



OCTOBER 2016

No. 366

Ecobon

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

OCTOBER PROGRAM by: *Kathy Greider, Program Director*

Thursday, October 13, 2016 at 3:00 pm - 4:30 pm

Location: Coastal Discovery Museum at Honey Horn, 70 Honey Horn Dr in the Sea Island Room.

The Herons of Serenity Lagoon in Sun City



We (John and Eilene) Burrack moved to Sun City Hilton Head at the end of 2004 from Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Iowa is nothing like the Low Country of South Carolina and we had no expectation what retirement life would be like. All we knew was the home we had purchased was on a little pond that provided a park-like view so it seemed like it would be a nice place to live. We embraced some new hobbies in retirement which included photography for me. I had a ready venue for practice as there always seemed to be a few big birds walking along the bank. The back yard was so peaceful we called it Serenity Lagoon. We joined the Sun City Bird Club to learn a little more about our birds and participated in field trips that introduced us to even more species and photo opportunities. We also began to notice significant nesting activities out back every year and I began to chronicle "The Herons of Serenity Lagoon" with photos. In most years we have had a dozen or more nests. In my presentation I get a chance to share Serenity Lagoon as well as my photos and what we have learned about the nesting cycle of Great Blue Herons.

FREE ~ Open to the public without registration VISITORS WELCOME!

For More Information Contact: Coastal Discovery Museum at 843.689.6767 Website: www.hiltonheadaudubon.org

October Field Trip

Date: Saturday, October 1, 2016

Time: 8:00 am

Place: Savannah National Wildlife Refuge Tupelo Trail and Little Back River Trail.

Special note: We will be taking a ride on one of the Refuge's open-seated travelers and will not be driving the Laurel Hill Drive Loop.

Closed toe shoes, long pants and bug spray is recommended.

Limit: 20

Carpool Meeting Spot: Neo's Restaurant in the parking lot at Moss Creek village.

Please contact Cindy Groff to sign up at 843-682-3840 or smilingcin@yahoo.com



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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*

Lessons in Humanity

I am often asked to help with identifying birds whether at the Christmas Bird Count, through e-mail, or in the field. While I love helping people learn more about birds, there is one aspect of it that always makes me cringe. Sometimes I have to tell people that they've made a mistake. It can be upsetting, but mistakes happen all the time.

This summer I made a major identification blunder. In the undercover of a Newfoundland forest, I ran into a grouse family. The mother was dark and clearly not a Ruffed Grouse or Sharp-tailed Grouse. So I was sure I had seen a Spruce Grouse for weeks. When I returned to South Carolina and was going through my photos I realized I had made a big mistake. The bird was definitely a Willow Ptarmigan. It's not a difficult ID and one that I would have made correctly if I had just been shown the photo but in the field I committed the most common mistake in bird identification: not knowing what birds to expect or not to expect in a habitat. I hadn't even considered that Willow Ptarmigans would be in this habitat and just assumed that there would only be one of the three grouse species. I hadn't posted a birding list or told anyone else about the bird so I avoided making a public fool of myself, but that was just chance.

Making mistakes is just part of birding and it happens all the time. Here are a few hints that will help reduce the number mistakes. First of all as I mentioned, it helps greatly to know what birds you should expect in a given habitat and time of year. You should start your identification with going through these possibilities and only consider something unusual if the bird doesn't fit what is expected. If someone reports a white goose in the winter time in South Carolina, it could be a Snow Goose or Ross's Goose but in the summer time it almost assuredly an escaped domesticated goose. Standard practice is to start with these possibilities before considering something more unusual.

In the field, structure is the first thing that you should examine about the bird. Ask yourself questions like what size and shape the bird is. Comparisons with other birds that are around are especially useful (is it smaller or larger than a mockingbird, etc.). The more specific you can be, the easier the identification will be. Is its head round or square? Are its wings long or short? Do the wing primaries project past the tail? Structure is a great characteristic because it usually the same for both genders and doesn't change with age or time of year. It is also is a trait that can often be used to distinguish between closely related species. People often tend to focus on color and plumage, but structure can usually get to a more accurate identification much more quickly.

