

October 2011
No. 321

ECOBON



Newsletter of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society
Audubon Refuge Keepers

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Natalie Hefter

Thank you all for making the first meeting of the year such a great success and being so welcoming to me as I begin this year as President. We had a wonderful turnout and it was great to see many of our 'snow bird' members have migrated back to the Lowcountry - welcome home. A special thank you to Ron Roth who presented a fabulous program about John James Audubon. All of us were enthralled and learned a great deal about the artist, his process and his special ability.

We also had a new addition to the meeting, 'Meet a Bird,' presented by Rick Riebesell our Program Chair. This addition to the agenda will help introduce some of our newer residents to some of our local birds and it gives a chance for seasoned birders to share their knowledge with the group. Rick shared a spectacular video of Ospreys fishing - truly amazing!

We've all heard that migration is in full swing, so I hope that you're getting a chance to get out to see who might be visiting your neighborhood on their way south. See you all at our October meeting.



**Hooded Mergansers
soon to arrive!**

OCTOBER PROGRAM by Rick Riebesell

Thursday, October 13, 2011 - 3:00 p.m. at Honey Horn in Sea Island Room

Bluebirds: A Love Story

When the first pair of bluebirds moved into the nest box outside Gretchen Gehrett's kitchen window there was magic in the air. Napoleon and Josephine, with their magnificent blue feathers, engaging personalities, and abundant offspring, were not just any birds. By carefully watching them throughout the years, Gretchen learned they were unique individuals with distinct personalities, and fascinating family dramas.

Hundreds of thousands of mealworms and 5 years later, Napoleon II moved into the spot left open by his father's death. With his insatiable curiosity and ease around humans, Napoleon II became a part of the family by sitting on windowsills and watching the action inside for hours on end.

Come and hear Gretchen's story of love, laughter, and interspecies communication with her feathered friends. Learn about the seasons of the Bluebird, and how you too can attract and develop an enduring relationship with a beautiful pair of Bluebirds.



Hog Island by Thea Luba

Doug and I returned from a truly inspiring week at Audubon Chapter Leadership camp at Hog Island. The island is a very special place we hope all our members get a chance to visit. It began 75 years ago in 1936. Roger Tory Peterson was one of the first teachers. Rachel Carson visited and mentioned it in *Silent Spring*. We got the opportunity to meet Dr. Stephen Kress, who began in the 70's to develop Project Puffin, the seabird restoration program recognized nationally and internationally for reintroducing terns and Atlantic Puffins to midcoast Maine islands. Doug went on a three hour Puffin boat tour. There was also a sunset cruise around the area.

The main topic was Atlantic Flyways. "Each year, more than 10 billion birds use major flyways to travel up and down the continent and points beyond. Underneath these flyways are migratory rest stops and the homes for non-migratory birds. These geographies are the 2,500 Important Bird Areas of America" we are fortunate to have two on Hilton Head: Pickney Island and Sea Pines Preserve. Jack Colcolough was a TV celebrity talking about (cont. on Page 3)

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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.

FIELD TRIPS *by Kay Hodnett*

Orangeburg Super Sod Farm trip

On Monday, 3 October, we will visit Orangeburg Super Sod Farm, about an hour and a half from Hilton Head. This is the best place in South Carolina during the Fall to find Golden Plovers and Upland, Pectoral, and Buff-Breasted Sandpipers. Horned Larks and Loggerhead Shrikes are usually seen as well, and Eurasian Collared-Doves are possible, along with various rarities. The birds are often far out in the fields, so scopes will be very helpful.

Our guide for the trip is Marvin Bouknight, who has led us on other very successful outings. Marvin is a professional naturalist who must make a living; the charge for this trip is \$10 per person. To sign up for the trip send a check for \$10 to Kay Hodnett at 4 Sally Port Road, Hilton Head 29928, or pay Kay at the September 15 Audubon meeting. Checks should be made out to Kay Hodnett.

