



APRIL 2017
No. 372

Ecobon

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

APRIL PROGRAM *by: Kathy Greider, Program Director*

Wednesday, April 5, 2017 4:00 pm

April 5th

Special Program Announcement

YOU MUST RSVP FOR THIS PROGRAM

Call Kathy Greider 404.313.8208

By March 31, 2017 to RSVP

Please Read This Entire Announcement



Date: Wednesday April 5

Time: 4 pm

Location: Sun City's Amenities Center

For our April meeting, we are lucky to join with the 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.

You MUST RSVP for this meeting. There will be a Gate Pass available to those who RSVP. Please use the Main Entrance Gate on Rt 278. Just tell them you are going to the Bird Club meeting and you will be given a pass with directions. However, remember that you **MUST RSVP** for this program!

Directions to the meeting will be printed on the back side of the pass.

Come and support our joint meeting.

Call Kathy Greider 404.313.8208

HII Audubon

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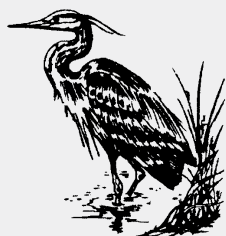
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The *Ecobon* is a monthly publication (September through May) of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society. Subscription is a benefit of membership.

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*

Common Sense

In 1776 Thomas Paine published one of the seminal works of American political thought, a pamphlet entitled 'Common Sense'. In this work he assailed the monarchy of England as the cause of many of the woes of the colonies. The work was a smash success and helped lead the colonies to a Declaration of Independence later that year.

I typically avoid talking about politics for a wide variety of reasons. But every once in a while something happens that seems in such violation of common sense that it needs to be mentioned. In recent days two changes in our conservation policies have been enacted. On his first day of office as Interior Secretary, Ryan Zinke reversed the recent ban on lead ammunition and fishing tackle on wildlife refuges.

The ban was instituted because lead ammunition and tackle can wind up being eaten by animals, notably carrion eating birds like our Bald Eagles. As you might expect, lead can be lethal to those animals. The ban seems common sense but opposition was centered on the fact that the ban was put through without typical due process, without consultation with local Fish and Wildlife agencies and that in the case of a small number of firearms non-lead alternatives did not exist. I would point out that waterfowl has successfully been hunted lead-free since 1991 and 14 counties in California have lead-free hunting (hunting in all of California will be lead-free in 2019).

In this first example, there are at least some grounds for argument with the process and scope of the original ban. The second and more recent decision flies in the face of all common sense. On March 22nd, the Senate repealed a series of restrictions on National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska. Fish and Wildlife Services established these restrictions to manage hunting on federal land. The restrictions prohibited killing cubs of wolves and bears and when in dens. It also forbid hunting predators by locating them with a helicopter and then landing nearby for the kill. It also bans certain methods of trapping predators. At the same time, most hunters widely view these practices as unsportsmanlike and the Alaskan public is 2:1 in favor of banning these practices. Native groups near the affected refuges also are in favor of the restrictions. Yet it was framed as an issue of federal overreach rather than common sense.

There has to be some common ground between both parties and collaboration between different branches of the government to aim for common sense laws and regulations. While I had planned to spend some time observing wolves in Alaska, until we make some steps back towards common sense, any future trips I make to observe wolves will unfortunately be to Canada.

Robert Rommel



Save this Date

Thursday, May 4th 5:30 pm

Annual Hilton Head Island Audubon Society Annual Picnic
Waddell Mariculture Center

RECENT AREA BIRD SIGHTINGS

by Jack Colcolough

Reported bird sightings continue to be excellent for many Rare, Uncommon and “Good Find” species in our area. We are in the middle of our active Spring migration with warbler and other migrant species moving through our area while our Summer birds are arriving. Many of our ducks and other Winter species are thinning out and moving northward for the Summer.



Black-chinned Hummingbird

Many “Uncommon” species reported included: Irruptive Purple Finch and Pine Siskin, American Woodchuck, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Prairie and Orange-crowned Warblers, Blue Grosbeak, Mississippi Kite, Common Goldeneye, Ruddy Duck, endangered Piping and Wilson’s Plovers, American Bittern, Rusty Blackbird, migrant Baltimore Orioles, Dark-eyed Junco, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Long-billed Dowitcher, American White Pelican, Caspian Tern, Peregrine Falcon, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Vesper Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, American Kestrel, Merlin, Stilt Sandpiper, American Pipit, Glossy Ibis, Red-throated Loon, Greater Black-backed Gulls, Eurasian-collared Dove, House Wren, Blue-headed Vireo, Wild Turkey, White-breasted Nuthatch and Golden-crowned Kinglet.

