

December 2012  
No. 332

# ECOBON

Newsletter of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society  
Audubon Refuge Keepers



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Natalie Hester

Holiday greetings to all of our members. I hope you all had a pleasant Thanksgiving. December brings us the annual Christmas Bird Count on December 14th. If you have never participated before, I would encourage you to contact your neighborhood leader and join one of the groups working in your area. I know that I learned so much from attending the count last year. While I may not have been the best 'spotter,' I know that every set of eyes and ears are helpful to the whole project.

Even if you cannot help with the CBC, I hope you'll join us at First Presbyterian Church for our annual preparation presentation by Barry Lowes. If you come, please bring some cookies / sweets to share. We will gather at 6:30 on Wednesday, December 5th. Also, plan to purchase your copy (and more for gifts....) of the Beaufort County annual calendar. It is organized around a birding theme this year and you'll recognize several of our members' photographs!

Happy birding, everyone. I hope you have a safe and happy holiday season.



## DECEMBER PROGRAM by Rick Riebesell

Wednesday, December 5, 2012, 6:30 p.m. at The First Presbyterian Church of Hilton Head, 540 William Hilton Parkway, Hilton Head Island.

### *Birds seen on the Christmas Bird Count*

Barry Lowes, noted nature photographer and birder, will be showing photographs of 135 birds commonly seen during winter on Hilton Head Island and likely to be seen on the 2012 Christmas Bird Count. The popular annual event will be at The First Presbyterian Church of Hilton Head, 540 William Hilton Parkway, on December 5 at 6:30 pm. The presentation serves as a review for the participants from the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society involved in the 2012 Christmas Bird Count, but is also enthusiastically attended by those who like to look at photographs of birds. The event is free and open to the public without registration.

Now the longest running citizen science survey in the world, Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count will begin December 14, 2012. The data not only helps identify birds in most urgent need of conservation action; it reveals success stories. The Christmas Bird Count helped document the comeback of the previously endangered Bald Eagle, and significant increases in waterfowl populations, both the result of conservation efforts.

Lowes, from Toronto, winters on Hilton Head Island between travels and spends about six months here annually. Lowes has exhibited at the Plantation Wildlife Arts Festival in Thomasville, Georgia, and in juried shows of the Hilton Head Art League, Southeastern Regional Camera Club competitions, and the Nature Conservancy. He has been published in brochures, magazines and calendars, and his photographs are in private collections in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. Lowes contributed the photography to the book *Short & Tall Tales of Hilton Head Island* by Margaret Greer.

Prior to the turn of the century, people engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt." They would choose sides and go afield with their guns; whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered quarry won. Conservation was in its beginning stages around the turn of the 20th century, and many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman, an early officer in the then budding Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition – a "Christmas Bird Census"-that would count birds in the holidays rather than hunt them. Now tens of thousands of volunteers throughout North America will brave winter weather to add a new layer to over a century of data.



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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

The official date of the Christmas Bird Count is December 14 this year.

To prepare for that day of counting birds, here are a few suggestions:

- 1) Get out and bird in your projected count area ahead of time. This sort of dress rehearsal helps you to reflect on the various habitats (wet/grassy/beach) and which little feathered friends you see or hear in that habitat. And nothing beats improving your birding skills like just spending time looking at birds!
- 2) When you have received the check list for birds seen in our area, take some time to thumb through your favorite bird book, noting key points about many of those birds.
- 3) Come to the bird review that Barry Lowes presents on Wednesday, December 5 at First Presbyterian Church at 6:30 pm. Bring a few cookies for the holiday cookie party that we have just before the review starts. Barry will present the birds most commonly seen in our area at the time of the Christmas Bird Count.
- 4) If you are new to birding, don't be intimidated by all our talk of birds. Just try to make sure you know how to use your binoculars and turn up dressed for the weather of the day. The rest is fun.
- 5) If you have any questions, please call your captain or call one of the CoChairs for the CBC: Barry Lowes at (843) 837-3537 or Charlotte White at (843)540-3858.