Those wishing to carpool will meet at Moss Creek Village. We will depart Moss Creek at 7 AM. After the drive, carpoolers and all others will gather in the parking lot of the Exxon Station at the intersection of Interstate 26 and Highway 301 (Five Chop Road). There is also a Waffle House at this intersection, and several establishments have restrooms. See directions below. We will go to the sod farm together from the Exxon Station. The sod farm office address is 3086 Five Chop Road, Orangeburg SC 29115. But this is a commercial operation on private property, so except for special circumstances we should not go into the office and should be careful to park cars in a way that does not interfere with farming operations.

After spending a couple of hours at the sod farm, some may opt to have lunch in Orangeburg before returning to Hilton Head. Information about restaurants will be provided the day of the trip.

Directions to Exxon Station near Orangeburg Sod Farm

Take US 278 to Interstate 95.

Take 95 North toward Florence.

After 78 miles take Interstate 26 West toward Columbia.

After almost 15 miles take Exit 154 A onto US 301

(Five Chop Road).

Exxon Station is at this intersection.

PROJECT FEEDER WATCH *by Jack Colcolough*

If you have feeders and enjoy watching the birds in your yard, you may want to join Project Feeder Watch (PFW) and count/report your findings weekly to The Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The season starts in November and lasts into early April each year. You can spend just a few minutes or hours on each of two days/week observing and counting your yard birds.

Your input will become an important part of the citizen science data that is used to determine important trends for North American bird populations over the years. This will be the 24th season for this very worthwhile project.

You will also receive the latest bird news in Winter Bird Highlights and Birdscope. The cost to join is \$15/season to cover the extensive handling of data and the publications.

If you are interested in joining PFW, you can do so online at: www.feederwatch.org or call toll free at: (800) 843-2473 and get more information about the project.

PFW is a lot of fun to do as some of our Audubon members will attest to! Come join us!

NOTES FROM THE NEWHALL PRESERVE

by Jack Greenshields

As the weather gradually becomes cooler, the Newhall Preserve experiences an increase in visitors. If you have not visited the Preserve recently, perhaps this would be a great time to reconnect.

Thanks to Marty and Robert Hocutt for serving as trail monitors in September and to Ron Howenstine for handling October.

One fairly large pine tree fell during a late summer windstorm blocking the North Woods Trail. Thanks to Jim and Marrienne Currie for cutting up and removing the tree to reopen the trail.

The fuel break project at Newhall is progressing slowly due to other priorities at Sea Pines. Sea Pines CSA would manage the project should it proceed in early 2012.

We are grateful for Joan Shulman organizing our guided walks in the Newhall Preserve this fall. There will be four walks during October: Betty Treen will lead the October 5 walk, Mary Alice Walker will lead the October 12 walk, Jack Greenshields will lead the October 19 walk, and Joan Shulman will lead the October 26 walk. All walks will start in the parking area at 10am. A \$10 donation per adult is requested. Please pass the word on about these guided walks and join us if you can.

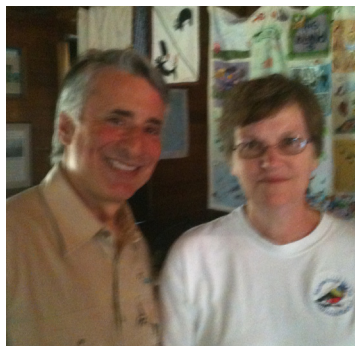
Our first work party for general cleanup at the Newhall Preserve is scheduled for Saturday morning November 5. Please put this on your calendar if you are able to assist.

(Hog Island from page 1)

about our migrant birds passing through. He also made a powerful case for making Fish Haul Park an IBA.