Other significant and “Good Find” birds reported this month include: Early migrant American Restart, early Prothonotary Warbler, arriving Northern Parula, Yellow-throated and Black & White Warblers, Hermit Thrush, early Purple Martin, early Barn and Northern Rough-winged Swallows, Wilson’s Snipe, Common Loon, Sora, many Bald Eagles (some nesting), Red-headed Woodpecker, many very late American Goldfinch, Eastern Screech Owl, Marbled Godwit, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, American Wigeon, Surf Scoter and many Cedar Waxwings and American Robins and others.

Many thanks to all reporting your bird sightings: Cindy/Ken Groff, Susan Murphy, Jane/Abe Hester, Dottie Bass, Carol Clemens, Fran/Denny Baer, Pauline Johnson, 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.



Oven Bird

“Rare” species reported the past month included: Migrant Scarlet Tanager in Sea Pines, Brown Creeper in Palmetto Dunes, Black-chinned Hummingbird in Savannah, early migrant Blackpoll Warbler and Snow Goose at Savannah NWR, migrant Blue-winged Warbler and Lincoln Sparrow in Chatham County, GA, Bachman’s Sparrow at Webb WMA, Pectoral and Solitary Sandpipers and King Rail at Onslow Island - SNWR and Common Ground Dove on Tybee Island.

“Out-Of-Season” species reported were: Painted Bunting, over-wintering Summer Tanager and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds.



Blue-winged Warbler

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. Please continue to report your good birds sighted on Birding Friends!

It’s a great time to go birding since our Spring migration is ON and our beautiful warmer Spring days are here!

Conservation Update ~ Surveys Continue at The Folly Inlet

Since October 2013, a small group of Audubon volunteers has been conducting bird surveys at the Folly Inlet. We started this project after the Town of Hilton Head proposed beach park facilities at Burkes and Collier Beaches, a boardwalk across the Folly and a large parking lot, all as part of the Chaplin Linear Park. We met with the Town representatives about the project and alerted them to our concerns and our monitoring project.

The Folly is an important natural resource. Here is Todd Ballantine's description of this mid-island area: "The Folly is the last remaining tidal inlet on the Hilton Head Island ocean shore. It is protected from development by federal and state regulations, as well as the Town's Wetland Protection Ordinance. This inlet is a "pressure valve" that mitigates the erosion of the beach from longshore currents and storm waves by allowing a high volume of seawater to flow in and out of the meandering channel and its broad tidal marsh."



Our survey is designed to meet several goals: determine which wildlife use the area, determine which portions of the habitat are critical for the survival of wildlife, and to determine how best we can manage the area for both recreational enjoyment and preservation of our natural resources. Lastly, if the area does suffer catastrophic change, the survey will document the negative impacts on our wildlife.

We follow a protocol we developed with Robert Rommel's guidance. Each survey takes about two hours and we do 30 per year. We vary the observation times of day and the tide levels. We count all of the birds we see, identifying the species, activity (feeding, resting, flying) and location (trees, marsh, dunes, beach, etc.).

We also note disruptions, including dogs off leash and crowds of beachgoers. Last fall we had the disruption of beach renourishment. The equipment and pipes were stored in the scrub area at Collier Beach, leveling much of the habitat there. (This area is at the end of Singleton Beach Road.) We are still assessing the impact of Hurricane Matthew.

Fran Baer schedules the surveys and records the data on what is now a massive spreadsheet. Our results have been pretty consistent over the years. Fran also takes great photos of individual birds and flocks that she can use to verify field identifications. Some of her photos are included with this article. Her team includes Susan Murphy, Miho Kinnas, Jack Greenshields and Susan Thomas.

The Town's plan for Chaplin Linear Park has slipped down the priority list, especially with the Hurricane Matthew cleanup. It is currently "on hold," per the Town website: <http://hiltonheadislandsc.gov/cip/cipdetails.cfm?CIPID=3>

Other priorities ahead of this are the Coligny area redevelopment and the USCB campus. However, part of the Coligny plan is to redirect some beach traffic to other beaches on the island, so the pressure is still on these "quieter" beaches. We will continue to monitor the area and give feedback on preserving this unique resource.

