

April 2011
No. 318

ECOBON



Newsletter of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society
Audubon Refuge Keepers

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Bill Nicol

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) is chartered to serve as the principal advocate for and steward of South Carolina's natural resources. We have visited several of their managed areas (Bear Island, Donnelly,) on recent field trips and will visit another (Webb) in April. The current economic downturn has impacted their funding from the state and requires them to make do with fewer resources. As Audubon members and supporters of the SCDNR mission, we can help them in their time of need by buying a hunting/fishing license even though you may be neither a hunter nor a fisherman. The funds collected from the sale of licenses are matched by the Federal Government and all funds go directly to SCDNR to support their work. Hunters and fishermen provide a significant portion of SCDNR funds in each fiscal year used to maintain the Wildlife Management Area's.

I was born and raised in Western Pennsylvania and most of my relatives were hunters and fishermen. I never had any interest in hunting or fishing; however I have purchased a SC license just to help maintain these important areas in our state. If you want to help, go to www.dnr.sc.gov or call 803-734-3833 and apply for a license. Special licenses are available for seniors.

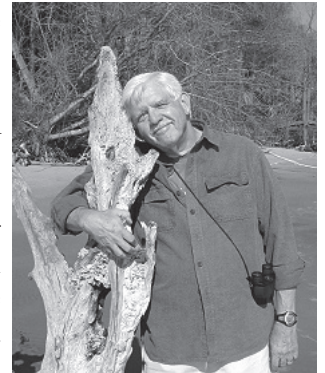


APRIL PROGRAM by Clem Dietze

Thursday, April 14, 2011, 3:00 p.m. at Honey Horn in Sea Island Room

THE FEATHERS IN NELLIE'S HAT

We have a great intriguing and informative program lined up for this meeting. Our presenter is John Albert. John is an award winning nature photographer living on Harbor Island. He holds an MA in History from Ohio University and for 37 years worked as an Educational Media Specialist teaching at Ohio University, Lancaster. He is a Master Naturalist, member of the Fripp Island Audubon Society, and presents programs for the Osher Life Long Learning Program as well as at Hunting Island State Park.

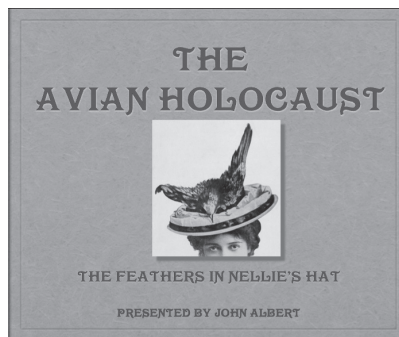


His program is the story of how the Audubon Society came into being. From 1879 to 1914 it is estimated that some 5,000,000 birds were slaughtered each year to provide feathers to adorn women's hats.

You will discover the story of the women and men who joined together to fight a multimillion dollar industry. This was a great fight involving tea parties (no connection with today's), unsolved murders, legislative double crosses, great successes and unbearable defeats all to save the birds. Much of the action took place here in South Carolina.

The cast of characters includes artists, scientists, suffragettes, plume hunters, game wardens, Presidents, and everyday people who took up the cause of the birds.

Don't miss this one. We look forward to seeing you.



ANNUAL PICNIC - May 12, 2011

Our picnic at Waddell Center will be at 6:00 pm instead of 5:00 pm so that we can enjoy the sunset at this beautiful location. Al Stokes will give a brief talk.

Chicken, soft drinks and water will be provided. Those with last names beginning with A-M, please bring a dessert; N-Z, please bring a salad or side dish. These should serve 6 to 8 people and please include serving utensils.

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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.



APRIL FIELD TRIPS *by Kay Hodnett*

Our first trip this month will be on Sunday, April 3, to Webb Wildlife Management Area. Directions and information about this trip are in the March *Ecobon*.

On Friday, April 22, we will visit the Audubon Center and Sanctuary at Francis Beidler Forest, 40 miles northwest of Charleston. A 1.7 mile boardwalk will take us into the heart of Four Holes Swamp, which contains the largest remaining stand of virgin bald cypress and black gum trees in the world. Along the boardwalk is probably the best place in South Carolina to see nesting prothonotary warblers.

