

April 2012
No. 327

ECOBON

Newsletter of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society
Audubon Refuge Keepers



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Natalie Hefter

It seems as though each month I sit down to write this brief column, I find myself jotting down notes about which of our board members, patrons or speakers I need to be sure to thank in this month's issue. And, this month is no exception. Your local Audubon chapter is very fortunate to have so many dedicated and talented members helping coordinate and implement the various activities.

This month, I'd like to acknowledge Ed Nash for his dedication to the Bird Seed Sale. As I am still fairly new to the Chapter, I have recently become aware of the 'way it used to be' for the annual Bird Seed Sale. Gosh, how the times have changed from a large truck full of seed backing up to have our members unload their hundreds of pounds of seed into their vehicles! Ed and Virginia Culter from Wild Birds Unlimited have worked out a great system that helps our education programs tremendously. If you missed the sale this year, do yourself (and the birds!) a favor and mark your calendar now to be sure to participate next January/February. Also, please be sure to see the separate letter of thanks to Virginia later in this issue. We are always indebted to Virginia for her support, be sure to thank her the next time you're in her store!

And, as you peruse this month's issue of the Ecobon, please take a moment to appreciate all the hard work that Joan Wilson puts into this publication. She has the unparalleled task of gathering all of our news items, filling in the blanks, and often finding additional material that will interest our members to include in each issue. Coordination with each of the writers, the graphic artist and the printer is no small feat, so thank you Joan!

I hope you've been getting out and enjoying the beautiful spring weather we've had lately. It's a great time to be outdoors in the lowcountry!

MARCH PROGRAM by Rick Riebesell

Thursday, April 12, 2012 - 3:00 p.m. in the Sea Island Room at Honey Horn

"Birds of Costa Rica"



Carlos Chacon
Natural History Manager
Coastal Discovery Museum

Carlos Chacon will be presenting "Birds of Costa Rica" at the April 12 meeting of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society at Honey Horn in the Sea Island Room at 3:00 pm. The meeting is open to the public and is without charge.

Carlos Chacon was born and raised in Costa Rica. Since he was 12 years old, he has volunteered for various nature-related organizations. His fascination with nature led him to study Tropical Biology at the University of Costa Rica. After graduating in 1996, Carlos began working as a nature guide, since then, he has been leading nature trips, from bird watching and butterfly watching to whale watching along both coasts of Central America. Through his work in Central America, Carlos has led tours for the World Wildlife Fund, Linblad Expeditions, Mountain Sobek Travel, Tauck Tours, Thompson Family Adventures and several other international travel companies.

Since 2004 Carlos has been living with his wife and two children in Bluffton, South Carolina. Since moving to the Lowcountry, Carlos has worked as a kayak guide in the marshes of Hilton Head and an Alligator tour guide in the Sea Pines Forest Preserve. Carlos joined the Coastal Discovery Museum on Hilton Head Island in 2005 where he is the manager of natural history for the Coastal Discovery Museum. He also organizes a couple of nature trips to Costa Rica each year. In 2007, Carlos received a M.S. in Earth and Environmental Resources Management from the University of South Carolina. Carlos received his Masters in Earth and Environmental Resources Management from the University of South Carolina in 2007. Carlos is a passionate ultimate Frisbee player.

Annual Audubon Picnic - May 17, 2012

The annual Audubon Members' Picnic will be held May 17 at Waddell Mariculture Center, 211 State Road S-7-744, Bluffton. Only current Audubon members who make a reservation may attend. Time is approximately 4:30 - 9:00 pm.

Audubon will provide Kentucky Fried Chicken, plates, silverware, napkins, soft drinks, and water. The fee for attending is \$10 per person (including a donation to the Waddell Mariculture Center) payable at the picnic.

