



Blowing Rock to Host Spring Meeting

Mickey Shortt

Mark your calendar for the spring 2016 Carolina Bird Club meeting in Blowing Rock, NC on April 28-30! The High Country is one of the greatest places to witness the spring migration of Neotropical migrants; this meeting will offer exceptional trip leaders and interesting opportunities, including owl prowls, along the Blue Ridge escarpment. Scott Whittle and Tom Stephenson will be our featured speakers on Saturday evening. Scott and Tom authored *The Warbler Guide* book and app. Scott is a one-time New York Big Year record holder, and both are excellent photographers.

The last meeting in Blowing Rock was held in 2011, when participants tallied 130 species including Swainson's Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Vesper Sparrow, Ruffed Grouse and both cuckoo species!

Trips will explore the varied habitats of the High Country including Grandfather Mountain's sharp peaks, the Blue Ridge Parkway's productive forests and meadows, as well as the open country of Rich Mountain. Many parts of the High Country will be in that golden window when migrants are passing through and the trees haven't leafed out, offering incredible views of the birds in brilliant plumage.

We'll be headquartered at the historic Green Park Inn near downtown Blowing Rock. Given the hotel's physical location, straddling the Eastern Continental Divide (at the gateway to the Blue Ridge Parkway) and its rich history and significance to the North Carolina High Country, the Green Park Inn was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

Rooms at the Green Park Inn may be booked by calling (828) 414-9230 and asking for a room in the Carolina Bird Club block. Room rates vary nightly from \$78 on Thursday for a Standard Queen to \$139 on Friday for a Superior King room with a balcony (prices do not include tax), and the inn offers a discount on your third night. Call the inn for more information. A select number of rooms are set aside for us at the Green Park; if you really want to stay at the host hotel, make sure you make your reservations early! Rates include an early breakfast and coffeemakers in each room.

A second option for lodging is one mile away from the meeting headquarters at the Holiday Inn Express. Rooms are \$69 on Thursday and \$89 nightly on Friday and Saturday (prices do not include tax). All rooms have two queen beds. The Holiday Inn Express offers complimentary hot breakfast each morning, which starts at 5:30 a.m. to accommodate our early starts. All the rooms feature a microwave and refrigerator, coffeemakers, and hairdryers. Please call (828) 295-4422 and mention the Carolina Bird Club to get our rates! A buffet dinner at the Green Park Inn will be offered on Saturday evening.

With beautiful scenery and birds, unique birding experiences, skilled leaders and a pleasant atmosphere, this will be a memorable CBC meeting! You'll find the registration information and trip descriptions in the next Newsletter.

The Carolina Bird Club is looking for a Newsletter Editor!

Steve Shultz

Ten years ago this spring I produced my first edition of the CBC Newsletter, beginning a journey that I anticipated would last a few years at most. But we are now ten years away from that freshman effort, and I'm looking fondly at the prospect of retirement. My reason for handing over the reins stems mostly from the belief that after a decade most of my creative ideas have been incorporated into the product, and the membership deserves an opportunity to enjoy new ideas, new directions, and a fresh outlook.

To this end, the club seeks an editor to take over production of the Newsletter beginning with the May-June 2016 edition, which has an April 15th deadline. Qualifications include the ability to commit to producing six editions per year meeting strict publication deadlines, the ability to run and use Microsoft Publisher software (or equivalent), and reasonable familiarity with currently-acceptable grammar, punctuation, and style.

The Newsletter Editor works with planners to organize, write, and format meeting announcements and trip descriptions, coordinates with the website editor on content delivery and timing, reviews and approves submitted content for publication, and serves as an *ex officio* member on the club's Executive Committee. The Editor receives no compensation and serves an unspecified term at the discretion of the Executive Committee.

If you are a member with capacity to assist the club through production of the Newsletter and excited about incorporating your creative ideas into a publication that reaches hundreds of individuals and institutions interested in the enjoyment and conservation of birds in the Carolinas, please contact me at newsletter@carolinabirdclub.org, or via telephone at 919-608-2069.



