

May 2011  
No. 319

# ECOBON

Newsletter of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society  
Audubon Refuge Keepers



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Bill Nicol

After three years as your president, I am finally writing my last President's Message. We have had a pretty good year and made several significant changes. After meeting many years on Tuesday evenings at Seabrook, we switched our venue to Honey Horn on Thursday afternoons. Although we had to make some adjustments to the new meeting time and location, almost everyone feels that it was a positive move. Your Board of Directors was very involved, enthusiastic and willing to do some forward thinking and deal with several problem issues. We continue to have a viable, fiscally sound chapter and we look forward to bigger and better things.

We have a full slate of officers for next year, two of which are new to the Board, Natalie Hefter, President and John Faucette, Treasurer. Join me in welcoming them to the Board. We wish them and all the other officers and board members great success in the coming year.

I want to thank the Board Members and Committee Chairs for all their hard work and support this past year. Without their efforts nothing would have been accomplished. I especially want to thank VP Clem Dietze for his guidance and covering for me when I could not be at several board and general membership meetings, secretary Marianne Currie who managed the transition from mailing to e-mailing the ECOBON, retiring Treasurer Fran Baer for her dedicated and thorough work, Thea Luba whose efforts got us several grants, and Nan Lloyd for the excellent new Birder's Guide.

And finally, thank all of you for your participation and contributions. See you at the picnic, with a friend, and have a great and safe summer.

## APRIL PROGRAM *by Clem Dietze*

Thursday, May 12, 2011, 6:00 p.m. at Waddell Mariculture Center

### ANNUAL PICNIC

Our picnic at the Waddell Mariculture Center will start at 6:00 pm instead of 5:00pm 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, the cost is \$5.00 per person. 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. RSVP to Sherm Barker at 342-6596. Looking forward to seeing you there.

.....

### Beidler Forest Field Trip

Hi Birders,

The HHI Audubon Society sponsored a visit to the Sanctuary at Francis Beidler Forest on April 22. We had a little rain but still had a successful trip. The walk along their very long boardwalk was lead by Denise Ecker of Beidler. Thanks to her for passing along to us her knowledge of Beidler and her birding expertise and to Kay Hodnett for organizing this interesting trip.

Highlights of the trip were many beautiful Prothonotary Warblers and two chatty Barred Owls.

Two female Prothonotaries were seen building nests in the top of Cypress tree knees just a few feet off the swamp floor. Many handsome males were heard and seen serenading the females along the very long boardwalk. Two Prothonotaries were even observed mating!

Two Barred Owls were conversing very loudly for a few minutes along the boardwalk ... very interesting chatter! We heard many hoots and "who cooks for you ... who cooks for you all"!

Other good birds found included: Rare Hooded Warbler, Arcadian Flycatcher, Summer Tanager, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Cattle Egret, Wild Turkey, Northern Parula, Red-eyed Vireo, Great-crested Flycatcher and common species.

Other attractions were: Several 1000-1500 year old cypress trees (some of the oldest in the state) as well as thousands of cypress knees, a Greenish Rat Snake climbing a tree, a large alligator so still it looked like a log and various pretty flowers and interesting plants in this pristine swamp.

Good Birding, Jack C. ~ HHI, SC

# HHI Audubon

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<i>Adopt-A-Refuge (Pinckney)</i>	
Clem Dietze	837-2612
<i>Audubon Newhall Preserve</i>	
Joan Shulman	842-9246
<i>Bird Walks/Field Trips</i>	
Kay Hodnett	342-7485
<i>Bird House Construction</i>	
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<i>Bird Seed Sale</i>	
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**Website: [www.hiltonheadaudubon.org](http://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.



## PINCKNEY NWR ~ BRINGING YOU UP TO DATE

By Clem Dietze, USFWS Volunteer

As most of you know, I am not only Audubon's VP and Chair of Adopt a Refuge but a uniformed volunteer with vehicular access to the entire refuge. I wanted to bring all of you a recap of how things stand with our local refuge and give you some facts about Pinckney which many of you may not know.

The 4,053-acre refuge includes Pinckney Island, Corn Island, Big and Little Harry Islands, Buzzard Island and numerous small hammocks in Mackay Creek. Pinckney is the largest island. Nearly 67% of the refuge consists of saltmarsh and tidal creeks. A wide variety of land types are found on Pinckney Island alone: saltmarsh, forestland, brushland, fallow field and freshwater ponds. In combination these habitats support a diversity of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and especially birds. Pinckney is bordered on one side by Mackay Creek and on the other by Skull Creek.

There are 10 miles of hiking and biking trails on the refuge.

