Moving Forward!

By Jim Nesbit
CFAS President

Serving as chapter president is such a great honor, but a big challenge as well. I truly appreciate everyone’s assistance and patience as we keep growing, adding to what draws new members and what keeps our stalwarts coming back for more.

As we move forward, here are some of my dreams. I hope they’re yours too:

CFAS will recruit more members and improve our diversification. We’ll increase members’ involvement and respond to their requests. We will continue to expand our great programs and bird walks.

We will encourage members to become more involved in volunteer opportunities, especially with our education program Discover the Wonders of Birds (DTWOB) — now in its fourth year serving 4th-graders in our schools — and also in presenting public programs, leading bird walks, and helping promote CFAS at community events.

That’s not all. We’ll be planning more out-of-town locations, including a weeklong birding trip in the U.S., and possibly a trip to Cuba!

Dreaming is great, but doing is even better. Let’s do it!

We're proud to dedicate this issue of The Skimmer to our beloved past president, Charley Winterbauer! (See p. 10)
**OUT and ABOUT!**

Gretchen Schramm makes it easy for members and non-members alike to get outside, have fun, and learn about birds.

She plans nearly two dozen group outings a year, recruiting leaders, taking beautiful photos, and sometimes serving up scrumptious homemade goodies for early risers.

(See schedule of upcoming walks. P.3.)

Here’s a roundup of recent field trips:

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Stories and photos: Gretchen Schramm

**Wrightsville Beach, Feb. 9**

Sam Cooper led the group; his birding abilities are exceptional, his jovial demeanor a delight, and his ability to get everyone on the scope a bonus.

Sunshine and rather little wind for Wrightsville Beach. We walked the Johnny Mercer Pier, then headed to the north end of the beach and into the marsh grasses, toward the Intracoastal Waterway.

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A nice flock of White Ibis were flushed from the water by a Bald Eagle. Then, a thrilling view of a male Northern Harrier prowling the marsh in search of prey.

A thoroughly enjoyable way to start the day! Again, many thanks to Sam for making this a 42-species morning.

**Backyard Bird Tour, March 23**

Our host, Charley Winterbauer, led us on a delightful walk through his neighborhood near Porters Neck. Charley knows everyone in the area so we were allowed to wander through gardens bordering both the creek area and the Intracoastal Waterway.

What a wonderful Saturday outing. Quite a few new faces in the group — always encouraging.

**Breakfast with the Birds, March 24**

We are now celebrating four years of “Breakfast with the Birds” cruises, sponsored in cooperation with Wilmington Water Tours. This was a sold-out cruise, but another is scheduled for August 4.

We had wispy clouds overhead, a slight breeze and lots of sunshine.

We headed up the Cape Fear River in order to observe the osprey nests being rebuilt — many were destroyed during Hurricane Florence and fortunately the birds have begun to repopulate the area.

(Continued on P. 3)
Maple Hill, April 6

What started out as a "misty morning" turned into legitimate rain as we traversed very soggy swampland and pathways.

Once the rain let up, we retraced our steps; the birds began to sing and the temperature became quite pleasant. We visited the woods to view the endangered Least Trillium and Jack-in-the-Pulpit, plus many species of ferns and other native plants.

The highlight of our birding was the Louisiana Waterthrush, singing his heart out in the top of a tree. For the day, the 12 of us logged a total of 28 species. Everyone on the walk was upbeat and chipper, even with the rain and getting soaked!

Our hosts were Janine and Jim Dunn, who were so gracious, even offering the use of their garage for our luncheon setup. But when the sun emerged, we were able to enjoy a nice meal on the grassy lawn.

Airlie Gardens, March 13

Dave Weesner led a good-sized group this glorious morning near Bradley Creek. Wilmington writer Gwenyfar Rohler tagged along to gather material as Dave demonstrated "birding-by-ear" as part of a whole suite of birding skills collectively called "holistic birding."

(This was one of the walks sponsored by Wild Bird & Garden every second Wednesday of each month.)

Check out Gwenyfar's article on holistic birding in Encore Magazine.

Future Bird Walks

(See Calendar section of our website for confirmation and details.)

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<td>Aug 4</td>
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<td>Sunset Beach &amp; Twin Lakes</td>
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The weather could not have been more perfect, with very little wind and a sunny sky.

