



MARCH 2017

No. 371

# Ecobon

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

**MARCH PROGRAM** *by: Kathy Greider, Program Director*

**Thursday, March 9, 2017 3:00 pm**

**Location:** Palmetto Electric Cooperative's Community Room on 111 Mathews Drive in Hilton Head  
(entrance and parking in the rear)

## **Bluebirds over South Carolina (and Georgia!)**

*with Mike DeBruhl, President of South Carolina Bluebird Society*

Mike DeBruhl is the Director and President of the South Carolina Bluebird Society. He is also member of the North American Bluebird Society. Mike developed a love of wildlife early, having been reared in the mountains of North Carolina on a wooded farm with lots of roaming room. He is a retired business/Human Resources executive and business consultant. He and his wife Peg moved to Aiken in 2008 from Reston, Virginia and discovered they had beautiful blue colored birds in their yard. The rest is history as they say!

Why do humans seem so mesmerized by bluebirds? What makes its family life so special? Why do we care about its conservation and that of other cavity dwelling birds and how you can help? Learn some basic things needed to attract bluebirds to your property. Discover the difference between primary and secondary cavity nesting birds, of which there 85 species in North America, and how their nesting requirements differ from most bird species. See examples of "connectivity" in nature, "unintended consequences" of human activity on our feathered friends, and how to deal with predation of cavity nesting birds. We will also discuss the fun of monitoring a bluebird nest box or a bluebird nest box trail.

Also, find out which species of woodpecker living in South Carolina and Georgia is on the endangered species list and what is being done to save it. The slide presentation contains many beautiful photographs.

Join us for a great program.

**FREE.** ~ Open to the public without registration. **VISITORS WELCOME!**

For More Information Contact: 404.313.8208 Website: <http://www.hiltonheadaudubon.org>

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## **March Field Trip**

Saturday, March 4 Meeting Spot: Bear Island WMA Main Entrance at 9:00 am

Bear Island Wildlife Management Area, Colleton County

Limit of 20 with Leader Bob Speare

Listed as one of the best birding areas in the state, Bear Island WMA is part of the ACE Basin and consists of over 12,000 acres of forest, wetland, and agricultural habitats. This will be a terrific opportunity to observe a number of waterfowl, waders, raptors, and songbirds among others. Some of the specialties that can be seen at Bear Island at this time of the year include American avocet, white pelican, and tundra swan. Recently, the appearance of a great kiskadee has attracted many birders to the property as well. This trip will include carpool driving and some walking on the site. To insure the best birding for the group, we will want to limit the number of cars traveling through the property. Anyone wishing to carpool up to Bear Island should meet at Neo's Restaurant in the parking lot at Moss Creek Village by 7:00 am. The travel time from Hilton Head is a good 2 hours. Also note, there are no restroom facilities at Bear Island. Directions and more information can be found at [www.dnr.sc.gov](http://www.dnr.sc.gov). To sign up for this field trip, please contact Bob Speare at [bobspeare@gmail.com](mailto:bobspeare@gmail.com) or 843-715-9772.



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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*

### *Responsible Birdwatching*

As spring rounds the corner, people will come out in droves to see nature burst forth in blooms, song, and color. But this is critical time of migration, feeding, and nesting for our feathered friends. It's extremely important that we enjoy our wildlife in a responsible manner.

Many of you may be familiar with the expression, "Leave only footprints behind." When I was taught the principles of backpacking, I learned that this well-meaning phrase didn't go far enough. Many times you will hike through sensitive environments like sand dunes or alpine meadows and footprints can cause damage to plants that can take years or even decades to recover. So the goal in hiking was to leave nothing behind and not change the landscape at all.

With birds, I've adopted a similar philosophy. My goal is always to make it so that it's exactly like I'm not there at all. The measuring stick is whether or not the birds change their behavior. If a bird takes flight, you probably scared it. If a bird stares at you, it is in a stressful situation and not engaging in its normal feeding or resting behavior. If you do things right, a bird may look briefly at you and then look away as it goes back to its prior behavior.