Attendees are advised to bring insect repellent, camping chairs, flashlights, a main dish (if Kentucky Fried Chicken is not a desired food), a side dish - for last names A - O bring a salad or vegetable plate and for last names P - Z bring a desert, and adult beverages (as desired). Space is limited and reservations are required. Reservations are by email at audubonhirsvp@gmail.com.

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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 TRIP *by Kay Hodnett*

Our April field trip will be to Webb Wildlife Management area on Sunday, April 22. (Sunday is the only day of the week that Webb is closed to turkey hunters). Diane Rand will lead the outing which should be well-timed to take advantage of Spring migration. Warblers, tanagers and buntings should all have arrived and there is also the chance of Bachman's Sparrow and Red-cockaded Woodpecker, if we are very lucky. The rookery should be lively with nesting activity.

Those wishing to carpool will meet at Moss Creek Village, leaving there at 7:30AM in order to meet the leader along the entrance road to Webb at 9 AM. We should be out between 3-4 hours depending on bird activity. After birding, we can have lunch at the picnic area where a restroom will be left unlocked for us. Bring lunch or snack, water, insect repellent and sunscreen. Driving directions are below. To sign up for the outing email Diane Rand at dianemrand@gmail.com or call 987-1111.

Directions to Webb

Take 278 to Interstate 95. Take 95 South to Exit 5.

Take US 17 North. Go almost a mile. Turn Left onto Hwy 321.

Head North on 321 to Garnett (*about 27 miles*). In Garnett turn left in front of Post Office

Continue straight, crossing over Hwy 119 onto SR 20 (Augusta Stagecoach Road)

Cross over railroad tracks. Go 2.6 miles to Webb entrance on Left

We will meet along the oak-shaded road that leads to the office.

Just pull over along the road rather than going to the office.

Address is 1282 Webb Avenue, Garnett SC 29922

Hemispheric Conservation of Atlantic Coast Shorebirds

The ecosystems of the world are linked by birds, and nowhere is that more apparent than the Atlantic Coast, where some shorebirds nest and rear their young, while huge flocks of other species pause to refuel on their long treks to their breeding grounds in the Arctic. Stephen Brown, Ph. D., Director of Shorebird Science at the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, will discuss the research and conservation work conducted at Manomet, focusing on this imperiled group of birds that depend on coastal habitats like those of South Carolina to survive. The presentation includes many images of the shorebirds of the Atlantic Coast, along with stories of Brown's adventures while carrying out his research here and in the Arctic.

Stephen Brown, Director of Shorebird Science
Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences

As Manomet's Director of Shorebird Research and Conservation, Stephen Brown works on a wide variety of science and policy issues related to protecting this imperiled group of birds that literally cover the globe during their annual migrations. Stephen was the lead author of the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan which brought together wildlife managers and policy makers from all 50 states and several federal agencies, university researchers, and many other conservation groups to develop a coordinated strategy for restoring the declining populations of shorebirds. Stephen has an active research program in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, where his work helps to determine the impacts of oil development on nesting shorebirds.

Stephen has been a conservation biologist with Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences since 1998. He earned his undergraduate degree from Hampshire College in Environmental Studies, and his Master of Science degree from the University of Michigan School of Natural Resources studying an endangered shorebird. His Ph.D. research in Natural Resources at Cornell University focused on improving habitat for birds through wetland restoration. Stephen has published dozens of articles on wetlands and shorebirds in scientific journals, and the recent book *Arctic Wings: Birds of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge*.

NOTES FROM THE NEWHALL PRESERVE

by Jack Greenshields

Several members of the Audubon Board met with Sea Pines CSA staff and a representative of the Hilton Head Fire Department regarding the potential fuel break project around the perimeter of the Newhall Preserve. We then toured the Sea Pines Forest Preserve to observe how their property appears after similar forest management practices have been completed. Most thought that given a growing season of recovery, the fuel break appeared attractive and habitable. The CSA Board met on the proposed agreement between Audubon and Sea Pines CSA. Audubon objectives were to incur no cost from this project which primarily is to benefit the safety of Sea Pines residents and that Audubon be indemnified against any legal action stemming from this project. The Sea Pines CSA Board surprisingly rejected the proposed agreement and shelved the project because they believed that indemnifying another property owner sets a unacceptable precedent.

