These Times!

By Krystyna Ochota, CFAS President

Greetings my fellow birders!

In these difficult times, we can still keep a lookout for birds and wildlife in our own surroundings. Just in the past month, early morning, I saw three Swallow-tailed Kites flying over Sturgeon Creek in Leland!

And the acrobatic Blue-gray Gnatcatcher buzzes overhead in our oak trees, looking for insects. Bluebirds are feeding their young in a nearby nest, and of course hummingbirds have been back for several weeks.

And plenty of insects are to be found in trees and in the lawn, so even the Mockingbird and the Brown Thrashers are getting along.

But, there are more ways to satisfy your bird-curiosity. Check out the bald eagle nest near Decorah, Iowa, at a site called "Explore.org." https://explore.org/livecams/currently-live/decorah-eagles

Or watch the exotic birds on the same site at Cornell Lab’s "Panama Fruit feeder" -- https://explore.org/livecams/currently-live/panama-fruit-feeder. And turn up the sound!

For more cameras, click on the “All Cams Live Now” link (upper left of the site) and you’ll see all currently live cameras around the U.S. (and world) for everything from birds, wildlife, domestic animal cams, and even the Aurora Borealis in Canada (quite a show the other night!)

Welcome to Virtual Reality!

Happy Birding,

Krys

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Happy Birding,

Krys
Backyard Birding
Is Having Its Moment
(So is Virtual Birding)

by Nancy Buckingham

As we're all staying mostly at home these days, there's plenty of time to enjoy the birds right outside our windows, in our yards, on our decks and around our neighborhoods.

National media outlets have even broadly suggested that people who have never birded before take it up as a pastime during this period of self-seclusion.

Not that it's ever a good time for a pandemic, but at least this is occurring during spring migration, when the diversity of birds around us is greater.

Here are a few Coronavirus updates for CFAS birders:

Audubon North Carolina Activity Status

Audubon NC has cancelled or postponed all of its events through June 30. Stewardship and monitoring activities are prohibited when local, state or federal stay-at-home orders are in place. That includes the Wrightsville Beach Bird Steward program. All Audubon centers (such as the Pine Island Sanctuary) are closed through June 30. Audubon summer camps are cancelled or have been transformed into virtual ones.

All non-essential travel for Audubon NC employees is banned through June 30.

Try Moving Online

Many online opportunities now exist for keeping up your birding chops. Here are a few:

I Saw a Bird: Spring Migration Show
Catch it each Wednesday at 7 p.m. on Audubon's website:
https://www.audubon.org/events/i-saw-bird-audubons-spring-migration-show-episode-5

Audubon for Kids
This is great if you are a parent with children at home or a grandparent with "access" to your grandchildren.
https://www.audubon.org/get-outside/activities/audubon-for-kids

Nate Swick's American Birding Association Podcast
Nate was Cape Fear Audubon's most recent presenter (at our March 9 meeting). His every-other-Thursday podcast reports news and happenings, recent rarities, guests from around the birding world, and features of interest to every birder.
https://blog.aba.org/author/nate-swick

How to Use the eBird App
In lieu of our cancelled May 4 program on this topic (with Holly Ferreira), you may want to try these YouTube videos for help in getting started.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-0xAJjxakw
and
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bfYd6D05TQ

Got an artistic bent? Now is a great time to try drawing birds. David Sibley is giving instructions on YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQX3BJY2WfM
Going Zoom:

CFAS Board Meets Online

The CFAS board held its first online meeting on Friday, April 10. In this screenshot, UNCW Seahawks Chapter President Sara Meissner has the "floor," with other board members listening in windows above.

Window Decals:

Get Your Sticker!

These 3.25- by 5-inch stickers tell the world you're a Cape Fear Audubon supporter. Want one? We'll mail yours, just for the asking. (Email us with your request, and include your postal address. Use the ContactUs link on the website.)

Hot off the Press!

We recently received our long-planned promo cards (front and back shown above). Once things "open up" again, we'll be able to hand them out to the public at community events (such as the Native Plant Festival or Fire in the Pines.)

These colorful 4- by 11-inch takeaways are designed to help us attract new members, and highlight the ways our chapter works to help birds. Photos contributed by Gretchen Schramm, John Sutton and others livened the layout. The project was completed by Alpha Graphics of Wilmington.

He's now a BLOGGER!

Have you seen the fun new blog, "Carolina Bird Gardens and More"? It's the latest and greatest from CJ Downey. A CFAS member since age nine, CJ's now a UNCW environmental sciences student.

