



Lower Neuse Bird Club

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Club Officers

President

Bob Gould
288-4615

Vice President

Who will it be?

Secretary

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Treasurer

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Field Trips

Al Gamache
675-8376

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876-1620

Refreshments

Captain

Susan McCrocklin
288-5043

March Program: Presentation by the Bogue Inlet Shorebird Stewards

Tuesday, March 7, 2017 at 6:30 pm

Meetings are held at Garber United Methodist Church, Country Club Road, New Bern, Room 123 of the Ministry Center, across the street from the main church. Parking and entrance are at the rear of the building.

Join us for refreshments & conversation for the first half hour. Business meeting begins at 7 pm, followed by this month's program topic.

Refreshments for this meeting are being provided by Diane Midness and the Pamlico Birders.

Lower Neuse Bird Club

Minutes from February 2017

By Mike Brooks

President Bob Gould welcomed over 20 members to the meeting and recognized new members and guests. He explained the plan for the field trip to Lake Mattamuskeet on February 18th. Planning for the mountain trip continues with a likely departure date of May 8th.

In Show and Tell, Carol Reigle has had a Red-breasted Nuthatch in her yard nearly all winter. Pauline Sterin has a Brown Creeper as a regular visitor to her home. Chris Root reported that swans have been leaving the area - possibly an indicator of an early migration. Al Gamache reported seeing some Yellow-breasted Chats at the New Bern Quarry and a Fox Sparrow near the quarry. Chris Root reminded the club that the spring meeting of the Carolina Bird Club (CBC) will be April 28-29 in Winston-Salem. Visit the CBC web site for registration and planned events.

Lower Neuse Bird Club

Minutes from February 2017

By Mike Brooks

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The program for this meeting was a presentation about the water quality monitoring program at Lake Mattamuskeet. Bob introduced the guest speaker, Dr. Michelle Moorman, who is the refuge biologist for Lake Mattamuskeet, Swan Quarter, and the Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuges (NWR). Created in 1934, the 50,000-acre refuge protects and conserves migratory birds and other wildlife resources by protecting the wetlands. Situated in the Atlantic Flyway, Lake Mattamuskeet is an important source of food for wintering waterfowl such as the Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintails, swans, and geese. Through water quality monitoring, biologists know that the lake has become more eutrophic since 1980. Specifically, an abundant accumulation of nutrients that support a dense growth of algae, such as phytoplankton, is depleting the shallow lake of its oxygen. This has resulted in a steady decline of the submerged aquatic vegetation needed to sustain the wintering waterfowl population. Michelle explained that Lake Mattamuskeet NWR has a memorandum of understanding with the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission to share resources for continued studies of water quality, and a watershed plan will be needed to improve water quality and the aquatic vegetation.

Michelle also provided some interesting historical facts about the lake. The lake spans 40,000 acres, but was once three times larger than it is today. In the early 20th century, private investment companies partnered with the public Mattamuskeet Drainage District to build four canals and the world's largest capacity pump plant to drain Lake



Mattamuskeet for residential, commercial, and agricultural development. The lake was drained three times in 1916, 1920, and 1926. Realization eventually set in that the lake could not remain drained because its elevation is below sea level. The drainage project ended when one of the private owners sold the lake property to the federal government in 1934 to create a refuge for migratory waterfowl.

This was an excellent and very informative program that was greatly appreciated by all who attended this meeting.

First Saturday Field Trips

- **March 11** **North River Preserve with John Fussel**

This month's field trip is on the 2nd Saturday. We will leave the BridgePoint Hotel PROMPTLY at 7am. For those not coming from New Bern, we will meet you at Crossroads Store/Gas in Otway (corner of Rt 70 & Harkers Island Rd). Plan to leave there at 8am. It's only a few minutes to the gate. We need to enter the gate as a group but you may leave individually.

- April 1 Croatan
- May 13 Camp Brinson (*date is tentative*)
- June 3 North River Preserve

Most trips end by noon and do not require much walking. Remember to bring your binoculars, scopes, field guides, insect repellent, rain gear, snacks and water.

Unless otherwise announced, all trips depart from the parking lot of the BridgePointe Hotel at 7 am sharp. Carpools can be arranged as we meet up. The planned destination may be changed at the last minute if a special sighting or different location gives us a better opportunity for birding. Information will be updated with each newsletter.



NC Waterbird Management Committee Meeting
March 2-3, 2017
Hammocks Beach State Park
Details in the January Newsletter

Carolina Bird Club Spring Meeting
April 28-29, 2017
Winston-Salem, NC

LNBC Membership Dues

Lower Neuse Bird Club annual membership dues are \$15 per person and cover the **program year from September 2016 through May 2017**. Dues may be paid at a monthly meeting, or you may send them directly to: Christine Root, LNBC Treasurer, 651 Quail Road, Merritt, NC 28556. Checks should be made payable to LNBC.

Members who have not paid their dues have been removed from the distribution list* for the Newsletter & other information.

**Please be sure to notify Carol Oldham, Newsletter Editor, of any changes to your email or other contact information.*



Lower Neuse Bird Club

3rd Saturday Bird Walk: Lake Mattamuskeet February 18, 2017

By Al Gamache



LISTING: “life list,” “year list,” “state list,” something I began doing almost immediately upon purchasing my first Birding Field Guide. (On the other hand, I don’t keep a “yard list,” not enough diversification of habitat). Although I sure was pleased to get that Gray-cheeked Thrush...right in my backyard, 11 October 2016, initially identified by chip notes (a quickly whistled ‘swear’) and then fantastic close-up views. Oh yes!