*Thanks for joining the fun!*



## Front cover of national Audubon magazine features one of our main projects!

Have you seen the latest national Audubon Magazine, the November-December 2012 issue? The main feature, starting with the front cover, is about finding piping plovers wintering in the Bahamas. And who is quoted often in that article? Matt Jeffery, Audubon International Alliances Program. He came to speak to us several years ago, and Hilton Head Audubon Society participated in supporting his research trip to the Bahamas and also sent binoculars and a scope. This project has identified some important bird areas in the Bahamas, has highlighted some



invasive plants that need to be arrested, and has focused partners from the USA and the Bahamas on ways to help support this endangered shorebird. Thank you, members of Hilton Head Audubon Society, for being part of this research project on our island as well as in the Bahamas! And read that Audubon article! If you did not receive the magazine, then go on the internet to [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org) and read the article.

## COMING IN JANUARY

THE 2013 H.H.I. AUDUBON CHAPTER BIRD SEED SALE STARTS JANUARY 2

DETAILS AND ORDER FORM IN THE JANUARY ECOBON.

SUPPORT OUR CHAPTER AND SAVE 12% TOO!



## NOTES FROM THE NEWHALL PRESERVE

by Jack Greenshields

As of this writing, all of the maintenance improvements requiring dollar expenditures as approved by the Newhall Preserve Committee and the Audubon Board have been completed per budget. A new donation post has been installed in a different location and improvements have been made to the parking lot and entrance. The pond has been cleared of unwanted vegetation which will allow improved view paths and an increase in wildflowers. Several copperheads were relocated during the process and our alligators seem ok with our efforts.

A number of volunteers performed additional site work on November 10. We had one "Newhall Purple Heart" recipient when a large yellow jacket nest failed to appreciate Joe Kernan's shovel invading their territory. Joe reports that the swelling and pain from the multiple stings has greatly improved.

Thanks to Sherm Barker for being our November trail monitor. Joan Shulman will perform this function in December.

Representatives of the South Carolina Forest Commission visited the Preserve on November 13 and endorsed the concept of a perimeter fuel break to mitigate fire damage to adjacent Sea Pines homes. Federal Hazard Mitigation funding is a possibility.

We have been conducting guided walks in the Preserve in October and November. Rita Kernan, Joanne McMenamin, Marie McClune, and I have led these. Public participation has been reasonably good. These guided walks will resume in February.

Anyone interested in assisting or learning more about the Preserve should contact Jack Greenshields at [jackg308@gmail.com](mailto:jackg308@gmail.com) or call 651-491-1851.



## RECENT AREA BIRD SIGHTINGS

by Jack Colcolough

A record long migration was experienced in our area this fall and is over. Winter songbirds, shorebirds and some ducks continue to arrive here.

Our fantastic early and long Fall migration ended on 10/29 and migrating warblers were found for a record 79 consecutive days at Crystal Lake in Indigo Run. Twenty-seven warbler species were found in our area during this migration including nine rare and eight uncommon species plus others. The only new warbler added to those reported the last two months was the uncommon Chestnut-sided Warbler. Also fourteen other migrant species were reported during our Fall, including the rare Solitary Sandpiper, uncommon Baltimore Oriole, Wood Thrush, and Stilt Sandpiper and American Robin, all added to the previously reported list.

Other rare sightings reported this month were: Very rare Golden Eagle at Fish Haul Creek, very rare Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Hutchinson Island near Savannah, early Snow Goose at Skidaway Island, several irruptive Red-breasted Nuthatches, Purple Finch, Clay-colored and Lincoln's Sparrows, Blackburnian, Cape May and Hooded Warblers and White-winged Dove. Other uncommon species found included: Peregrine Falcon, irruptive Pine Siskin, American Avocet, Blue-headed Vireo, Orange-crowned and Prairie Warblers, Merlin, Caspian Tern, Long-billed Dowitcher, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Swainson's Thrush, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Seaside Sparrow, Ruddy Duck, Mottled Duck, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Glossy Ibis, White-breasted Nuthatch, House Wren and Purple Gallinule.

FOTS birds reported during the month included: Surf Scoter, American Goldfinch, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hermit Thrush, Northern Shoveler, Lesser Scaup, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Phoebe, Hooded Merganser, Gadwall, Bald Eagle, Blue-winged Teal, White-throated and Song Sparrows, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Tree Swallow.

Hummingbirds continue to come to a few feeders on the Island and a few have shown up daily "year around". One Hummer is suspected to be other than a Ruby-throated but must be identified.

