



# Audubon

The Hilton Head Island Audubon Society is a Chapter of National Audubon Society, Inc.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By *Natalie Hefter*

The Hilton Head Audubon is off to a great start to 2013. Once again, we enjoyed a fabulous presentation at our last meeting. It was a 'standing room only' crowd to hear about The Nature Conservancy's projects here in South Carolina. Dr. Whitehead provided an excellent summary of various conservation projects, on land and sea, that affect our bird populations. She invited our group to plan a field trip to a number of areas that they help preserve. Look for more information soon about any trips.

Speaking of field trips, we have had some volunteers offer a few trips for the winter / spring. But, we are looking for a few more volunteers. You don't need to be an expert birder to lead a trip. Please consider having a few of your fellow Audubon members join you on a birding trip that you're planning. These trips are one of the best ways that we learn from one another and to hone our birding skills in advance of the 2013 Christmas Bird Count.

These recent warm days have led me to start thinking about the spring. I'm planning to install a blue bird box in my back yard. Won't you consider adding one to yours? Even better yet, do you live on a golf course or in a gated community that could benefit from having a few boxes installed? All sales of these boxes benefit your local chapter. Please contact Marianne Currie if you're interested in buying any boxes this year.

It's not too late to buy your birdseed at a special price. Wildbirds Unlimited is offering a special discount on seed for our members. Please stop in and order yours before the end of February. Thank you to Ed Nash for continuing to coordinate this important annual event.

On the subject of 'thank you,' I have to thank all of our captains and counters again for their efforts in this year. With 152 species identified and over 38,000 birds counted, it was a busy year! Thank you to Charlotte White and Barry Lowes for organizing this flock of counters and arranging for the data to be compiled. And, behind the scenes, Nan Lloyd has been a busy lady - she's compiling all the data digitally and sending it to our regional coordinators. That truly is a thankless job- so, thank you very much, Nan!

I'll look forward to seeing you all at our next meeting.

## FEBRUARY PROGRAM *by Rick Riebesell*

Thursday, February 14, 2013, 3:00 p.m.

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

### ***"Beaks for All Occasions"***

"Beaks for All Occasions" will be presented by Robert Rommel at the February 14th meeting of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society at the Coastal Discovery Museum at Honey Horn in the Sea Island Room at 3:00 pm. He will be discussing the diversity and function of some of the wide array of avian beaks. The meeting is open to the public and is without charge.

Robert Rommel received his Bachelor's degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Princeton University and attended the University of Michigan for graduate education in Ecology. Education about nature has been a part of his life since early childhood and to this day, he still spends time studying the wildlife and ecosystems he photographs. He employs his comprehensive knowledge of biology as a tool in understanding his subjects, determining their locations and habits, and predicting behavior. Robert Rommel has taught at various levels, including community groups, children, undergraduate and graduate-level classes. He conducts nature photography workshops and has a website at <http://www.robertrommel.com>.



Cardinal



Hummingbird



Eagle



Warbler



Pelican



Toucan

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### Bird Seed Sale

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### Christmas Bird Count

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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.

## • FEBRUARY FIELD TRIP *by Natalie Hefter*

• Friday, February 15, 2013 at 9:00 am

• On FRIDAY, February 15th we will visit the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge with Audubon members Annette Hausman & Wendy Hansen (not experts) but frequent visitors to this site. We will meet in the parking lot at the entrance of SNWR Laurel Hill Wildlife Drive at 9 a.m. Please be prompt or a little early.

• This 4 mile drive has lots of places to stop & observe winter ducks, wading birds, hawks, & numerous small birds. We will wander short distances but walking will be minimal.

• There are "port a potties" along the way. Bring binoculars, spotting scopes (we will have at least one) water, & snacks. At the end of the drive, figure 2 to 3 hours, there will be an optional visit to the SNWR visitors center, a must for anyone who hasn't been there yet. There are exhibits, habitat video, a gift store & e-bird tracker computer and a real bathroom! There are no picnic tables so if you plan to picnic lunch at the visitors center bring a chair.