Identification in the field is a hierarchical approach with a mental "tree of choices". In this approach you don't need to consider many options and can quickly come up with an identification or a small list of candidate species. The first question is what large group of birds does it belong to. Then sub-group, etc. For example based on structure and habitat you can tell that the bird is a shorebird. Based on structure, you can tell it's a plover rather than a sandpiper. Next based on size you can narrow it down to the small plovers which brings you to 3 species: Snowy, Semipalmated, and Piping.

The first step to learning to identify this way is to really learn the groups well. Most birders gloss over the scientific Families of birds that are found in many bird guides but this is very valuable information. As you spend more time you'll begin to see how cranes are actually more like the small rails than they are like herons and egrets. Focusing on similarities is very important as they will be how you begin to build your branches in your mental identification tree. The studious birder will even jot down notes in the fields about how birds fit or don't fit into their known groupings.

In the end, you will probably make numerous mistakes in identification. I know I do. It is vital to recognize that you often can't identify every bird you see. Many times you are left with a situation where you know it is one of your groupings. This is normal and the most expert birders often have unknown birds on their lists. Enjoy, and don't worry if you too are human!

RECENT AREA BIRD SIGHTINGS

by Jack Colcolough

Our Fall migration is off to a great start with many migrants moving through our area and some of our Winter birds starting to show up!

There were 17 Warbler species sightings reported during this last month of the 18 total for our Fall ... the best is yet to come in October! Other reported migrant species this month numbered 11 of 13 for our total so far this Fall.

Rare species reported this last month were: Cape May, Hooded and Worm-eating Warblers, Wilson's Phalarope, Roseate, Black and Common Terns, King Rail, Buff-breasted and Solitary Sandpipers and Roseate Spoonbill.

Many Uncommon species were reported this month including:

Louisiana and Northern Waterthrushes, Magnolia, Prairie and Yellow Warblers, Ovenbird, Yellow-throated Vireo, Veery, Baltimore Oriole, Loggerhead Shrike, Long-billed Dowitcher, Greater and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Least Bittern, White-breasted Nuthatch, Seaside and Field Sparrows, Worthington's Marsh Wren, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Caspian Tern, Eurasian-collared Dove, Bank Swallow, Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Glossy Ibis, Piping and Wilson's Plovers, Swallow-tailed and Mississippi Kites, Indigo Bunting, Blue Grosbeak, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, migrant Bobolink and Least Tern.



Wilson's Phalarope
audubon.org



Baltimore Oriole

New arrivals and «good finds» included: Migrant Black-throated Blue, Prothonotary, Yellow-throated, Black & White and early Palm Warblers, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Common Yellowthroat, arriving Bald Eagle, Summer Tanager, early Pied-billed Grebe, many Cattle Egrets, Gull-billed Tern, early Blue-winged Teal, Wood Stork, Spotted Sandpiper, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, American Oystercatcher, Red- and White-eyed Vireos, early Tree Swallow, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Summer Tanager and migrant Bobolink.

Many thanks to all reporting your bird sightings: Robert Rommel, Nan Lloyd, Jane Hester, Dottie Bass, Carol Clemens, Fran/Denny Baer, Joanne McMenamin, Cindy/Ken Groff, Shelia/Roger Johnson, Dorothy Mosior, Kathy/Grant Greiger, Peter Cram, Annette Hausman, Deb Beamer, Kay Lauener, Diana Churchill, Steve Calver, Mary Ann Lueckel, Russ Wigh, Buddy Campbell, Mary Alice Tartler, Dick Phillips and many visitors who reported their sightings.

To report a bird sighting that is Accidental, Rare, Out-Of-Season, Uncommon, 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 of your sighting and other pertinent information.

October is the best month of year to sight our migrants, earlier Winter arrivals, late Summer birds still here and resident species ... and the cooler weather is an additional bonus! Now is the time to get out into the field and find some of these great birds!



