



FEBRUARY 2016

No. 361

Ecobon

The Hilton Head Island Audubon Society is a Chapter of National Audubon Society, Inc.

JANUARY PROGRAM *by: Kathy Greider, Program Director*

Thursday, February 11, 2016 3:00 pm at Coastal Discovery Museum/Honey Horn, 70 Honey Horn Dr in Sea Island Room



On the Trail of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds with Doreen Cubie

Join Doreen Cubie, as she describes her research with Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, from wintering birds in South Carolina to summering Rubythroats in central and western Canada. She will discuss her banding projects, including a four-year study of wintering Rubythroats near Charleston, SC. Doreen will also talk about her travels during the summers of 2010 and 2011, when she banded Rubythroats from Manitoba to British Columbia, to learn more about this species at the northern and western edges of their breeding range and attempt to discover whether our wintering Ruby-throated Hummingbirds spend their summers in Canada.

Doreen is a master bird bander, one of only 300 hummingbird banders in the US and Canada. She has been studying wintering hummingbirds in the southeastern US since 2005, and a paper on her wintering Ruby-throated Hummingbird research was published by the Wilson Journal of Ornithology. During the summers of 2010 and 2011, she expanded her hummingbird research into central and western Canada.

Doreen's career was in publications, including a position as an editor with the National Wildlife Federation. During the last 15 years, she worked as a freelance magazine writer, specializing in natural history, the environment, nature travel, and gardening for wildlife. Her articles have been published in a number of national magazines including National Wildlife, Audubon, Wildlife Conservation, Nature Conservancy, Wilderness, Natural History, Islands, Yankee, and Birder's World.

FREE. Open to the public without registration. SNOWBIRDS WELCOME!

Info: Coastal Discovery Museum at 843.689.6767 or HHI Audubon's Website: www.hiltonheadaudubon.org

Join us for the first Field Trip of 2016!

Place: Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, Laurel Hill Wildlife Drive. (entrance south of SC 170)

Date: Saturday, February 6, 2016

Start time: 8:00 AM till noonish

Leader: Cindy Groff Recommendations: Boots and bug spray

During this trip we will do a small amount of walking in conjunction with driving the 4.5 mile driving loop. Upon everyone's arrival at the refuge we will divide up in carpools to limit the number of vehicles we take through the refuge and disturbance to the wildlife.

Possible siting included: Sora, Wilson's Snipe, Great Horned Owl, White-throated & assorted Sparrows, along with an assortment of Ducks, Warblers and Raptures.

To join our Field Trip, please contact Cindy Groff @ 843-682-3840 or email her at smilingcin@yahoo.com

There is a \$5.00 fee for all non-HHIAS members



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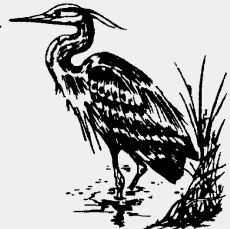
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The *Ecobon* is a monthly publication (September through May) of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society. Subscription is a benefit of membership. Direct inquiries to P.O. Box 6185, Hilton Head Island, South Carolina 29938 or call one of the above officers or chairpersons.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *by Robert Rommel*

The Joy of Birdfeeders

As the winter months progress, I spend many hours looking out of our sliding glass doors at the brilliant array of colors darting about in our backyard. On a typical day I may see over 100 birds and 20 different species. My yard is not a wildlife refuge, instead it is a tiny patch - a mere 15'x20' with grass that is barely hanging on in the sandy soil. Yet as I write this, there are bluebirds, orioles, thrushes, warblers, and finches at my feeders.

There are several things you can do to get the most out of a feeder setup in your yard. First is that you need a variety of food sources. If you want to attract a variety of birds, they all eat different things. Seeds are the most obvious starting place. Sunflower seeds attract many of the large billed birds from Cardinals and Blue Jays down to Tufted Titmice and Chickadees. Smaller billed birds often prefer millet. The Mourning Doves are one of the species at my feeders that relies on these smaller seeds. In addition to seeds, many birds will come to nuts like peanuts. Mealworms will attract insect-eating birds (I prefer the dried variety for ease of use and storage). Suet also attracts a wide variety of birds. I prefer to make my own suet - it's cheaper, fresher, and the birds like it more. Making it is easy: 1 part lard and 1 part peanut butter and then add enough cornmeal so it isn't sticky and oily. Nectar feeders can bring in hummingbirds and orioles. Cut up fresh fruit can also attract some species.

After a variety of food, cover is the next most important thing. Cover is vital so that your birds don't get picked off by raptors but it also makes your feeding station attractive to the birds. A distance of 6' to 10' from dense bushes or undergrowth is ideal for making your feeder area popular with the birds. Closer than that and you will have problems with the squirrels jumping onto your feeder. As long as your feeders are 6'+ from anything and 4'+ off the ground, squirrels should not be able to get to them with a sufficient baffle on the pole. Having multiple feeders and if necessary, spacing them out can ensure that 'bully birds' don't dominate your feeders.