Sea Pines CSA would likely proceed with the fuel break project and also manage Preserve maintenance if Audubon transfers ownership of the property to the Sea Pines Forest Preserve Foundation. This has been previously discussed and the current Audubon Board is not endorsing proceeding with ownership transfer at this time. The Board has also endorsed the Newhall Committee recommendation to increase signage on the Preserve perimeter warning of fire danger and encouraging entrance to the property only through the main entrance gate. We have requested that Sea Pines CSA also address issues with several residents that have encroached into the Preserve and have modified the habitat.

Thanks to Joe Kernan for being trail monitor for March and Ron Howenstine for April. Anyone who would like to do this can e-mail me at jackg308@gmail.com.

Upcoming group visits to the Preserve include the Hilton Head Herb Society and Hilton Head Woman's Club in March and the Hilton Head Camera Club and a OLLI class in April. If someone is interested in learning more about being a guide for the public or group, please contact me.

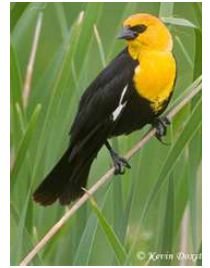


RECENT AREA BIRD SIGHTINGS

by Jack Colcolough

Spring has sprung and the birds are singing like crazy! Early migrants and summer arrivals have already shown like the Veery and Northern Parula. Some winter songbirds, shorebirds and ducks have already departed for areas northward.

Highlights of the month were two rare birds found on HHI. A "first ever" Western Tanager was sighted and photographed at a bird bath in Palmetto Dunes. A Yellow-headed Blackbird was seen at Shelter Cove's Veterans Memorial Park.



Out-of season and overwintering birds continue to be a hot item while we are having a record warmest winter here and include the following reported birds: Rare Nashville Warbler in Savannah, rare Wilson's Warbler and American Redstarts at the Savannah NWR and Ruby-throated Hummingbird in Port Royal Plantation.

Other rare birds reported during the month were: Black-headed Gull, Razorbill, and White-winged Dove in Savannah and Virginia Rail in the Sea Pines Forest Preserve.

Uncommon birds sighted included: Winter Wren, Dark-eyed Junco, Veery, American White Pelican, Merlin, Northern Gannet, Orange-crowned Warbler, Blue-headed Vireo, American Avocet, Red-throated Loon and House Wren.

FOTY and other good birds reported included: Wilson's Snipe, American Wigeon, singing Yellow-throated Warbler, Gadwall, Common Loon in breeding colors, American Goldfinch (few and late this warm winter) and many flocks of Cedar Waxwings, some with 100+ birds.

Nesting birds reported were: Great Horned Owl, Bald Eagle, Osprey, Eastern Bluebird and Great Blue Heron.

A rookery of mixed 500+ ibises, herons and egrets moved into the Crystal Lake area in Indigo Run but left very abruptly when severe tree cutting and bush hogging was done around the lake there until stopped. Sadly, it is feared that our record migration of 31 warbler species there last fall may be seriously affected there in the future because of this drastic action.

Thanks to all reporting their recent sightings: Fran Baer, Barry Lowes, Kay Hodnett, Dick Phillips, Joanne McMenamin, Rita/ Joe Kernan, Kathy Greider, Dottie Bass, Shelia/Roger Johnson, Annette Hausman, Robert Rommel, Mary Ann Luechel, Diana Churchill, Miriam Waterhouse, Deb Beam, Carol Clemens, Mary Alice Tartler, Sandy Stern, Stanton Allaben, Garry Greenstein and Royce Hough.

