now), Chipping Sparrow (rare), and White-throated Sparrow (with its whites now brilliant and the yellow above its lores shining).

We have welcomed many migrants passing through as well as the birds that will remain with us throughout the summer. These include American Golden Plovers (at the turf farm), Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Indigo Buntings (some males still changing into their brilliant blue), Great-crested Flycatchers, Eastern Kingbirds, Orchard Orioles, Summer Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Blue Grosbeaks, Common Yellowthroats, Yellow-breasted Chats, Prairie Warblers, Hooded Warblers, White-eyed Vireos, Red-eyed Vireos, and probably many others that don't come to mind at the present time. Still awaiting the first report of Mississippi Kite in the area and hearing the first Nightjars (Chuck-will's-widow, Whip-poor-will, and Common Nighthawk).