Bird feeders are not a natural food source for birds in the wild. They don't immediately associate a wire tube, wooden tray, or plastic dish with food. Because of this it can take the birds some time to find the food. The more visible you can make the food at the beginning, the sooner the birds will find it. For this reason I like to use a large tray-style feeder where they can see the seed easily. I also will throw out some seed on the ground to enhance visibility. Once a few birds have found the food source, they will attract other birds so you don't need to keep these practices up after the feeder has been found.

Bird feeders are also a responsibility. You are putting out an artificial food source that the birds wouldn't have on their own in nature. As such, I feel there is a strong obligation attached with this. As mentioned, you have a responsibility to make sure it does not become a feeding station for raptors by providing sufficient cover. You also have a responsibility to keep it orderly and clean out the feeders regularly. I empty out and wash the feeders at least once a week, more often during wet times. Lastly, I like to keep the food sources as close to natural as possible. Seeds, nuts, mealworms, nectar, and fruit are all analogous to natural food sources. I avoid things that have dyes, preservatives, or human foods like grape jelly that are clearly unnatural. Treat your birds with kindness and respect and enjoy the countless hours of entertainment that they will give you!

RECENT AREA BIRD SIGHTINGS

by Jack Colcolough

Area birding sightings continue to be excellent with over 100 reported during the last month. However, our warmer Winter so far has affected the usual large influxes of some of our Winter ducks, Goldfinches and other Winter birds.

We had another very successful annual Christmas Bird Count in December with 142 species found by a record 296 birders in our CBC area ... that data will be covered in detail on the HHAS website later.

An accidental Couch's Kingbird was found on Hutchinson's Island near the bridge to Savannah mixed in with rare Western Kingbirds. The Couch's is normally found in south Texas/Mexico.



Couch's Kingbird
Bill Hubick



Summer Tanager

Rare species reported during the past month were: Snow Goose on the beach at Mitchelville Beach Park on HHI, Western Tanager and Virginia Rail on Hutchinson Island, Rufous and Black-chinned Hummingbirds in Savannah, Ash-throated Flycatcher on Hunting Island, Purple Sandpiper on Tybee Island, King Rail at Savannah NWR and in Savannah, Roseate Spoonbill on Skidaway Island and Leconte, Fox and Grasshopper Sparrows found on HHI, Spring Island and Tybee/Hunting Islands respectively.

Out-Of-Season species were: Summer Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Whip-poor-will, Prairie Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Painted Bunting and several Ruby-throated Hummingbirds.

Uncommon species were many and included: Baltimore Oriole, Dark-eyed Junco, endangered Piping Plover, Pine Siskin, Northern Bobwhite, Rusty Blackbird, Reddish Egret, Lesser and Greater Black-backed Gulls, Orange-crowned Warbler, Nelson's, Saltmarsh, Seaside, Vesper and Field Sparrows, American Kestrel, Eurasian-collared Dove, Ruddy Duck, Red-throated Loon, Black-bellied Whistling Duck, American Avocet, Golden-Crowned Kinglet, American White Pelican, Wilson's Plover, White-winged Scoter, Loggerhead Shrike, American Pipit, Glossy Ibis, Winter, Sedge and House Wrens, Blue-headed Vireo, White-breasted Nuthatch, Merlin, Muscovy, Northern Pintail and Greater Scaup.

Other "Good Finds" reported included: Bald Eagle, Sora, American Goldfinch, Lesser Scaup, Common Loon, Great Horned Owl, American Robin, Northern Gannet, Mallard, Spotted Sandpiper, Marbled Godwit, American Oystercatcher, Cedar Waxwing, Eastern Meadowlark, Gray Catbird, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Wilson's Snipe, Bonaparte's Gull and others.

Many thanks to all reporting their sightings: Robert Rommel, Kathy/Grant Greider, Susan Murphy, Barry Lowes, Mary Alice Tartler, Diana Churchill, Carol Clemens, Fran/Denny Baer, Cindy/Ken Groff, Joanne McMemamin, Dottie Bass, Jane/Abie Hester, Jim Grove, Mark Hymer, Dorothy Mosier, Doreen Cubie, Shelia/Roger Johnson, Paul Weatherhead, Deb Beam, Steve Calver, Russ Wigh, Dick Phillips, Annette Hausman, Dianne Faucette, Mary Ann Lueckel and a number of visitors.



