



The Bulletin

February 2026
Volume 53, Number 6



Barred Owl in Eno River State Park, February 2026, photo courtesy of [Kelly Mieszkalski](#)

Winter Chills

When they said we were to have storms, I didn't know they really meant it. See, I have lived in North Carolina for a long time and more often than not, when the weather folks say we are to have snowmageddon, we get a light dusting. This time,

they got it right (mostly). We endured significant snow, significant ice, and significant COLD. What they didn't say was, there will be ducks... and geese!

With the winter weather the triangle has seen ducks with red heads, ducks with canvas backs, ducks with long tails, geese with white fronts, and more. All these cold weather goodies have been dropped in our laps by our unusual weather. I think I would have taken that bargain especially, if it had been offered with a side of my power staying on!

I hope you all have enjoyed the snow and the rare bird visits. I am sorry we had to cancel our January meeting, but look forward to seeing you all this month when we hear from Jennifer Aiton.

I hope to see you soon at our meeting or at one of our field trips.

Cheers,
Bo Howes



February Program: *Jennifer Aiton — My Backyard Birding Journey: How to Maximize Your Birding Joy*

When: Monday, February 23, 2026 at 7:15pm (light refreshments served at 7:15, program to start at 7:30)

Where: [Binkley Baptist Church, 1712 Willow Drive, Chapel Hill, NC 27514](#) or on [Zoom](#).

RSVP: Let us know you are coming by responding to our [Facebook event](#). To attend by Zoom, register [here](#).

Jennifer will talk about how she evolved from a casual backyard birder to filling her front and backyard with feeders and native plants. She will talk about what she has learned from feeding birds and how you can elevate your backyard birding experience.

Jennifer is the Co-Manager of Wild Birds Unlimited Chapel Hill. She has been a backyard birder for 20 years. When she isn't at work spreading bird joy, she can be found photographing all the birds visiting her feeders at her home.

She recently exhibited her photographs at the Coldwell Banker in April and May 2025 for the Hillsborough Art Walk.

See below for some of her wonderful photos!







CHBC Outer Banks Trip

(1/16-1/19/26)

By Loren Hintz

See <https://ebird.org/tripreport/463905> for the 4 day Trip Report. All photos courtesy of Loren Hintz.

Friday Afternoon 1/16/26, nineteen of us rendezvoused at the Holiday Inn Express in Plymouth. After checking in early, our leader **Bruce Young** consolidated us into 5 cars and headed to **Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge**. We caravanned to Pat's Rd off of NC 45 and drove north to Pungo Lake. Driving past grazing Tundra Swans, Bruce stopped at a dead tree he checked out earlier. An **Eastern Screech Owl** was waiting for us and

sometimes opened its eyes. Blackbirds and Northern Harriers were along the road. We reached some flooded wetlands (the lake was hidden) and saw Pipets and Snipe close by, a large flock of Sandhill Cranes and lots of Tundra Swans and a single **blue morph Snow Goose**. We returned to the entrance fields for the sunset extravaganza. Thousands of **Tundra Swans** followed by even more Snow Geese. Lots of cameras clicking and die-hard birders scanning hundreds of bills for Ross's Goose. After a quick return we celebrated at downtown **Garden Spot Café**.



Eastern Screech Owl

Saturday 1/17 After an early morning head count, our 10 vehicles headed to **Lake Phelps at Pettigrew State Park**. Distant views of swans and gulls and then a board walk through a cypress swamp. Among the restored slave housing of Somerset Place Historical Site (good books and information can be found at the closed visitor center) we recorded a number of woodland and field birds including **Eastern Meadowlark and Eastern Phoebe**. We caravanned again to **Mattamuskeet and Alligator National Wildlife Refuges**. Lake Mattamuskeet did not have as many ducks as in the past but we saw a number of species plus great views of an **Anhinga, Forester's Tern and Common Mudhed/Gallinule**. While some ate their picnic lunch, others did a short tour of **Mattamuskeet Lodge** which is being renovated. We missed the bears and wolves at Alligator but did see more waterfowl and **Northern Harriers** and a glorious sunset. While waiting for Short Eared Owls (no luck), Byron Perry focused my scope on **Jupiter** and many saw its moons for the first time. At **La Fogata Mexican Restaurant** we discussed Sunday's weather and planned for rain. Most stayed at Nags Head Holiday Inn Express but three of us stayed at the cheaper Comfort Inn near Jennette's Pier.