• To sign up contact Annette Hausman (843-757-7211 or email [annetteh@hargray.com](mailto:annetteh@hargray.com))

• The SNWR is about 25 miles from Hilton Head.

### • Directions:

• Take Highway 278 west. Turn left at Highway 46 (Oldtown Bluffton). Drive to Bluffton 4 way stop, turn right (still on hwy 46). 170 West joins Hwy 46 at the big roundabout. Follows signs for 170 West (you're still on Hwy 46) for 2.8 miles

• Turn right on Hwy 170 West (Freedom Parkway) Stay on 170 West at stop sign go left. At next stop sign go left onto HIGHWAY 17. (You will see a sign for SNWR)

• You are on hwy 17S/170W heading south. 170 West will turn off the 17S highway on the right (Alligator Alley). Look for entrance to LAUREL HILL WILDLIFE DRIVE on the left (about 2.3 miles). See you under the big oaks in the parking lot. We will form carpools there. (Annette's cell 206-276-5846 for last minutes cancellations or questions)

• If you are interested in leading a walk in one of your favorite birding spots, please email Natalie Hefter at [nhefter@me.com](mailto:nhefter@me.com). We're always looking for outings!

## • Why Don't Chickadees Freeze to Death in Severe Winters?

*by Clyde Sorenson*

• Tiny warm-blooded animals, with their high surface area to volume ratio are in a constant struggle to avoid heat loss and subsequent death in very cold weather, particularly at night, yet Carolina Chickadees seem to blissfully weather the harshest conditions. Chickadees have a number of adaptations that allow them to not only survive, but thrive, during the coldest winters.



• A chickadee's plumage is obviously one factor contributing to their ability to conserve heat. In extremely cold temperatures, the bird erects its body feathers, trapping highly insulating dead air. This insulation, when fluffed to its full 6/10" depth, is so effective that the bird's breast will be 105° F even though the surrounding air is a bitter 0° F.

• At night in very cold weather, the bird allows its body temperature to drop about 20° F, in a very controlled fashion. It maintains this new, lower, temperature by periodic shivering, but this adaptation allows it to expend much less energy overnight, compared to its normal 105° F temperature. The chickadee rapidly warms the next morning as it resumes normal activity.

• The bare legs would also seem to be a place where a tremendous amount of heat could be lost, but the bird has a heat-exchanging arrangement of the blood vessels in its legs. Hot arterial blood flowing towards the feet gives its heat up to the cold venous blood leaving the feet, pre-warming it as it returns to the heart.

• Yet another way chickadees conserve heat and metabolic energy is by huddling together with others in communal roosting cavities. The best cavities (the ones that lose the least heat) are in large, live trees. Other birds, such as bluebirds, also exploit this strategy.

# NOTES FROM THE NEWHALL PRESERVE

by Jack Greenshields

Thanks to everyone who came forward to volunteer for trail monitoring duty at the Newhall Preserve. The positive response enabled a schedule to be put together for the entire year! Included are new volunteers Karen Marts, Bob Clemons, Rick Garman, Lee Wilwerding, Tom Hennessey, Joanne McMenamin, Marie McClune, and Carol Rivers.

Winter is the time for more aggressive maintenance as the temperatures are cooler and the critters are fewer (snakes and alligators hibernate!). Volunteers have been cutting dead trees, clearing brush, spreading mulch, and removing anything that might be considered a fire hazard near the trails and parking lot. Special thanks are in order for Roy Havens and Matt Mattoon who have devoted significant time to the Newhall Preserve. There will also be some group workdays scheduled for January and February.



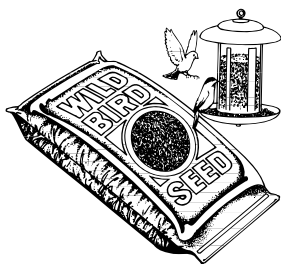
On February 4th, the A-Chivers club of the WAHHI will be visiting the Newhall Preserve to learn more about the native plants on site. If you know of a group that would like personal guided tour of the preserve, please contact Jack Greenshields at jackg308@gmail.com or 651-491-1851. We have a number of trained volunteers who provide excellent and very educational walking tours of the Newhall Preserve.

