

January 2013
No. 333

ECOBON



Newsletter of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society
Audubon Refuge Keepers

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By *Natalie Hefter*

I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas and New Year. A special thank you to all of our members who took time out of their busy schedules to participate in the 2012 Christmas Bird Count. I joined the Indigo Run group again this year and we had a fabulous count, including seeing one of the Bald Eagles swooping into its nest and a Barred Owl. Our group kept on the move and saw some great birds. It was a beautiful day and I learned quite a lot from the experienced birders that were with us. It was nice seeing such a great turnout for the CBC Preparation meeting on 12/5. As usual, Barry Lowes provided a wonderful program to help participants identify the various species on the bird count day. And, a thank you to Teresa Bedo for setting up our raffle ticket sales and merchandise table. We raised some funds for the Society – thanks!

This month and next are the time to order your birdseed for our annual sale. Ed Nash works hard to get this program going and we appreciate all that he does. Be sure to stop in to Wild Birds Unlimited to purchase your seed at a discount. We do ask that you use cash or check to help us avoid paying credit card transaction fees.

Reminder: if you haven't renewed your local membership yet, please fill out and return the form in the newsletter. Thanks for your support!

JANUARY PROGRAM *by Rick Riebesell*

Thursday, January 10, 2013, 3:00 p.m.

at Coastal Discovery Museum at Honey Horn in the Sea Island Room.

Conservation Takes Flight

Dr. Maria Whitehead will present "Conservation Takes Flight: SC TNC's Whole System Approach and the Birds that Benefit" at the January 10th meeting of the Hilton Head Audubon Society at the Coastal Discovery Museum at Honey Horn, Sea Island Room at 3:00 pm. Dr. Whitehead is an ornithologist and Project Director of The Nature Conservancy – South Carolina (TNC-SC). The meeting is open to the public and is without charge.

Maria Whitehead grew up on a farm, raising a great horned owl in her mother's kitchen. She continues the family conservation ethic today as a TNC-SC project director, ornithologist, and wife of TNC-SC Assistant Director of Land Protection Ryan Olson. Maria has a bachelor's degree in biology from Davidson College and a degree in management from the University of Georgia. She studied avian ecology for her PhD in natural resources from Clemson University. She joined TNC-SC in 2007 as director of the Winyah Bay and Pee Dee River Basin.



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JANUARY FIELD TRIP *by Natalie Hefter*

Monday, January 14, 2013 at 7:30 am

Carlos Chacon will be leading an 'Urban Bird Watching' walk on Monday, January 14th starting at 7:30 AM. The site he has chosen for this field trip is close to the Red Cedar School in Bluffton. There is a wetland area and undeveloped piece of property near the school where he has been seeing Red Headed Woodpeckers, various winter Warblers, wading birds and more. Please call Carlos to register, as there is a limit of 12 participants for this walk, 689-6767, ext. 226. Parking is located at the Hidden Lakes community pool off of Red Cedar Road.



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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.

2012 Christmas Bird Count; A Great Success!

For the 2012 Hilton Head Audubon Christmas Bird Count, the total species count was 152 and the total bird count was about 38,003. This is excellent, considering the weather and temperature changes!

Happy New Year and here's hoping you have time for good birding in the coming year! A team has been working on the final figures for the 2012 Audubon Count and this report reflects lots of organization and hard work on your part. Thank you so much! And to every one who participated in the count, know that without you, the goals could not have been reached. Your participation contributed greatly to the success of the day!

Our bird lists have had careful review. And to the captains, you collected them and reviewed the sightings. Your rare bird reports and photos this year were outstanding. Some groups even went to high buildings to get distant counts with telescopes and powerful cameras. Others plied the waters in cold weather. Many of you worked to recruit experienced participants as well as novices. You planned the areas for your groups and you spread experienced birders among those groups. We feel confident that our tally is sound and well documented. The pictures this year were exceptional! We expect our count to be well received. The success has been due largely to your efforts and to the leadership of the captains. You should feel proud of what you have achieved.

Nan Lloyd, the official Compiler for our chapter, will be entering the statistics into computer form along with names and email addresses of participants. By mid January, she will have submitted this official report to the regional level. We hope that our tightened protocol will be recognized.



Again, we thank you for your participation in the Christmas Bird Count and may your new year be filled with enjoyment of this beautiful place in which we live.

Barry Lowes and Charlotte White

CBC - Explanation for the number of Eagles, 25, and Osprey, 80, counted during our Christmas Bird Count

by Barry Lowes

We have felt for some time that our Eagle and Osprey counts have been higher than we anticipated. So this year we had counters note the time Eagles were seen and the GPS on where they were found, also which direction they were flying.

We plotted all these sightings on a map of our Count area. This indicated by time and place any likely double counts.

We concluded that our Count was close to being the actual number of different Eagles sighted. We also postulated that we have two kinds of Eagles. Those birds that migrate south for the winter and return north to nest in the spring; and those who live here year-round and begin to nest earlier.