CHBC Birding Group at Lake Phelps

Sunday 1/18 We again formed carpools and caravaned south in the rain to **Oregon Inlet**. Bruce organized us under the Bonner Bridge. We shared extra warm clothing and scoped a few not-so-common **Common Eiders** plus **Semi-palmated Plovers**. After ID'ing gulls and loons and pelicans we headed to **Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge**. With the visitor center providing shelter from the rain, we saw **Gannets, White Pelicans and Ducks**. Driving back north on NC 12 we stopped at **Bodie Island Lighthouse** and used the board walk tower for shelter. Someone scoped an **Iceland Gull** and everyone had rainy views of it. A **Greater Yellowlegs** and a few Avocets were visible plus a variety of ducks (**24 species of ducks, geese and swans were seen on the trip.**) We retreated to our hotel rooms and ventured to the **Board Walk of Duck**. The rain lessened and we had great views of **White Ibises, Bonaparte Gulls** and a lone **Black headed Gull**. An **Orange-crowned Warbler** made an appearance near a picnic shelter. Cold, wind and rain increase but a small group decided to brave **Jannette's Pier in Nag's Head**. The end was "closed" due to construction, but Margaret asked for permission so we could huddle against the last shelter and see Dolphins, **Red-throated Loons, Gannets and some Royal Terns**. We warmed to great meals of seafood at **Blue Moon Beach Grill**.



White Ibis

Monday Jan. 19 was sunny with blue skies. Board walks and steps were slippery with frozen rain. Bruce took us back to some of yesterday's spots, but this time with perfect lighting for photographs. We hiked the Oregon Inlet dunes and found a **Tri-colored Heron** in a tiny pond. At a new **NC12** stop at "the Cut" near the North Pond blind we had good views of **Short-billed Dowitchers and American Avocets**. We ended at Janette's Pier and saw one **Razorbill, Black Scoters and Boat tailed Grackles**. Surfers, fishermen and dolphins were active. The trip was a success. Attenders donated money to Chapel Hill Bird Club Scholarship fund. Lots of new friendships were

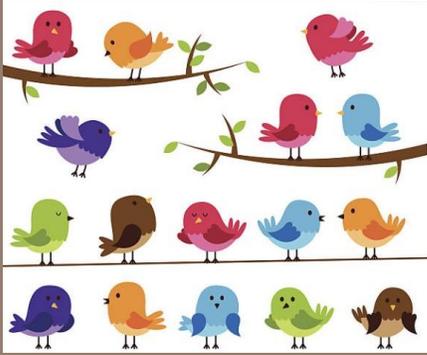
formed and life birds for many. The group saw over 112 species and visited the best birding spots between Plymouth and Hatteras Island.



Short-billed Dowitchers



American Avocets & Tundra Swans



Membership Renewal

If you haven't done so already, please renew your membership to the Chapel Hill Bird Club for calendar year 2026. As a reminder, dues are \$25 per calendar year for individuals and families (and you can pay for two years at a time), and just \$10 for students. Please visit our [membership web page](#) for information about paying your dues by Paypal or check.

If you have a question about the status of your membership, contact [Do Hodgson](#) (Treasurer, CHBC).



2026 CHBC Outer Banks Trip, Oregon Inlet, photo courtesy of Loren Hintz

Field Trips

We have bimonthly field trips from September through April, except during bird count seasons. Check our [bird walk schedule](#) for dates and times.

The purpose of the Chapel Hill Bird Club is to provide engagement and educational opportunities for area birders of all experience levels. We offer interesting educational programs, local birding field trips, Christmas and spring bird counts, and connection to other members via a Facebook group. Members have access to like-minded people including experts who can answer your questions. Whether you watch birds in your yard or travel to the ends of the earth to chase rarities, our club offers something for you. We are a friendly group and welcome all to join us, especially new birders! Our members are mostly from the Research Triangle area of North Carolina: Chapel Hill, Durham, Raleigh, Cary, Pittsboro, and surrounding towns.