The investigation of a potential fuel break continues. Tom Hennessey created and delivered to a meeting of Sea Pines residents a very informative Power Point presentation on the subject. If interested, please contact Tom at thennessey@hargray.com.

## LAST CALL for BIRD SEED by Ed Nash

Our bird seed sales end on March 2, 2013, and are ahead of last year so far in January.

Please help fund our local education programs and the Audubon Adventures school program with a purchase of bird seed by March 2, 2013, and save 12% with a 5% discount and 7% tax savings. Just use the 2013 Bird seed order form.



## RECENT AREA BIRD SIGHTINGS

by Jack Colcolough

Our winter is in full swing, even though we have had some record high temperatures in January. Most of our winter birds have arrived including ducks, shorebirds and songbirds. We have had another very successful annual Christmas Bird Count, finding a whopping 152 bird species in the immediate HHI area (all details to be reported later).

Rare species sighted during the month were: Razorbill on Tybee Island, Brown Creeper and Red-breasted Nuthatch on Hilton Head Island and Common Ground Dove on Daufuskie Island.



“Out-Of-Season” birds reported were: Summer Tanager, Painted Bunting, Northern Waterthrush, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Cattle Egret and Green Heron.

Uncommon bird sightings included: American Woodcock, Dark-eyed Junco endangered Piping Plover, Bob White, Eurasian Collared Dove, White Pelican, Red-throated Loon, Baltimore Oriole, Canvasback, Redhead, Blue-headed Vireo, Purple Finch, Loggerhead Shrike, Orange-crowned Warbler, American Kestrel, White-breasted Nuthatch, Greater Scaup, Ruddy Duck, Wild Turkey, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Hairy Woodpecker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, House Wren, Nelson’s, Saltmarsh and Seaside Sparrows, Great Black-backed Gull and Rusty Blackbird.



Photo by Denny Baer

Other good finds and FOTS reported were: Bald Eagles (25), Surf and Black Scoters, Wilson’s Snipe, Red Knot, Common Loon, Sora, Hermit Thrush, American Goldfinch and Bonaparte’s Gull.

Many thanks to all reporting their sightings: Shelia/Roger Johnson, Carol Clemens, Dianne Faucette, Rita/Joe Kernan, Karen Marts, Mary Ann Lueckel, Dick Phillips, Nan Lloyd, Mary Jane Majors, Dottie Bass, Miriam Waterhouse, Marianne/Jim Currie, several visitors and all the CBC birders contributing.

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

Now is a great time to do some winter birding or join one of our field trips!



## ROOKERY OF MAGICAL BIRDS AT SHELTER COVE *by Karen Marts*

A few weeks ago it was brought to my attention that there were 100's of "white birds" in a pond behind Shelter Cove Mall. I was stunned at the news, and wondered how such a significant amount of birds could escape my attention. Local birders will be surprised to know that there is a rookery located next to the Shelter Cove Community Park. Just driving down Shelter Cove Lane you can spot the birds. I parked my car at 5pm one evening recently, and walked a minute to the bike path that lines the road. Full of anticipation, I was unprepared for the beautiful sight that awaited me. Hundreds of White Ibis were settling in for the night as their comrades, such as Little Blue Herons, Tri-colored Herons, Snowy Egrets, and Great Egrets, joined them. Birds flew in flocks of 20-30 from the direction of Broad Creek and the marshlands that surround the area. It was completely magical! It was amazing to see birds of a different feather flocking together. Hooded Mergansers were floating peacefully in and out of the low branches that hung over the pond, their dramatic black, white, and brown color feathers begging for a photograph. I marveled at the Bufflehead ducks swimming nonchalantly in the center. Anhningas and Double-crested Cormorants sat on their favorite perches, diligently preening their feathers.