Thanks to those reporting their sightings: Jane Hester, Carol Clemens, Nan Lloyd, Robert Rommel, Annette Hausman, Shelia/Roger Johnson, Wendy Hansen, Diana Churchill, Kay Hodnett, Mariam Waterhouse, Dottie Bass, Kathy/Grant Greider, Rita/Joe Kernan, Karen Marts, Rick Williams, Fran Baer, Karen Petterson, Russ Wigh and several visitors. Keep up the excellent sightings reporting!

To report a bird sighting that is rare, out-of-season, uncommon, First-Of-The-Year (FOTY) or First-Of-The-Season (FOTS) e-mail: [BirdingFriends@yahoo.com](mailto:BirdingFriends@yahoo.com) or call 290-9469. Please state your name, the bird sighted, date and location of the sighting and any other pertinent information about your sighting.

It's a great time to get outside and find some of our winter arrivals and to prep for our annual Christmas Bird Count on December 14th by finding good places to look for birds on count day. Come join our CBC if you are not already signed up!



## LEGISLATION *by Clem Dietze*

The fight goes on regarding deepening the Savannah River. We and the Coastal Conservation League oppose the dredging due to the substantial damage that will occur, impacting sensitive wetlands and fish populations because of increasing saltwater intrusion. This may eventually reach the Supreme Court.





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## BIRD YOUR LOCAL PATCH

*by Christopher Loscalzo*

Birding one's local patch is probably the most useful thing a birder can do. A local patch is any area close to your home where birds are found. It can be a city park, schoolyard, pond, marsh, beach, abandoned farm field, state forest, or just about any other place in your neighborhood frequented by birds. It should be easy to get to and open to the public.

Birding your local patch affords you the opportunity to get to know the common birds in your area. You learn their songs, habits, and behaviors. You come to recognize them quickly and easily. You see how they feed, nest, and raise their young. You see how they interact with one another and with other species.

Birding your local patch teaches you about migration. You learn when spring migration starts and when fall migration ends. You come to know the arrival dates for migrants and summer residents. You see what conditions favor movements of birds into your area. Winds, cold fronts, and precipitation take on new meaning.

Birding your local patch benefits the local birding community. You can submit your sightings on ebird.org, so they become a part of a worldwide data-base of avian populations. There is, in addition, the potential for your sightings to aid in land preservation, because the information you collect about endangered or threatened species that breed in or visit your birding site could persuade government officials to preserve the land and spare it from being developed or sold.

## NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY CHAPTER

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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.

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**Hilton Head/Bluffton Audubon Society Chapter**

Local Membership Form     1 YR. - \$15 - Individual  
    1 YR. - \$25 - Family  
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Please enroll me as a member of Hilton Head/Bluffton Audubon Society.

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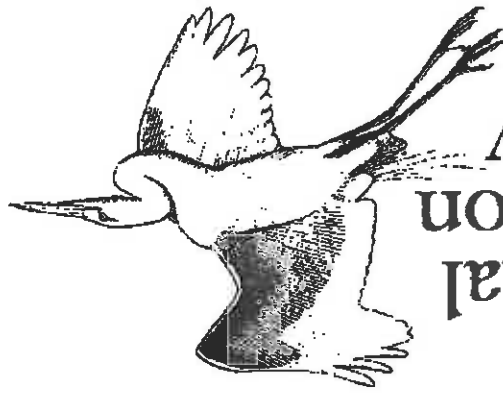
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# National Audubon Society

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ECOBON

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## DECEMBER 2012 - JANUARY 2013 Calendar

### DECEMBER

- Weds. Dec. 5 **Monthly Meeting** at First Presbyterian Church .6:30 pm
- Thurs. Dec. 6 **Board Meeting** at the Seabrook ..... 1:30 pm  
at the Armstrong-Hack Conference Room at Honey Horn
- Fri. Dec. 14 **Christmas Bird Count** ..... All Day

### JANUARY

- Thurs. Jan. 3 **Board Meeting** at the Seabrook ..... 1:30 pm  
at the Armstrong-Hack Conference Room at Honey Horn
- Thurs. Jan. 10 **Monthly Meeting** at Honey Horn ..... 3:00 pm

.....  
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, in the 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.