North Carolina Bird Records Committee Welcomes New Members

At the end of each calendar year the terms of three North Carolina Bird Records Committee (NC BRC) members expire, and the committee welcomes three new members. Members serve a three-year term with a mandatory one-year waiting period before they are eligible to serve again.

Effective January 1, 2016 the NC BRC is pleased to welcome **Sam Cooper**, **Josh Southern**, and **Jeff Lemons**. The trio replaces Mike Tove, Doug Pratt, and Jeff Pippen, whose terms expired.

The NC BRC consists of the following nine voting members and non-voting two member advisory panel. For voting members, the year in which their terms expire is noted by their "class".

Class of 2016

Nate Swick- *Chair*
Taylor Piephoff
Steve Shultz

Class of 2017

Susan Campbell
Michael McCloy
Simon Thompson

Class of 2018

Sam Cooper
Josh Southern
Jeff Lemons

Advisory Panel

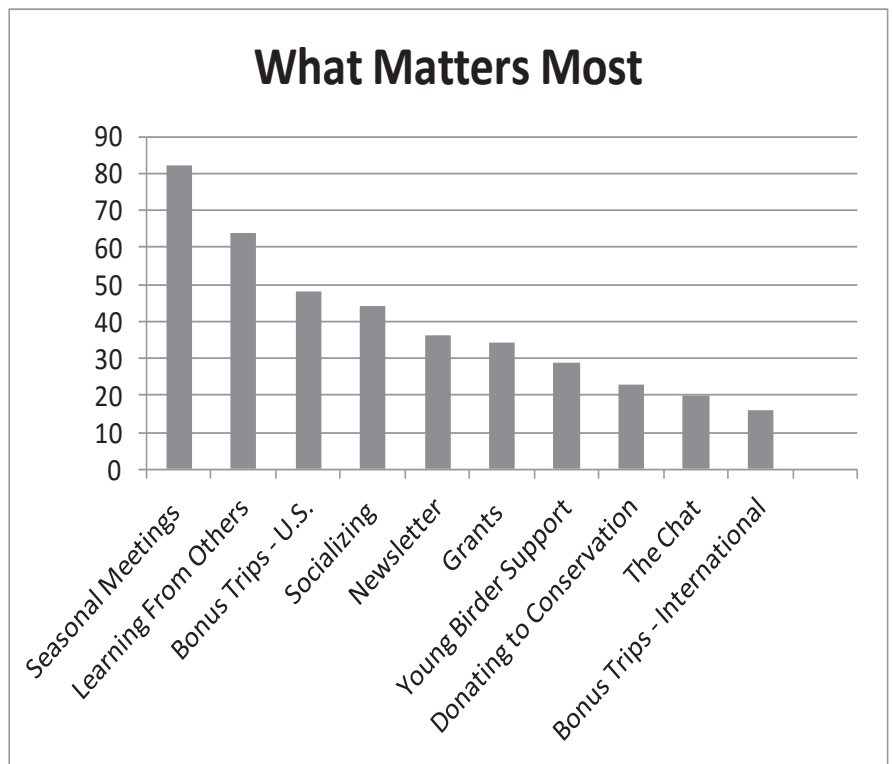
Harry LeGrand
Ricky Davis

What Aspect of the CBC Means the Most to You?

Members attending the fall meeting in Hickory, NC were invited to participate in an informal survey to identify what aspects of club membership are of the greatest importance.

Using a common technique from business, members placed tape flags on cards depicting various club offerings. Each tape flag represented a “vote” and participants could apply all of their votes to a single category, vote for different categories, or combine their “votes” in any way that they felt most best reflected the value proposition of each offering.

The results are show in the graph to the right. Do you have a different view? Make your voice heard by corresponding with any member of the Executive Committee (contact information can be found on the CBC website by navigating to “Member Services” and then “Executive Committee”)



