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## Have You Tried Counting Birds?



Male Cardinal by Ken Thomas

Saturday, May 3, is our annual spring bird count. We count species and numbers within a 15-mile circle, mostly by car, with brief stops and short walks. If you are a novice and want to learn more, joining a count group is a great way to do so. If you know your birds and would like a territory assigned to you, we have one waiting. We do need new people in order to cover our area. This count is run by the Piedmont Bird Club. Call or e-mail Elizabeth Link to join in the fun.

273-4672 or [linkh@bellsouth.net](mailto:linkh@bellsouth.net).

## Program: “What’s New with Conservation Projects in the Piedmont?”

Thursday, May 8, 7 p.m.

Kathleen Clay Edwards Family Library

Speaker: Ken Bridle

Ken Bridle, Stewardship Director for the Piedmont Land Conservancy, will discuss the status of a number of conservation projects. Topics will include parks on the Haw, Mayo and Dan rivers, greenways, the Mountains to Sea Trail, local conservation projects and farmland preservation.

Bridle stresses that general public support for these types of projects has sometimes been weak, making it difficult to obtain the involvement of local governments and agencies. However, advocacy networks and working partnerships are evolving and beginning to have a record of success in generating the political and financial backing to achieving worthy conservation goals. ❁

*Hurry, Hurry, Hurry!*

Registration Deadline for  
ANC Annual Meeting is April 15.

Time is short, but if you act now, you can still make the deadline for registration for the ANC Annual Meeting being held on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, & June 1<sup>st</sup> at Haw River State Park. Online forms are available at <http://www.tgpearsonaudubon.org/ANCflyer.FINAL.1-23-lo-rez.pdf>

## Chimney Swift Tower Funded By TGPAS

By Dennis Burnette

This coming summer, Chimney Swifts could have another nesting site option, thanks to the T. Gilbert Pearson Audubon Society Chapter.

Chimney Swifts (*Chaetura pelagica*) are those sausage-shaped birds with long swept-back wings that swoop around over fields and suburban lots taking insects during the warm months. If you listen closely, you can hear their distant high-pitched twittering calls. They spend all day in the air, even diving down to ponds to drink water or bathe while on the wing!

As interesting as they are in the daytime, their nightly roosting behavior is even more remarkable.

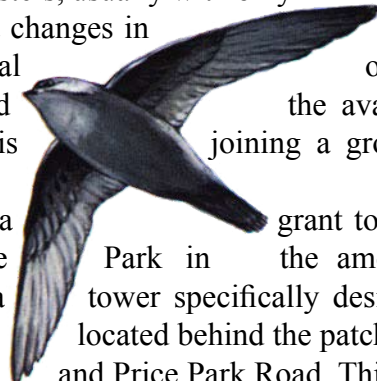
In the days before humans built chimneys, these small birds (just a little over 5 inches in length) spent their nights in hollow trees. Cutting of forests and removal of nesting trees from farms and yards reduced the number of potential nesting and roosting sites as human settlements grew. The birds adapted, moving to the chimneys that humans had constructed as we were removing the old hollow trees. Sometimes flocks in the thousands of birds would swarm down large "smokestacks" that were not in use in the summer. Even today congregations of hundreds of Chimney Swifts can be seen descending into chimneys at dusk, looking like smoke in reverse.



Now Chimney Swifts are declining in numbers throughout their range in eastern North America. Although they are gregarious at their roosts, they are solitary nesters, usually with only one nest per site. Some experts believe that changes in modern chimney design and the removal or capping of old chimneys have decreased the available nest sites. Our Audubon chapter is joining a growing movement to provide an alternative.

TGPAS has made a grant to the Meadowlark Sanctuary project at Price Park in the amount of \$300 to fund the construction of a tower specifically designed for nesting Chimney Swifts. It will be located behind the patch of trees near the intersection of Hobbs Road and Price Park Road. This site was chosen to be inconspicuous in an effort to reduce the possibility of vandalism. To see an example of the construction of a Chimney Swift tower, go to the following Web site: <<http://www.concentric.net/%7edwa/page55.html>>

The Meadowlark Sanctuary project is a new effort being made by representatives of several organizations, including TGPAS, to improve wildlife habitat in the large grassy meadow along New Garden Road between Jefferson Elementary School and Hobbs Road. It will involve the reintroduction of native grasses and flowering plants that once were common in Piedmont prairies, as well as the removal of invasive non-native plant species. The project's name comes from Eastern Meadowlarks, another species in rapid decline, which have been found on the site. The



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Chimney Swift tower will be just north of our chapter’s wet meadow project. Chapter members will have several opportunities to be involved with the Chimney Swift tower as well as habitat restoration and maintenance. We will need volunteers to monitor nesting success in the tower.