Pinckney is managed by FWS as one of the 7 refuges in the Savannah National Wildlife Refuges complex.

Pinckney was first settled in 1708 by Alexander Mackay who was an Indian trader and in turn sold to Charles Pinckney who in turn passed ownership to his son General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney. General Pinckney was a commander during the Revolutionary War, a signer of our Constitution, and a presidential candidate for the Federalist Party in 1804 and 1808. In 1804 he moved to the island and began managing the property. The Pinckney family developed the islands into a plantation, removing much of the maritime forest and draining and tilling the fertile soil. By 1818 over 200 slaves labored to produce fine quality long-staple Sea Island Cotton on 297 acres. By 1840 386 slaves lived on the island. US Army records reflect that black troops from Pinckney were recruited for the Union Army. In 1862 THE Confederate Beaufort Light Artillery attacked a company of New Hampshire Volunteers on the island killing four Union soldiers and wounding 10 men (eight Confederate, two Union).

After the Civil War, the plantation did not prosper. By the 1930s it was virtually abandoned. In 1937 after more than 200 years of Pinckney family ownership, Pinckney was sold to the Bruce family of New York who used the property as a hunting preserve. They planted hardwoods and pine, built ponds to attract waterfowl and provide for irrigation and placed 70% of the farm fields back into cultivation.

In 1954 Edward Starr and James Madison Barker purchased the islands and continued to manage them as a game preserve until 1975 when they donated the islands to the USFWS to be managed exclusively as a National Wildlife Refuge and as a nature and forest preserve for aesthetic and conservation purposes. Pinckney Island NWR was formally established on December 4, 1975.

Today Pinckney is the most visited of all of the Savannah complex refuges. Our most productive area is Ibis Pond which was recently dredged by Savannah personnel. Last year the rookery was the nesting site for literally hundreds of both egrets, little blue, great blue, tri-colored, and black-crowned night herons followed by hundreds of white ibis. This year promises to be even better since the dredging. The male great egrets were spectacularly displaying their full breeding plumage last week to attract mates.

Also at Ibis is our beautiful Butterfly Garden. We built the garden itself but the plantings, signage, and maintenance are handled by a group of Master Gardeners who have done a magnificent job with plantings that attract a number of species in season. Fall is particularly productive. Fortunately Ibis is less than a mile from the parking area providing an opportunity for old and young to experience this site.

(Continued on page 3)

Continued from page 2...

Several years ago Malphrus Construction needed fill dirt and a pact was reached with FWS to let them take dirt if they would create new ponds. As a result we now have beautiful Starr and Nini Chapin (a great benefactor of Pinckney during her life) ponds. The islands on both of these ponds are now supporting a heavy growth of trees and shrubs which should make them our next big rookeries.

With no resident ranger (Federal budget constraints) most of the maintenance of Pinckney is done by our core group of uniformed volunteers with assistance from Savannah for major mowing.

We have 23 bluebird boxes scattered about the island and several wood duck boxes. Last year I monitored a total of 107 fledged bluebirds and this year promises to be as good or better (weather permitting) as we already have newborns in two boxes, eggs in 10 others and nests under construction in 6 more. 2 broods of wood ducks were raised last year and we have recently erected more wood duck boxes on Starr and Chapin ponds. One of the islands hosts a bald eagle nest and we have 2 active osprey nests.

If you talk up Pinckney to visitors be certain to warn them about the lack of drinking water and restrooms on the refuge. Every year we haul people out who are on the verge of Heat Stroke from hiking too far in blazing heat without water even though there are clearly visible signs warning them. Also tell them that if they want to hit areas several miles in like White Point trail through the maritime forest to Port Royal Sound they should plan on biking and not hiking. If anyone has questions about Pinckney contact me and I will be happy to oblige.

GOOD BIRDING TO ALL!

## NOTES FROM THE NEWHALL PRESERVE

by Joan Shulman

The guided walks in April were well attended. We also gave a guided walk for the Avid Gardeners of Hilton Head Plantation. It is always interesting to learn that many who live in the area have never visited the Preserve. All seemed to enjoy the walk, and many thought they would come back again on their own. Thanks to Mary Jane Major for encouraging the group to visit the Preserve.

Spring seemed to come early to the flowering trees, vines, and other plants. Many plants had finished blooming by the time of our walks. No matter, there is always something interesting to see or talk about in the Preserve. We seem to have many more fetterbush shrubs nowadays. They were in full bloom. The small alligator was still hanging around in the pond.

Thanks to Ron Howenstine for monitoring the trails in April. We need monitors for May, June, July, August, and September. Please call me at 842-9246 to volunteer or find out more details.

