

November 2010
No. 313

ECOBON



Newsletter of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society
Audubon Refuge Keepers

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Bill Nicol

At their November meeting, the Board of Directors will appoint a nominating committee to recruit a slate of officers for the 2011-2012 meeting year. They will make this appointment earlier than usual because we still have a significant requirement for new officers. Most of our officers have served in some capacity for several years and it is past time to get some fresh faces. Our move to Honey Horn offers us a new flexible venue and an opportunity to expand some of our community efforts. New people with fresh ideas will help us grow. The successful operation of our chapter depends on our members volunteering to fill these important positions.

We also have several Committees that need a chairperson. No one has stepped forward to be Program Chair and we have still have an existing vacancy for the Publicity and Public Relations Committee. Fortunately, Charlotte White has agreed to be the Christmas Bird Count Chair. Many of our committee chairs have been doing the job for several years and would like to step down. All of these committees are important for the effective and successful operation of our chapter.

If you choose to help out with any of these positions, you will not be left alone. All members of the Board will assist in any way they can to make you successful. They will not tell you what to do but will provide guidance. If you have any questions or can fill any of these positions please contact any of the existing Board Members.

See you at the meeting and bring a friend.

NOVEMBER PROGRAM *by Clem Dietze*

Thursday, November 11, 2010, 3:00 p.m. at the Sea Island Room at Honey Horn

This month we are pleased to welcome Virginia Culter, owner of Wild Birds Unlimited located in the Festival at Indigo Run shopping center here on Hilton Head. Virginia is an expert on advising people of types of bird feeders, houses, seed and other foods to offer both for our permanent resident birds and seasonal migrants. She also can answer questions on water sources, optics, bird guides, and bird nest cameras. Each winter Virginia graciously provides us with the opportunity to offer a seed sale to generate funds for the chapter Watch your future Ecobons for 2011 dates. Please come prepared to ask questions for suggestions regarding your particular habitat site. Solutions vary depending on what is in your yard. Question and answer will be the focus of Virginia's visit in order to help as many people as she can.

FIELD TRIPS *by Kay Hodnett*

On Tuesday, 16 November, we will visit Georgia Southern University's Center for Wildlife Education in Statesboro, Georgia. The Center is not a rehab center but is home to various birds, especially raptors, who have suffered injuries that prevent their being returned to the wild and need a refuge after their medical treatment has ended.

In addition, a variety of free-ranging birds are attracted by the Center's 17 acres of carefully managed habitat.

The director of the center, Steven Hein, will be our host for a two hour program beginning at 10 AM. He will take us on a walking tour of the wetland preserve, and talk to us about his wildlife travels around the world. We will finish with a flight show featuring birds of prey. Following the tour if we choose we may roam around a bit on our own. When we depart some of us will repair to the nearby Beaver House Restaurant, in an old inn which is on the National Register of Historic Places and still serves lunch boarding-house style. Even with lunch we should get back to Moss Creek no later than 4 PM.

Those wishing to carpool will meet at Moss Creek Village. We will leave there at 8:15 AM. The tour costs \$5 per person. To sign up call Kay Hodnett at 843-342-7485 or email sallyportk@gmail.com. Please indicate if you plan on lunch so I can call in a reservation. Directions to the Center on Page 4.



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Howard Costa	842-9447
Jim Currie	681-8525
Barry Lowes	671-3537
Nan Lloyd	363-2092
Joan Wilson	837-2874

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<i>Audubon Newhall Preserve</i>	
Joan Shulman	842-9246
<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>	
Charlotte White	837-4597
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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.



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2010

I know it's hard to think of Christmas while summer weather in the 80's is still with us and the flow of fall migration has just passed by. -But- the big day of birding, our annual Christmas Bird Count will come sooner than you think.

I have always viewed Bird Count Day as the one day of the year when we pause to take a "snapshot" of the birds in our area - the number of species and the total number of birds.

This citizen-science exercise has been going on for more than 100 years. The more than 1000 areas counted stretch from Alaska to Hawaii, plus Central America. The data compiled and studied shows trends and population movements of the birds and points to species and areas of concern. The steady decline in numbers is alarming!



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP? Anyone can participate, whether you are a novice or experienced birder - or even if this would be your first outing. You will be a member of a team, not alone. We need all of you. Commit to giving this one day to make our count a big success. Each year the Hilton Head Count ranks with the top counts on the continent. We know daily that Hilton Head is rich in bird life - but they must be counted!

The Captains, a wonderful group of faithful leaders, coordinate the count in each plantation. The teams work under their direction and leadership. If you participated in the past then reconnect with your captain. If you are a first time participant, call : Charlotte White at 837-3537 or Nan Lloyd at 363-2092. We will see that you get assigned to an area of your choice.