To report a bird sighting for a rare, out-of season, uncommon, first-of-the-year or -season species, e-mail: BirdingFriends@yahoo.com or call 843-432-2661 (MUST dial the 843) or 290-9469. Please state your name, the bird sighted, date and location of your sighting and any other pertinent information.

Enjoy some good birding in our area and report your significant sightings so that our Audubon members can share them with you.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT *by Sherm Barker*

Audubon through its lobbying efforts has helped achieve two huge wins for birds and bird habitat. The Senate recently voted to devote most of the BP penalty money toward Gulf Coast restoration efforts rather than putting the money in the general treasury. The size of the fines to be paid by BP is estimated to be between \$5 and \$20 billion. The Senate also increased funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. It authorized \$1.4 billion for the next two years much of which will go to bird and wildlife restoration.

Following up on last month's report on wind energy and efforts to provide more protection for birds, David Yarnold notes in the current Audubon magazine that Audubon will now be playing a critical role in creating the balance between renewable wind energy and bird safety. Audubon was instrumental in the development of the new wind energy guidelines. Now continued vigilance will be vital as the science based approach on how to position new wind turbines in more bird friendly ways unfolds.

Yarnold also notes that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), whose efforts have come under attack in the recent Republican presidential debates, is preparing the first ever regulations for green-house gas pollution for new power plants. Audubon will work to support these regulations because the energy sector should be a model for a cleaner future. The new regulations will be good news for birds, habitat and people. BUT WETLANDS DO NOT VOTE AND BIRDS DO NOT TEXT. It will be up to the people in the Audubon network to "raise a ruckus", in Yarnold's words, in support of the EPA in the months ahead.

PARADISE IN THE LOWCOUNTRY ~ *Nature left alone on Callawassie Island, South Carolina*

Twelve years ago, after Dorothy Mosior and her husband retired, they moved from the Chicago suburbs to Callawassie Island, about 10 miles from the Atlantic coast in southern South Carolina. Their house sits on a half-acre lot with a freshwater pond in the backyard. For butterflies and hummingbirds, Dorothy maintains a side-yard garden that includes swamp mildweed, honeysuckle, pineapple salvia, and lantana plants. In the backyard she has planted a shade garden next to the house, and she has ferns in hanging baskets along with bird feeders, but for the most part, she allows nature to take over. Native trees such as wax myrtles, yaupon, and live oak provide lots of shade in the back and along the edge of the pond.

A few years ago, lightning struck a red oak in the yard, killing the tree. Rather than have it removed, the Mosiors left the trunk standing because it's a favorite of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and other woodpeckers.

The payoff for cultivating plants native to the South Carolina lowcountry is that her property is "blessed with birds", as Dorothy says. She has seen and photographed warblers, egrets, herons, flycatchers, wrens, chickadees, waxwings, sparrows, and (in summer) Painted Buntings. One winter, an immature female Baltimore Oriole hung around for the season. "She was so beautiful," Dorothy recalls. "I love the birds," she says. "What can I say? I find them to be fascinating. There's always so much to learn about them."

Mat Mendenhall, Associate Editor, BirdWatching Magazine

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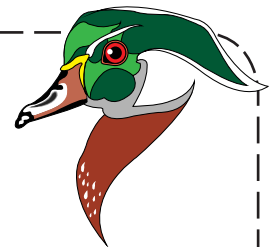
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THANK YOU, VIRGINIA

The HHI Audubon Board of Directors at their March 1, 2012 meeting, unanimously declared their appreciation to Virginia Culter for her sponsorship of the 2012 Audubon Bird Seed Sale promotion that was held from January 2 to February 25, 2012 at your Wild Birds store. This has been an annual event since 1995 and has been a very helpful source of income to our Chapter and we trust it has been mutually beneficial. The sales were slower and fewer than in previous years but the total fortunately met our Education program needs.

We also salute your sponsorship of the Audubon Chapter Membership day held on February 4, 2012 at your store. This is a nearly annual event that has brought many new members to our chapter. You have supported this special day with newspaper notices and donations of bird seed packages at your expense.