"When you connect those geographic spots on the map, you see the web of life that represents America's richest veins of biodiversity." I went to speak to Mike Burger, Atlantic Flyway Interim director and David Yarnold, President of National Audubon with an idea. I asked them to connect those 'geographic spots' and they would find our local and state chapters! We could post interpretive signage about the Atlantic Flyways at our IBA's and meeting centers and we would all be Audubon Education Centers...we would all be connected! Mike and David said they would 'sign' on to that! and asked Hilton Head Audubon to create prototype signs. Todd and Marianne Ballantine have done the signage at The Coastal Discovery Museum, Sea Pines Preserve, Pickney, and Fish Haul. Many were done with money raised by HH Audubon Society. We should also check out the Migration Flyway sign they made for The Savannah Wildlife Refuge. This very significant project is going to be led by The Hilton Head Audubon Society.

There isn't enough room in one Ecobon for all the sharing and exciting new projects we learned about at during our stay at Hog Island. The food was delicious. The Chef Yanni customized each meal for tastes and diets. How do you like that photo of me and David Yarnold? If you want to know more about our adventure please call or email.



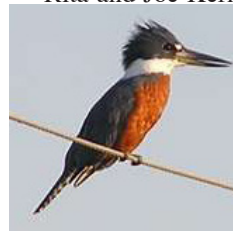
RECENT AREA BIRD SIGHTINGS

by Jack Colcolough

We are off to a great start on our fall bird migration! Twenty-one warbler species have been sighted to date and nine other fall migrants as well. We expect to find more in the weeks to come before migration is over. Some of our winter shorebirds and songbirds are also arriving in our area.

New warblers added to last month's list include: Rare Blue-winged, Tennessee and Nashville Warblers and Yellow-breasted Chat and uncommon Orange-crowned, Hooded and Worm-eating Warblers and Ovenbird as well as Yellow-throated Warbler and FOTS Palm Warbler and many, many American Redstarts. Other new migrants added to our fall list this month were: Rare Scarlet Tanager and Sooty Tern and uncommon Baltimore Oriole and Swainson's Thrush. Crystal Lake in indigo Run is a little HHI "hot spot" for warblers again this fall ... having found migrants there for sixteen consecutive days at this reporting.

Rita and Joe Kernan sighted an accidental migrant Ringed Kingfisher at their Sea Pines home. This is a west Texas bird never found in South Carolina before. Congratulations to the Kernans!



Rare species reported during the month include: Philadelphia Vireo in Hilton Head Plantation, Gray Kingbird in Savannah, Roseate Spoonbill in Beaufort and at Savannah NWR, Lark Sparrow on Pinckney Island NWR, Black and Common Terns in the ocean waters off HHI and King Rail at Savannah NWR.

Many uncommon species were reported including: Black-bellied Whistling Duck, endangered Piping Plover, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Wild Turkey, Seaside Sparrow, Least Bittern, Black-necked Stilt, Glossy Ibis, Purple Gallinule, Loggerhead Shrike, Caspian and Least Terns and Greater and Lesser Black-backed Gulls.

Some good FOTS birds reported were: Northern Gannet, Wilson's Snipe, Pied-billed Grebe, Purple Martin and Tree Swallow.

Bald Eagles are returning to the area and some Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are still around and a few could overwinter here like last year.

It's been a very busy birding month and thanks to all for reporting their sightings: Kay Hodnett, Natalie Hefter, Dottie Bass, Carlos Chacon, Joan/Richard Shulman, Dianna Churchill, Buddy Campbell, Rita/Joe Kernan, Carol Clemens, Wendy Hansen, Annette Hausman, Pam Shirley, Peter Wong and a number of visitors.

To report a sighting for a rare, uncommon, first-of-the-year or -season or out-of-season bird, e-mail: BirdingFriends@yahoo.com or call 298-9469. Please state your name, the bird sighted, date and location of your sighting and any appropriate comments about your sighting.

Please all join in and report what you consider your significant bird sightings!

