

Eleanor Mehlin writes about BIRDS on Bogue Banks:

"Are you a bird-watcher too? Of great interest to us, here in Pine Knoll Shores (other than the sea and the shore) is the variety of "feathered friends". At our feeder there are flocks of purple finch -- not really purple, but the male wine colored and the female resembling a small sparrow. There are noisy bluejays, glossy black red-wings and many cardinals, their brilliant plumage bright against the trees. Well named -- the North Carolina State Bird! Chickadees, Carolina wrens, and the small warblers constantly flit around in the denser shrubbery and the towhees, thrushes, and fox sparrows scratch endlessly in the brush and undergrowth. Of course, the sparrows we have always with us -- it is a challenge to sort them out. The flickers and red-headed woodpeckers search for insects up and down the tree trunks but the ladder-backed (red-bellied woodpecker) occasionally visits the feeder, for a change of diet. The mockingbird comes frequently to bathe and when we hear his song, there is no doubt of his presence in the neighborhood. The Kingfisher glides down over the canal, searching for fish, and nests in the sand bank on the opposite side.

Such excitement in April when we saw the first painted bunting! What was that beautiful bird at the feeder? No one had mentioned them, and we had never seen one before, so we rushed for the bird book. The male is a bright patchwork of color, blue, green and red. The female a brilliant yellow-green.

Last spring, huge flocks of robins invaded, made away with most of our ornamental berries, and moved on to the north. And, in May, a pair of great crested flycatchers, while house hunting, came by and investigated our purple martin house. We left before they settled in but hope the final occupants were purple martins. As you probably know, they are supposed to help keep down the mosquito population. If any of you are interested in building an apartment house for them, stop by -- we have directions.

A feeder, with a mixture of seed, especially sunflower, and a bird bath of fresh, clean water is so necessary to attract the many birds.

For identification "Birds of North America" (a Golden Field Guide, paperback, \$3.95) is invaluable.

Not only our editor, Mary Doll, is traveling. Lucy Elmendorf writes: I spent three weeks in Mexico during January, sight-seeing with my sister; a few days visiting friends in Bethlehem, Pa., and two days in New York to see Joan Sutherland in "Tales of Hoffman". So I missed all of January in PKS.

We had a week in Mexico City, with lovely, cool weather, just right for a light suit. It took us a couple of days getting used to the 7000 foot altitude, and the street noises in our hotel. After that, we put in a lot of time at the marvelous Anthropological Museum, which has examples of things from all of Mexico's colorful past. We also managed to get lost getting to the San Angel Saturday market of fine craftsmen. When we finally found it, we were waylaid by a musical program in the park outside in which the city was presenting school children playing the harp. The market itself is in an old house, with food served in the courtyard, and every inch of space taken up by very superior work, well displayed.

From Mexico City we flew to Oaxaca, buzzing the famous peaks of Popocatepetl and Ixtaxiuhatl in passing. Oaxaca is only 5000 feet above sealevel and was a little warmer than Mexico City. It is the capital of the state of the same name, with about 100,000 inhabitants, but has the comfortable feel of a small town. It is predominately Indian in population and is noted for its production of native arts and crafts, particularly a black pottery and weaving. We saw a marvelous performance of Mexican dances in a hotel courtyard on a Saturday night, very spirited and skillful.

In both Mexico City and Oaxaca we took trips to archaeological sites, the famous pre-Columbian pyramids, and from Oaxaca we flew to Yucatan where we took a tour of more pyramids. Yucatan is at sealevel, flat, hot, and humid. The pyramids in each place represent the work of different cultures and are quite distinct: Aztecs in Mexico City, Mixtecs and Toltecs in Oaxaca, and Mayan in Yucatan.

Finally we flew and bussed to Palenque in the state of Chiapas where we saw the most remarkable pyramids of all, this time in a very lush tropical mountain setting. We stayed in comfortable hotels everywhere, except Palenque, and the #1 hotel there, half furnished, and in a constant state of rebuilding, looked as