Those wishing to carpool should meet at Moss Creek Village; we will depart there at 7:30 AM, gathering at the Beidler office at 9:30 AM. Denise Ecker, director of bird conservation, will be our guide on a tour that will take about two and a half hours. After our walk we enjoy a picnic before returning home. We should get back to Moss Creek by 3:30.

There are restrooms and picnic facilities, but no trashcans. Bring a lunch and plan on packing out any remains. Bug spray would be a good idea. Beidler charges \$7 per person for the tour. To sign up call Kay Hodnett at 843-342-7485 or 843-338-1445, or email her at sallyportk@gmail.com Directions follow below.

Directions to Beidler

- Take 278 to I-95.
- Take I-95 North to I-26.
- Take I-26 East to Exit 177 (Harleyville) and follow "Beidler Forest" signs.
- The GPS address is 336 Sanctuary Rd., Harleyville, SC 29448.
- Telephone is 843-462-2150.

MARVEL OF THE HIGH ARCTIC

- from an article by Clare Morrison

Located at the northern tip of Ellesmere Island, CFS Alert is the northernmost permanently inhabited outpost in the world. Closer to Moscow than to Ottawa and cloaked in total darkness each year from October 10 to March 1, it is a cold, barren place most of the time, occupied by a handful of hardy weather, signals-intelligence, and civilian personnel and reached only by military aircraft and chartered jets.

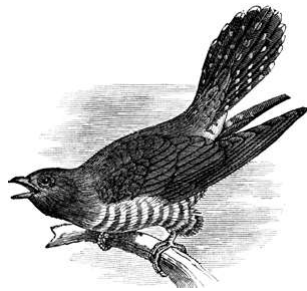
Yet for two and a half months in the part of the year warmed by the midnight sun (the average temperature during July, the hottest month, is 37.9 F,) the island becomes the summer home of a charismatic, robin-size shorebird famous for making long-distance migrations - the Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*). This bird is a familiar sight on all coasts of North America. "Red Knots," says Guy Morrison, Senior Research scientist with Environment Canada, "are amazingly adapted to breeding in the arctic. You look out and see what appears to be just a simple bird feeding on the shore, but really what you're looking at is a marvel of biological engineering."

The knot's 2,800 mile journey to Alert takes about a month. After leaving Europe near the end of April, it stops in Iceland or northern Norway for three weeks. Then it flies on to Ellesmere, arriving in the last days of May and the beginning of June. Its two long, nonstop flights sandwich the most important part of the annual migration: the refueling stop. During it, the bird transforms into a flying machine. Body parts that won't be used while flying - the stomach, leg muscles, and other organs - decrease, while what you might think of as pieces of the bird's flight equipment - the heart, its muscles and fuel stores - increase, leaving the Red Knot in a condition that is exquisitely adapted for migration.

THE MATING GAME

Bernd Heinrich's latest book, *The Nesting Season: Cuckoos, Cuckolds, and the Invention of Monogamy* explores why birds pair up and parent in various ways.

"When it comes to choosing a mate, males typically pursue and persist, but females ultimately get to decide. They make their choice, Heinrich explains, based on traits that serve as a sign of health and vigor. Depending on the species, selection might be based on an elaborate vocal repertoire. Showy behavior, colorful plumage, or architectural genius also come into play. Female song sparrows, for instance, opt for males that sing a variety of songs - some have up to 15. And in the case of the penduline tit, the male's intricate, pear-shaped nest is the sexual magnet. "A female inspecting nests compares males indirectly," Heinrich writes. "She chooses for herself a resource she needs for reproduction and also indirectly assesses the male's potential vigor and industry."



AUDUBON NEWS *by Sherm Barker*

The March/April issue of *Audubon* magazine contained a message from Audubon President David Arnold noting that by mid-April the first of the neotropical migrant birds will appear in the Hudson Valley where he lives. They are already here in the Lowcountry. Migrating birds need our help and Arnold joined conservation leaders from Audubon and other groups in Washington to support the reauthorization of Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act spearheaded by Sen. Ben Cardin (D-MD).

Since its original passage in 2000, the act has spawned more than 330 conservation projects across 40 U.S. states and territories and more than 30 Latin American and Caribbean countries. It has helped conserve and improve more than 3 million acres of vital bird habitat and benefited millions of migratory birds.

