

## **CBC Spring Meeting at Fletcher, North Carolina – April 25-27, 2025**

By Paul Laurent

Our Spring Meeting will be in Fletcher NC, just outside of Asheville in western North Carolina. I'm sure everyone is excited to see what birding is like in the mountains after the devastation of Hurricane Helene, and to do our small part to help the struggling economy up there. We will be in the peak of spring migration, and will be looking for tons of warblers in their stunning breeding plumage.

This meeting will be in a slightly different format, with most trips on Saturday and Sunday morning. There will be a few trips on Friday for the early arrivals. We are experimenting to see if this works for more members - especially those who are working on Friday.

Our trip schedule may be affected by layoffs and inaccessibility to certain locations due to changes within the Federal Government (i.e. the National Park Service), as well as unrepaired storm damage. Currently, several of the parks we are planning to visit as well as chunks of the Blue Ridge Parkway are still closed to the public. We think many of these will be open by April, and others we can get special permission to visit, but we can't know for sure yet. This means we won't have trip sign-ups as part of registration for this meeting. We will send out the final trip list a week before the meeting, and you can sign up for trips when you arrive at the hotel in Fletcher.

We know some folks will be arriving later than others, so we will not be capping the number of trip participants. Instead, we will have additional trip leaders that will be able to go wherever the most



interest is, and we will run multiple trips to popular locations if needed. The key word for this meeting is

FLEXIBILITY! We know this is a big change from previous meetings, but due to the extenuating circumstances in western NC this is the only way we will still be able to have our Spring Meeting in the amazing mountains of North Carolina. Also, a social is planned later in the day Saturday, ahead of our evening program at the host hotel.

**Host Hotel:** Clarion Inn Asheville Airport, Fletcher, located at 550 Airport Rd, Fletcher, NC 28732. Reservations can be made online at <https://www.choicehotels.com/reservations/groups/AV8402>. You can also call **(828) 483-4260** to reserve your room.

Room rates are \$94 per night for single or double occupancy. Be sure to mention you are with the CBC when making reservations. All rooms have a hair dryer and coffeemaker. There is a free breakfast included in the reservation.

Due to the unusual circumstances, we are going to have a slightly different registration for this meeting. Online Registration opens Saturday, March 15th at 2:00 pm, and will end on April 18th at noon. Registration may be extended if we have sufficient early registrants but is not guaranteed. April 11th at noon is the last day for refunds if you have to cancel attendance. Also, very important—If you have to cancel, please do so online, or else notify the Headquarters Secretary by sending an email to [hq@carolinabirdclub.org](mailto:hq@carolinabirdclub.org). Please reserve your room and thank them for their hospitality. CBC greatly appreciates your use of the host hotel. The rate is exceptional, and you actually save CBC costs by staying with us. The following is a list of the tours that we hope we will have, and an updated list will be sent out shortly before the meeting. The hope is that all or at least most of these trips will happen as described.

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## Half-Day Trips

### **Blue Ridge Parkway North to Craggy Gardens**

The Blue Ridge Parkway winds through beautiful mountains and is home to a remarkable variety of birds. This trip will take the Parkway north from the hotel to the Tanbark Tunnel. This area is known for Cerulean Warblers, as well as Blackburnian Warblers, Worm-eating Warblers, Black-throated Blue and Black-throated Green Warblers, as well as Scarlet Tanagers, Indigo Buntings, and more! From here we continue north to the Craggy Gardens Picnic Area, which is a good spot to look for Canada Warblers, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Ovenbirds, and Winter Wrens. We will be keeping an eye out for Common Ravens flying overhead.

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L3580407>, <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L1267439>

*Approximate Travel Time* - 40 minutes to first stop. [Google Maps directions from the Clarion Inn](#)

*Conditions:* EASY - We will be walking along the side of the Parkway, so most of the terrain will be flat, and we won't be walking more than a few hundred yards at any of our stops. There are restroom facilities at the Craggy Garden Picnic Area.

### **Hooper Lane / Mills River Park**

The sod farms along Hooper Lane are famous for attracting a wide variety of shorebirds during migration, including the potential for some very rare visitors! The trip will search the fields for

shorebirds and sparrows before checking the fields of Mills River Park and the trees along Mills River for migrating warblers as well as meadow species.