With all the stresses of spring, just a little bit of extra time feeding might make the difference between avoiding a predator and not or in making the migration with enough energy to successfully lay a clutch of eggs. It's difficult to have no impact on birds. You will undoubtedly fail sometimes, but if you are trying, most times you will succeed. You will have to make some small sacrifices: you might be able to get close enough to make a definitive identification or take the photograph you want. You will feel regret when you do make small disturbances in the lives of birds. I routinely wind up flushing snipe when walking trails near water and no matter how hard I try, I often am unable to see them before I get too close!

Any of these cautions are especially crucial in breeding situations when lives hang precariously in the balance. For this reason, I stay far away from most nesting situations no matter how tempting it might be to watch these exciting events. I prefer to watch breeding herons at egrets at the St. Augustine Alligator Farm rather than at nearby Pickney since the birds in St. Augustine are so accustomed to human contact. Next time you are watching a bird, don't just think about trying to tell what species you are looking at. Ask yourself how is your presence changing life for that bird. As long as you are doing everything you can to minimize this, you'll feel great about your bird experiences. One last little 'secret': when you do try to minimize your impact on the birds you both see more birds and have much longer views of the birds!

Enjoy the spring!  
Robert Rommel

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## RECENT AREA BIRD SIGHTINGS

by Jack Colcolough

Area bird sightings continue to be excellent with > 110 species reported in our area in the last month. With the advent of a very warm Winter, we have not seen the larger numbers of each species including Winter Ducks, Sparrows, Yellow-rumped Warblers, American Goldfinch and others that we have usually seen here in past Winters. Our Spring migration has begun and we are seeing a few of our early arrivals and migrants ... Ovenbird and Northern Waterthrush.



**Long-billed Curlew**

Rare species reported the past month included: Long-billed Curlew at Mitchelville Beach Park on HHI, Brown Creeper in Palmetto Dunes on HHI, irruptive Red-breasted Nuthatch in Beaufort, Black-chinned and Rufous Hummingbirds in Savannah, Snowy Plover at Little Tybee Island, Fox Sparrow at Webb WMA, Barn Owl and Lincoln Sparrow in Chatham County, GA and Western Kingbird at Hutchinson Island.

Out-of-season species reported were: Summer Tanager, Painted Bunting and a good number of “over-wintering” Ruby-throated Hummingbirds.

Many Uncommon species reported included: American Woodcock, Common Goldeneye, Redhead (duck), Ruddy Duck, endangered Piping and Wilson’s Plovers, American Bittern, Rusty Blackbird, many migrant Baltimore Orioles, Dark-eyed Junco, Purple Finch, American Avocet, Long-billed Dowitcher, Greater Scaup, American White Pelican, Whimbrel, Peregrine Falcon, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Seaside Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, American Kestrel, Merlin, Stilt Sandpiper, American Pipit, Mottled Duck, Glossy Ibis, Red-throated Loon, Greater and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, White-winged, Eurasian-collared and Common Ground Doves, Winter, Sedge and House Wrens, Orange-crowned Warbler, Blue-headed Vireo, Hairy Woodpecker, Wild Turkey, White-breasted Nuthatch and Golden-crowned Kinglet.



**Rufous Hummingbird**

Winter birds and “Good Finds” reported this month include: Red Knot, Wilson’s Snipe, Northern Gannet, Bonaparte’s Gull, Sora, many Bald Eagles (some nesting), Red-headed Woodpecker, American Goldfinch, Eastern Screech Owl, Red-breasted Merganser, American Wigeon, Surf Scoter, Cattle Egret, Horned Grebe, many Cedar Waxwings and American Robins and others.



**Brown Creeper**

Many thanks to all reporting your bird sightings: Cindy/Ken Groff, Susan Murphy, Jane/Abe Hester, Dottie Bass, Carol Clemens, Fran/Denny Baer, Joanne McMEnamin, Shelia/Roger Johnson, Dorothy Mosior, Kathy/Grant Greiger, Doreen Cubie, Miho Kinnas, Diana Churchill, Steve Calver, Russ Wigh, Buddy Campbell, Mary Alice Tartler, Nancy Male, Dick Phillips, Kay Grinnell, Bob Speare, Bob White and many visitors.