But there are red flags. More than a third of the 340 species of Neotropical migrants, particularly the red knot and the wood thrush are experiencing ominous declines due to threats to their habitats and environment as they migrate from the tropics to as far north as northern Canada and back every year.

It is worth noting that this act is a model of cost effectiveness. Since the program began, our country's investment of \$35 million has been matched by nearly \$150 million in private funds.

Please consider e-mailing your congressman and senators asking them to fully support the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act. The birds, you, your children and grandchildren can be beneficiaries for years to come if we can protect the birds' migratory routes that stretch from Greenland to Argentina.

RECENT AREA BIRD SIGHTINGS

by Jack Colcolough

Our cool winter has passed and the glorious days of spring are upon us! Spring migrants and summer arrivals are beginning to show up and some of our winter birds are still around.

The highlight of the month was the rookery that moved into Shipyard to roost there at night. There were >1000 White Ibises, Herons and Egrets and one uncommon Glossy Ibis in the mix. The Indigo Run rookery on Crystal Lake apparently decided to move to Shipyard. This was a spectacular sight to behold!

The only rare bird reported was a Purple Sandpiper found at Fish Haul Creek Park ... the first to ever be reported there to my knowledge.

Many uncommon bird species were reported including: Eurasian Collared Dove, Piping Plover, Wilson's Plover, Redhead, Pine Siskin, Rusty Blackbird, Red- and White-breasted Nuthatches, Wild Turkey, Whimbrel, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Canada Goose and Hairy Woodpecker.

Spring arrivals reported to date were: Prothonotary Warbler, Painted Bunting and Northern Parula as well as singing permanent residents Yellow-throated Warbler, White-eyed Vireo, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Black & White Warbler and Black Skimmer.

Several overwintering Ruby-throated Hummingbirds continue to show up at HHI feeders. Summer arrival Hummers are due in any time now.

Other good birds reported were: Flocks of Robins and Cedar Waxwings, Wood Stork, an injured Black Scoter, Red-throated and Common Loons and Horned Grebe, Least Sandpiper and rafts of Lesser Scaups.

Thanks to those reporting their sightings: Shelia/Roger Johnson, Miriam Waterhouse, Dottie Bass, Bev Schneider, Dianne/John Faucette, Annette Hausman, Rita/Joe Kernan, Debbie Beam, Sandy Stern, Mary Jane Majors, Diana Churchill, Mary Alice Walker, Allan McLaughlin and several visitors.

We continue to tally 1000-4000 shorebirds sighted at Fish Haul Creek/Mitchelville Beach towards an effort to make this area an Important Bird Area in South Carolina that we feel it deserves.

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

Little St. Simons Island – Great Trip!!

Long- billed CURLEW, Wilson’s Plovers, White Pelicans, American Oyster Catchers, Black Skimmers and terns were some of the highlights among the 42 birds sighted.

Eight birders made an Audubon Society trip to the 10,000 acre, privately owned barrier island off coastal Georgia. It was a beautiful, sunny day in the 70’s and the gourmet picnic of butter-nut squash soup, tossed veggie salad, grilled tuna and chocolate cookies was delicious. All really enjoyed the trip!

Digital Cameras Inspire Young Naturalists

Nongame wildlife program supervisor for Minnesota’s DNR, Carrol Henderson, says that taking a walk to look for birds is too passive for many young people today. But put a digital camera in their hands, and they are quickly transformed into nature enthusiasts.



“They slow down, they watch, they listen,” he says. “They look for signs of nature and themes like camouflage, bird nests, or pollination that can be incorporated into classroom activities.” “Younger children might be encouraged to photograph the alphabet by finding creatures or plants that start with letters of the alphabet.”

OLDEST KNOWN BIRD HAS CHICK AT AGE 60

By Clem Dietze



A biologist from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service came across a 60 year-old Laysan Albatross weeks ago in a remote wildlife refuge outside of Honolulu and saw that it was mothering a chick.

How do they know this seabird’s age? A member of the U.S. Geological Survey banded the bird-

named Wisdom- in 1956 when she was around five year old. Documentation proves she is the oldest wild bird in the bird-banding program, which has been around for almost 100 years.