Susan Murphy



OSPREY NESTING SEASON IS HERE!

By John Faucette

Dianne and I are beginning our 9th year monitoring osprey activity on Hilton Head Island. With the help of many osprey watchers, we are currently monitoring 46 nests scattered throughout Hilton Head Island and reporting the behavior of these beautiful raptors through the Osprey Watch program managed by the Low Country Institute on Spring Island. The behavior of osprey can serve as an environmental indicator because they require a healthy fishery to survive. The statistics gathered for Hilton Head Island are part of a larger study conducted by The Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William and Mary.



photo by John Faucette

Osprey return to Hilton Head Island by February/March each year, usually to the same nest, and become reacquainted with their life-long mate. They have spent the winter in different locations, mostly in South America. Some osprey are returning to find that their nest or entire tree was a victim of Hurricane Matthew. We expect to see a lot of new nests constructed, usually very near the location of their previous nest. By March they have spruced up their nest and will lay one to three eggs. We begin our monitoring activities in March/April, and observe each nest for about 15 minutes each month..

We need your help in locating and monitoring additional osprey nests. I'm sure there are dozens of nests that we are unaware of. All you need is a pair of binoculars and a little time to look up into the trees near where you live or visit on the island. Our territory begins at the island foot of the bridge and covers the entire island. We need to especially locate nests in Sea Pines, North and South Forest Beach, Point Comfort, Wexford, and Long Cove. We are currently monitoring only a couple of nests in these areas. As an osprey watcher, you would email your observations to be included in my monthly report.

If you can help with this fascinating program, please contact me at johnfaucette@yahoo.com or 843-785-2899. The nesting season is from February thru August, so please let me hear from you soon.

If you'd like to learn more information about the osprey and their behavior, go to www.osprey-watch.org.

SUN-DRIED WINGS

Comorants use their wings to help push them through the water, so the wings get somewhat waterlogged. Waterfowl, on the other hand, don't use their wings under water.

Comorant wing feathers are structured in a manner that allows them to get somewhat saturated, which allows the wings to efficiently push the bird through the water. Most birds produce natural oils from a preen gland that they spread through the feathers when preening, and these oils help the feathers repel water. Comorants don't spread much oil onto their feathers. They literally need to dry out their wings before being able to fly efficiently.

Waterfowl fall into two basic categories. Dabblers don't typically submerge under water, using just their big webbed feet to propel them across the water's surface. Diving ducks do submerge, but they only use their feet for propulsion, keeping the wings folded. They also liberally oil their wing feathers when preening.



(from *Bird Watcher's Digest*, by Mark S. Garland)

Some thoughts on Blue Bird Boxes

Carlos Chacon, Manager of Natural History, Coastal Discovery Museum

Many people and organizations are putting up and caring for Blue Bird Boxes at this time of the year. Often, each follows different guidelines to care for bird boxes. Many fit their boxes with predator guards to prevent predators from accessing the box and potentially eating the birds or eggs. Purchased boxes often come with instructions that encourage care takers to evict birds of other species as chickadees and flying squirrels that move into Blue Bird boxes.

The Coastal Discovery Museum has close to 30 bird boxes spread through the museum's Honey Horn grounds. As an organization devoted to making a difference in the way people think and interact with the environment of the Lowcountry, we care deeply about the Lowcountry and its wildlife. However, the museum has adopted the policy of not evicting any native birds or other native wildlife that nest in one of our boxes. We will, however, evict non-native birds such as European Starlings and European House Sparrows. Non-native species compete with native species and can be out of balance with the local environment, thus having a detrimental effect on the native wildlife. Native species belong here and play a role in the ecosystem. Some particular species such as Eastern Flying squirrels can predate bird boxes and many people get rid of them if they find them on a bird box. However, as part of our native wildlife, they deserve to be here as much as the Blue Birds. This is also true for other native bird species that often use Blue Bird boxes, such as Carolina Wrens, Carolina Chickadees and others. At the museum, we choose not to evict any of these species from our boxes.

At the museum we also do not have predator guards in our bird boxes, although we may add some on selected boxes in the future. We will always leave some boxes without guards, and therefore exposed to potential predators. Predators that can potentially raid bird boxes, such as snakes and raccoons, are native animals and deserve as much protection as Blue Birds. Although we do lose some of the eggs or hatchlings in our boxes to predators every year, we consider this part of nature and do not feel we have to eliminate those predators or absolutely protect our boxes against them. In fact some of the predators, such as snakes, have seen population decreases over time, and therefore may deserve more and stronger protection than more numerous species such as Blue Birds. The fact that a bird is pretty to human eyes, does not make it more important or more worthy of protection than other species. All native species are valuable and are worthy of protection. Many, although not perceived as pretty by most, are playing a vital role in the environment.