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](mailto: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. Keep up the good work of reporting your “Good Bird Finds” on Birding Friends! It’s a great time to go birding since our Spring migration has begun and our beautiful warmer Spring days are here!

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## ***Wild Birds Unlimited Returning to Hilton Head Island***

If you've spent any time at Festival Centre on the north side of the island recently, you may have noticed the construction paper and "Coming Soon" signs on the windows at the former location of Wild Birds Unlimited. HHI residents Julia and Sean Dennis purchased the store late last summer, and have been renovating the space in preparation for a reopening planned for late March 2017, with an official Grand Opening planned the weekend of April 22-23. The store will have new products and old favorites, and a new bird seed discount program. The new owners plan to work with us on our annual seed sale as well.

They are also currently accepting applications from anyone who may be interested in working part-time at the store. You may contact them at [HiltonHeadWBU@yahoo.com](mailto:HiltonHeadWBU@yahoo.com) to inquire about receiving an application via email.



### **8 NUTTY FACTS ABOUT SQUIRRELS**

1. Squirrels are known for constantly foraging and hoarding food....and for stealing! They lose 25 percent of their food to theft by birds and other squirrels.
2. Celebrate furry friends on Jan. 21: National Squirrel Appreciation Day.
3. A handful of these mischievous creatures was first released in 1877 in New York's Central Park, where the population has since flourished.
4. Squirrels are surprisingly fast; at top speed, they can run 20 mph.
5. Their superhero-like talent to reach seemingly inaccessible bird feeders comes from the ability to rotate their hind feet 180 degrees.
6. There are 285 squirrel species around the world and three over-arching kinds: ground, tree and flying.
7. Most gray types can pull off an 8-foot jump from a stationary position.
8. A squirrel's four front teeth grow about 10 inches a year. (Gnawing keeps them short.)

*(from Birds and Blooms)*

### **HEAD OVER HEELS FOR NUTHATCHES**

- If you feed backyard birds, you likely get visits from nuthatches. They are keen on seeds and suet, particularly during the winter. In the East, the white-breasted nuthatch is a standard feeder bird, along with the black-capped or Carolina chickadees and downy woodpeckers.



Nuthatches are a well-defined family of birds. All of them make their living finding food hidden in the bark of trees. They are famous for their ability to crawl head down while foraging - no easy feat! Well, you see a different set of insects

- hiding in the tree when you go down than you do going up. The brown creeper heads up the trees, never down. So, perhaps they divide up the insects in bark niches by each going in a different direction?

- There are four species of nuthatches in North America. Generally speaking, white-breasted nuthatches are widespread and found both in the East and West, but breeds in the North or mountains and is largely migratory in many parts of the eastern United States, being found in winter.

- In the West you find the pygmy nuthatch, and in the East you find the brown-headed nuthatch. Nuthatches have a unique body shape: Stocky would be the word, with a rotund body and ridiculously short tail. Their legs are strong, and for their size, nuthatches have huge feet. They have short necks and large heads, with distinctively upturned bills.

*From Bird Watcher's Digest, article by Alvaro Jaramillo*

## Letter: Beach also belongs to the birds

Your recent photograph captured a happy family tossing bread crumbs to gulls on a Hilton Head Island beach. Actually, these generous people are not helping the birds. Bread distends the gulls' stomachs, preventing them from eating their natural diet and, of course, makes them dependent on handouts. It's better to just watch wildlife.

Another problem is the frequent walking, jogging, biking and dog-running through flocks of shorebirds resting on the sands. Many humans barely notice these small creatures who not only deserve to share the beach habitat with us, but depend on it to live. Many birds have flown thousands of miles from their nesting grounds in the arctic, some wintering here and others flying as far as the southern tip of South America.