Wisdom has raised an estimated 30 to 35 chicks in her lifetime, which means half her life has been devoted to incubating and raising chicks. Albatrosses are able to lay only one egg per year and spend the first year incubating and raising their offspring.

What’s equally astounding is that, for a Laysan Albatross, Wisdom is well past the species’ expected lifespan. According to the USFWS, the maximum lifespan of a Laysan Albatross is around 45 years – and only 2% of birds within a population survive to that age.

“She looks great,” said Bruce Peterjohn, chief of the North American Banding Program. “To know that she can still successfully raise young at age 60-plus, that is beyond words;

Adorable and interesting news, especially considering the recently proven existence of bird empathy between mother birds and their chicks.

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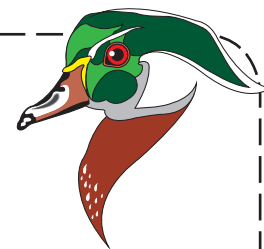
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DISTURBING STATISTICS *by Clem Dietze*

We all know that our avian friends are dropping numbers and in many cases species at a rather alarming rate. We can see it in migrations and in what used to be our resident populations of various species at our own feeders and favorite birding sites.

What follows are some statistics compiled by Dr. Rudski at Muhlenberg College. in cooperation with American Bird Conservancy. These are current estimates of the amount of birds killed each year in North America alone by many of the hazards they face.

Agriculture/Pesticides ~ 67 million

Wind Turbines ~ 40 thousand

Cats both feral and free roaming house cats. ~ 100 million

Oil and gas extraction spills ~ unknown but at least 300,000 by Exxon Valdez spill alone.

Windows ~ #1 Killer at 100 million to 1 billion, more likely closer to 1 billion and particularly acute during night migrations over cities.

Communication towers/electrical transmission lines ~ 185 million

Land development ~ (unknown, but habitat destruction here and in Latin America is the leading cause of bird population declines)

Hunting ~ 120 million

Auto and truck collisions ~ 50 to 100 million

Human contributions to climate change ~ (unknown but definitely a factor as witnessed by range changes in many species.

If you want a copy of results once the study is complete contact Dr. Rudski rudski@muhlenberg.edu.

As individuals we can't solve all of these problems but we can do something. Cat lovers, please don't let your house cat roam free particularly at night. Do not feed feral cats. Many people believe that released neutered feral cats are not a problem but they kill birds for sport and still carry diseases.

Support organizations like American Bird Conservancy, Move on Political Action, ABA, Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, Defenders of Wildlife, National Wildlife Federation and others who frequently have "Calls to Action" asking signatures for letters and petitions to authorities and legislators. Many of these pleas to save habitat in various areas and stop such practices as strip mining, clear cut logging on Federal Lands, and more. Their membership fees are minimal and we all need to make ourselves heard loud and clear!


DID YOU KNOW?

Your VP Clem Dietze is a Travel Consultant with 44 years experience in the industry. I have been a tour escort, cruise ship shore excursion manager, Travel Counselor and Agency owner. I have lost count of the mileage I have logged, the countries visited in depth, ships sailed on, tours organized, and independent itineraries arranged over the years. Here are just a few benefits you gain by contacting me.

- 1) I offer Personal, Professional, Knowledgeable, and unbiased advice.
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APRIL ~ MAY 2011 Calendar

APRIL

- Sun. Apr. 3 **Field Trip** to Webb Wildlife Refuge 7:30 am
- Weds. Apr. 6 **Newhall Walk**..... 10:00 am
- Thurs. Apr. 7 **Board Meeting** 1:30 pm
at the Jarvis Room, Old Coastal Discovery Museum
- Weds. Apr. 13 **Newhall Walk**..... 10:00 am
- Thurs. Apr. 14 **Monthly Meeting** 3:00 pm
at Honey Horn in the Sea Island Room
- Weds. Apr. 20 **Newhall Walk**..... 10:00 am
- Fri. Apr. 22 **Field Trip** to Beidler Forest 7:30 am

MAY

- Thurs. May 5 **Board Meeting** 1:30 pm
at the Jarvis Room, Old Coastal Discovery Museum
- Thurs. May 12 **Annual Picnic** 6:00 pm
at Waddell Center

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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, at the Sea Island Room at Honey Horn. 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.