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L870227>, <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2327984>

*Approximate Travel Time* - 10 minutes. [Google Maps directions from the Clarion Inn](#)

*Conditions:* EASY - Hooper Lane and Mills River Park are very flat, and we will be on grass or paved paths the entire time. Restrooms are available at Mills River Park

### **Beaver Lake Bird Sanctuary**

Beaver Lake is a wonderful conservation success story. The Blue Ridge Audubon Society helped prevent yet another shopping center being constructed on top of the wetlands that drain into Beaver Lake. Years of wetland restoration and a very nice trail system make this one of the top birding spots in the area. Virtually any migratory bird has a decent chance of being spotted at Beaver Lake in the spring, including a wide variety of warblers as well as waterfowl.

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L166279>

*Approximate Travel Time* - 25 minutes. [Google Maps directions from the Clarion Inn](#)

*Conditions:* EASY - The trails around Beaver Lake Bird Sanctuary are flat and well maintained. Restrooms are available at nearby gas stations if needed.

### **Margie Huggins' Private Land**

This 16-acre property was once a hay field, but Margie has been working to transform it into a natural habitat. This is a great spot for migrating songbirds, with a river, meadows, and forested bottomland habitat. If you have land you'd like to restore to native habitat this is a fantastic place to get inspiration and ideas!

*Approximate Travel Time* - 30 minutes. [Google Maps directions from the Clarion Inn](#)

*Conditions:* EASY - There are well maintained, mowed paths throughout the property. There is a small hill. Restrooms are available at Margie's house.

### **Charles D. Owen Park**

This park is always a great spot for birding. The lakes attract waterfowl, and the bottomland forests along the Swannanoa River are great for migrating warblers. The farm fields draw a wide variety of shorebirds, sparrows, and other open land species including American Pipit.

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L596716>

*Approximate Travel Time* - 30 minutes. [Google Maps directions from the Clarion Inn](#)

*Conditions:* MODERATE - This will be a several mile walk. The trails around the park and farm are generally flat, but there are a couple of places that are steep and have tricky footing. Restrooms are available at the park.



## **Davidson River**

This trip follows the Davidson River, with several great trails and lots of migratory birds as well as summer residents. We will be looking for warblers, as well as vireos, woodpeckers and much more.

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L3932246>, <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L4924285>

*Approximate Travel Time* - 25 minutes to first stop. [Google Maps directions from the Clarion Inn](#)

*Conditions:* MODERATE - There will be 3 to 4 miles of walking. The trails are relatively easy, but there will be changes in elevation and occasional rough footing. Restrooms are available at the campground at the start of the trip. There will be abundant 'facilitrees' for the remainder of the trip.

## **Sunday Rarity Roundup!**

We will chase after whatever the most unusual bird of the meeting is. If no incredible rarities are around this trip won't happen, and you can join whichever trip is on your way home!

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## **Full Day Trips**

### **Max Patch Golden-winged Warblers**

This trip heads west to the Tennessee border in search of Golden-winged Warblers. There are several places along the road to Max Patch that are reliable spots for this rare and elusive bird, along with lots of other species. Max Patch itself is a wonderful example of an Appalachian Bald, with spectacular views as well as spectacular birds. Look for a wide variety of warblers, sparrows, thrushes, and much more!

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L523302>, <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L1712604>

*Approximate Travel Time* - 45 minutes to first stop. [Google Maps directions from the Clarion Inn](#)

### **Blue Ridge Parkway North to Mt Mitchell**

The Blue Ridge Parkway winds through beautiful mountains and is home to a remarkable variety of birds. This trip will take the BRP north from the hotel to the Tanbark Tunnel. This area is known for Cerulean Warblers, as well as Blackburnian Warblers, Worm-eating Warblers, Black-throated Blue and Green Warblers, as well as Scarlet Tanagers, Indigo Buntings, and more! From here we continue north to the Craggy Gardens Picnic Area, which is a good spot to look for Canada Warblers, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Ovenbirds, and more. We will be keeping an eye out for Common Ravens flying overhead. The full day trip continues on to Mount Mitchell, the highest peak east of the Mississippi River. Look for high altitude species like Winter Wren as well as a spectacular view!