Anyway, way back, and I do mean way back in the day, I purchased my very first Birding Field Guide (there’s a story behind that as well) and took it home that evening to inspect. As I began flipping through the pages I was absolutely overwhelmed by the sheer plethora of illustrations. I felt swamped. So I quickly turned to the book’s introduction (far less overwhelming). There I found the author saying to me that if I were to pursue this thing called bird watching I would need to make two additional purchases, i.e. binoculars like a pair of 7x35’s, and a bound journal into which I would record the names of each species of bird as I was able to find and identify them. He also recommended a spotting scope, which I eventually got but that was way down the road.

Thusly, within a few days, I had made my way over to my favorite discount gas station and purchased a \$15.00 pair of binoculars, clearly not an elite instrument, but they worked. That is until I tipped a canoe over while running some rapids up in Wisconsin, and the binoculars filled with water. Back home, I completely disassembled the apparatus, dried all the parts, but was never able to reassemble the whole thing to the point where they worked any more.

As to the second purchase, I returned to the same bookstore where I had gotten my field guide and bought a bound journal. At the end of that first year I had proudly identified and entered 41 species into that journal, I was a “lister” from the get go. I still have the journal although it’s completely falling apart.



I like to keep track of birds. So at the end of this past January, as I was departing from the CBC Winter Meeting held at Nags Head (I had gotten all sorts of ducks out there, including some goodies as in Long-tailed Duck, and Common Eider) but I was still short on some ducks like White-winged Scoter, Eurasian Wigeon and Blue-winged Teal.

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3rd Saturday Bird Walk: Lake Mattamuskeet

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My plan was now to stop at Lake Landing on the way back home and look for the well reported Eurasian Wigeon (that was successful) and then onto Wildlife Drive to look for Blue-winged Teal (that was not successful). My target-bird for the upcoming Mattamuskeet trip was now, of course, the B.W. Teal.

Our first stop was at Gum Swamp Road for a possible Brewer's Blackbird (unsuccessful). Second stop was at Lake Landing, hoping to re-find the Eurasian Wigeon. Our small group had left our vehicles armed with tripods and all, sauntered over the flat bridge and gathered at the edge of the first pond. I spread the legs of my tripod, and unzipped the cover of my scope, brought my eyeball up to the ocular lens and twisted the focus knob, and what to my wondering eye should appear but a beautiful male B.W. Teal! And I hadn't even begun to scan. I had the bird. I HAD THE BIRD! I firmly and clearly announce to the assembled group I GOT THE BIRD!

Bob Gould turned to me and said, "I suppose you're ready to pack up and go home now?" "Sort of," I replied. But we continued birding anyway. Interestingly enough, that was the one and only B.W. Teal I was able to find that day. Here's a list of those remaining birds:

Pied-billed Grebe	Turkey Vulture	Carolina Chickadee
Brown Pelican	No. Harrier	Carolina Wren
D.C. Cormorant	Am. Kestrel	Marsh Wren
Great Blue Heron	Buteo	Winter Wren
Great Egret	Bald Eagle	E. Bluebird
Snowy Egret	Am. Coot	Am. Robin
Little Blue Heron	Killdeer	No. Mockingbird
Cattle Egret	Ring-billed Gull	Euro. Starling
White Ibis	Gt. Black-backed Gull	Pine Warbler
Tundra Swan	Rock Pigeon	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Canada Goose	Mourning Dove	Savannah Sparrow
Green-winged Teal	Belted Kingfisher	Song Sparrow
Am. Black Duck	Red-bellied Woodpecker	No. Cardinal
Mallard	Downy	R.W. Blackbird
No. Pintail	No. Flicker	E. Meadowlark
Gadwall	Pileated Woodpecker	Common Grackle
Am. Wigeon	E. Phoebe	Eng. House Sparrow
R.N. Duck	Am. Crow	
Hooded Merganser	Fish Crow	
Ruddy Duck		
No. Shoveler		
Wilson's Snipe		



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Blue-winged Teal

Pairs and small groups of this tiny dabbling duck inhabit shallow ponds and wetlands across much of North America. Blue-winged Teal are long distance migrants, with some birds heading all the way to South America for the winter. Therefore, they take off early on spring and fall migration, leaving their breeding grounds in the United States and Canada well before other species in the fall.

*Image & text from
allaboutbirds.org*

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3rd Saturday Bird Walk: Lake Mattamuskeet February 18, 2017

By Al Gamache

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And now, to finish on a sour note. Prior to our visit to Lake Mattamuskeet on the 18th of February, Dr. Michelle Moorman, the Refuge Biologist at Mattamuskeet, was our guest speaker at our LNBC Meeting on the 7th of February. Basically, she told us that Lake Mattamuskeet has become so polluted that it is now a dead zone. So polluted with nitrates and phosphorus, presumably from farm run off, that Lake Mattamuskeet has become hypoxic (low oxygen); that even the SAV (Submerged Aquatic Vegetation), which is exactly the vegetation that Swans and Ducks feed on, is no longer able to grow. The lake has become so clouded with phytoplankton blooms that sunlight cannot penetrate to the bottom of this extremely shallow lake, such that this Submerged Aquatic Vegetation can not conduct photosynthesis. The only remaining living section of Lake Mattamuskeet over the last several years has been the very south-east edge of the lake, where one could still find masses of Tundra Swan and Snow Geese. Now that's gone.

One can still find swarms of Swan and Duck, but only in those impoundment ponds that are found ever so narrowly separated from the Lake. The lake itself is a dead zone. And even if those impoundment ponds are a bit separated from the lake itself, there are occasional exchanges of the water. One does wonder.

I looked up dead zones on the internet and found a world map. Our east coast and the gulf coast look diseased. The west coast looks considerably more healthy. But the overall impression looks quite dreadful. Not good!

