

May 2010
No. 310

ECOBON



Newsletter of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society
Audubon Refuge Keepers

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Bill Nicol

Our annual picnic on May 11 ends our meeting schedule and starts our summer break. We have had a pretty good year with excellent programs provided by Charlotte White and great trips by our Field Trip Coordinator, Kay Hodnett. Your Board of Directors was very involved, enthusiastic and willing to do some forward thinking and deal with several problem issues. I thank them for all their support. We continue to have a viable, fiscally sound chapter and we look forward to bigger and better things.

As you know from the article in the April Ecobon, we have a full slate of officers for next year. Unfortunately several of us have volunteered to serve an additional term because we cannot get any of our members to agree to learn and serve as officers. We also have several committee Chairpersons who can no longer continue to serve and we are having difficulty finding replacements especially the Program Committee Chair. If you have any questions or want to help, please contact me or any of the officers.

One of our goals for this year was to strengthen our community involvement. We continue to have many opportunities to talk to various community groups but still do not have enough of the right people to handle all these requests. Your board is working with SC Audubon to get some tools to improve our capabilities.

Thank you for your participation and contributions. See you at the picnic, with a friend, and have a great and safe summer.

MAY PROGRAM *by Charlotte White*

Tuesday, May 11, 2010, 5:00 p.m. at the Waddell Center

A PICNIC AT THE WADDELL CENTER

We are going to have a little different adventure with this picnic. Drive out to the Waddell Mariculture Center in Bluffton, SC to the old Waddell home situated on a lovely bank looking over the Colleton River. Come at 5 PM for a tour of this Department of Natural Resources Research center. Food will be served at 6 PM.

When: Tuesday, May 11 at 5 PM

Cost: \$5.00

Where: Waddell Mariculture Center, Bluffton, SC. On 278, turn on Sawmill Creek Rd, across from Tanger 1. Drive several miles, looking for the sign on the left for Waddell. Turn into Waddell and drive on the pavement to the end, when you come to the river! Note the big Waddell grey home looking over the river.

Menu: Chicken (grilled or fried) will be provided.

If your last name begins with A – M, bring a side dish or salad for 6-8 people.

If your last name begins with N – Z, bring a dessert for 6 – 8 people.

What else to bring: a lawn chair and maybe some binoculars. If you want to be green, bring your own dishes and utensils. Audubon will provide paper products and tableware for those who cannot bring reusables. Drinks are provided.

Reservations: Please notify Charlotte White BY May 10 if you are coming. Write her at her email docwhite@hargray.com or call and leave a message on the home phone 837-4597 or cell 540-3858.

Hope to see you there. And bring a friend!

PS: Go to the site www.friendsofwaddell.org to learn about a picnic Friends is having at Waddell on May 2 from 4 – 8 pm. This is a fundraiser for Waddell with shrimp, fish, auction, tours and music.

ANOTHER BIRDLIKE DINOSAUR

Late last year, Chinese researchers unearthed multiple fossils of birdlike dinosaurs in north-western China, and these creatures attract ongoing discussion. Dubbed *Anchiornis huxleyi*, they predate *Archaeopteryx*, the commonly accepted first known bird, by perhaps 1 million to 11 million years. *Anchiornis* (meaning "near bird") may have had two types of feathers - one fuzzy and one more traditional - and had flight feathers on each of its four limbs. The transition from dinosaurs to birds is still poorly understood, but some paleontologists assert that this small "four-winged" creature (about the size of a yellow-billed cuckoo) must have been an important phase in the evolutionary transition from dinosaurs to birds.

HHI Audubon

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Clem Dietze	837-2612
Barry Lowes	671-3537
Nan Lloyd	363-2092
Betty Walter	842-7147
Joan Wilson	837-2874

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<i>Audubon Newhall Preserve</i>	
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<i>Bird Walks/Field Trips</i>	
Kay Hodnett	342-7485
<i>Bird House Construction</i>	
Jim Currie	681-8525
<i>Bird Seed Sale</i>	
Ed Nash	681-5725
<i>Christmas Bird Count</i>	
Barry Lowes	671-3537
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Charlotte White	837-4597
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<i>Wetlands/Conservation</i>	
Sally Krebs H: 757-2973 O: 341-4690	

Website: www.hiltonheadaudubon.org



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.