In addition, we are interested in donations of almost any native plant species (both plants and seeds) that are suitable for grassland, woodland edge, or wet meadow habitats. High priority is being given to native plant species that have both value for wildlife and visual appeal to humans. As an example, Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepius tuberosa*) and Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepius incarnata*) occupy different niches but provide nectar for insects, are hosts for Monarch butterflies, produce seeds for wildlife, and are visually attractive. These plants will not only provide food and shelter to wildlife, they will support the insects that are essential to the survival of Chimney Swifts.



For more information about the Chimney Swift tower or the Meadowlark Sanctuary project, or to make plant donations or volunteer to help, contact Dennis Burnette, [deburnette@triad.rr.com](mailto:deburnette@triad.rr.com), 299-4342. ❀

### *Do You Know...?*

- Chimney Swifts winter in the Amazon Basin of Peru. They arrive in the continental United States in late March and are gone by early November.
- Chimney Swifts eat nearly one third of their own weight in flying insect pests such as mosquitoes, biting flies and termites every day.
- Today, just like Purple Martins, Chimney Swifts rely almost entirely on man-made structures for nest sites.
- If you have a masonry or clay flue-tile chimney, you can provide a nest site for these insect-eaters by keeping the top open and the damper closed from March through October.

– Driftwood Wildlife Association, Austin, TX

## Field Trip to Hanging Rock

Saturday, May 17



Hanging Rock by Jacalyn Ender

We will be traveling to see beautiful Hanging Rock State Park on May 17. To carpool, meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Friendly Center Parking lot on the Sears side or meet at the Visitor’s Center at the park at about 10:30 a.m. if you prefer to join us there.

There are many trails to choose from. The nature trail winds less than a mile past the interesting bath-house built by the CCC. There are also several waterfalls within an easy walk from the Visitor’s Center. If we are feeling more ambitious, the walk to Hanging Rock offers gorgeous views. After the walk, the deck of the Visitor’s Center offers excellent birding also. Bring a picnic lunch and join us in exploring one of our nearby state parks. Please RSVP to Alice McCall or Rick Earl at 336-698-0220 or [mccalla2@gcsnc.com](mailto:mccalla2@gcsnc.com) ❀

## Summer Evening Stroll

Saturday, June 12

Plan to enjoy a relaxed summer evening with a walk through Piedmont Environmental Center’s South Preserve. We’ll meet at PEC’s headquarters in High Point, 1220 Penny Road, at 7:00 p.m. The terrain is mostly gentle, but sturdy shoes are a good idea. RSVP to Gregg Morris, [gregg.morris@highpointnc.gov](mailto:gregg.morris@highpointnc.gov) or 883-3270. ❀

## June - July Calendar

**Sat, May 3** - Spring Bird Count with Piedmont Bird Club

**Thu, May 8** - **Meeting:** "What's New with Conservation Projects in the Piedmont?"  
Speaker: Ken Bridle

**Sat, May 17** - **Field trip:** Hanging Rock State Park

**May 30-June 1** - **Audubon NC Annual Meeting at the Summit at Haw River State Park**

**Thu, June 12** - Summer Evening Stroll @ PEC

**Sat, June 14** - T. Gilbert Pearson Audubon Society Annual Planning Meeting

## THE HAW RIVER STATE PARK: Dream Becomes Reality

The Haw River State Park was conceived in 1997 by a group of Guilford County residents who had a dream to save forests and wetlands along the upper Haw River. The Guilford County Open Space Committee (GCOSC), newly formed in 2000 from that group of citizens, took the dream to the Guilford and Rockingham County Commissioners, whose support helped it become a reality in 2003 with the General Assembly's passage of HB 1025, which authorized the park along the upper Haw. The T. Gilbert Pearson Audubon Society (TGPAS) shared in the dream from the start, as several chapter members were among that original 1997 group of citizens, and continue to serve on the GCOSC. The chapter wrote letters of support for the establishment of the park, and a chapter member was one of those who brokered the purchase of the Summit Conference Center from the Episcopal Church.

