

# book | *news*

from North Carolina

**The University of North Carolina Press**

116 S. Boundary St. | Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514-3808

**A Conversation with the creators of  
*The North Carolina Birding Trail: Coastal Plain Trail Guide***

Distributed for the North Carolina Birding Trail

by the University of North Carolina Press

Published February 2008

\$18.95 paperback, ISBN 978-0-9794-4680-1

172 pp., 176 photographs, 2 tables, 121 maps, index, full color throughout

For photos visit: <http://www.ibiblio.org/uncp/media/birds/>

**Q: Do you need to be an experienced birder to use this guide?**

**A:** No, this guide can be helpful for a novice or an experienced birder. The best way to gain experience is to actually get out and watch birds in the wild, and *The North Carolina Birding Trail—Coastal Plain Trail Guide* helps you find the great spots for doing that in NC. Every site in the book is a nice place to go for a hike with the family, or a relaxing walk to enjoy nature. Some offer additional educational, recreational, and/or cultural experiences, too!

**Q: Who collaborated on this project? How did the collaboration work?**

**A:** The NC Birding Trail (NCBT) is a partnership among 6 agencies and organizations in North Carolina—the NC Wildlife Resources Commission, Audubon NC, NC Sea Grant, NC State Parks, NC Cooperative Extension, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. A Steering Committee, made up of representatives from each of those entities, provides guidance and oversight of the NCBT initiative. From its inception, one core goal of the NCBT was to develop a regional Trail Guide series. For this first guide in the series—*The Coastal Plain Trail Guide*—many Steering Committee members put considerable time and energy into writing and editing site descriptions, compiling and editing photos, and commenting on design and layout ideas.

Beyond the formal NCBT partnership participants, many other people also contributed to *The Coastal Plain Trail Guide*, including 15 photographers who donated photos for the guide, and NCWRC staff who developed the maps.

**Q: How is the book arranged?**

[more]

Contact Meagan Bonnell for review copies/author interviews [919] 962-0591  
Fax [919] 966-3829 Email: [Meagan\\_Bonnell@unc.edu](mailto:Meagan_Bonnell@unc.edu)

**A:** The book is arranged by Group (i.e., chapter)—clusters of sites that are geographically close to one another and/or related by a geographic feature. The groups are ordered starting at the northeast corner of the coastal plain region; they wind back and forth throughout the coastal plain region. Each Group is color coded, and colored tabs on the side of each page make it easy to find a particular group in the guide. Each Group “chapter” is complete with a map and individual site descriptions for each birding destination in that Group.

**Q: Are all sites easily accessible by car or foot?**

**A:** As a ‘driving trail,’ directions to each site are given from the nearest major state or federal highway so that the sites can be visited in any order within the Group. However, a few coastal plain sites are actually accessible by ferry or boat only (you still need to drive to the ferry terminal or the boat dock). And a few others are canoe/kayak access only (again, you need to drive to the put-in). Once at the site, a variety of conditions await—some sites have staffed visitor centers, boardwalks, paved walkways; others consist of just a primitive path through the woods. The Site Description presents an accurate description of the site and the Directions and Access & Parking sections should give indications of anything to pay special attention to.

**Q: What is the best way to watch birds?**

**A:** There are many ways to maximize your opportunities to view birds in a natural setting minimizing disturbance to the birds or their habitats. Be sure to study your field guide ahead of time to familiarize yourself with the species in an area. Scan the area for any movement and move slowly and quietly to avoid startling any wildlife. Use a viewing blind and take advantage of any natural cover the area affords. Wear clothing that blends in with the surroundings, except during hunting season, when blaze orange is a safety must. Keep your ears and eyes open at all times—many birds will be detected by ear before they can be spotted by sight, and use binoculars, a scope, or a photo lens to get a clearer view. Finally, leave your pets at home to minimize any disturbances they may cause.

**Q: For an amateur birder, what is the best way to start? Do you need any special equipment?**

**A:** A decent pair of binoculars and a field guide are the essentials of birding. It really helps to go birding with someone who is more experienced, since they can give you tips and help you fine tune your skills (both sight and sound identification). The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has a great beginning birder program called Birding 1-2-3:  
<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/birding123>.

Also, a listing of all the Audubon chapters in NC can be found at:  
<http://www.ncaudubon.org/LocalChapters.html>.

There may be other local birding clubs, too. Ask local bird enthusiasts to find out if there is one near you.

[more]

**Q: What birds are unique to the coastal NC region?**

**A:** North Carolina is at the northern extent of the breeding range for a few coastal species. The Wood Stork is known to nest as far north as southeastern NC, and Painted Buntings nest as far north as central North Carolina (Carteret County).