A TIP TO HELP WITH BIRD IDENTIFICATION

by Alvaro Jaramillo

Do Home Patch Birding. Home patch birding is a standard way to watch birds in Europe, particularly when honing one's identification skills. The Dutch and British often are considered among the most accomplished in this bird identification biz. So what is "home patch birding", and what does it do for you?

Home patch birding is when you visit a place or two near where you live again and again throughout the year to watch the birds. The home patch could be your backyard, or it could be a local park or a famous birding site such as Central Park in New York City. Again, the key aspect here is repetition. You get to go back to a place where you are comfortable, where you gradually begin to know the common species. Not only that, you get to see these species in various aspects of their life - as migrants, as breeders, as winter residents, to name but a few. You also get to see them when they are freshly molted, worn, as juveniles, and as adults. You get to see their patterns and timing of migration - when they arrive and when they leave - when they sing, and so on. All of this helps you get to know the birds, and eventually learn what they look like and how to recognize them.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT *by Sherm Barker*

Thanks to Marianne Currie for calling my attention to a recent e-mail from the Coastal Conservation League (CCL) about the Savannah Wildlife Refuge (SWR).

According to Andrea Malloy of the CCL and a recent article in The Beaufort Gazette, repairs to the main road, Laurel Hill Drive, have been completed making it easy for visitors to enjoy all the refuge has to offer from the comfort of their cars. However, the recent repairs also serve to illustrate the devastating effects that dredging the Savannah River has had on the refuge.

Laurel Hill Drive was closed in 2010 in order to conduct extensive repairs on a series of gates that were installed more than 30 years ago. A canal and gates were supposed to mitigate the effects of dredging the Savannah River to 38 feet at that time. The system to prevent flooding and loss of bird and animal habitat failed almost immediately. Higher than expected levels of salt water quickly corroded the gate controls, and the gates were not repaired.

Twelve thousand acres of land have shrunk to 3,300 over the years. Why should bird lovers care? This is not just another area where bird and wildlife habitat is shrinking. The region is famous for the birds that nest in and migrate through the SWR. According to the CCL "During the migratory season 21 species of warbler stop here and more than 13 species of duck numbering in the thousands (including the rarely seen cinnamon teal, Eurasian widgeon and the fulvous whistling duck.)" Like the Pinckney Island Preserve, the SWR is a jewel we need to hang on to.

As I reported in the May Ecobon, the Georgia Port Authority now wants to dredge the river to 48 feet to allow super sized container ships to come in to Savannah once the Panama Canal is enlarged to accommodate these giant ships. At least 340 more acres of tidal freshwater wetlands are immediately threatened with salt water intrusion.

In conclusion, here are four questions for you to think about. Yes, measures have been promised to counter the effects of the salt water levels rising, but who is to say they will work any better than they did 30 years ago? If the proposed measures fail as they did before, will years go by as government agencies wrangle over who is at fault and who is going to pay to make things right? Will it take another 30 years to get the Army Corps of Engineers to fix the problem? Finally, how many birds will lose their nesting or resting place in exchange for promoting more commerce for Savannah?

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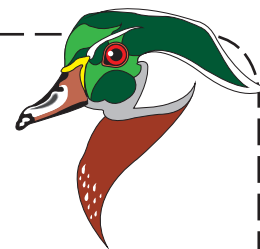
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OSPREYS FLOURISH ON HILTON HEAD ISLAND

by John & Dianne Faucette

For the third year, we have surveyed the osprey nests on Hilton Head Island under the direction of the LowCountry Institute on behalf of Beaufort County. In summer 2009, the LowCountry Institute partnered with the Sea Island Fly Fishers Club of Beaufort, Parris Island, and the Fripp Island Audubon Club to survey nesting osprey populations in the Port Royal Sound area. Ospreys can serve as an environmental indicator because they require a healthy fishery to survive. A total of 125 platforms were observed in the Beaufort County survey in 2009 (20 on Hilton Head Island). Of these, 78 (62%) had active nests. This data is being used as a baseline and compared with surveys in future years. In 2010, we observed 30 nests on Hilton Head Island, of which 19 (63%) were active. In 2011, 32 nests were observed, 25 of which had chicks (78%).