Carolinabirds Turns Nineteen

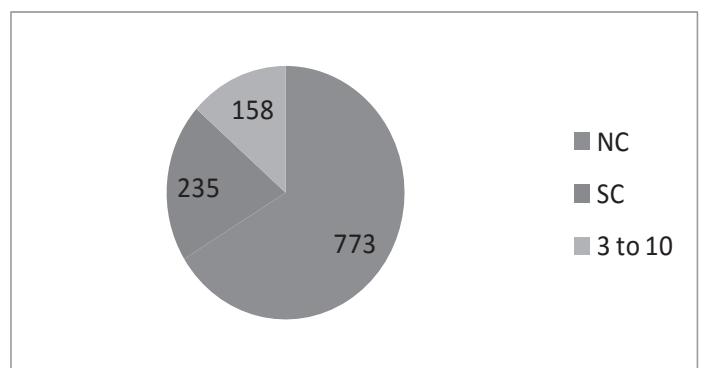
The Carolinabirds e-mail list turned nineteen years old on December 13th. The mailing list, independent of the CBC, connects birders via sightings, requests for information, trip reports, and more. 1,472 members subscribed to the group at the end of 2015.

The chart to the right shows where list members reside, with the majority being in NC, a sizable number in SC, and the rest of the top ten totaling 158.

While the vast majority of members, understandably, live in the United States, the list also serves members in Canada, Costa Rica, France, Scotland, and Belgium.

The largest concentration of users resides in the Triangle area of North Carolina (Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill), with 316 subscribers, or 25.5% of the total.

More than half of the members are male (as estimated by name) with 60.6% of the total, leaving an estimated 39.4% as female. Note that the estimate of gender is



of lower confidence than the estimate of location.

To join the fun, simply send an e-mail with the line “subscribe carolinabirds” in the body to sympa@duke.edu. You will receive a reply with more information.

Thanks to Will Cook for continuing to manage this wonderful birding tool!



CBC Bonus Trip to Florida May 1-7, 2016



When you need it bad, we've got it good... come to Florida! Even if you don't remember the catchy jingle from 1979, you're sure to enjoy South Florida birding.

Join members of the CBC as we visit southeastern Florida and the Keys to search for ABA-area specialties difficult to find outside of SoFla! Early May is a great time, as the birds are in place but the weather hasn't hit that scorching level yet. Passerine migration will still be in progress, adding spice to our trip list. White-crowned Pigeon, Black-whiskered Vireo, Gray Kingbird, Snail Kite, Magnificent Frigatebird, Roseate Tern, Antillean Nighthawk, Gray-headed Swamphen, and Florida Scrub-Jay are just some of the species we expect to find. The elusive Mangrove Cuckoo might also be found. On the other end of the bird spectrum, we should see Egyptian Goose and Muscovy Duck, which are ABA-countable. Yes, the red-wart-faced feral Muscovy is now countable in Florida!

After flying into Fort Lauderdale on Sunday evening, our first stop on Monday will be Brian Piccolo Park for Burrowing Owls (99.9% guaranteed) and Monk Parakeets. Heading south, Florida City is good for Common Mynas, and Gray Kingbirds can be found in many places. Then we'll drive to Flamingo in Everglades National Park for Shiny and/or Bronzed Cowbird and walk the Anhinga and Pa-Hay-Okee Trails. We'll drive to Key West on Tuesday, stopping first at Card Sound Bridge to look for the "Cuban" Golden Warbler, a Yellow Warbler subspecies. Other stops along the way are good for Black-whiskered Vireo and White-crowned Pigeon. Roseate and Least Terns nest on a rooftop in Marathon and can be seen from the parking lot. In Key West, we'll visit the botanical gardens, Fort Zachary Taylor State Park, and look for Antillean Nighthawk at the airport.

On Wednesday, we'll take a boat (two-hour ride each way in the Gulf of Mexico) to Garden Key in the Dry Tortugas. Just before Garden Key we will stop near Hospital Key to look for Masked Boobies at the only breeding colony in the United States. Just next to Garden Key is Bush Key with a Sooty Tern population of over 80,000 birds and a Brown Noddy colony of 4,500

birds along with scores of Magnificent Frigatebirds. We'll hope for a Black Noddy, almost annual here, and watch for a Brown Booby flyover. Staying in Marathon Wednesday night, we'll visit the tiny airport for possible Antillean Nighthawk, just in case we missed it in Key West.