Yellow headed Blackbird

Travelling to upstate New York?

by Carol Clemens

If you are ever in the Albany, NY area you might want to visit the Albany Pine Bush Preserve located at 195 New Karner Road. Described as one of the best remaining examples of an inland pine barrens in the world, the preserve is home to the endangered Karner Butterfly. There are over 20 miles of well-marked paths for walking, hiking, and nature study. The center offers many special programs. In August when I was there, I attended an evening Common Nighthawk Watch where we saw these birds fly over the preserve as they migrated. Another day there were mist nets set up and a bird banding center. Depending on the season, you might find birds such as Rough-legged hawks, Broad-winged hawks, Ring-necked Pheasant, American Woodcock, Black-billed Cuckoo, Whip-poor-will, Chimney Swift, Hairy Woodpecker, Warbling Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Swainson's Thrush, Black-throated Green Warbler, and others who either live, breed, or migrate through the preserve. For more information, check their website: <http://www.albanypinebush.org/>



WHAT IS eBIRD?

eBird is a project that combines large numbers of birders around the world with the enormous computing power that now exists to create a huge, dynamic database on bird populations and distribution.

The concept is simple. eBird allows bird watchers to share observations from their birding trips - everything from a few minutes in the backyard to a month-long expedition in New Guinea. Birders are asked to count, or at least estimate, the numbers of each species that they've seen. En masse, these reports provide dynamic maps of the ranges of different species, showing how they change over time, and also changes in numbers. These data give biologists and conservationists a massive amount of information, much more extensive than they could ever gather by themselves. eBird data will likely provide an early warning for sudden declines of some species in the future.

Data from eBird reports are organized on the website in many ways that are helpful to birders. Traveling to an unfamiliar area? eBird reports can help you prepare to bird that area, creating bar graphs automatically to show abundance of all the birds found there throughout the months of the year.

(from Mark Garland, BirdWatcher's Digest)

Book Review

The Genius of Birds

by Jennifer Ackerman, Penguin Press

The phrase "bird brain" ought to be a compliment, not a slur. The navigational skills of some long-distance migrants far exceed that of humans; some birds can recognize individual human faces, but to most of us, all crows look alike. This book documents and explores the vast range of bird intelligence, including use of tools; song (and even language) acquisition; adaptation to environmental change; and much more.



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2016 Christmas Bird Count

by Susan Murphy, CBC Coordinator



Mark these DECEMBER DATES on your calendars!

NEWS: Our annual Christmas Bird Count meeting is on **Thursday, December 8**, at First Presbyterian Church, 540 William Hilton Parkway.

The social begins at 7:00 pm in Fellowship Hall. The program begins at 7:30 pm. Our Chapter President, Robert Rommel, will preview the birds we might see on count day. Plan on attending this festive and informative event!

The 2016 Count Day is **Thursday, December 15**, for the Hilton Head area. If you are interested in being a part of this international effort, please e-mail me and I will have a Captain contact you!

Susan Murphy
HHICBC@gmail.com
(843) 686-3733

Note for our Sun City-Okatie members: The count for the Sun City-Okatie circle is Friday, December 16. If you are interested in participating there, please contact Jim Cubie, (843) 991-1059 or jimcubie@gmail.com.



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.

Membership Report for October 2016

Hi fellow birders!

Please welcome the following new members who have joined us since late August 2016.

- Donna Beer
- Donna Sacks



Remember that dues are based on a rolling calendar. For example, if you joined or renewed in March 2016, you are a paid member through March 2017. Once your dues have been received and processed, you will get an email from Membership confirming your renewal. We send an email reminder with a renewal form in the quarter your dues expire. The renewal may be mailed to us or turned in at a meeting.

Have a question about your membership? Have you changed your email? Please contact Carol clemens318@roadrunner.com or Fran at seatwo@roadrunner.com

Bluebird Box Monitoring

All around the area there are teams of dedicated volunteers who regularly monitor an assigned area of bluebird boxes. Data is recorded on an online site. As an example, a group led by Chris Johnson and Jim Ellis regularly monitor boxes in the Farm Plots area of Hilton Head Plantation.

This season they reported

- 13 Nests
- 56 Eggs
- 51 Fledglings

Thanks to all who help with this project.



Carol Clemens



Audubon

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P. O. Box 6185

Hilton Head Island, South Carolina 29938

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OCTOBER ~ NOVEMBER 2016 Calendar

Newhall Walks every Thursday at 10 am through November 17

OCTOBER

Sat. Oct. 1 Field Trip at Savannah National WLR8:00 am
 Thurs. Oct. 6 Board Meeting at CCHH.....10:00 am
 Thurs. Oct. 13 Monthly Meeting at Honey Horn 3:00 pm

NOVEMBER

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

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 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.