They are exhausted and hungry and need the small sections of beach to rest and find food to keep them alive. When humans (or dogs) disturb a small group, the birds must fly out of the way, expending precious energy to find food, vital for their ongoing journey. Put yourself in their place, and think of the stress.

We use the beach for recreation, while birds depend on it for their very survival. Since we share the space, humans can adopt some simple courtesy. Pay your respects and go around the small gatherings so the birds may refuel and rest for another day. And perhaps people will stop for a bit to observe their behavior, learn who they are, why they are here and how we can help protect them from harm.

DEBBY BOOTS  
HILTON HEAD ISLAND



## Results of the 2016 Baltimore Oriole Winter Survey

SC DNR held the second annual Baltimore Oriole Winter Survey on 12-15 February 2016. Results are in and for the second year in a row, SC had the largest number of orioles wintering in the US.

Participants counted and recorded the largest number of orioles they could see at one time, on one, two, three or all four days of the survey period. When possible, sexes and ages were also noted. This year SC had 65 reports and tallied 463 orioles. Reports were down by a few, from last year, but we recorded a larger number of orioles from last year's 304. Orioles were recorded in 14 SC counties and ranged from the upstate, through the midlands and along the coast, from North Myrtle Beach to Hilton Head. The Charleston area had the largest number of reports and orioles recorded in the state.

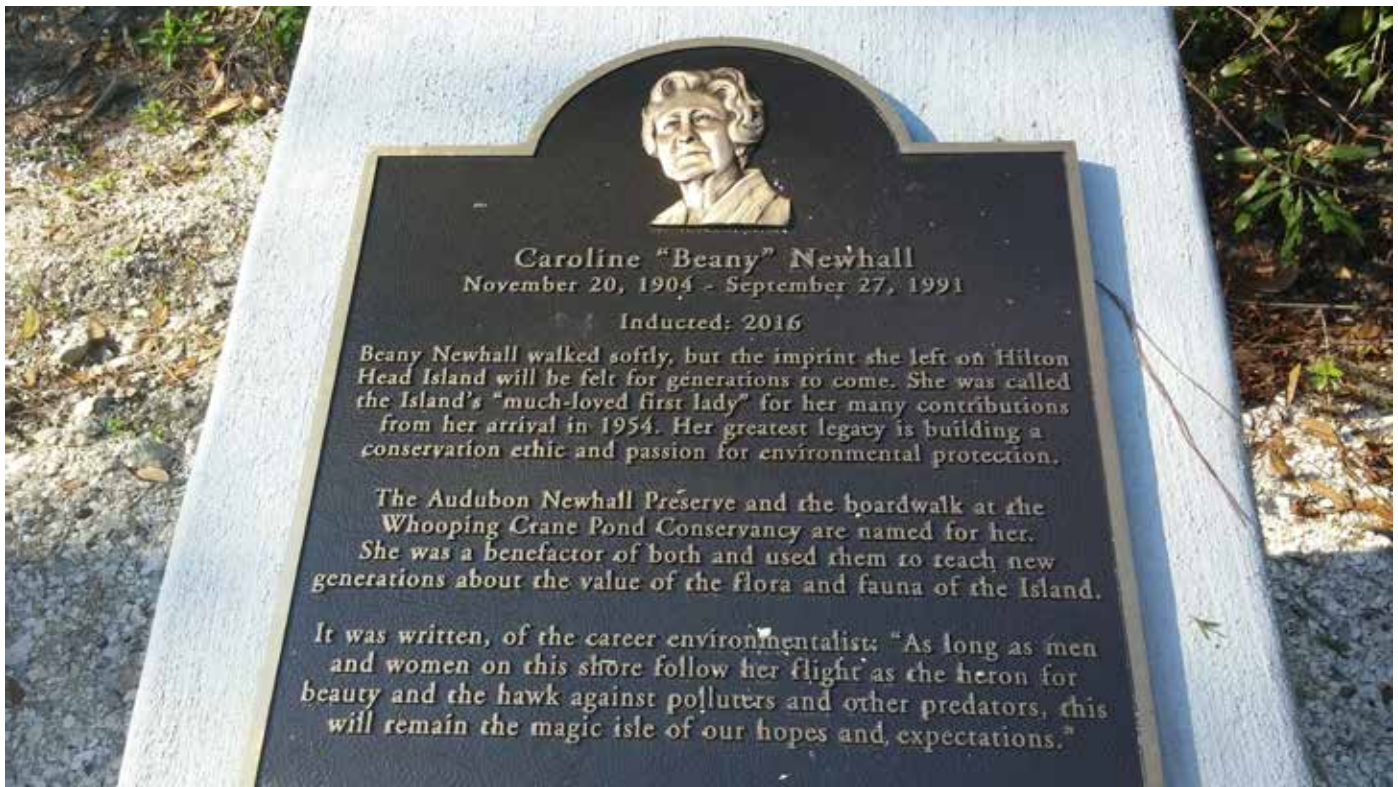
There were 304 reports and 1194 orioles tallied this year in the US. Florida had the largest number of reports, with 79. SC tied with North Carolina for the second largest number of reports. Orioles ranged from Maine to Florida and over to Mississippi and Tennessee. There was even reports from Nova Scotia and a report from southern California this year.