On Thursday morning, we'll start our drive to the Miami area, stopping at a Cave Swallow roost featuring birds from the West Indian subspecies, and trying for Mangrove Cuckoo. The area around Baptist Hospital is good for Red-whiskered Bulbul (the only remaining location in the ABA area for this declining species), Spot-breasted Oriole and White-winged Parakeet, all ABA countable. Then we'll visit Crandon Park and Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park on Key Biscayne and walk the trails.

Our first stop on Friday morning is Markham Park, near Fort Lauderdale, for Spot-breasted Oriole. Nesting waders and their young are a wonderful sight at Wakodahatchee Wetlands and Green Cay Nature Center, our next stops, where we should find Wood Stork, Limpkin, Least Bittern, Purple Gallinule, and Gray-headed Swamphen. Then we'll head north to Jonathan Dickinson State Park for Florida Scrub-Jay and Short-tailed Hawk. The trip ends on Saturday May 7th.

The leader for the trip is Ron Clark. If you have any questions, or want to reserve a slot, contact Ron at: waxwing@bellsouth.net. You can get a species list from the 2015 trip (146 species) and a link to photos.

The price for the trip is **\$1260 for double occupancy and \$1795 for single**. This includes six night's lodging with breakfast, ground transportation, entry fees, Dry Tortugas boat trip, and guided birding each day. You pay airfare, lunches, dinners, and any personal items. The trip is **limited to seven participants**. A deposit of \$500, **due by February 1st**, will hold your spot, with the **balance due by March 1st**. If you must cancel, a full refund will be given until March 17th. Cancellations after the 17th allow for a refund only if someone is found to take your place.



Birder's Book Review

Steve Shultz



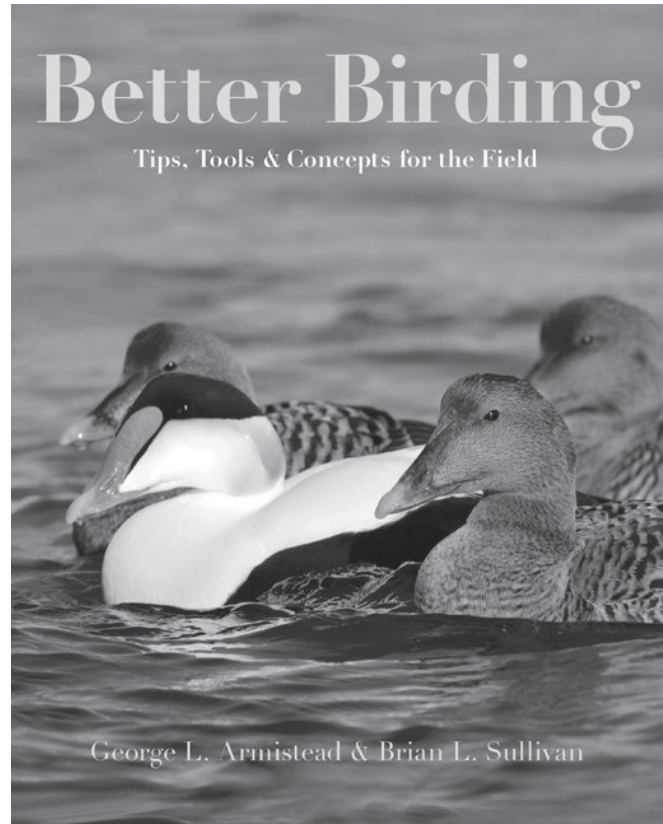
Better Birding: Tips, Tools & Concepts for the Field
George L. Armistead and Brian L. Sullivan
ISBN 978-0-691-12966-2, 318 pages, paper
2015, Princeton University Press, \$29.95

When I first began birding, the Peterson field guides were widely considered to be the apex of avian identification books. Long noted as one of the most important advances ever in non-scientific bird identification, the Peterson stood alone atop a pile of guides with common names like “the Stokes guide”, “the NatGeo guide” or “the Golden guide”. In 2000 the now-considered-cutting-edge *Sibley Guide to Birds* rocketed onto the scene, and since that time, with a few exceptions, the “fight for field guide dominance” has remained unchallenged, with the Peterson/Sibley duo monopolizing the genre.