<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L3580407>, <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L1267439>,  
<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L6189944>

*Approximate Travel Time* - 40 minutes to first stop. [Google Maps directions from the Clarion Inn](#)

*Conditions:* MODERATE - While the walking will be along the BRP and be mostly flat, the high altitude at Mount Mitchell (6682 feet above sea level) can make even an easy walk more difficult. Restrooms are available at the Craggy Gardens Picnic Area and at the top of Mount Mitchell.

### **Blue Ridge Parkway South to Black Balsam**

Black Balsam is the last place in North Carolina to find Black-capped Chickadees (and have eBird believe you)! This trip travels south along the BRP, stopping at overlooks along the way for migrating and breeding warblers, thrushes, grosbeaks, buntings, and more. At Black Balsam we will hike in the Sam's Knob area. This area can be great for Ruffed Grouse, Least Flycatcher, Black-capped Chickadee, and maybe even an early Alder Flycatcher. We will also check the Devil's Courthouse trail for Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush, Canada Warbler, and in some years Peregrine Falcons nest here.

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2837319>, <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L304320>,  
<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L1663032>

*Approximate Travel Time* - 1 hour

*Conditions:* MODERATE - While the walking will be along the BRP and be mostly flat, the Devil's Courthouse trail is steep. It is only about a quarter mile long, but at high altitude it can be a bit challenging. You can easily choose to walk some or all of the trail. Restrooms are available at the Sam's Knob area, and at Mount Pisgah.

### **Green River Game Lands**

Green River Cove Road winds down a lovely ravine with lots of warblers. The lower elevation makes this a good spot for Swainson's Warblers, and we will stop several times along the road to look and listen... We will explore a trail that leads through several succession habitats and a meadow that often has Yellow-breasted Chats and Prairie Warblers, as well as a variety of sparrows and other open-land species. There is a lake and swamp at the bottom of the road that can produce Prothonotary Warblers as well as shorebirds and waterfowl. We will stop by The Park at Flat Rock to look for the pair of Virginia Rails that have been there for the last several years.

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L9218830>, <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2834796>,  
<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L2808141>

*Approximate Travel Time* - 30 minutes. [Google Map directions from the Clarion Inn](#)

*Conditions:* EASY to MODERATE - Stops along Green River Cove Road will not involve a lot of walking. The trail into the Game Lands is relatively flat, and is a couple miles long. There are restrooms at a gas station at the top of Green River Cove Road, once we start, there are a wide selection of 'facilitrees' you can avail yourself to.

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## **Fall Meeting Teaser**

We are going to Beaufort, South Carolina for our Fall Meeting, October 2-5, 2025!!!! Picturesque Beaufort offers some of the best birding along the South Carolina coast. Previous meetings in Beaufort we have tallied 203 species, which is a close second to the Outer Banks (204 species). Then, think of the field trips to Bear Island... Donnelley... Savannah NWR... Botany Bay WMA... These sites are hallowed ground to Lowcountry birders, and we will visit them all and more during the upcoming Carolina Bird Club 2025 Fall Meeting! We are staying at the Holiday Inn & Suites Beaufort -- Plan NOW on going!

**CBC Spring 2025 Fletcher, NC Registration Form**  
**Registration Begins Saturday, March 15, @ 2pm.**

**Register online at [www.carolinabirdclub.org](http://www.carolinabirdclub.org).**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Registration (Member) \_\_\_\_\_ x \$40 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Registration (Non-Member) \_\_\_\_\_ x \$45 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting registration at the door costs \$45.



**Make check payable to Carolina Bird Club and send to:**

**CBC, 1800 Meadow Ave., Banner Elk, NC 28604**

Club policy requires all field trip participants to comply with the field trip leader's assessment and requests concerning the physical ability of each participant to make or complete the trip.