SC DNR would like to thank everyone that participated in the survey. Your time and efforts are greatly appreciated.

Lex Glover, Wildlife Technician, SC DNR  
Bird Conservation Program, Columbia, SC



Photo by Jerry Kerschner, Pawleys Island, SC



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## MONARCH BUTTERFLY STILL IN DEEP TROUBLE

The recently released annual "overwintering" count of monarch butterflies confirms that their numbers have fallen by 27 percent since last year - and more than 80 percent since the mid-1990s.

This year's dramatic decline is partly due to extreme storms that killed millions of monarchs last March in Mexico's mountain forests, to which 99 percent of these beautiful butterflies migrate in winter. But their overall decline is mostly caused by pesticides that kill milkweed plants - monarch caterpillers' only food - plus habitat loss in the past 20 years. Monarchs may have lost more than 165 million acres of habitat.



"The monarch's in really big trouble and needs really big help if we are going to save this beloved orange-and-black wonder" said Tierra Curry, senior scientist for the Center for Biological Diversity.

## Changes for April monthly meeting.

Date: Wednesday April 5 at 4 pm  
Location: Sun City's Amenities Center.

We are lucky to join with Sun City Bird Club to hear Dr. Rothenberg speak to us about Painted Buntings. He has headed a research program on the East Coast since 2005.

Thanks to Doreen Cubie for arranging the speaker and to Noah Rosenberg and Dave Davies for making all the arrangements.

Gate passes and directions to the meeting will be posted on Facebook and flyers will be available at the March 9th meeting.



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**843-340-8673**

 **Audubon**

## Membership Report for February 2017

*Hi fellow birders!*

Please welcome the following new members who have joined us since our last Ecobon was published.



**Tom Donaher family**

**Jacqueline Emery**

**Pam Shirley family**

*– part time residents from Kentucky*

**Ron and Rita Sorber**

*– part time residents from Loganville, GA*

Thanks to all who renew their memberships in a timely manner! 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 [cclemens318@roadrunner.com](mailto:cclemens318@roadrunner.com) or Fran at [seatwo@roadrunner.com](mailto:seatwo@roadrunner.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.*



# Audubon

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Hilton Head Island, South Carolina 29938

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## MARCH ~ APRIL 2017 Calendar

### MARCH

Thurs. Mar. 2 Board Meeting at CCHH .....10:00 am

Sat. Mar. 4 Field Trip to Bear Island .....9:00 am

Thurs. Mar. 9 Monthly Meeting at Palmetto Electric .....3:00 pm

Weds. Apr. 5 Monthly Meeting at Sun City .....4:00 pm

Thurs. Apr. 6 Board Meeting at CCHH .....10:00 am

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.