FIELD TRIPS *by Kay Hodnett*

On Saturday 15 May at 8:30 AM, and again on Tuesday 18 May at 11 AM, Howard Costa will take Audubon members on a five-hour boat trip to view shorebirds on Jones Island, Turtle Island, and Tomkins Island. The main attraction is Tomkins Island, an artificial island created as a mitigation for activities associated with the spoil disposal site along the South Carolina side of the Savannah River in Jasper, activities that destroyed shorebird nesting habitat.

Birds began nesting on Tomkins even before construction of the island was completed in 2005. By 2007 there were over 7,000 nesting pairs, and today a “no vacancy” sign could be posted, as the island is fully occupied—by pelicans, sandpipers, plovers, and especially Sandwich and Royal terns. David Lauderdale refers to Tomkins Island as a “Club Med” for birds. In reality, it may be more like a Motel Six, but it’s still the best available for many shorebirds. No humans are allowed on the island, but we can see the birds from Howard’s boat.

Don’t miss this rare opportunity! Price per person is \$50, payable the day of the trip (but, please, “no shows” are not acceptable for this trip). Sign up by contacting Kay Hodnett at 342-7485 or sallyportk@gmail.com. Limit for each trip is six people. If more sign up we will consider adding a third trip.

We will meet for each trip at Howard's boat, The Skimmer, docked in Shelter Cove. At the light across from Palmetto Dunes turn off 278 onto King Neptune, take the first left onto Shelter Cove Lane. The Arts Center will be on your left. Stay on Shelter Cove as it winds its way for about ¼ of a mile until you reach a parking area at the end, next to the Ocean Grille. Walk to the water and the Skimmer will be on your right.

FIELD TRIPS IN MAY

On Friday May 7 Clem Dietze will lead a field trip in Pinckney NWR. Due to Fish & Wildlife Service restrictions on vehicles entering the reserve this trip will be limited to 20 people in 5 vehicles. First come first served. Contact Clem at clemd@hargray.com if you wish to participate. We will meet in Pinckney’s parking lot at 8AM and finish by 12:30PM. If anyone wishes to bike the trip you may do so and not be in the restricted 20. Please let Clem know if you are participating in this manner. Our beloved painted buntings along with other summer residents such as white-eyed vireos, summer tanagers, and indigo buntings should be present. With global climate change who knows what else may show up.

GYRFALCON NEST: More Than 2,500 Years Old

Gyrfalcons and many other raptors are known to return to the same nest sites over long periods and many generations, but until recently nobody know how long this activity could persist. As part of a study of 13 gyrfalcon nests in Greenland, scientists have discovered a gyrfalcon nesting site that is at least 2,500 years old.

Researchers used radiocarbon dating of guano and nest debris to determine that one nest in Kangerlussuaq (in central-west Greenland) is surely more than 2,500 years old. Three other nests in the area are more than 1,000 years old.

NOTES FROM THE NEWHALL PRESERVE

by Joan Shulman

Our first two Spring guided walks were a great success--30 people participated. (The third walk has not yet taken place as I write this.) As usual, most who came were visitors to the Island. A few were residents who wanted to know more about the local natural habitat. Some had lived here for awhile, others were newcomers to the area.

We appreciate the publicity given to our events in the Newhall by the tourist magazines (Island Events and Where to Go on Hilton Head) and the Island Packet. Most walk participants say they saw the information in one of these publications. I do get calls about the Preserve from people who have checked the local Audubon Web site. We will have another series of walks in October.

Thanks to Ron Howenstine for monitoring the trails in April. We still need Trail Monitors for June, July, and September. If you can help out, call me at 842-9246.

Thanks again to the Jones Brothers Tree Surgeons for providing us with wood chips for the main trail, and especially for spreading the chips.

The Preserve is looking good. We know lots of individuals visit because the supply of Trail Guides needs to be replenished a couple of times a week. The comments in the Visitor's Book are always interesting to read.

Happy Summer Everyone.

E-MAIL Reminder

Have you sent your E-mail address in to Nan?

If not, please send it to Nan at nan@nanhiltonhead.com.

JUST A REMINDER

Birdhouses have a limited lifespan, so check yours to make sure that time, weather, and our friendly squirrels have not taken their toll on it. This is a good time to replace old houses and install new ones so your feathered friends will have a cozy place to shelter this winter, and a nice fresh abode for next spring's nesting season. A nice birdhouse also makes a very nice gift.