This seems to account for the numbers counted now and in the spring, nesting. These nest sites are monitored by the State by flying over the nests. The extra Eagles will be missing from their northern Count Area.

NOTES FROM THE NEWHALL PRESERVE

by Jack Greenshields

It has been relatively quiet and peaceful at the Newhall Preserve as the changing of the seasons continues. Thanks to Joan and Richard Shulman for serving as trail monitors in December. The 2013 assignment list for this critical task is being assembled for the preserve. Trail monitors walk the property main areas once per week on their own schedule for their assigned month and report any issues such as downed trees, trail damage, or trash that needs removal. This is a great volunteer opportunity for someone who likes to walk and observe nature. We have lost some of our regular volunteers due to relocation and health issues, so Hilton Head Audubon has a real need for members to step forward. If interested, please contact Jack Greenshields at jackg308@gmail.com or 651-491-1851.

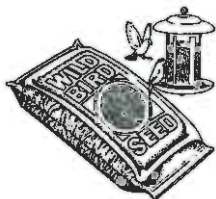
Discussions continue with various groups regarding the potential fuel break on the Newhall Preserve perimeter with Sea Pines. Representative of the South Carolina Forestry Commission are expected to meet with Sea Pines residents and others in January.

2013 BIRD SEED SALE UNDERWAY NOW

by Ed Nash

AUDUBON MEMBERS SAVE 12% NOW ON SEEDS

Our annual Audubon Chapter & Wild Birds Unlimited fund-raiser starts on January 2, and runs thru March 2, 2013. This drive is the principal means for supporting our local educational programs. This includes the Audubon Adventures workbooks that we donate to elementary schools each year, coordinated by Mary Jane Major, our Education Chairperson.



Please note that we are offering discounted prices during this sales period only, so you can order as many seeds as you may need for the year, and then pick up new seeds as needed throughout the year, so you can be assured of always getting fresh seeds. Please use the 2013

Bird Seed Sale order form that can be printed from our home page computer menu, or pick up a copy at the Wild Birds store in Indigo Run.

We want to thank all buyers for their strong support.

RECENT AREA BIRD SIGHTINGS

by Jack Colcolough

Our winter birding is progressing very well with the presence of 14 species of ducks in our area as well as winter shorebirds and songbirds. Another successful Christmas Bird Count was enjoyed on December 14. A final tally for the number of species and total birds on our HHI CBC will be available soon.

An accidental sighting of a Whooping Crane was reported flying over the Old South Golf Course in Bluffton. This the "first ever" Whooper sighting reported in our immediate area to my knowledge.

Rare birds reported for the month were: Snow Goose, Grasshopper Sparrow and King Rail on Savannah NWR, Black-chinned Hummingbird on Skidaway Island, irruptive Red-breasted Nuthatch on HHI and Purple Sandpiper on Tybee Island.



Out-of-season birds were:

Rare Roseate Spoonbill, rare Nashville Warbler, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Ruby-throated Hummingbird and a Palm Warbler in full breeding plumage.

Uncommon species included: Lesser Scaup, American Kestrel, White Pelican, Canvasback, Redhead, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Loggerhead Shrike, Rusty Blackbird, Hairy Woodpecker, Orange-crowned Warbler, American Bittern, Ruddy Duck, Mottled Duck, Eurasian-collared Dove, White-breasted Nuthatch and Glossy Ibis.

Other FOTS and good finds reported included: Bald Eagle, Wilson's Snipe, American Goldfinch, White-throated and Song Sparrows, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Common Loon, Black & White and Yellow-throated Warblers, Red Knot, Hermit Thrush, Sora, Northern Harrier, Eastern Phoebe, Red-breasted Merganser and winter ducks, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, Hooded Merganser, both Teals, Ring-necked Duck, Wood Duck and Bufflehead.

Many thanks to all reporting their sightings: Shelia/Roger Johnson, Fran Baer, Carol Clemens, Marianne/Jim Currie, Dianne Faucette, Robert Rommel, Dottie Bass, Kathy/Grant Greider, Rita/Joe Kernan, Karen Marts, Jane Hester, Mary Jane Majors, Dick Phillips, Jim Grove, Lou Brocato, Joanne McMenamin, John/Caroline Crawshaw, several visitors and all the CBC participants.



Now that our CBC is over, plan an exciting birding trip to enjoy some of the great winter ducks as well as our winter shorebirds and songbirds!

In Memoriam

Ann Daniel
who passed away in December.
She was a long-time member of our
Audubon chapter and a past
Editor of the Ecobon.

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STUDY - NATIVE PLANTS BEST FOR BIRDS

Lawns offer lower habitat quality than yards with native vegetation

Researchers have confirmed what gardeners know intuitively: Yards with native plants are better for birds than yards dominated by green lawns. So says a study comparing native and exotic landscapes in Phoenix, Arizona.

Yards that mimic native vegetation of the surrounding desert offer birds mini refuges, helping to offset the loss of biodiversity in the city, according to scientists from the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Arizona State University in Tempe.