The 32 nests we observed this year are scattered all over the island: 12 in the Hilton Head Plantation area, 6 in the Indigo Run area, 4 in the Port Royal Plantation area, 4 in the Shipyard Plantation area, 3 in Palmetto Dunes Resort, 2 in the Spanish Wells area, and 1 in Sea Pines. Most of these osprey nests were located by friends who reported them to us. We feel there are many more active nests on the island, and we would very much like to have them reported to us by Audubon members or anyone else who locates a nest.

Ospreys return to Hilton Head Island by February 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. By March they have spruced up their nest and will lay one to three eggs. We begin our monitoring activities in April, and observe each nest for about 15 minutes sometime during the first two weeks of each month through August. We record our observations on an Excel spreadsheet which is sent to the LowCountry Institute at the end of the five month period. All of our data is combined with other observers throughout Beaufort County, and a county-wide report is issued in late fall. We will give you this year's summary results for the whole county in a future Ecobon article.

Hilton Head Audubon Society members can be a big help to us in two ways. Beginning next February, please spend a little time looking up in the trees, especially pine trees, for nesting activities of this beautiful bird and give us the location. Additionally, we are looking for monitor volunteers who will observe located nests from April through August 2012 in the specific area of the island where they live. Jack Colcolough volunteered to be our monitor for Indigo Run this past year and we certainly appreciate his help. We need monitors for Sea Pines, North & South Forest Beach, Point Comfort, Wexford, and Long Cove. These are areas of the island where we have not observed ospreys or not had access.

You can contact John & Dianne Faucette at 785-2899 or e-mail us at johnfaucette@yahoo.com.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2011

Mark Wednesday, December 14, 2011 on your calendar - NOW! It is 86 degrees F as I write this note and an early migration of birds is already in progress. The CBC cannot be far behind.

The news and the sightings continue to show a decline in most species - world wide. Efforts to come to grips with the problems and hazards experienced by birds all year long as they migrate, nest and return south, are dependant upon good data.

Our Christmas Bird Count is one of many and Hilton Head's annual counts have made a significant contribution for almost 40 years. As a member of the Audubon Society we know that you care and want to help.

In the November Ecobon we will tell you how to become involved. One day - just one day! Give back what you have received.

REMEMBER DECEMBER 14

Charlotte White 837-4597 Barry Lowes 837-3537
Nan Lloyd 363-2092

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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www.hiltonheadaudubon.org



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.

Hilton Head/Bluffton Audubon Society Chapter

- Local Membership Form 1 YR. - \$15 - Individual
 1 YR. - \$25 - Family
 1 YR. - \$10 - Student/Senior

Please enroll me as a member of Hilton Head/Bluffton Audubon Society.

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OCTOBER ~ NOVEMBER 2011 Calendar

OCTOBER

- Mon. Oct. 3 **Field Trip** to the Orangeburg Super Sod Farm 7:00am
 Wed. Oct. 5 **Guided Walk** in Newhall Preserve
 Thurs. Oct. 6 **Board Meeting** 1:30 pm
 at the Jarvis Room, Old Coastal Discovery Museum
 Wed. Oct. 12 **Guided Walk** in Newhall Preserve
 Thurs. Oct. 13 **Monthly Meeting** 3:00 pm
 at Honey Horn in the Sea Island Room
 Wed. Oct. 19 **Guided Walk** in Newhall Preserve
 Wed. Oct. 26 **Guided Walk** in Newhall Preserve

NOVEMBER

- Sat. Nov. 5 **Work Party** in Newhall Preserve
 Thurs. Nov. 3 **Board Meeting** 1:30 pm
 at the Jarvis Room, Old Coastal Discovery Museum
 Thurs. Nov. 10 **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 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.