Anyone who's been with him on a nature outing has seen a young man with astonishing knowledge of the natural world. He knows not just birds, but plants, insects, spiders and more. His curiosity is boundless, and (if you will pardon the term) infectious.

You'll see it all in the blog. Check it out!

https://carolinabirdgarden.blogspot.com/
Gardening? Go NATIVE!

Working in the yard is usually a Covid-safe activity, with the bonus of being around birds!

When you are planning and planting, remember that native plants are best for birds. They harbor the caterpillars and other foods birds need to survive.

Where can you get native plants?

Catherine Nesbit and Charlie Winterbauer suggest the following places where you can purchase natives. We recommend calling ahead if you are looking for something in particular.

- **Going Native Gardens***
  Joyce Huguelet and Mindy Nathanson

- **Tinga Nursery** – 910-762-1975, Castle Hayne (carries some natives)
  http://www.tinganursery.com

- **Pender Pines Nursery, Hampstead**
  910-270-2706 (carries some natives)
  http://www.penderpines.com

- **Shelton Herb Farm***, Leland – 910-253-5964
  (some natives, Covid Hours 10.m. -2 p.m.)
  http://www.sheltonherbfarm.com

- **Lloyd’s Nursery, Wilmington** – 910-686-4984
  https://www.lloydsolandscapenc.com/

- **Grizz’s Nursery**, Leland – 910-547-4934

*Tidal Creek Food Coop*, Wilmington
910-799-2667 (both Going Native Gardens and Shelton Herb Farm have been bringing plants to Tidal Creek. Open daily 8 a.m.-9 p.m.
https://www.tidalcreek.coop/

Now Open

Using Safe, No-contact Curbside Service

- Michelle Frazier

Exciting news!
Keeping the health of the community and the welfare of our local birds in mind, both Wild Bird and Garden locations are now offering a limited schedule of curbside service. All of our favorite bird-friendly supplies, optics, and nature-lover gifts are available again and, if you prefer to wait for the return of joyful browsing, you can still support the store now with the purchase of gift certificates in any amount.

Here’s how the curbside service works: call ahead and place your order, and staff will process your purchase via phone. (They’ll be happy to answer questions and make recommendations too!) Give another call when you’re outside the store, and they’ll be out to you ASAP with your purchase and receipt. Couldn’t be easier or, in these times, safer!

**Southport Schedule:**
Monday, Friday, Saturday 10:00 - 2:00

**For Southport service call:**
910 457-9453

**Wilmington Schedule:**
Monday through Saturday 10:00 - 2:00

**For Wilmington service call:**
910 343-6001

The store will be following the guidance of public health and government officials and will continue to expand their schedule accordingly, so keep an eye on their website for updated schedules:

www.wildbirdgardeninc.com

Note: Cape Fear Audubon partners frequently with Wild Bird and Garden in efforts that promote birds, bird survival, and birding. We are pleased to see them back in operation in support of birds during the coronavirus restrictions.
Pausing, Reflecting

By Gretchen Schramm
(Photos by Gretchen)

This is a time to be still.
Observe.
A time to reflect.
Absorb.
Enjoying the peace of being alone, yet surrounded by a myriad of inspiring natural gifts to appreciate and cherish.

Cancelling Audubon’s bird walks was not, in the long run, a hard decision to make. It meant saving lives.

Alas, our walks must be cancelled indefinitely — until I am certain no one is at risk for the sake of gathering, sharing, socializing.

And, after that, I must pass the baton to someone else. Yes, I have loved organizing these events over the years, congregating with wonderful birders and sharing the enthusiasm we all have for our feathered friends. Now is a different time.

I am still looking for a volunteer to replace me in my duties, as this is my last year organizing these monthly field trips for CFAS. I assume all leaders from this year would be more than willing to reschedule for 2021, so next year should be a breeze for the new coordinator!

I am always honored when my garden, seen from overhead, becomes a sanctuary, tempting feathered guests to drop in for a visit.

The moments I have taken just sitting outside, for a generous amount of time, have produced some surprising birds who alight here for water, food, or a much needed rest during their migratory journey.

Northern Parula, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Belted Kingfisher, Cooper’s and Red-shouldered Hawks, Summer Tanager (after spying my bee hive!), Baltimore Oriole (who comes back year after year to over-winter here) … and many more visitors I would have missed had I not been outside and still.

There are many parks and open spaces where I believe it is safe to go and bird. A word of caution: The mild winter and spring seems to have brought out snakes in abundance. I swear I would not be able to spot a copperhead until I stepped on it. Their camouflage is so amazing! But don’t kill snakes; just avoid them.

