The Wilmington and Southport Christmas Bird Counts consistently rank nationally in the top five counts for the most number of species seen. The species counts approach 160 each winter for these two areas in the Lower Cape Fear River basin. The field trips at the Carolina Bird Club winter 2018 meeting will cover some of these same areas. The meeting headquarters is at Wrightsville Beach and the dates are January 26 through 28, only a few weeks after the Christmas Bird Count dates. Here is some early information about the meeting.

The Lower Cape Fear offers some of the best winter birding spots in the Carolinas with a variety of habitats including the ocean, maritime forests, saltwater mud-flats, freshwater lakes and marshes, pine forests and more.

Wrightsville Beach is just across the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) from Wilmington. The two towns are situated between the Cape Fear River and the Ocean. Wrightsville Beach and Wilmington boast of many fine restaurants along the coast and in the downtown area respectively. The Wilmington downtown River Walk along the Cape Fear River is a great place to hang out for site seeing, shopping and for great food and beverages. So even though our hotel is on Wrightsville Beach, Wilmington is just across a couple of bridges to our west.

The field trip areas in and around Wrightsville Beach will provide opportunities to see birds such as the Nelson’s and Saltmarsh Sparrows, Orange-crowned Warblers, Loggerhead Shrikes, Marbled Godwits, four Rail species, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Great Cormorant, Anhinga, and three scoter species. Some rare birds which might be seen include Ross’s Goose, Dickcissel, Bachman’s Sparrow, Razorbill and Parasitic Jaeger. /Continued P. 2
Ocean watching at Wrightsville Beach will be available from Johnnie Mercer’s pier and from the hotel. If you have never watched the Northern Gannets fishing just outside the waves, you are in for a real treat.

We will be near winter birding hotspots that include: Johnnie Mercer’s Pier, Airlie Gardens, Greenfield Lake, the Battleship North Carolina area, Ft. Fisher, Kure Beach, Bald Head Island, Oak Island, Brunswick Town, and Boiling Spring Lakes.

We have already lined up two guest speakers that should interest you. Friday night we will hear from David Blevins. Dr. Blevins is a nature photographer, writer, and ecologist. He combines a sense of wonder with an artistic eye to create images that help tell stories about the meaning and significance of the natural world. He received a Ph.D. in ecology from the University of British Columbia, as well as M.S. and B.S. degrees in forest science from North Carolina State University. His newest book, "North Carolina's Barrier Islands," reveals the natural character of barrier islands, the forces that shape them and the sense of wonder they inspire. His previous book, "Wild North Carolina," is a visual journey to the best remaining examples of natural communities across the State.

To prepare for Saturday night’s speaker you might want to watch “The Big Year” movie one more time. Laura Keene will entertain us with her photographs and tales from her big year chase in 2016. Laura holds the current ABA record for number of birds photographed in one calendar year.
Our meeting site headquarters and host hotel is the Blockade Runner Beach Resort on Wrightsville Beach.

Half of the rooms have ocean and sunrise views and half have views of the Inter Coastal Waterway and the sunset.

Room rates respectively will be a bargain: $95 and $85 plus taxes. A full chef-prepared breakfast is included in the room rates.

The hotel will also host our Saturday night buffet and their chef is highly rated and recommended by frequent visitors. The rooms have king or queen bed(s), 42” Plasma TV, WiFi, refrigerator, coffee maker, and hair dryer. Check out their web-site and ocean cam at: http://blockade-runner.com.

The address of the hotel is:
275 Waynick Boulevard, Wrightsville Beach, NC 28480.

For reservations call 910-256-2251 and make sure to tell them you are with the Carolina Bird Club.

Look for registration information and trip descriptions in the December CBC Newsletter and on our web-site: www.carolinabirdclub.org.

Hope to see you at Wrightsville Beach in January 2018!
Carolina Bird Club is Offering 2 Bonus Trips to Costa Rica in February of 2018.

The first trip will be "Northern Costa Rica" and will run from February 17 to February 26.

This will include the best birding sites in the Central Pacific near Carara NP, the dry NW known as Guanacaste, the Northern Caribbean wetlands of Cano Negro and the Caribbean foothills of scenic Arenal Volcano.

The second trip will be "Southern Costa Rica" and will run from February 25 to March 6. This trip will include the Highlands including Savegre and Pacific foothills as well as Pacific Southwest Costa Rica.

Both trips will be packed with excellent birding. For a detailed itinerary and description of each trip and information on registration, please go the CBC website.

www.carolinabirdclub.org
For over thirty years I have planned to visit South Florida. From May 11 to May 17 this year, I finally pulled it off.

My birding buddy Richard Hayes and I have had success in new spots entirely on our own such as the Lower Rio Grande Valley and Colorado, but this time we decided that a tour guide would make our trip more effective. So we hired Homestead, Florida-based guide Larry Manfredi for his "Ultimate South Florida Tour".

The tour included seven full days in the field, and we covered South Florida from Kissimmee and Sebastian Inlet to Fort Jefferson. The tour size was only three plus the leader. So we were able to move fast and cover a lot of ground.

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My potential life list target list was 35, but this included a lot of West Indian strays. I hoped for at least 11 life birds to bring my American Birding Association (ABA) area total to 600. It turned out I got all of my target birds and added four rare birds, the most unusual the ABA category 5 Bahama Woodstar hummingbird. We saw about 145 species total and I saw 17 (!) ABA life birds, photographing all but the Red-footed Booby seen at a distance from the parapet of Fort Jefferson.

The list also included the Florida endemic Mangrove Cuckoo, the Black-whiskered Vireo, and elusive White-crowned Pigeon. We also got all the usual Miami-area exotics: Egyptian Goose, Red-whiskered Bulbul, Purple (Gray-headed) Swamphen, Spot-breasted Oriole, Common Myna, and White-winged Parakeet.