CALL NOW - GET INVOLVED! The birds in your yard and beyond need your help. It is wonderful day out-of-doors joining in the fellowship of discovery with others, and knowing at the end of the day that you have done something worthwhile.

BIRD REFRESHER SHOW, Wednesday, December 8 at the Seabrook at 7:00 pm

The Audubon Society will hold its annual Bird Show. A presentation of colorful bird images of the birds you are most likely to see will be given by Barry Lowes. This popular program enables all of us an opportunity to sharpen our identification skills. This not-to-be-missed event is preceded by a social get-together with refreshments.

The time and place will be published in the *Ecobon* and on the Audubon website. **BIRD COUNT DAY** begins with this show - December 8, and the Count takes place on December 14.



NOTES FROM THE NEWHALL PRESERVE

by Joan Shulman

A “Work Day” in the Preserve will take place on Saturday, November 13, from about 9:00 A.M. to Noon or 1:00 P.M. Bring your energy, gloves, clippers, loppers, small saws, rakes, etc. There are always a lot of wayward sweet gums to cut back and dead wax myrtle branches to cut up and haul away. Come when you can and stay as long as you can. Water will be provided.

The first two walks in October went well. (The third had not taken place by the time of the deadline for this article.) We had good weather for both. Most walk participants are visitors. Once in awhile a new or long-time resident turns up. Most have seen the notice about the walks in the Packet’s Community Calendar or the calendar listings in the Friday supplement, “the Guide.”

Not as many of the fall blooming plants are at their peak right now. The high temperatures until recently and lack of rain seem to have sapped their strength. The magenta berries on the Beauty Berry bushes do stand out, especially when the sun shines on them.

If you value the Preserve, won’t you join the Newhall Committee to help keep it a prized possession of our local chapter? For information, call me at 842-9246.

CAPE ROMAINE TRIP

by Kay Hodnett

On October 19, a dozen Hilton Head Auduboners drove to Cape Romaine National Wildlife Refuge north of Charleston and enjoyed a five-hour land and water tour. The old adage that “you see the best things from the parking lot” proved to be true. When we arrived at the pier to begin our trip we saw thousands of tree swallows repeatedly circling and casting a beautiful pattern of moving shadows on the parking lot below. Other highlights included an excellent close-up view of a colony of oystercatchers, seeing as well as hearing clapper rails, and good looks at perched and flying bald eagles in two different locations. The tide allowed for better spotting during our boat ride through the estuary than for the beach area we hiked to on Bull Island. Overall, though, we saw 33 species, enjoyed glorious weather, and got a lot of exercise.

Our guide, Chris Crawley from Coastal Expeditions, was first rate. His knowledge not only of the birds but of the whole ecology of barrier islands added much to the trip. Chris also conducts tours to Cape Romaine islands that are a bit further out but promise unusual findings, such as long-billed curlews. We may want to avail ourselves of his services again before long.

RECENT AREA BIRD SIGHTINGS

by Jack Colcolough

Our fall migration is progressing along very nicely and should be winding down in the next week or so. It’s been a very active birding month. Twenty-one warbler species and thirteen other fall migrants have been reported through. Winter shorebirds continue to arrive at our beaches.

Lake Mary in Sea Pines’ Forrest Preserve has been our best migration “hot spot” this fall with 10 warbler species and >70 total warblers on one walk. Crystal Lake in Indigo Run was also a good spot for migrants.

Warblers reported this month were: rare Canada and Chestnut-sided; uncommon Blackpoll, Ovenbird, Yellow, Prairie, Northern and Louisiana Waterthrushes and Orange-crowned plus American Redstart (many), Common Yellowthroat, Palm (many), Prothonotary, Black-throated Blue, Yellow-throated and Black & White. Other migrants included: rare Philadelphia Vireo, Scarlet Tanager and Buff-breasted Sandpiper; uncommon Yellow throated Vireo, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Swainson’s and Wood Thrushes plus Whimbrel.

FOTS winter arrivals reported included: uncommon Merlin, Sharp-tailed and Seaside Sparrows and House Wren plus Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Spotted Sandpiper, Eastern Phoebe and Bald Eagle. Other good birds reported were: rare Roseate Spoonbill in Beaufort and uncommon Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Seaside Sparrow and Loggerhead Shrike. Ruby-throated Hummingbird are still around.

Many thanks to all reporting their sightings: Carol Clemens, Susan Thomas, Kay Hodnett, Wendy Hansen, Buddy Campbell, Marianne Currie, Richard Shulman, Dorothy Mosier, Dottie Bass, Miriam Waterhouse and Fran Baer.