RECENT AREA BIRD SIGHTINGS

by Jack Colcolough

Spring has sprung and many bird songs are in the air. Spring was welcomed here by all after a cold winter. Summer arrivals are progressing nicely but spring migrants have been very slow to arrive and late this year. Some winter birds are still here.

The highlight of the month was an accidental sighting of a Spotted Redshank by visitor, Sally Steiner (Ed Nash's daughter) on a lagoon in Port Royal Plantation. This Eurasian bird is a casual visitor to our coast in spring and winter. The sighted bird was a black shorebird in full breeding plumage with white spots on its back and dark red legs and bill. Only a few of these birds have been seen in South Carolina over the years. This accidental sighting was reported to the SC Records Committee.

The only rare bird found this month was a King Rail in Sea Pines. Uncommon birds reported included: Peregrine Falcon, Yellow-throated Vireo, Piping Plover, Swallow-tailed Kite and Baltimore Oriole.

Winter shorebirds have appeared in large numbers (1000 - 4000) at the Fish Haul Creek beach. Dunlins have been the predominate species with many Black Skimmers, Marbled Godwits, terns, plovers, gulls and sandpipers, etc. Specific data are being collected to apply to the state Audubon Society to make this great HHI birding area an official SC Important Bird Area (IBA).

Warblers found this month were: Prothonotary, Black & White, Yellow-throated, Yellow-rumped, Pine and Northern Parula. We hope to soon find more warbler species during our late spring migration.

First-of-the-year birds reported included: Chuck-wills-widow, Purple Martin, American Kestrel, Glossy Ibis, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Painted Bunting, Green Heron, Wood Duck, Orchard Oriole, Red-eyed Vireo, Great-crested Flycatcher, Eurasian-collared Dove, Gray Catbird and Canada Goose.

Thanks to all birders that reported their sightings: Kay Hodnett, Doris Stoner, Ray Thimineur, Royce Hough, Dottie Bass, Miriam Waterhouse, Denny/Fran Baer, Dianne Faucette, Ed Nash, Mary Jane Major, Wendy Hansen, Carol Clemens, Bill/Geri Green and several visitors.

To report a rare, uncommon, first-of-the-year or season or out-of-season bird sighting, please e-mail: Birding-Friends@yahoo.com or call 290-1508. Please state your name, date and location of your sighting and any appropriate comments.

Field Trip Report *by Jack Colcolough*

Hi Birders,

The HHI Audubon had a successful field trip to the new Botany Bay Plantation WMA on Edisto Island, SC on a beautiful spring day. The group birded the maritime forest, coastal wetlands, agricultural fields and a barrier island with a pristine beach on the Atlantic Ocean. We took a driving tour with birding stops, ate lunch and then birded along this secluded ocean beach. This fine trip was graciously led site staff member Bess Pellet and volunteer Frank Kirk and organized by our Kay Hodnett. Many thanks to them for a job well done!

We tallied a good total of 58 bird species at this site.

Highlights of the day included:

- Endangered Piping Plover (5)
- FOTY and uncommon Wilson's Plover (2) that breeds there*
- FOTY Least Tern (This site has the largest breeding population for this species in SC)
- Adult Bald Eagle in flight
- A beautiful FOTY Summer Tanager

Other good birds sighted were: American Oystercatcher, Ruddy Turnstone, Royal Tern, Semipalmated and Black-bellied Plovers, Tricolored Heron, FOTY Great Crested Flycatcher, FOTY Eastern Kingbird, House Wren, Cedar Waxwing, Red-tailed Hawk, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, White-eyed Vireo, Gray Catbird, Northern Parula, and Yellow-throated Warbler plus common species.

Good Birding, Jack

Local Group Encourages New Birders

by Mary Jane Major, Bird ID Group on HH Plantation

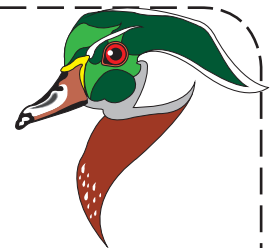
In Hilton Head Plantation's monthly newsletter back in January, Miriam Waterhouse posted a small "want ad" for anyone interested in learning how to identify birds. The ad read: "Are you interested in birds but not always sure what species you are looking at? Would you be interested in a casual group activity of learning to learn the basics of birding and identifying what you see? No dues, no officers, casual and field trip educational experiences." Contact information was a phone call.

