

OBX Winter Birding Weekend a Big Success for Members and Birds!

by Susan Campbell

Photos by Susan Campbell, Bob Lewis and Pam Ford

January 13 through 15 was a terrific weekend on the Outer Banks. 150 intrepid birders enjoyed trips, speakers and socializing—finally! This was the second seasonal meeting held since the pandemic hit in early 2020. By all accounts, it was a big success!

Not surprisingly the weather was not ideal. But what would a weekend in January on the Outer Banks be without some wind and wintry precipitation? Some field trips experienced rain, sleet, and snow in the span of just a few hours! The birds, and the birders, did not really seem to mind.



Photo by Pam Ford

One hundred sixty-three species were tallied over the course of the weekend with a few interesting birds making the list. A Snow Bunting that had been in the same area of Alligator River Refuge for over a month was seen by most participants. But conversely, the Ash-throated Flycatcher also at Alligator River was seen by few. Unfortunately, alcids were few and far between with only a few Razorbill tallied from Jennette’s Pier. A couple of flyby Common Eiders, a few Manx Shearwaters, and a Long-tailed Duck were also good birds at the pier. A handsome drake Eurasian Wigeon impressed a couple of groups at Pea Island, while an apparent Northern Pintail/Gadwall hybrid was a great find. Gull numbers at Hatteras Point were impressive, with an Iceland and Glaucous in the mix.



Photo by Bob Lewis

Many would say that the “best bird” of the weekend was actually not a bird at all. Multiple participants (including yours truly) were treated to shockingly good views of Red Wolves. These locally reintroduced canids had been active at Alligator River Refuge in the vicinity of Milltail Road in weeks leading up to the meeting and so, with a bit of luck, could be seen at fairly close range. Several members managed some good photos of the animals, and Bob Lewis even captured some amazing video!

Field trips ranged north from our base in Kill Devil Hills to the village of Corolla, south along the Outer Banks to Cape Hatteras, and inland to sites from Pocosin NWR (where an epic encounter with tens of thousands of geese and swans amazed participants) to Lake Mattamuskeet to Palmetto Peartree Preserve for a visit with the area’s resident Red-cockaded Woodpeckers.

Our hotel, the Comfort Inn on the Ocean, provided wonderful hospitality. Early breakfasts and optional bag lunches in addition to a delicious banquet ensured participants were well fed.

Evening presentations ranged from an update on Golden-winged Warblers in North Carolina by Aimee Tomcho, to an in-depth taxonomic review of Carolina subspecies by John Gerwin, to a virtual birding tour of the Galapagos Islands by Steve Shultz.

Evening events also included a raffle in which over 20 donated items were won by lucky participants, a feather identification challenge, and a fun series of “dingbats” that asked folks to put on their creative thinking caps to guess the bird’s name described by custom artwork provided by Les McCallum. Tables representing the Cape Fear Bird Observatory, Ventures Birding Tours, and the North Carolina Breeding Bird Atlas provided information and swag, while young birder Ian House received a scholarship to attend the meeting and assisted by acting as the official drawer of raffle tickets Saturday evening. Last not least, as a result of member generosity, the sales of donated books and ceramics as well as raffle tickets netted the Young Birder Fund over \$400 during the course of the weekend.



Photo by Pam Ford



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I would like to extend a special thank you to Les Coble, whose planning for the Covid-cancelled 2022 winter meeting provided significant input into our 2023 meeting, our evening speakers, and the many volunteers who led field trips. We could not have done it without you! With the winter meeting in the annals of history, I am looking forward to seeing you at our next meeting in Banner Elk, NC. After too many canceled meetings, we are back! 😊



Photo by Pam Ford



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