Christmas Bird Count Update

The Regional Editor has completed his review of our December 15, 2016, count.

Here are the final numbers:

Species: 130

Birds: 25,353



The final results (Ten-Year History) are on the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society Website:
<http://www.hiltonheadaudubon.org/audubon-christmas-bird-count>

Susan Murphy
CBC Coordinator

Volunteer Opportunity: Be a Shorebird Steward!

Audubon South Carolina's Coastal Program Coordinator, Nolan Schillerstrom, has asked if our Chapter can participate in its Shorebird Stewardship Program. If we get enough volunteers to sign up, Nolan will come to Hilton Head for a training session this summer, and we would begin the program in time for the Fall migration.

What it entails: Volunteers would sign up for shifts at specified public beach access points. Volunteers would provide a "presence" at the beach to answer questions about our birds: who they are, when and why they come here, what their needs are, and especially, the effects of disturbance by people and pets on our diminishing numbers of shorebirds. We might hand out our "shorebird information cards" and have a spotting scope set up to let people see birds close up without disturbing them.

Training: Volunteers would learn how to respond to questions, how to approach and/or engage people, how to handle an "emergency" (i.e. who to call), etc. Primary to understand is that "enforcement" of beach regulations would not be our "job".

Examples of access points to staff: Mitchelville Beach, Burkes Beach, perhaps Collier/Singleton Beach.

We already have eight members signed up! Please consider joining in this effort. Our site coverage and schedule will depend on the number of dedicated volunteers that will participate. For more information about this program, go to www.audubonsouthcarolina.org and click on the Conservation, then Coasts, then Shorebird Stewardship!

Please email Fran Baer (seatwo@roadrunner.com) if you would like to add your name to the volunteer list. Please include your phone number.



Photo ~ Nolan Schillerstrom of Audubon South Carolina

Membership Report for April 2017

Hi fellow birders!

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



**Carol Beck
Lynn Hodgson
Carl Samberg**

Kent Sidel and Annette Walker

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.

We also greatly appreciate the extra donations that many members are making when they renew. There is a line on the membership form donations.

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



Founded in 1974, the Hilton Head Audubon Society uses 100% of local membership dues for programs and activities in our own area. Your local dues provide support for the following:

- Monthly programs
- Field Trips
- Citizen Science projects such as the Christmas Bird Count
- Audubon Newhall Preserve
- Education Outreach programs
- Various learning opportunities

We need your help to continue these activities. All of the above are possible through our LOCAL DUES! We do NOT receive national funds for any of our local programs. Please join the Hilton Head Island chapter of the Audubon Society and support these local programs. Remember.....100% of the chapter dues stay LOCAL!

For membership information, contact: hhiaudubon@gmail.com

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Please detach and mail or bring to the next meeting.

Local Membership: select either 1 year individual \$15 or 1 year family \$25

I wish to make an extra donation of _____(amount)

Last Name _____ First Name(s) _____

Address: _____ city _____ State _____ Zip _____

For LOCAL residents, please indicate your plantation/neighborhood such as Sea Pines, Indigo Run, Bluffton, Sun City etc. _____

Preferred phone: _____

Email: _____ (please print clearly!)

Can you help us with any of these activities on an as needed basis? Please check any of interest to you. Audubon Newhall Preserve Help with Field Trips Conservation Education Christmas Bird Count Publicity/Programs other _____

Please mail to: P.O. Box 6185 – Hilton Head Island, SC - 29938 (Rev. 2/2017)



Audubon

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ECOBON
P. O. Box 6185
Hilton Head Island, South Carolina 29938

Title: Ecobon
Issue Date: April 2017
Frequency: Monthly Sept.-May
Organization: Hilton Head Island Audubon Society
P.O. Box 6185
Hilton Head, South Carolina 29938
Issue #: 372

APRIL ~ May 2017 Calendar

APRIL

Weds. Apr. 5 Monthly Meeting at Sun City4:00 pm

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

MAY

Thurs. May 4 Annual Picnic5:30 pm
at Wadell mariculture Center

Sat. May 6 Field Trip - Solomon Track.....TBA

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.