Part of the fun and challenge of this trip was figuring out what birds are presently ABA-countable. Miami and southern Florida have perhaps the largest population of free-flying parrots and other exotic species.

Many of the parrot species are becoming established but have not yet been voted in. So we decided to take some time to document all of the species we encountered, filing them away in the expectation that they will be voted in someday soon. The Scaly-breasted Munia and Mitred Parakeet fell into this category.

Waiting for Larry in Florida City, we picked up Gray Kingbird and Common Myna in the parking lot. Larry met us with the words: "Ready? Let's go see a Western Spindalis". Unprecedented numbers of West Indian species have been seen in south Florida this spring, with the Western Spindalis persisting in several locations for several weeks.
We got a good close-up look in a few minutes on Key Largo. After that we got looks at the rather common Black-whiskered Vireo.

A bit more effort, as usual, was required for the Mangrove Cuckoo. Both sang extensively. White-crowned Pigeons offered tantalizing looks on Key Largo and every day in the Keys, but were not well-seen until Key West.

On day two we worked our way down the Keys picking up Antillean Nighthawks flying with Common at Big Pine Key and Roseate Terns at Marathon. We got up early the next day for the big trip to Fort Jefferson, the centerpiece of the trip for me. There we picked up all the expected species, adding a surprise Red-footed Booby perched at the far end of nearby Bush Key!

Frigatebirds, Sooty Terns, and Brown Noddies were very common, Masked and Brown Booby were present, and a large group of passerine migrants rested on the parade ground inside the massive fort. The only "miss" of the entire week occurred when Black Noddy, occasionally seen with the Browns, was absent.

The Yankee Freedom ferry from Key West was easy to use and is highly recommended. A spring trip to the fort ought to be on every birder's bucket list. Day five took us through Miami for the exotics.

Red-whiskered Bulbul became my 600th ABA area bird. Then we drove for about three hours up the Atlantic coast on a hot tip that a Bahama Woodstar, only seen five times previously in the ABA area, had been seen the day before in the Sebastian inlet area.

After several hours of patient search with other birders, we decided to take a break and were on the way to eat when the call came: "Woodstar here right now!" So Larry made a quick u-turn and we hurried back, and were rewarded with good looks and eventually photos of this very rare West Indian hummingbird.

Day six took us further inland to the pine woods and lakes of central Florida. We spent hours that day and another looking for a Short-tailed Hawk, and were finally rewarded with a distant look at a circling distant bird.

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Various lakes yielded Snail Kite and Fulvous Whistling Duck, and the Circle B Bar Preserve was visited on a hot tip that a Ruff was there. We did see the Ruff and found the preserve full of very approachable waders like Limpkin and Roseate Spoonbill. It was our best photo spot of the trip.

Our last day was spent further down in central Florida, visiting Clewiston on Lake Okeechobee for a rare Fork-tailed Flycatcher and further south for the hard-to-find Smooth-billed Ani in scrubland.

Larry knows all the great places for seafood. You will eat well on this tour and also walk a lot if you choose. Larry Manfredi Tours are highly recommended.

Beginning with the Winter 2018 issue, The Chat will be published online only. Discontinuing print publication will result in significant financial savings, a percentage of which will be deposited into the CBC Conservation Fund for future conservation efforts throughout North and South Carolina. This also of course saves trees by reducing paper consumption. The Chat has been optionally available online for several years and about a quarter of the membership has already chosen to receive it only online.

Thank you,
Christine Stoughton-Root, President, CBC

We have field trips and events for Young Birders throughout the Carolinas Region.
We are eager to add new members.

If you are interested in joining the CBC Young Birders Club or know a young birder in the Carolinas, please e-mail at mjanson@carolinayoungbirdersclub.org. We are a club for any young person aged 8-19 who has an interest in birds and lives in the Carolinas.

It’s free to join. All that we ask is to stay in contact with us and participate!

“At the Winston-Salem meeting in April, young birders (l to r) Savannah Boucino, Laura Quadarella, Conor Quadarella, and Juliana Boucino joined veteran birder Marion Clark (r).
Welcome New Members!

Upgraded to Life Membership

Linda Allman
Columbia, SC

Steve Shultz
Apex, NC

New Members

Janette Bame & Robert Dixon
Concord, NC

Linda Barry
Latta, SC

Bob & Carol Benston
Monroe, NC

Bob Butler
Asheville, NC

Christie Cantrell
Raleigh, NC

Nancy Coombs
Columbia, SC

Joanna Culliton
Pawleys Island, SC

Jody Davison
Fort Mill, SC

Patricia Fischer
Chapel Hill, NC

Wade Gassman
Belvedere, SC

Candace Gillespie
Audubon South Carolina
Harleyville, SC

Rebecca Goggans
Arden, NC

Thomas, Carly and Talon Gray
Winston Salem, NC

Cynthia Hever
Holly Springs, NC

Alicia Johansen
Gainsville, FL

Patty Masten
Charlotte, NC

Judith Mauer
Hartwell, GA

George McHenry
Belton, SC

Robert O’Dell
Charleston, SC

Deborah Phillips
Pawleys Island, SC

Mary Reeves
Saluda, NC

Michelle Reid
Wake Forest, NC

Darrylin Smith
Hampstead, NC

McKenna Sprouse
Columbia, SC

Susan Lyon Stone
Carrboro, NC

Cynthia Wallace
Murrells Inlet, SC
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Membership dues include access to the CBCs two publications the CBC Newsletter and The Chat. Tax deductible as required by law.

Cost for CBC bird checklists, including postage: 10@$5.45, 25@$13.40, 50@$27.00, and 100@$54.00.


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