The Newhall Committee and the HHI Audubon Society are taking steps to make sure that the Preserve will be well cared for far into the future. More details will appear in the September Ecobon.

Visiting the Preserve can be a special experience for anyone--from the local area or from out of town--who walks its trails. As many visitors write in the comment book, "Thank you Beany Newhall for being so farsighted and preserving a bit of the original habitat of the island."

## RECENT AREA BIRD SIGHTINGS

by Jack Colcolough

Spring has boomed into our area with beautiful birds, blooms and weather. It's been a very active month with many migrant birds and summer arrivals being reported while some winter birds still remain. It's a wonderful time of year!

Our highlight of the month was a rare Hudsonian Godwit mixed in with Marbled Godwits and found at Fish Haul Creek Park by yearly visitor, Bev Schneider of Nova Scotia. It was a first ever sighting of this migrant bird on HHI.

Other rare species reported during the period were: Bachman's Sparrow at Webb WMA, Hooded Warbler on HHI and Olive-sided Flycatcher in Bluffton.

A 12-warbler day was reported at Savannah NWR (GA side ... SC side is closed for maintenance). Best warblers included: Yellow, Hooded, Prairie, Prothonotary, Black-throated Blue and American Restart as well as Yellow-throated, Blue-headed and Red-eyed Vireos.

Uncommon birds reported included: Red-cockaded Woodpecker, American Bittern, Merlin, Swallow-tailed Kite, Whimbrel, Black-necked Stilt, Ruddy Duck, Wild Turkey, Purple Finch and Pine Siskin.

Many FOTY species were reported including: Chuck-wills-widow, Summer Tanager, Painted and Indigo Buntings, Orchard Oriole, Red Knot, Green Heron, Barred Owl, Cattle Egret, Black Skimmer, Royal Tern, American Oystercatcher, Red-headed Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Eastern Kingbird, Great-crested Flycatcher, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Barn Swallow, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Hermit Thrush, Chimney Swift, Common Yellowthroat, Palm and Black & White Warblers and Bald Eagles on nests.



Many thanks to all reporting their bird sightings: Kay Hodnett, Barry Lowes, Wendy Hansen, Anne Hausman, Pam/Rich Ribesell, Bev Schneider, Dianne/John Faucette, Marvin Bouknight, Fran/Denny Baer, Dottie Bass, Miriam Waterhouse, Rita Kernan, Richard Shulman, Carol Clemens, Shelia/Roger Johnson and several visitors.

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

## Field Trip Report *by Kay Hodnett*

### Webb WMA

On Sunday, April 4, eleven Hilton Head Auduboners enjoyed a beautiful Spring day of birding at Webb WMA. Led by local naturalist Marvin Bouknight, whose knowledge of Webb may be without parallel, we saw and/or heard at least 45 species. The high point for many of us was watching pairs of red-cockaded woodpeckers flitting and drumming among the loblolly pines they love (none of us were able to see the speck of red on the male). Getting a good look at a Bachman's sparrow (first heard by Wendy Hansen and first spotted by Annette Hausman) was also exciting. Other good birds included swallow-tailed kite, prothonotary warbler, and redheaded woodpecker. A more or less complete list follows.

bluejay	little blue heron	white ibis
Cooper's hawk	great white egret	yellow-rumped warbler
white-breasted nuthatch	red-winged blackbird	prothonotary warbler
Carolina chickadee	anhinga	red-shouldered hawk
tufted titmouse	moorhen	downy woodpecker
red-bellied woodpecker	northern parula	
double-crested cormorant	blue-winged teal	
Eastern bluebird	Eastern kingbird	
Northern cardinal	belted kingfisher	
brown thrasher	American crow	
red-headed woodpecker	white-eyed vireo	
Northern mockingbird	green heron	
Eastern towhee	mourning dove	
red-cockaded woodpecker	white-throated sparrow	
pileated woodpecker	red-eyed vireo	
Bachman's sparrow	common grackle	
brown-headed nuthatch	American bittern	
chipping sparrow	swallow-tailed kite	
chimney swift	red-winged blackbird	
pine warbler	palm warbler	

## WATCHING BEHAVIOR *by Eldon Greij*

Birdwatching is always exciting, but sometimes it can feel like a race: We see more and more species but less and less of each bird.

Every so often, we should reverse that pattern by actually watching birds. The breeding season is a great time for doing this. Intriguing behaviors abound. Here are a few ideas.

Watch for displays - Courtship can be as exciting for bird-watchers as it is for birds. Start by listening to singing male songbirds, especially those that seem to be staying in one area. Watch to see if females join them, then look for interactions that suggest the birds are paired.