Dave Weesner led our Audubon group of 16 on a splendid Saturday at the lake, where we saw 64 species.

After six of us spent the night in Engelhard, we traveled to the Outer Banks on Sunday under cloudy skies and experienced a little more wind than the day before.

We first attempted to locate the Harlequin Duck near Bonner Bridge, but were rewarded instead with a wonderful pod of dolphins.

We added another 11 species to the list, for a total of 75 for the trip.

Among the OBX highlights: a flock of American Avocets, still sleeping in the early morning light.

A wonderful weekend trip!
Lake Mattamuskeet (Cont.)

Mattamuskeet: It's our state's largest natural freshwater lake, lying 100 miles northeast of Wilmington, near Pamlico Sound and the Outer Banks. Its shallow waters are part of a National Wildlife Refuge that shelters great numbers of over-wintering waterfowl and other birds. During our annual winter field trip to the lake and the Outer Banks, our 16 sharp-eyed birders spotted a total of 75 species.
What's 'Motus'?

Cape Fear Audubon is proud to help advance an idea that will add to knowledge of birds and their movements across the Earth’s surface. The project’s name, Motus, comes from the Latin word for motion. UNCW assistant professor and CFAS member Ray Danner works on Motus development in our area.

By Raymond M. Danner, PhD
Assistant Professor, Department of Biology and Marine Biology
University of North Carolina Wilmington

A major challenge in studying bird migration is to track the movements of individual birds. New radio transmitter technology allows us to accomplish this. First, researchers carefully attach small radio transmitters to the backs, legs, or tail feathers of birds.

Radio receivers on towers detect the presence of birds passing by. Each tower can detect birds within about six miles. Researchers and community members are building a network of these radio receiver towers, and share the data with each other. This allows us to monitor bird movement across North America, and now the rest of the world. This effort is called the Motus network, and the towers are called Motus towers. (https://motus.org).

We are building southeastern N.C.’s first two Motus towers to monitor the marshes and beaches, which are important migratory paths as well as habitat for many species of conservation concern. These towers will provide much needed coverage in our region — the nearest existing towers are on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuges along the Outer Banks and in South Carolina.

The tower will hold four directional antennae, which will point roughly in the four cardinal directions. Each antenna holds several horizontal elements, and each antenna connects to a common receiver with a coaxial cable. The receiver is housed in a weatherproof case and constantly records the signals from nearby radio tags. To retrieve the data from the receiver, we will visit the tower regularly and download to a laptop computer.

Tower Placement

The Cape Fear Audubon tower will be situated to monitor Lea-Hutaff Island, between Topsail and Figure 8 islands. This tower location will complement a second tower, which will monitor Masonboro Island. We hope to build additional towers in the Cape Fear region in order to study local and seasonal movements of flying animals around our region.

LEARN MORE ...

Video: https://motus.org/video/

UNCW webpage:

The Seahawk (UNCW newspaper)
https://theseahawk.org/22288/news/uncw-ornithologists-awarded-grant-to-study-sparrows/
Meet Connor Holland!

By Catherine Nesbit

Connor Holland is our outstanding UNCW intern this spring semester.

In this role she has now facilitated at all the learning centers of the Discover the Wonders of Birds program at local elementary schools. The fourth-graders have related so well with her, knowing she was a young scientist studying environmental sciences.

Connor graduates this May in the environmental science program. Her future plans include law school, with a focus on environmental issues.

“Through my work with the Discover the Wonders of Birds program I have really learned just how critical environmental education is at a young age,” Connor says. "As a child, I did not receive many opportunities to learn about the environment and just how important it was. However, I believe that the introduction of environmental awareness at a young age is similar to learning a language at a young age. In each case, we learn better, and we’re set up to keep those skills for life. If we give kids early exposure, there may be hope to change our future actions."

Thank you, Connor, for your valuable service. We will miss you, and wish you a future filled with success!

Birding at Home

VAGRANT at the FEEDER!

By Nancy Buckingham

Our human visitors came in threes and fours. The word was out. We had a Western Tanager at our feeders on the deck, and soon the birding diehards were coming to the house with binocs and cameras to admire the vagrant wanderer.