I will release and discharge (and will not make a claim against) the Carolina Bird Club for injury, death, or property damage arising from my participation at this meeting and/or Club field trips. This release of liability is entered into on behalf of all members of my family, including all minors accompanying me. I certify that I am the parent or legal guardian of any such minors and that I am over 18 years of age.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Processing of mail-in registrations will not begin until online registration opens.*

**Cancellations will be refunded if received by 6 pm, April 11**

**Cancel by contacting the Headquarters Secretary at [hq@carolinabirdclub.org](mailto:hq@carolinabirdclub.org).**

# Bonus Trip to the NC Sandhills May 31-June 1

By Steve Shultz

Join us for a quick weekend getaway to the Sandhills of central North Carolina the weekend of May 31-June 1, 2025 to enjoy spectacular scenery and great birds as we explore the beautiful pinewoods. We'll explore the diverse 58,000-acre Sandhills Preserve and fire-managed 930-acre Weymouth Woods, focusing on pine savannah specialist birds such as Northern Bobwhite, Bachman's Sparrow, and the regionally endemic Red-cockaded Woodpecker, to name a few. Spring migration will be at the tail end, and we will be on the lookout for any northbound migrants as well, anything and everything from warblers, tanagers, buntings and more.



Longleaf pine forest once stretched from the Carolinas to eastern Texas but today only 3% remains. The focus of this trip is a birding visit to one of the best examples of this now rare habitat in North Carolina. Managed with carefully prescribed burns and the thinning of trees, the Sandhills Game Lands area boasts some of the world's most diverse plant communities (up to 40 species per square meter!) and some of North America's rarest birds. The oldest Longleaf Pine tree in the world is found in Weymouth Woods.

We will attend nature programs with the Weymouth Woods' rangers, visit a banding station, and explore the forest with a focus on pine savannah specialists.

If you've never spent time birding in this part of NC then you are certainly missing out – it's one of the most beautiful and unique places in the state!

A few of the birds we hope to see: Bachman's Sparrow, Red-Cockaded Woodpecker, Chuck-Wills-

Widow, Common Nighthawk, Mississippi Kite, Loggerhead Shrike, Prairie Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Northern Bobwhite, Red-headed Woodpecker, Summer Tanager, and a whole lot more!

## Itinerary in Brief:

Saturday, June 1 — Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve and Local Hotspots

Our first couple of hours birding in the area will give us a nice introduction to these special habitats and the birds that reside here. If we miss Red-cockaded Woodpeckers this morning, we'll have other chances this evening and tomorrow.

Sunday, June 2 — Sandhills Game Land

We expect to encounter more Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and Bachman's Sparrows as we drive through acres of restored Longleaf Pine managed by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission less than an hour south of Southern Pines. We should also have a good chance of finding Northern Bobwhite, Common Nighthawk, Loggerhead Shrike and maybe even a Lark Sparrow. Additionally, the group will visit McKinney Lake to tick some bottomland forest passerines and a few wetland species. If time permits, we will make a stop in an agricultural area known to produce Mississippi Kites.

### Logistics:

The fee for this field trip is \$75 and advance registration is required. Participation is limited to 8. Participants are responsible for lodging and meals. Detailed information including directions, lodging choices, dining opportunities and more will be provided to registrants. Leaders for this outing are Susan Campbell and Steve Shultz.

To register for this field trip, please contact Steve Shultz at [sshultz@nc.rr.com](mailto:sshultz@nc.rr.com) or call 919-629-7226. Upon confirmation of your slot on the trip you will be sent a registration form/waiver that can be submitted with your trip fee.

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## The Passing of John Fussell

By Derb Carter



North Carolina lost a giant in the birding community with the passing of John Fussell in Morehead City on December 27, 2024. John was a fixture in NC birding for sixty years starting as a teenager, pursuing his interest at NC State University, then returning to Morehead City. He knew the birds and every birding corner along his beloved NC coast like no one else. In fact, he wrote the book. UNC Press published his Birder's Guide to Coastal North Carolina in 1994 and it remains the definitive guide.

John eagerly volunteered to lead field trips at CBC meetings, Wings Over Water, and other gatherings and many birders in the Carolinas got to know him through these trips. He was well known as THE guy who could show you your first Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Swainson's Warbler, Bachman's Sparrow, or Black Rail.

The one thing you could almost be certain of on one of John's trips is you were going to get your feet soaked within the first hour. If the shortest way was dry, John would take the long way through the marsh or tidal flats on the chance of flushing a rail, sparrow, or wren. For John, birding was the journey, not the destination.