North Carolina also offers one of the very best chances of seeing pelagic (ocean dwelling) birds, because of our proximity to the Gulf Stream and its confluence with the cold Labrador Current. People come from all over the country to take guided birding trips offshore in search of rare pelagic bird species.

Our coastal national wildlife refuges are home to tens of thousands of snow geese and tundra swans each winter—these birds use the area as a key wintering grounds to and from their migration to the Arctic each summer to breed. The coastal NC region as a whole is a very important winter grounds for a wide variety of waterfowl.

**Q: What types of birds does one see in different seasons?**

**A:** North Carolina has more than 450 bird species documented throughout the year. Some live here year-round, some only breed here, some only winter here, and some are only here during the spring and fall migration period. Some birds are locally abundant, while others are very rare even when they are present in the state. So the birds that are documented at a site depend both on the season and on their abundance.

Many sites keep bird lists. If there is a visitor center phone number or a website listed, check ahead of time to find out if they have a bird list available. The site descriptions in the guide often reference the season in which a particular species could be found.

The best way to know if and when a bird will be present in the state (and therefore a possibility for you to find) is to consult birding guides, ask if the site maintains a bird list, visit online bird chatrooms or list serves, and learn about bird ranges and seasonal variations from knowledgeable birders.

Waterfowl (ducks, geese, loons) usually appear in the winter months. Some songbirds live here year round, many migrate to the tropics in the winter and breed to our north, so they're only here during the spring and fall. Some Raptors (hawks, falcons, owls, "birds of prey") also live here year round, while some migrate farther south during the winter. Beach-nesting birds can be spotted in late spring and summer.

**Q: What is the rarest bird one might be lucky to see on the coast? What is the most common bird one is likely to see?**

**A:** It's impossible to list just one bird, but some of the more rare and sought after southeastern species at the coast might include the Bachman's Sparrow and Red-

[more]

cockaded Woodpecker (both found in longleaf pine habitat), Swainson's Warbler (along bottomlands and other moist areas), Black Rail (marshlands), Piping Plover (a beach nesting species), and the Razorbill (a northern species rarely spotted from the shore in the winter).

As for the most rare, on a few occasions, a rare albatross species (more common to Antarctica) has been seen offshore.

As for the most common, Yellow-rumped Warblers are common at many of the coastal sites in winter. Many other species, such as Northern Cardinal, blackbirds, waterfowl, and certain species of gulls, are also very abundant.

Check the Carolina Bird Club's Rare Bird Alert web site ([www.carolinabirdclub.org](http://www.carolinabirdclub.org)) for rare bird sightings.

**Q: How is this book different from other birding books?**

**A:** *The North Carolina Birding Trail—Coastal Plain Trail Guide* is different from other birding guides to North Carolina because it combines detailed site information with useful visitor information in a visually appealing design. The spiral binding makes the guide easy to use while traveling. 'Birder Calling Cards' placed at the back of the guide can be used by travelers to let local businesses know they are visiting the area and spending money in the local economy, a key goal of successful and sustainable nature-based tourism.

###

This interview may be reprinted in its entirety with the following credit: A conversation with the creators of *The North Carolina Birding Trail: Coastal Plain Trail Guide* (University of North Carolina Press, Spring 2008). The text of this interview is available at [www.ibiblio.org/uncp/media/birds](http://www.ibiblio.org/uncp/media/birds).

**PUBLISHING DETAILS**

\$18.95 hardcover, ISBN 978-0-9794-4680-1

Publication date: February, 2008

172 pp., 176 photographs, 2 tables, 121 maps, index, full color throughout

The University of North Carolina Press

116 South Boundary Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27514-3808

919-966-3561 (office) 1-800-848-6224 (orders) 919-966-3829 (fax)

<http://uncpress.unc.edu/default.htm>

**CONTACTS**

Publicity: Meagan Bonnell, 919-962-0591; [meagan\\_bonnell@unc.edu](mailto:meagan_bonnell@unc.edu)

Sales: Michael Donatelli, 919-962-0475; [michael\\_donatelli@unc.edu](mailto:michael_donatelli@unc.edu)

Rights: Vicky Wells, 919-962-0369; [vicky\\_wells@unc.edu](mailto:vicky_wells@unc.edu)

Contact Meagan Bonnell for review copies/author interviews [919] 962-0591  
Fax [919] 966-3829 Email: [Meagan\\_Bonnell@unc.edu](mailto:Meagan_Bonnell@unc.edu)