Again, we herewith applaud your continuing leadership and support of the HHI Audubon Chapter.

Sincerely,

Natalie Hefter

Natalie Hefter, President

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THANK YOU BIRD SEED BUYERS

We wish to thank every member, 39 in all, who purchased seed at the Wild Birds Store during our recent two month sales drive. This is an important source of income to our chapter, due to the 17 year continuing sponsorship by Virginia Culter. Your purchases of seeds during the sale period brings over \$1,000 into our chapter. This is an event that we feel earns the support of every Audubon member, and we ask that you remember and shop at the Wild Birds Store whenever buying seeds and/or birding accessories.

WHY SHORELINES ATTRACT BIRDS

The shorelines of large bodies of water are sure-fire bird accumulators. North-bound birds drop in after making land-fall in the spring; southbound migrants congregate before setting out over the waves in the fall.

Are the shoreline habitats more important to birds than that? Surprisingly, spring migrants clustered along the shoreline before leaves there had unfurled - and before the insects that munch on them had become abundant. So-called phytophagous insects are a major food source for migrating birds. So what was attracting the birds? Midges - small, two-winged flies that hatch in the water, clouds of them. The early-season insect eaters or birds that breed farther north are most likely to arrive before leafout in spring and be more dependent on aquatic insects.

BirdWatchingDaily

EARLY SPRING MIGRANTS

One of the first passerines to return north each spring is the Tree Swallow, which arrives well before winter has lost its grasp. As in most songbird species, males return a bit earlier to stake out territories. During difficult conditions when winter storms pass through, swallows gather in large numbers over ponds and reservoirs, where they try to forage on aerial insects, or simply rest in dead trees. They occur across the continent, arriving in February in southern latitudes and early April in more northerly areas.

You may not know that the American Bittern is an early migrant, since its camouflaged plumage can make the bird extremely difficult to find. The species migrates at night, but with persistence and luck you can sometimes see it flying high overhead or low over marshes in the early morning or late evening. Bitterns begin to depart wintering sites along the Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific coasts in March, and by April they occur across most of the lower 48 states and southern Canada. Listen for them near sunrise or sunset, when their deep gulping calls carry long distances.

From Onthemove by Chris Wood, Marshall Iliff, and Brian Sullivan

HILTON HEAD ISLAND/ BLUFFTON
AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

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

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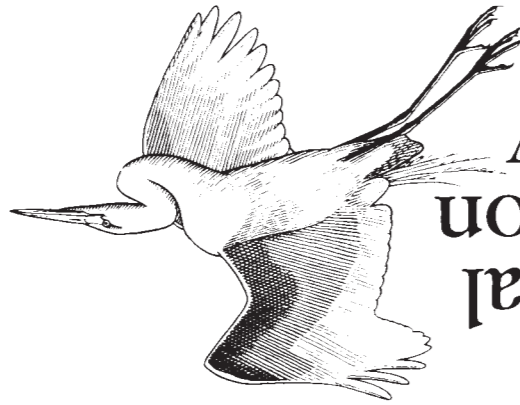
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P.O. Box 6185

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APRIL ~ MAY 2012 Calendar

APRIL

- Thurs. Apr. 5 **Board Meeting** 1:30 pm
at the Jarvis Room, Old Coastal Discovery Museum
- Thurs. Apr. 12 **Monthly Meeting** 3:00 pm
at Honey Horn
- Sun. Apr. 22 **Field Trip** to Webb Wildlife Area..... 7:30 am
- Fri. Apr. 27 **Presentation** at Palmetto Electric Building..... 6:30 pm
on Hemispheric Conservation of Atlantic Shorebirds

MAY

- Thurs. May 3 **Board Meeting** 1:30 pm
at the Jarvis Room, Old Coastal Discovery Museum
- Thurs. May 17 **Annual Picnic** 4:30 pm
at Waddell Mariculture Center

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.