These long-distance migrants will sometimes get blown off course or get lost, and then end up finding the suet, seed and fruit we providers leave out for our “regular” avian visitors. Some bird biologists suggest that these “outliers” could be starting to extend their species’ range. And there is local evidence: I am aware of at least two different Western Tanagers seen this winter in the Cape Fear area. Sherry Lane’s photo here shows the Tanager and, below it, a Baltimore Oriole.

Admirers, from left:
Sherry Lane
Sam Cooper,
Ricky Davis

Next Monthly CFAS Meeting:
Monday, May 6, 7-8:30 p.m.
Halyburton Park Event Center.
Program: The Magnificent Rescue — with Ecologist and educator Andy Wood, of Coastal Plain Conservation Group. The compelling story of a relentless campaign to save the Magnificent Ramshorn, a freshwater snail now gone from the wild. (See p. 9)
Now in its fourth year, our interactive, hands-on program for New Hanover County schoolchildren continues to add new volunteers. They facilitate our seven learning stations, each designed to highlight some wondrous aspect of birds. To date, we have presented to over 4,500 students in 30 schools. DISCOVER THE WONDERS of BIRDS (DTWOB) continues to improve, thanks to insights and suggestions from our volunteer presenters. Meet some of them here!

Sara Evans, a UNCW biology student, will graduate next year. She loves not only birds, but insects and spiders too. Here she facilitates a learning center at Blair School.

Bruce Kenney enjoyed a long teaching career at elementary schools and universities. He finds DTWOB a fulfilling way to connect with students.

Diane Bonney brings a wealth of teaching experience from a career in public schools. Here, she helps fourth graders see why and how birds migrate.

Brenda Dixon is a retired public schools biology teacher. She handles many stations, but here she's helping students see how bird anatomy makes flight possible.

UNCW student "CJ" (left) and his mom, Debbie, designed our popular Migration Game and other stations too. CJ has been with our chapter since 7th grade, and has become an expert on birds, bugs, and other wildlife.

Emilee Winter, a recent UNCW environmental education grad, now volunteers for AmeriCorps on Bald Head Island. Here she's helping Blair students grasp why their own muscle design is ill-suited for flying.

Krys Ochota’s wrap up talk includes “Junior Ornithologist” certificates for all. Her corporate background brings organizational skills that are ideal for her role as CFAS volunteer coordinator.
Souththeastern North Carolina's long-revered ecologist and conservation educator Andy Wood will be our featured guest on Monday, May 6, from 7-8:30 p.m., at Halyburton Park Event Center, 4099 S. 17th St.

Wood, director of Coastal Plain Conservation Group (CPCG), will bring us current on the plight of a rare species he has worked to rescue from the brink of extinction — a snail called the Magnificent Ramshorn.

It's a fascinating story of wetland ecology, politics, resource exploitation, and a tireless campaign to find and protect a tiny denizen of what was formerly a welcoming freshwater habitat — the lower Cape Fear River.

The presentation, “Magnificent Rescue,” spans more than 25 years of stewarding one of the earth’s rarest animals, the Magnificent Ramshorn, a snail now gone from the wild, and alive today only in the sequestered care of Andy Wood.

He continues to campaign to clear the ecological log jam where downstream swamp trees drowning in saltwater meet upstream swamp trees being converted to wood pellets to burn in European electric plants.

As always, our monthly programs are open to the public free of charge.

FOR DETAILS on UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS, visit http://www.capefearaudubon.org
Thank you, CHARLEY WINTERBAUER!

We're dedicating this issue of The Skimmer to a beloved leader whose service we'll all miss.

Metaphors abound, but whether it's called passing the baton, relieving the watch, or just changing the guard, leadership turnovers are inevitable. Even so, when Charley announced his retirement as CFAS president at the end of 2018, few of us had yet grasped the enormity of the contributions he's made over these past several years.

Charley was among the small group who helped our fledging chapter get its start, around 10 years ago. He became president in 2011, succeeding Cary Paynter. Even before that, he has worked with determination — and still does — to spread the word that native plants are essential for bird survival.

More than once, he helped raise funds to bring Doug Tallamy to speak to groups in our area. Tallamy, of course, is the author of Bringing Nature Home, recognized as the seminal book on native plants for bird survival. Charley himself has been a tireless and prolific speaker on the topic, encouraging audiences to make their yards "Bird-Friendly Habitats" by retaining, restoring and planting native vegetation.