A decade prior to Sibley, a book from the broader Peterson series hit the market. The year was 1990 and the book was Kenn Kaufman’s *Advanced Birding*. *Advanced Birding* dove much deeper into the identification of birds, especially notoriously tricky field challenges like loons, *empidonax* flycatchers, and jaegers, and allowed birders to explore what was then the cutting edge of bird identification. But more importantly, *Advanced Birding* set the stage for more books with similar aim. Many more. We now enjoy at least half a dozen excellent volumes on hawk identification, books delving into the tricky nature of pelagic bird identification, and more. Kauffman himself offers a second, updated volume, now in his own line of guides, 2011’s *Kaufman Field Guide to Advanced Birding*. Birders now have, in addition to excellent “field guides” a number of compelling “identification guides” that dig deeply into the sometimes hair-pulling identification challenges provided by similar-looking species.

To this group we now add the fresh-off-the-presses *Better Birding: Tips, Tools, and Concepts for the Field* by George L. Armistead and Brian L. Sullivan. This 318 page book might be slightly misnamed, as I expected a “how to be a better birder” volume similar to recent efforts by Sibley, Derek Lovitch, and others. While those books might be considered foundational from the perspective of more experienced birders, Armistead and Sullivan’s effort reminds me of the first *Advanced Birding*. The authors begin with a short (17-page) chapter on field identification tech-

niques, but the bulk of the hefty book looks into identification challenges across species ranging from murrelets to Atlantic gadfly petrels, skulking *accipiters* to winter-plumaged longspurs, herons to pipits.



The authors admit that the inclusion or exclusion of certain known identification challenges was solely due to their interest and experience, so when one wonders why the relatively easy white herons are treated in detail while the tricky juvenile jaegers are excluded, the answer may simply be that the authors felt the herons needed coverage while the jaegers did not. Nonetheless, I would prefer to see the white-cheeked geese take the place of swans, which are not a significant identification challenge, but what is included impresses.

And while the decision to cover certain bird families might be seen to have a coastal bias (both authors live along the seaboard, one in the Mid-Atlantic and the other in California) even birders in the middle of the country can brush up on decidedly difficult challenges such as the aforementioned longspurs and the pipits.

I especially like the “natural history” and “taxonomy”

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Birder's Book Review

Steve Shultz



Offshore Sea Life ID Guide - East Coast
Steve N.G. Howell and Brian L. Sullivan
ISBN 978-0-691-16621-6, 64 pages, paper
2016, Princeton University Press, \$14.95

This column recently reviewed *Offshore Sea Life ID Guide - West Coast* from Howell and Sullivan. Now, in time for that spring cruise or home study before the thrill of a Gulf Stream pelagic trip, is the anticipated *Offshore Sea Life ID Guide - East Coast*.

The East Coast already has a number of offshore wildlife guides including *A Field Guide to North Atlantic Wildlife* by Proctor and Lynch, and *Guide to the Offshore Wildlife of the Northern Atlantic* by North Carolina's own Michael H. Tove. So are there compelling reasons to buy Howell and Sullivan's effort? Overall, yes. The *Offshore Sea Life ID Guide: East Coast* scores points in four key areas of size, span, ease of use and price.

Whether on a dedicated pelagic birding excursion, whale watching trip, or taking a cruise from one of the East Coast home ports, having a pocket-sized (5x8", 64 page) reference often makes the difference between being able to use the tool on the spot versus keeping the book in the cabin or day bag for reference before or after sightings. Let's face it, most field guides are just too large to have in hand while observing, and toting individual volumes for mammals, birds, and fish limits space for other important items.

The very fact that a limited number of species inhabit offshore waters makes it possible to present the vast majority of likely sightings in a single, portable vessel. The book covers pelagic birds, marine mammals, sea turtles, flying fish, and more, showing each species in easy-to-read format and portrayed in composite form as they typically appear "on the water". And the price, with an MSRP of \$14.95, ensures that you can still afford a decent dinner later on.

The authors depict species in "Crossley fashion" whereby multiple photos are combined onto a background to show different, and generally realistic, views of how the animals appear at sea. Plates and text are on the same or opposing pages, and due to the small format of the book, text is limited to abundance, range, and identification notes.