Many CFAS Facebook fans are now utilizing our page to record and share bird sightings, experiences, and general thoughts during this difficult time. Very encouraging!
Tidal bores are common in rivers that empty into the Bay of Fundy of Nova Scotia, which has the highest tides in the world. As the tide comes quickly in and proceeds up rivers and streams that empty into the bay, the water flow reverses direction abruptly and a wave called a tidal bore can be seen advancing up the river or stream. The time of the tidal bore is predictable, and some cities and towns publish predicted tidal bore times for their vicinity.

While North Carolina does not have tides that come in so rapidly, I recently experienced a phenomenon analogous to a tidal bore while birding on Oak Island in Brunswick County.

Low tide occurred at about 11:30 AM and I arrived at a parking lot on the southwest end of Oak Island at 12:30, hoping to do some birding via kayak.

I dragged the kayak to the edge of the water — an inlet to the Lockwood Folly River, which flows between Oak Island and Holden Beach. I then had second thoughts. The wind was blowing at 10 to 20 mph and seemed to want to take me and my kayak out to sea. I sat down and analyzed the situation.

Even though the water seemed to be flowing rapidly toward the ocean, I knew the tide was actually coming in. So while the wind might blow the kayak seaward, I felt I could place the kayak paddle deep enough in the water so that the tide would give my paddle a push in the right direction. And the wind was blowing parallel to the inlet’s shore, so if I found I could not overcome the wind with the help of the tide, then I could beach the kayak, swallow my pride, and drag the boat back to where I launched.

Thus confident that the danger was minimal, I launched the kayak into the wind. Only if I could proceed upstream and thus away from the ocean would I turn the kayak around and head toward where the birds were hanging out on sandbars exposed by low tide. That is when I met the tidal bore!

The wind was blowing the surface of the water toward the ocean at perhaps 10 miles per hour, but at few feet deep the tide was moving the water *inland* at perhaps five miles per hour. The net result were tidal-bore-like waves that were one to two feet high. Unlike the tidal bores caused by the Bay of Fundy tides, these waves did not advance upstream but were relatively stationary in relation to the shore.

Spray from the waves got me wet, but the waves themselves did not enter the kayak and threaten to swamp me. I have never done white-water kayaking, but this gave me a taste of what it was like. It was fun! By paddling hard I was able to proceed upstream, so I was sure I could turn around, head toward the birds, and finally return to port.

I angled away from the waves, and shortly exited from the turbulence. About 100 feet from shore the tidal-bore waves were gone, and I commenced birding. When you are kayaking, you are almost at eye-level with birds that are on sandbars or on the shore. It is a great perspective. And shore birds are much less shy than if you were walking toward them. My experience has been that I can get about three times closer to a shorebird via kayak than on foot. It is a great way to take bird photos. Unfortunately on this trip I did not have a camera as I had been worried about swamping.

Not only was it a great day for kayaking, it was a great day for birding. Normally this area has lots of gulls, terns, pelicans, and sandpipers. This trip I encountered them but also 10 Ruddy Turnstones, 12 American Avocets, and 50 Black Skimmers.

If you want to search out tidal-bore-like waves, look for incoming tide, outgoing wind, and a relatively narrow inlet to the sea. Happy hunting!
A Swallow-tailed kite. (Photo by John Ennis). Krys Ochota reports sighting several of these beauties over Leland's Sturgeon Creek several times this spring.

**The Skimmer** is the quarterly newsletter of the [Cape Fear Audubon Society](https://www.capefearaudubon.org) (CFAS), a regional 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.

**President:** Krystyna Ochota  
**Vice President:** Jim Nesbit  
**Secretary:** Morgan Freese  
**Treasurer:** Regina Podolskis

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- Nancy Buckingham (1, 6)  
- Dan Essigmann (1)  
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- Catherine Nesbit (3)  
- Jim Nesbit (2)  
- Regina Podolskis (5)  
- Robert Roush (1)  
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- UNCW Seahawks Chapter

**Working Committees:**

1. - Communications  
2. - Conservation  
3. - Education  
4. - Field Trips  
5. - Membership  
6. - Program Planning

**Webmaster:** Dan Essigmann  
**Skimmer Editor:** Robert Roush

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES!**

Interested in serving on our board, or one of our working committees? We're currently in need of a new Field Trip Coordinator. Contact us to find out how you can …

**MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR BIRDS!**

**WEBSITE:** [https://www.capefearaudubon.org](https://www.capefearaudubon.org)