But about a year ago it appeared as if the dream would become a nightmare. About 700 acres adjoining the Summit to the west went under option to the BlueGreen Corporation, a Florida developer, which wanted to build 775 up-scale houses in a gated, golf-course community. To the immediate east of the Summit another developer had installed roads and other infrastructure for another high-end development. But

local citizens rallied to form Citizens For Haw River State Park, whose 9-member steering committee included five TGPAS members, one of whom chaired the effort. Using yard signs, blogs, e-mail, letters-to-the-editor and a legal team, the group applied a full-court press that convinced BlueGreen to sell its option to the State for the park. Meanwhile, the other developer ran into financial problems and also sold his property to the State. In a matter of a few weeks the park expanded from 300 to over 1200 acres. Dream fulfilled!

Audubon involvement is also expanding. In 2005 and 2006 the TGPAS conducted point counts along the upper Haw (a potential IBA), including two sites in the park. We are also using our collaborative IBA funding to help print birding guides and trail maps for the park, as well as to develop NC Birding Trail signage. Most recently the chapter placed three members on the Park Advisory Committee. This has been a 10-year process with TGPAS involvement constant throughout, and is a lesson in dreaming, with patience and persistence. We'll see you at the Summit at Haw River State Park for the ANC Annual Meeting. I think you'll agree that the long effort paid off. ✿



## Chapter Annual Meeting – Birds, Breakfast, and Business

Saturday, June 14, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Kathleen Clay Edwards Family Library

The annual planning meeting of T. Gilbert Pearson Audubon is scheduled for June 14, 2008 at the Kathleen Clay Edwards Branch Library in Price Park. The meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m. and end at 3:30 p.m. We'll start the day by birding Price Park, starting at 8:30 for those who are so inclined and then enjoy a continental breakfast. The morning will be devoted to the election of the 2008-2009 officers, to setting goals and objectives for the coming year and to other business. Following a potluck lunch, we will spend the rest of the afternoon planning field trips and programs for next year. It would be very helpful if you can bring ideas for programs and field trips to the meeting. For more information, contact Ann Walter-Fromson, 299-9494 or [walterfromsona@gborocollege.edu](mailto:walterfromsona@gborocollege.edu) ✿

# Rain Kiss

It rolled in from the mountains.  
It called as it came.  
Clouds churned in roiling fountains  
Foretelling of rain.

Though the angry skies rumbled  
I sensed a calm peace.  
And nature, as if humbled,  
Let soft rain release.

Everywhere clear orbs falling  
Grew puddles by chance.  
Pitter and patter calling  
Set ringlets to dance.

Rain soaked wet into the bark  
Of Elm and Sweet Gum.  
Slowly painting each one dark  
'Til dried by the sun.

It gave drink to fertile seeds,  
Sprouts, and tender shoots.  
Alike to flowers and weeds,  
Deep down to their roots.

The open breast of the earth,  
Swelled by Heaven's tears,  
Sets the cycle of new birth  
As in bygone years.

From nature's chorus sprang a  
Joyous sound, again.  
Loud and undaunted sang the  
Carolina Wren.

Rain fell on the pine cones in their lofty green towers,  
And fell soft on my hair as it fell on the flowers  
Sent shivers up my spine, cut down my defenses  
Held me in a kiss overwhelming my senses.

Rain ran down my neck, my arms, my body, my being.  
Cool rain rivers coursing, awakening, entreating.  
Stirring a dormant spirit long asleep in my breast,  
Until all of my being was embraced and caressed.

For a heart so hardened, and put away in the dark,  
To feel an anxious beating excite a tiny spark.  
To hold life again and feel my empty spirit fill  
Is restoration, my new strength, bent by nature's will.

Soon the rain was retreating.  
My world washed and raw.  
I stood there, barely breathing,  
Looking on in awe.

In silence there, listening  
Sure it would not cease.  
All so still and glistening  
In abundant peace.

- Robb Fulkerson