Charley was also instrumental in developing Discover the Wonders of Birds our thriving environmental education program. At the beginning of countless DTWOB sessions, fourth-graders gaped wide-eyed at Charley decked out in an outrageous costume of plastic grocery bags and preaching the mantra, "Reduce! Re-use! Recycle!"

Flying was one of Charley's early hobbies. Woodworking may have come later, but he was skilled at it. It was only natural for him to design and build an interactive DTWOB learning station, made of interlocking painted wooden blocks representing food, water and shelter — the essentials of bird survival. Children in every school we visit are still fascinated with the lessons it teaches.

Charley lived most of his younger life in San Diego. He earned a B.S. in physics from San Diego State College, and then worked as an electronics engineer. He says his interest in nature began with camping trips to the California desert, where one could see kit foxes, big horn sheep, Golden Eagles, Cactus Wrens, Roadrunners and, his favorite, the Burrowing Owl. (Actually, he is also partial to hummingbirds.)

Before coming to Wilmington, in 2000, he spent several years in the Washington, D.C. area, working as a Congressional liaison for the National Reconnaissance Office, a sibling of the CIA. As he puts it, the job involved "observing the wildlife on Capitol Hill."

Charley is still a crusader for native plants, of course, and continues to serve as co-president of our sister organization, the Southeast Coast Chapter of the N.C. Native Plant Society.

Charley as 'Plastic Man'
'Just who is JIM NESBIT?'
(He became our chapter's new president in January.)

**Jim's 'Short Version'**
Jim Nesbit loves nature and birds.
He is a retired educator, with 20 years as a teacher and 10 years a principal in elementary schools. He continues to volunteer in schools and as a docent at Cameron Art Museum.

He helped "restart" Cape Fear Audubon Society by serving on its board from 2006-10, and later helped develop and present centers for our Discover the Wonder of Birds program. He and his wife Catherine volunteered at the Audubon Camp at Hog Island Maine. He has been a pelican-banding volunteer.

He loves to travel with Catherine to national parks and to other countries.

**A Little Longer Version:**
Originally from Ohio, Jim graduated from Ohio State in 1968. During summers while at OSU he worked as a merchant seaman on the Great Lakes.

He served in the Coast Guard from 1968 -1972, flying as navigator on C-130s and repairing aircraft electronics in Alaska and N.C. While in Alaska he worked finding housing for Native students at a regional high school. It was during that experience that he decided to become a teacher.

After transferring to Elizabeth City, N.C., from Alaska, he earned a teaching certificate at Elizabeth City State University, studying while working nights for the Coast Guard.

He started teaching kindergarten in Charlotte in '72. Taught in a K-6 classroom for two years in a team with an upper elementary teacher. "It was a one-room school within the school."

After a couple more teaching jobs he returned to Charlotte to work with teachers in staff development, then as an assistant principal, and finally as a principal. He was a principal for 10 years.

Jim married Catherine in 1991, and they relocated to Wilmington, buying a home here 1997. He resigned his Charlotte duties and went back to teaching kindergarten, at Wilmington's Coddington School.

When Catherine was assigned as Program Coordinator for the UNC-Charlotte Program Abroad in London, Jim became a kept man for a year. ("Hard work," he says, "but one must answer the call.") Upon returning to Wilmington, he taught at Cape Fear Center for Inquiry for four years.

He served on the original CFAS board with Cary Paynter for four years. Jim served as vice president on the CFAS board before becoming our fearless leader in January.

Jim and Catherine developed their first interactive bird workshops for the Audubon Camp during a stay at Hog Island, in Maine. While working with the Early College Program in Brunswick, they transformed the workshops into the first Discover the Wonders of Birds (DTWOB) learning stations. This was the starting point for today's DTWOB.

For too long, Jim had to inflate the DTWOB Migration Globe with his own breath. Finally, we found him an electric air pump. Now he's president.
The Skimmer is the quarterly newsletter of the Cape Fear Audubon Society (CFAS), a local chapter of the National Audubon Society.

The MISSION of the Cape Fear Audubon Society is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems within our region, focusing on birds and other wildlife for the benefit of humanity and the earth’s diversity.

Want to volunteer? Find details on our website: capefearaudubon.org.