To report a rare, uncommon, first-of-the-year or season or out-of-season bird sighting, please e-mail: BirdingFriends@yahoo.com or call 715-0540. Please state your name, date and location of your sighting and any appropriate comments.

First Songbird Species Has Its DNA Sequenced

The zebra finch, the most common finch of central Australia, has achieved a major distinction: The songbird’s entire genetic code has recently been sequenced. A few months ago, an international team of researchers announced their accomplishment, making the zebra finch the first songbird - and the second bird, after the domestic chicken - with a completely decoded genetic blueprint. Contained in the species’ DNA could be clues to how songbirds learn vocal information and use songs in social situations, as well as clues to understanding an avian immune system.

Neuroscientists have studied zebra finches for many years to learn how the birds’ brains become active as they learn song variation.

CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITY

by Sherm Barker

Public pressure after the BP oil spill prompted the House of Representatives to pass the Consolidated Land, Energy and Aquatic Resources Act (CLEAR). One amendment to the bill directs \$1.2 billion of the expected civil penalties from the BP spill to Gulf Coast restoration. The second amendment includes \$900,000,000 to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Act. That money will buy a lot of wetlands and other habitat at risk from development and other threats.

The Senate still has to pass similar legislation, but Audubon expects action during the post election lame duck session and will be working hard to ensure that the Senate version measures up to the House bill.

From a National Audubon e-mail

Field Trip Directions from Page 1 ~

Directions to the Center for Wildlife Education

Take 278, then 95 South, and turn off on Interstate 16 West toward Macon. Go about 30 miles and take Exit 127 (Georgia Hwy 67) north towards Statesboro. At second stoplight (about 10 miles) turn left onto Veteran's Memorial Parkway (Bypass 301, 67, 25). Go through the stop light at Lanier Drive and through the stop light at the GSU entrance on Akins Blvd. At the third stoplight turn right onto US 301. Just after passing the Best Western on the left, turn right at GSU entrance (Southern Dr.) Turn right onto Sweetheart Circle. Take the first right off Sweetheart Circle onto Forest Dr. Proceed through the 3-way stop. The Center for Wildlife Education is just down the street on the left across from the University Public Safety offices. The Center's telephone number is 912-478-0831.

Crystal Lake Birding Trip on October 6

by Wendy Hansen

We had fun today on our birding trip to Crystal Lake at Indigo Run, with Jack Colcolough as our resident guide. We saw 21 species of birds, including five different warblers. Although it was not the bonanza Jack had anticipated, we had fun and enjoyed a beautiful fall morning.

Here is a listing of all those wonderful sightings:

Belted Kingfisher, Tufted Titmouse, House Finch, Pine Warbler, Palm Warbler, Black & White Warbler, Female Black-throated blue Warbler, Female Common Yellowthroat Warbler, Ibis, Bluebird, American Crow, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Downey Woodpecker (male and female), Carolina Chickadee, Female Redstart, Female Anhinga, White-eyed Vireo, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Snowy Egret, Great Blue Heron.

Happy Birding all, Wendy Hansen

BOOK REVIEW

"Life List: A Woman's Quest for the World's Most Amazing Birds" - Passion can lead a person into uncharted waters. Phoebe Snetsinger's particular passion was adding new birds to her life list. Gentile's book chronicles an unfolding zeal, one ironically triggered by a grim diagnosis of terminal cancer. The doctors were wrong, but by the time she realized she would live more than a few months, Snetsinger had already embarked on a quest that became an obsession: to see more of the world's bird species than anyone else.

Gentile's book is gripping, building in oddity and intensity just as Snetsinger's quest snowballed.

Julie Zickefoose

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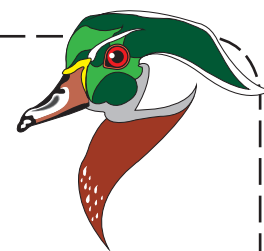
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A NIGHTMARE

by Clem Dietze

As they often say on TV the following has content which may disturb some people, but if your home abuts a marsh or has one in close proximity I recommend you read this horror story thoroughly.

Our home is 15 years old and built on a concrete slab to which pilings are attached to bring the living space to 14 ft. above sea level creating a crawl space with lattice on the inside perimeter to allow air flow. Insulation is installed above the crawl space before the flooring is laid.

In early September our Pest Control company came to spray the house for insect prevention which they do 3 times a year. The technician informed us that the insulation in the crawl space was falling apart and he discovered a marsh rat nest in part of it.