John was understated and it was hard to tell when he was excited. In 1982, I found a Masked Duck on a lake in the Croatian Forest, and called John to bring his camera. After an extended search, we relocated it and John got photos, about the most excited I ever saw him. Several years later some of us were birding on Pea Island dikes at the end of a long day when John walked up. After exchanging greetings and talking about mundane things a few minutes, John casually mentioned "Oh, I just had a Northern Wheatear in Avon." We, of course, all raced down to see this first documented NC record.

In 1986, John, Ricky Davis, Merrill Lynch, Allen Bryan, and I decided to see how many species we could see in NC in one day, a Big Day. John was working on the Outer Banks at the time and when we made it there in the afternoon, he had staked out numerous rarities. We kept ticking through birds until an American Bittern just before midnight, recording 184 species, a record still standing after nearly four decades. It would never have happened without John.

John cared deeply about protecting important habitats and as an accomplished naturalist contributed his knowledge and observations to the identification and preservation of lands by state and federal agencies and conservation organizations. Many natural areas remain today because of John's field surveys and effective advocacy, a legacy for future birders and naturalists...

John was an avid participant in Christmas Bird Counts, including the Morehead City count he started as a teenager. He also participated every year in the Wilmington CBC, covering undeveloped Masonboro Island. I missed waving to him across the inlet this year. I think the gulls, terns, shorebirds, and pelicans were also looking for him and missed him. We will all miss him.



## **Carolina Bird Club Winter Meeting Wrap-up**

Christine Stoughton Root

The Carolina Bird Club's annual winter meeting took place January 16 to 19 at Emerald Isle, NC. Enthusiastic participants embarked on field trips to bird-rich destinations like North River Wetland Preserve, Shackleford Banks, Rachel Carson Estuarine Reserve, Cedar Island, Calico Creek, and various other spots on the Crystal Coast. The weather was quite variable, featuring warmth, rain, an arctic blast, and fog, adding an element of adventure to our birding experience.

In spite of the challenging conditions, participants spotted approximately 165 species—details of which are available on our website. Noteworthy rarities included a Snow Bunting at Harkers Island, three Long-billed Curlews on Shackleford, an Iceland Gull at the Cedar Island ferry landing, three Sandhill Cranes near Beaufort Airport, Great Cormorant, Purple Sandpiper, and Nashville and Prairie Warblers at Ft. Macon. We were also delighted by a Western Tanager sighting at Calico Creek, among others.

A special memorial display was dedicated to John Fussell, commemorating his contributions and impact on our birding community, which added a meaningful touch to the event.

Our seasonal meetings provide a fantastic opportunity to explore new regions of the Carolinas, and we're incredibly grateful to our 135 participants, including six young birders and twelve Field Trip Leaders, who joined us from places as far afield as England, Colorado, Virginia and the Carolinas.

We look forward to seeing you at one of our upcoming Carolina Bird Club events. Join us for the next seasonal meeting in Asheville/Fletcher/Hendersonville at the end of April. For more information, please visit <http://www.carolinabirdclub.org>.



*The boat trip and shorebirding efforts at Bird Shoal on Saturday.*



*Young Birder grant winners – (L to R) - Cary Lloyd Perry, Kai Dickson, Alban Lloyd Parry with Christine Stoughton-Root and Steve Tracy.*



*Friday night speaker Leslie Ruble from Possumwood Acres Wildlife Sanctuary.*

# Carolina Bird Club Winter Meeting

Photos by Robert Lewis



*Merlin*



*Iceland Gull*



*Redhead*



*Black Scoter*



*Bonaparte's Gull*



*River Otter*



**Carolina Bird Club**  
1800 Meadow Ave.,  
Banner Elk, NC 28604

**Periodicals Postage Paid  
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and additional mailing offices**

## Upcoming CBC Meetings

*Spring Meeting at Fletcher, NC – April 26-27, 2025*

*Fall Meeting at Beaufort, SC – October 2-5, 2025*

*Winter Meeting at the Outer Banks, NC – January 23-25, 2026*

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**Deadline for submission of Volume 71, Issue 3 is  
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**[www.carolinabirdclub.org](http://www.carolinabirdclub.org)**

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