Snow Goose

To report a bird sighting that is Accidental, Rare, Uncommon, Out-Of-Season, First-Of-The-Year (FOTY) or First-Of-The-Season (FOTS) or a species that you consider to be a 'good find' e-mail: BirdingFriends@yahoo.com or call 843-432-2661. Please state your full name, the bird species sighted, date and location and other pertinent information of your sighting.

Winter it is a great time of year to bird and find many unusual birds at your favorite birding spots in our area. Dress warmly and go birding! Please continue reporting your "good bird finds"!



New Members Are Joining

Membership Report for February 2016

Welcome to the following who have joined since mid-January.

Don Grubba
Dorothy Mosier
Marilyn Shaw



Check out our new HH birding app!

<https://www.hiltonheadislandbirdingtrail.org/>
and the State Birding app:

<https://www.southcarolinabirdingtrail.org/>

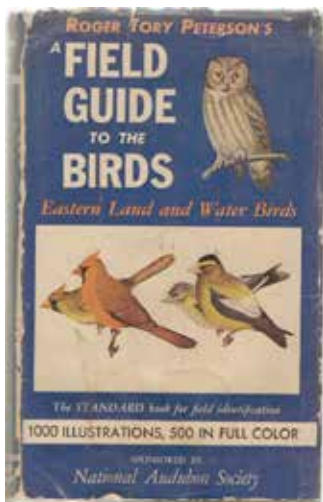
You can go to the App store and download them for free or use them on the above web sites.

A PETERSON ANNIVERSARY

This year marks the 75th anniversary of Roger Tory Peterson's *A Field Guide to Western Birds*, published in 1941 by Houghton Mifflin. Peterson was initially reluctant to take on this daunting task, but his original *Eastern Guide* virtually demanded a companion volume. His reluctance was based on handling the ecological diversity of the West and confusion inherent in a plethora of subspecies at the time. Peterson resolved the first ecological problem by indicating the general range of each bird species, omitting individual habitat descriptions. The subspecies problem was more complex; he resolved it by putting into the main text the subspecies that could easily be identified in the field and listing the hundreds of subspecies and their ranges in an appendix.

The finished product had 40 black-and-white plates and six color plates. It worked and was well received. The validation came a few years later, in 1944, when Peterson was awarded the William Brewster Memorial Award from the American Ornithologists' Union.

From Bird Watchers' Digest



Hardening Shorelines Threaten Birds

The United States seems to be covering its coasts in armor. "Shoreline hardening" refers to the process of adding structures such as seawalls, bulkheads, riprap, or jetties. The practice has become increasingly popular over the past century. (Most of these structures have been built since 1900.)

These continual changes could spell real trouble for birds and entire ecosystems. Shorebirds, beach-nesting birds, and even long-legged waders are obvious victims of the trend.

More than 50 percent of south Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coasts are fringed with tidal wetlands that could be threatened by future hardening, based on projected population growth, storm frequency, beach renourishment, low-profile breakwaters that also serve as fish-favoring mini-habitats, and oyster restoration. All are expensive, but also all are also bird-friendly.

From Bird Watchers' Digest



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Christmas Bird Count

by Susan Murphy, CBC Coordinator



The Hilton Head count was on December 14, 2015. This was the 116th year for this international citizen science project! By the time this article is published, we will have sent the results to the CBC Regional Editor in Charleston. Once the report is accepted, we'll have "final" numbers.

Species count: 142 (141 in 2014)

Total birds: 32,297 (28,405 in 2014)

Although we counted more birds this year, much of this is due to a flock of 7,000 Red-winged Blackbirds at Palmetto Bluff, part of a total of 9,125. This was the highest count for any species this year.

Most groups reported seeing fewer birds as they turned in their checklists. As Robert Rommel observed in an interview with *The Island Packet*, "Some of our winter birds just haven't arrived yet. I don't know if that's because of the weather or because they are following a food source somewhere else."

For example, this year we counted 357 Hooded Mergansers vs. 705 last year. We counted 394 Buffleheads vs. 736 last year. Dunlins totaled 826 vs. 2,276 last year and a 10-year average of 2,928.

There were many new participants this year, for a total of 296. Last year we had 249 participants. Field observers totaled 236, working in 71 parties. We have had about the same number of field parties in each of the last three years, even though the number of people increases each year. Our big increase was in the number of Feeder Watchers, going from 34 to 60. Many Feeder Watchers comment that the count helps them become more observant and informed about the species and numbers of birds they regularly see at home.

If you would like more information, our 10-year history is available on the Hilton Head Island Audubon website at the link below. Click on Ten Year CBC History for the data: <http://www.hiltonheadaudubon.org/audubon-christmas-bird-count>

Thank you to all who participated and we hope that you will join us again in mid-December for the 2016 count!