Not all species that may be encountered are covered, but the book's intent is to allow ready identification of more than 90% of the animals encountered while at sea. So no Red-footed Booby or European Storm-Petrel, but species such as Fea's and Trindade Petrel are shown.

One feature that I especially like is the inclusion of small (representing distant) photos. Let's face it, if the animal is close enough to see as well as depicted in a standard field guide, many of the identifications would not be as difficult, but views are often distant, and birds, especially, may appear very different when far away. Having a "mental picture" assists in making long distance identifications.

Overall this is a neat little book that fits handily in the pocket, and I can easily see myself using it while "on deck". Surely most naturalists would want to follow up by consulting specialized (and often weighty) texts before or after the trip, but while at sea, it will be hard to beat Howell and Sullivan's offering.



Welcome New Members!

The Carolina Bird Club warmly welcomes the following new members:	Laurel Plesniarski Raleigh, NC	Charles, Michelle & Jocelyn Donnelly Johns Island, SC	Kristen Spangler, Helen Pohl & Frederick Pohl Columbia, SC	Bill Rowse Huntersville, NC
Marcia Stager Rock Hill, SC	Patricia Geiger Boone, NC	Harold Donnelly Elloree, SC	Martina Nordstrand Indian Trail, NC	Robert Trowell Hartsville, SC
Peter, Conor, Laura and Ann Marie Quadarella Weddington, NC	Susan & Gary Behrend & Zack Medoff Raleigh, NC	Colleen Bockhahn Clayton, NC	Joyce & Gene Hall Greenville, SC	Debra Ballou & Peter Mohlin Mt. Place, MA
	Sandra Fergus Spartanburg, SC	Richard Porter Fort Mill, SC	Ben Jones & Family Columbia, SC	Hunter Phillips Holly Ridge, NC

Shortt Joins Executive Committee

Following the resignation of Jesse Pope as Western North Carolina Member-at-Large, President Irvin Pitts appointed Linville resident Mickey Shortt, Jr. to fill

the unexpired term. The annual election for open Executive Committee positions is scheduled for the Blowing Rock spring meeting.

Better Birding

(Continued from page 5)

notes focusing on intriguing aspects of avian science.

Another feature that stands out is the “Crossley-treatment” showing similar birds together in the form they may be seen “in the wild”. Viewing Cooper’s and Sharp-shinned Hawks side by side helps drive home those “general impression” comparisons so important to correct identification. Similarly, seeing Black-capped, Bermuda, Fea’s, and Trindade Petrels all together greatly assists comparative evaluation.

While a few of the chapters seem unusual choices (the swifts, for example, since Chimney and Vaux’s rarely provide close enough views for visual cues, identification is typically via sound) coverage of longspurs, pipits, yellow-bellied kingbirds, marsh

sparrows, tropical terns, sulids, and murrelets hits the mark.

Crisp photography, with side-by-side composite comparisons of similar species accompany detailed, easy-to-read text. The hundreds of photos are nearly worth the price of the book on their own.

Above all, *Better Birding* was a fun read. Engaging, text hits the mark of being specific, but not overly technical. Photos bring birds to life, and show salient identification points described in the text.

Pros: Easy and fun to read. Great photography. Fresh looks at difficult identification challenges for groups of birds not covered extensively elsewhere.

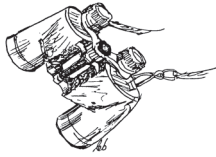
Cons: Seems to have a slight coastal/California bias. Chapters do not cover some of the common identification challenges such as juvenile jaegers and white-cheeked geese.

The Newsletter and The Chat are online on the CBC website, and you can elect either electronic or paper delivery. The most recent electronic editions of each are only accessible to CBC members.

To access the “members only” content, you must first create a login and password.

This can be done at the Member Services page at:

[http:// www.carolinabirdclub.org/members/](http://www.carolinabirdclub.org/members/)



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 offices

Upcoming CBC Meetings

Spring 2016 - Blowing Rock, NC
 Fall 2016 - Beaufort, SC

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 pittsjam@windstream.net

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Deadlines for submissions are the 15th of December, February, April, June, August, and October.

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www.carolinabirdclub.org

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