At about the same time we began hearing scurrying noises in the attic and gnawing sounds inside a couple of walls. On awakening two mornings at 4AM to get my coffee I startled a marsh rat running across the kitchen floor and disappearing under the range when the light went on. About 2AM on another morning I felt something crawl over my blanket. We then closed bedroom doors at night and piled sheets against the bottoms. It was time to call in the Commandos.

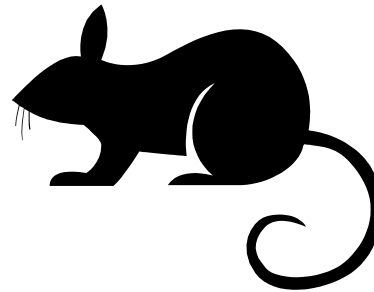
On inspection the attic and crawl space were littered with droppings and bird seed hulls.


Critter Management laid different types of traps all over. The crawl space insulation was replaced (several more nests were found in pulling the old insulation and one worker was bitten) Heavy mesh wire was installed against the perimeter lattice driven through the dirt to the cement slab to prevent rats from tunneling under. All bird feeders were removed (breaking my heart a bit). They found several places where the rats had been gathering seed droppings in mouth pouches and storing their stash. One place where we have a Murphy Bed built into the wall and disguised as a closet was so disgusting I don't even like to think about it. I have to confess to having been lax about cleaning up spilled seed under feeders. They found one other entry point where the rats had gnawed through the insulation on the tubing leading from the outside HVAC unit to the attic air handler enabling them to get in and go to the attic. It was sealed and the entire house was checked for other entry points.

After several weeks of Hell we were down to what they thought was one smart rat who avoided all of the different kinds of traps. They suspected he was somehow getting into the food in our Amazon Parrot's cage without disturbing the bird. The parrot was removed and boarded. Several days after the bird was gone, a 1 and a half pound rat in desperation because there was no more food to access, hit the bacon/peanut butter trap near the empty bird cage. We are now thankfully rat free. Joe Maffo of Critter Management said that even though he has eradicated houses with many more rats than ours this was probably the most stubborn case he has faced.

I am told that in about a month the rats (which by the way are an epidemic on Hilton Head) will have forgotten our house and I can put out a couple of feeders with wide trays under them and constant cleaning of any spilt seeds.

Don't be a victim like us. Inspect your home particularly insulation batting, use feeders with wide trays underneath, and clean, clean, clean. Save yourself the almost \$2000 this horror story cost us.





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Hilton Head/Bluffton Audubon Society was founded in 1974.
We have 600 individual and family memberships.
100% of Membership dues to local chapter will support our local programs.

Benefits of Membership to our Local Chapter:

Monthly Programs & Field Trips
Citizen Science, eg. Christmas Bird Count/ Piping Plover Count
Newhall Preserve
Birding 101
Nature Photography
Education Outreach: Audubon Adventures
Discounts to local shops

For all membership information, contact Thea Luba at (843) 785-3214 or
thealuba@roadrunner.com.

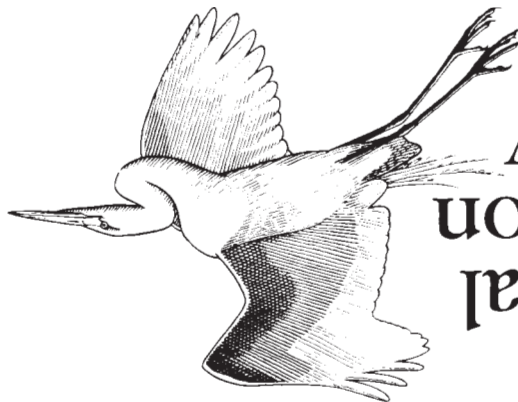
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 1 YR. - \$25 - Family
 1 YR. - \$10 - Student/Senior

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November ~ December 2010 Calendar


NOVEMBER

- Thurs. Nov. 4 **Board Meeting** 1:30 pm
at the Jarvis Room, Old Coastal Discovery Museum
- Thurs. Nov. 11 **Monthly Meeting** 3:00 pm
at Honey Horn in the Sea Island Room
- Tues. Nov. 16 **Field Trip** to Center for Wildlife Education 8:15 am
Statesboro

DECEMBER

- Thurs. Dec. 2 **Board Meeting** 1:30 pm
at the Jarvis Room, Old Coastal Discovery Museum
- Weds. Dec. 8 **Monthly Meeting and Social** 7:00 pm
at the Seabrook.
- Tues. Dec. 14 **Christmas Bird Count** All Day

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 Monthly meetings of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society are regularly scheduled at 3:00 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month, September through May, at the Sea Island Room at Honey Horn. Members and guests welcome!



B E Q U E S T S

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.