UMass graduate student Susannah Lerman and colleagues placed seed trays in 20 residential yards at least 1.8 miles apart. Half the yards were desert-like, while the others had green lawns. Abert's Towhee, Curve-billed Thrasher, House Finch, and House Sparrow were the most widespread tray visitors.



Species that visited both types of yards consumed more seed from trays in yards with lawns, indicating lower habitat quality than yards with native plants. Similarly, foragers in the desert-like yards quit the seed trays earlier and spent more foraging in the natural yards and less at the seed trays.

(BirdWatching, December 2012)

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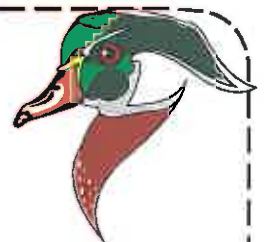
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BP OIL FOUND IN MINNESOTA PELICAN EGGS

Oil, dispersant confirmed in largest colonies of American White Pelican.

Evidence of the BP disaster has been found more than 1,100 miles northwest of the Louisiana coastlines that were coated in oil two years ago - in the eggs of American White Pelicans nesting in Minnesota.

The birds winter in the Gulf, and subadults remain in the region throughout their first summer. Pelicans hatched in 2009 were present while oil was spewing into the Gulf in 2010. More than 22,000 pairs of pelicans nest at 15 sites in Minnesota - the largest concentration of nesting white pelicans in North America.

The researchers have found oil contamination in 20 of the first 22 eggs analyzed and dispersant in 14 of 18 eggs. Analysis is continuing on the remaining eggs and on more than 50 bill knobs collected from nesting areas. Bill knobs grow on top of the birds' bills on their wintering grounds and then fall off in the breeding colonies. Knobs collected in 2011 will be compared with knobs collected prior to the oil spill.



Carrol Henderson, nongame wildlife program supervisor for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, says the effects of the contamination on hatchability or survival of chicks is unknown. More results are expected this year.

(from Birdwatching Magazine, December 2012)



Bird Counters
(file photo)

HOW MUCH DO BIRDS SLEEP?

Birds don't really sleep in big chunks of time like mammals do. They can grab a few winks whenever it is appropriate, no matter what time of day. Most songbirds are active during the daytime. This means they get much of their sleep at night. Small songbirds seem to sleep only in very short bouts lasting just a few minutes, interspersed with periods of wakefulness, over and over throughout the night. Birds often sleep off and on during the day if they are not busy foraging, avoiding predators, tending to young, or defending a territory.

Bird sleep is not always a deep sleep but often a type of semi-alert sleep in which one half of the brain remains alert; it's called unihemispherical sleep. One of the easiest ways to observe the behavior is to look for ducks resting with one eye open. A big advantage to unihemispherical sleep is that it allows birds to stay vigilant and detect predators.



(BirdWatching, by Julie Craves)

What do Chickadees do with all those seeds?

Chickadees at feeding stations are busy birds. You may see them take a single seed (often a sunflower), fly a short distance, stand on it with one foot, crack it open with a blow of the bill, and consume it.

But chickadees - as well as jays, titmice, nuthatches and woodpeckers - also hide seeds and other food items in cracks and crevices in tree bark, telephone or fence poles, home siding, or other places within their winter territories. This food storing is known as caching. Most birds carry one seed at a time, but you might see jays gobbling down dozens of seeds before flying off. They have a special throat pouch that enables them to hold a lot of seeds.

Chickadees and their relatives usually cache close to the food source and recover it within a week, while jays may cache over a wider area. If they are resident, they may not reclaim their food for many weeks.

(Julie Craves, BirdWatching)





Founded in 1974, the Hilton Head Audubon Society uses 100% of local membership dues for programs and activities in our own area. Your local dues provide support for the following:

- Monthly programs
- Field Trips
- Citizen Science projects such as the Christmas Bird Count
- Audubon Newhall Preserve
- Education Outreach programs such as Audubon Adventures in local schools
- Various learning opportunities

We need your help to continue these activities. All of the above are possible through our LOCAL DUES! We do NOT receive national funds for any of our local programs. Please join the Hilton Head Island chapter of the Audubon Society and support these local programs. Remember.....100% of the chapter dues stay LOCAL!

For membership information, contact: enews@hiltonheadaudubon.org

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 Please detach and mail or bring to the next meeting.

Local Membership: select either 1 year individual \$15 or 1 year family \$25

Last Name _____ First Name(s) _____

Address: _____ city _____ State _____ Zip _____

For LOCAL residents, please indicate your plantation/neighborhood such as Sea Pines, Indigo Run, Bluffton, Sun City etc. _____

Preferred phone: _____

Email: _____ (please print clearly!)

Can you help us with any of these activities on an as needed basis? Please check any of interest to you. Audubon Newhall Preserve Field Trips Conservation Education Christmas Bird Count Publicity/Programs other _____

Please mail to: P.O. Box 6185 – Hilton Head Island, SC - 29938