



Audubon NORTH CAROLINA

Adopt an IBA News

Volume 3.1 Winter 2008

Happy Holidays!

I hope this brand new year finds you warm and healthy and ready for a new year of Adopt an IBA activities.

2007 was a great year for the program with a number of groups adding onto their program of monitoring with educational work, signage projects, and other great IBA activities! This year promises to be better than ever as we welcome three brand new chapters into the Adopt an IBA program. Mecklenburg Audubon will be helping in the Cowan's Ford area (Catawba River Bottomlands IBA) with a Prothonotary Warbler nest box project, and the new High Country Chapter will be adopting the Wilson Creek IBA for monitoring and advocacy work. The newly re-formed Cape Fear Chapter will be helping out at the Bald Head - Smith Island and Green Swamp IBAs in the Wilmington area.

We are also considering a retreat-style training event for Adopt an IBA volunteers from across the state. We are thinking maybe early fall this year and try to showcase the work everyone is doing and also talk about some of the new methods and projects we are undertaking in the near future. If you would be interested in this kind of event (at a state park or similar facility where we can also bird!), please let me know so we can gauge the interest and start making plans.

In addition, most of the training materials I have been handing out (forms, instructions etc) are now available on the NC Audubon website (www.ncaudubon.org). Click on IBAs and follow the links to Adopt an IBA to see what is there. Collaborative Funding documents for chapters are also posted there.

Christmas Bird Counts

Many of you have helped with our IBA CBC data project to tease out those portions of your circles that are included in IBAs. Last year over 20 compilers shared their data this way. This year we had a lower response and it is not too late to send that data in to Curtis at csmalling@audubon.org or mail your forms to him at 667 George Moretz Lane, Boone, NC 28607

I am often asked:

What Do You Do with all of this Data?

So here is a relatively brief answer

Current –

Audubon's data, from Adopt an IBA volunteers, staff, and partnering agencies is used by Audubon North Carolina for several key purposes.

The current uses include production of priority species lists for comments on specific projects. Last year in the mountains alone, I used our data to provide comments for three National Park Service proposals, four Forest Service projects, and three private development projects. Often we are asked to inform other agencies for their comments on those same projects. The Laurelmoor Development is a good example where we provided our data directly to the developer, the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, the Blue Ridge Rural Land Trust, and two private environmental consultants working on the project (ENV Environmental and Equinox Environmental). On the Globe Project with the Forest Service we were able to call their survey methods into question using data gathered by staff surveys immediately adjacent to the project area. We have provided our Bull Creek Cerulean data (largely collected by volunteer Charlotte Goedsche over several years) to the Forest Service for their scoping of the Shope Creek project. Away from the mountains, data collected by T. Gilbert Pearson and Forsyth Audubon have been used by advocates of the Haw River and Haw River State Park to battle a proposed development in the heart of the river corridor. We were able to use that data to show the species of high concern located there in an effort to convince the County Commission to slow down the permitting process. These data do not always convince these entities to change or modify their course of action, but they do lend "hard science" to the discussion. And of course there are literally dozens of other examples where hard data we have collected have been used for advocacy battles (OLF, Bonner Bridge, Cape Hatteras management, Masons inlet project, etc)

Internally, ANC is using the data to refine our IBA prioritization methods, and also to evaluate our population targets for focal species in the state. That is why the quantitative data are so important. Distance estimation and other methods we are using help us estimate those numbers much more precisely.

Data collected by Adopt an IBA volunteers on our State Parks partner lands is entered into the State Parks NRID system for their inventory and monitoring programs. We are also working with State Parks on surveying possible new acquisitions to the park system. This is data that would probably not be collected by state parks staff except in rare instances.

Some of the data collected by Adopt an IBA volunteers is entered into larger national datasets including hawk migration counts, BBS, CBC, and other national projects that form the underpinning of bird research nationwide.

Our data were used in the creation of several regional planning documents including the State Wildlife Action Plan, Southeast Shorebird Management Plan, NC GAP Vertebrate Modeling Project, and SE GAP bird modeling project.

Immediate Future

Data collected by staff, volunteers, and partners is currently being used for pretty high powered conservation planning. When the NC Natural Heritage Program needed presence absence checklists for all species at geo-referenced points in NC, they came to

us. These data sets are being used by Steve Hall to help the Ecological Enhancement Program (a large trust fund for mitigation by DOT) help decide where to purchase conservation lands. In addition, and building on this work, the NC NHP is working on and just completed a draft of a new Comprehensive State Conservation Plan. This plan already gives some added weight to lands included in IBAs, but our quantitative data are allowing us to make the case for finer scale weighting of individual areas and tracts.

Once our web served data system is up and running so that individuals volunteering to count birds in IBAs can enter data directly, we will have a very powerful tool to more easily complete the tasks and projects listed above. Right now, data are spread out over literally dozens of partners, dozens of databases, and lots of formats and methods. We are consolidating those data into a single source for bird data in NC. Once complete, larger scale projects like National GAP modeling, an update of the NC Breeding Bird Atlas project, NC GAP vertebrate model updates, entry into the National Point Count Database at the National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII), National Audubon Society's IBA Database, Appalachian Trail Mega Transect Project, USFWS Joint Venture planning, and other projects will be much easier. This ease of use will be exponential in its effect on the use of our data.

So please keep collecting quantitative data if possible!

Thank you so much for all that you do for birds across the state. We could not do the work we do without your dedication and enthusiasm!