Top 5 Species for the 2015 Hilton Head CBC:

Red-winged Blackbirds (9,125 total)

Yellow-rumped Warblers (2,292)

Double-crested Cormorants (1,265)

American Crow (1,154)

White Ibis (1,022)

A Special Lowcountry Birding Event

February 24th ~ 2:00 to 4:00 pm

At Magnolia Hall in Sun City



DEBORAH CRAMER

Author of *The Narrow Edge*, *Smithsonian Ocean* and *Great Waters*

The Narrow Edge

A Tiny Bird, An Ancient Crab & An Epic Journey

Each year red knots undertake a near miraculous 19,000 mile journey from one end of the earth to the other and back. In her book *The Narrow Edge*, Deborah Cramer accompanies them on their extraordinary odyssey along the length of two continents, tracking birds from remote Tierra del Fuego to the icy Arctic, and walking moonlit beaches to find ancient horseshoe crabs, whose eggs fuel shorebird migration and whose blue blood safeguards human health. Join Cramer on the journey, to examine the critical role South Carolina plays in this story, and to explore what's at stake, for shorebirds, horseshoe crabs, and for us.

Deborah Cramer lives with her family at the edge of a salt marsh in Gloucester, Massachusetts, where each year she awaits the arrival of horseshoe crabs and alewives in tidal creeks, and the passage of migrating sandpipers and herons. She writes about science, nature, and the environment, and is a visiting scholar at MIT.

Cramer has written three books, *Great Waters: an Atlantic Passage*, *Smithsonian Ocean: Our Water Our World*, and *The Narrow Edge: A Tiny Bird, an Ancient Crab, and an Epic Journey*. She has lectured about her writing and the sea on both sides of the Atlantic, at science and maritime museums, at major environmental and teachers' organizations, and at undergraduate and graduate schools in oceanography and journalism. Her writing has most recently appeared in the *Boston Globe* and on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*.

- Pre registration is required for entrance to the event.
- Non-residents of Sun City must enter the Southern Sun City security gate on US 278 and receive a special pass.
- An email with registration documents will be sent to you
- You will need to print it and bring it with you to the venue.
- You can register for no more than 4 individuals.

To register, email the Sun City Bird Club at magnolia2.24.2016@gmail.com



SUN CITY HILTON HEAD BIRD CLUB



Fripp Audubon Club



A Special Lowcountry Birding Event

February 24th

At Magnolia Hall in Sun City

2:00 to 4:00 PM

DEBORAH CRAMER

*Author of **The Narrow Edge**, **Smithsonian Ocean** and **Great Waters***



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Praise for The Narrow Edge

"An intimate portrait of the small red knot and a much larger exploration of our wondrous, imperiled world."—**Elizabeth Kolbert**, author of *The Sixth Extinction*

"A superbly written and gripping account...more thrilling than the Kentucky Derby."—**Thomas E. Lovejoy**, University Professor of Environmental Science and Policy, George Mason University, and National Geographic Conservation Fellow

"The 'narrow edge' of the title could be the shoreline that demarcates the journey, but it also describes the delicate and imperiled balance of birds, crabs, beaches and ocean... I have a compass, GPS, and radio," [Cramer] writes. "The birds have—what? By the end of this journey I am more in awe than when I began." Follow her graceful writing for the full 9,500 miles and you will share in that awe."—Laurence Marschall, *Natural History*

Articles

Two op-eds on the themes of the book have appeared in the *New York Times*:

"Silent Seashores," Op-Ed *New York Times*

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/02/opinion/silent-seashores.html?_r=0

"A Bird Whose Life Depends on a Crab" Op-Ed *New York Times*

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Audubon

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FEBRUARY - MARCH 2016 Calendar

JANUARY 2016 - Bird Seed Sale!

FEBRUARY

Thurs. Feb. 4 Board Meeting at CCHH.....10:00 am
Sat. Feb. 6 Field Trip at SNWR.....8:00 am
Sat. Feb. 12-15 Great Backyard Bird Count All Weekend
Thurs. Feb. 11 Monthly Meeting at Honey Horn..... 3:00 pm

MARCH

Thurs. Mar. 3 Board Meeting at CCHH.....10:00 am
Thurs. Mar. 10 Monthly Meeting at Honey Horn..... 3:00 pm

Monthly meetings of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society are regularly scheduled at 3:00 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month, September through May. Meetings are held at the Coastal Discovery Museum, 70 Honey Horn Drive. Members and guests welcome!



BEQUESTS

If you wish to honor a family member or friend with a memorial gift, or remember the Audubon Newhall Preserve or the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society in your will, your gift may be in the form of securities, cash, life insurance, real estate, or other property.

Contact your own estate planner or our Audubon Chapter at P.O. Box 6185, Hilton Head Island, South Carolina 29938.

Sharing your estate with Audubon not only reduces the taxes on your estate but will help protect birds, wildlife, and their habitat in the years to come.