When the interested person called, their names, email address, phone number, and days and times during the week were noted and then used to set gatherings. We have about 20 interested birders. Next fall, we will have a couple one hour meetings per week from November through the Christmas Bird Count, so they can be confident enough to participate in that illustrious experience. We had a concluding Beer and Bird Fly-by Pot Luck which was terrific. The hundreds of Ibis, Egrets, and Herons that have flown past our Skull Creek condo, apparently flew past in the tree tops while we were all eating and drinking beer, for not one measly white bird was spotted! The birding highlight of the evening was the 2 Brown Thrashers scratching away under our breakfast nook window! Squeals of joy resounded with the appearance of those two yellow-eyed beauties! If someone can make the commitment to helping others learn about bird ID, there is a great longing out there for someone to help the interested but uninformed! It is a great joy to experience the novice learning about birds! As an example, just last year, our illustrious President Bill Nicol, allowed me to join one of the last Piping Plover counts at Port Royal Beach, near Fish Haul Creek; without his help, and Arnie's help, I would never had seen this endangered Piping Plover! Birding is a Blast!!!

PLEASE NOTE: Current members are encouraged to use this membership form to sign up friends, relatives, and neighbors as new members. Our Chapter benefits significantly from a "return of dues" from National if our local form is used for new memberships

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY CHAPTER

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**PINCKNEY VOLUNTEERS
WIN COVETED AWARD**

Each year wildlife refuge Project Leaders nominate their uniformed volunteers to be named volunteers of the year for their region.

This year our own "Pinckney 10" won out over almost 100 refuges in the Southeast Region which includes North & South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Puerto Rico, and The V irgin Islands.

On May 13 this group will be presented with the award at a ceremony during the FWS conference in Atlanta. They are all going at FWS expense.

Our Savannah National Wildlife Refuges Project Leader, Jane Griess nominated the group on the basis of the projects accomplished and hours expended in caring for a refuge which has no resident Ranger.

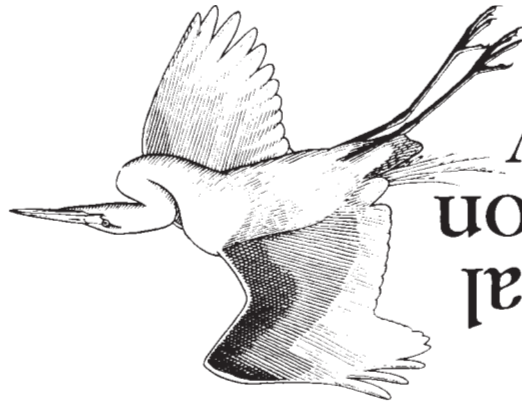
The group works under the direction of Mike Mc Ginty who spots a need and calls out the troops much as he did during his days as a USAF General. Mike himself spends countless hours in our summer heat operating the huge tractor/mower for which he took special training to keep the trails and fields open for visitors.

Clem Dietze and Karen Mc Ginty monitor 25 Blue-bird boxes on the refuge every week from March to December. The other members are Bill Hamel, Buck Hackett, Connie & Dale Terrell, Twila Gray, Dick Hansen, and Susan Henderson and these folks along with the aforementioned do almost everything from clearing debris from trails, pruning trees, collecting trash, maintaining signage, and whatever else Mike or FWS dream up. The Master Gardeners with some help from us maintain our beautiful Butterfly Garden.

This is indeed an honor and reflects well on us as well as the monetary contributions HHI Audubon has made to Pinckney.

Place your ad here!

Call Bill Nicol
for more information
671-4721



National Audubon Society

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Hilton Head, South Carolina 29938

P.O. Box 6185

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MAY 2010 Calendar

MAY

- Thurs. May 6 **Board Meeting** 1:30 pm
at the Jarvis Room, Old Coastal Discovery Museum
- Fri. May 7 **Field Trip** to Pinckney Island 8:00 am
- Tues. May 11 **Picnic** at the Waddell Mariculture Center 5:00 pm
- Sat. May 15 **Boat Trip** with Howard Costa..... 8:30 am
- Tues. May 18 **Boat Trip** with Howard Costa..... 11:00 am

Monthly meetings of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society are regularly scheduled at 7:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month, September through May, in the Auditorium at the Seabrook, 300 Woodhaven Drive. Members and guests welcome!



BEQUESTS

If you wish to honor a family member or friend with a memorial gift, or remember the Audubon Ne-whall 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.