Females typically show their willingness to mate by crouching - lowering their body, head, and wings. If the courting male sees her posture, he will mount her quickly and ever so briefly as they manipulate their tails to permit sperm transfer.

Listen for duetting. - If cardinals, Baltimore or Bullock's Orioles, or Rose-breasted or Black-headed Grosbeaks are singing and females are around, be alert for duetting. Watch the bill of a male to see if the song continues after he stops singing. This means a female is responding. Notice that no gaps will be apparent between their singing bouts. Then ask yourself how the female knows when to begin and, later, when the male knows when to come back in. They will seem to sing one long, seamless song.

Count feeding trips - After the young hatch, count how many feeding trips the adults make to the nest in an hour. (Count trips for 30 minutes and double the number.) Multiply the total by the hours of daylight, and you will get an astounding number of trips per day. When you consider that the adults will do this for many days, you understand why selecting a territory with a good food supply is so important.

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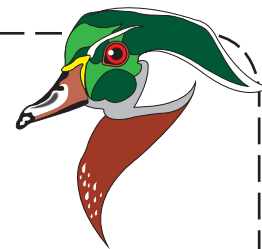
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# Dredging the Savannah River

from Sberm Barker

In the spring 2011 edition of Coastal Conservation League magazine an opinion piece by CCL Director, Dana Beach, and a subsequent article make a strong case against the idea of dredging some 38 miles of the Savannah River to a depth of 48 feet at a cost of \$625 million. The new channel would be 6 feet deeper than the current channel and four times the river's natural depth. Supporters say the river needs to be deepened to accommodate the giant ships expected to arrive along the East Coast once the Panama Canal is widened in 2014.

The environmental damage would be "beyond calculation" considering the salt water that would advance up the river and threaten the drinking water of over a million people. Plus 337 acres of tidal freshwater wetland would be lost that could never be restored. A century of dredging has already reduced the freshwater wetlands from 12000 to 3,000. acres. More dredging of the Savannah River channel is not good news for our feathered friends.

Dredging will also mean less oxygen in the river water harming the wildlife population, and it will "create a domino effect through the food chain and river systems" Mechanical respirators have been proposed to pump oxygen back into the river. However, this solution has already been vetoed by the EPA when "bubblers" and "iron lungs" were proposed to provide more oxygen in the Mississippi River.

The Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, which many of you have visited, stands to lose 10% of its tidal freshwater wetlands if the channel is dredged to 48 feet. The land lost cannot be replicated somewhere else or restored by human engineering. It will be gone for good. Hundreds of species depend on these wetlands "if saltwater intrudes on the refuge" according to one official, "it is basically the difference between an oasis and a desert."

In addition to Savannah, five other southeast ports are lining up to receive the post-Panama container vessels. Only Norfolk is currently ready to receive these vessels which will be loaded with 8000-12000 containers. The CCL argues that the Southeast does not need 5 newly dredged sea ports nor should the government spend the billions of dollars it will take for the required environmental studies and actual dredging costs. Beech's statement "The reality is that Charleston, whether we like it or not is far more suited as a post-Panamax port, at least on the water side." will not please Lowcountry business interests and politicians looking forward to the economic development associated with a bigger and better cargo port in Savannah.

To follow the latest news and reports on the Savannah River dredging proposal go to [www.PortBarrel.org](http://www.PortBarrel.org)


## 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.**

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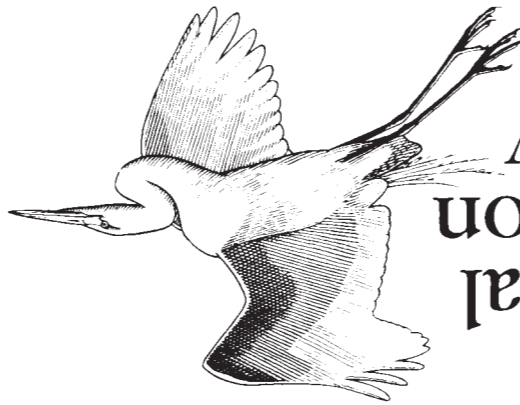
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# National Audubon Society

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## MAY and SEPTEMBER 2011 Calendar

### 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

### SEPTEMBER

Thurs. Sept. 8 **Board Meeting** ..... 1:30 pm  
at the Jarvis Room, Old Coastal Discovery Museum

Thurs. Sept. 15 **Monthly Meeting** ..... 3:00 pm  
at Honey Horn in the Sea Island Room

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 N-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.

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