With both the redevelopment of Shelter Cove Mall, and the cutting back of vegetation to expose the rookery, the birds have been gaining more attention. It was originally slated to drain this pond, but now the importance of preserving the rookery remains high. Although apartments will be built to the right of the roosting area, a larger park is being planned to the left, closer to Shelter Cove Marina. Bird conservation needs to be in the forefront of the community. It is my hope that everyone will make a special trip in the next two weeks to witness this phenomenal group of wading birds and ducks.



Why not take advantage of enjoying Shelter Cove Community Park during the fall migration. Carry a picnic lunch and relax on the benches that overlook a gorgeous grass lawn peppered with tall trees. There is a pavilion, restrooms, and free wireless internet for your convenience. I couldn't believe the amount of Eastern Bluebirds flying expertly through the park. Yellow-rumped Warblers perform their acrobats, along with various Sparrows, Carolina Wrens, and Purple Finches. A delightful trail

leads to a boardwalk that graces a second pond, where you will see the same Great Blue Heron fishing every day. Adjacent to Shelter Cove Community Park is the Hilton Head Island Veterans Memorial, a tribute to honor our fallen heroes. Two arbors draped in vines provide cover for song birds. Another trail winds around a grassy area lined with trees and tall shrubbery, perfect for dog owners and their pets. Downy Woodpeckers, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, and Northern Cardinals can be seen. Finally, there is a boardwalk with an observation deck overlooking Broad Creek, offering spectacular sunsets! The diversity of habitat in these 2 parks and the rookery provide unparalleled birding opportunities.



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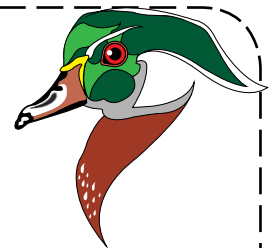
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## Report on Audubon Christmas Bird Count of 2012

Charlotte White and Barry Lowes were in charge of the Christmas Bird Count of 2012 for the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society. Barry Lowes will be reporting on the Christmas Bird Count at the February 14th meeting of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society at the Coastal Discovery Museum at Honey Horn in the Sea Island Room at 3:00 pm. The meeting is open to the public and is without charge.

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 act as "citizen scientists" each year to add a new layer to over a century of data.

The Hilton Head Audubon Society is pleased to announce its results of the annual Christmas Bird Count. As part of the National Audubon Society's efforts to collect data about bird populations throughout the North American continent, local groups of "citizen scientists" traverse golf courses, beaches, rivers, marshes and waterways throughout the Lowcountry. Led by experienced birders, each team counts birds in a specific geographic area, reporting number and species.

Each team determines the best way to count the birds in its area. While most teams walk, others use boats, golf carts, and, in one case, the rooftop of a local resort (to set up spotting scopes to get a better view of birds offshore).

After all the data was collected and the sightings confirmed and reviewed, this year's totals were 152 different species of birds – a total of 38,003 individual birds. Birds are constantly threatened by a variety of factors which over time have been squeezing down the species and numbers of birds. The data from the Christmas Bird Count is very helpful in understanding trends in bird populations.

A highlight for the 2012 count was the spotting of 50 White Pelicans flying overhead. Several groups, miles apart, submitted this unusual sighting. Another highlight was the count of 25 Bald Eagles and 80 Ospreys, whose numbers are growing.

This important exercise could not be executed without the 170 volunteers who spent a day out-of-doors in fellowship of others searching for, finding, and counting 152 species and a total of 38,003 birds. This count has been happening for 35 years on Hilton Head Island. If you would like to become involved, whether an experienced or inexperienced birder, you are welcome to join the Christmas Bird Count, Contact Charlotte White at 843-540-3858 or Barry Lowes at 843-837-3537, for further information.



Photo from 'Urban Bird Watching' walk on Monday, January 14th with Carlos Chacon.  
*Photo by Carol Clemens*

## DON'T DISTURB THE SHOREBIRDS!

The South Carolina Shorebird Partnership reminds us to please pay special attention to the shore birds that enjoy our beaches each winter. Our beaches are important "fueling stops" as they migrate. Any disruption or chasing by dogs is interfering with them. Please keep pets on a leash whenever shorebirds are present on the beach. If we can walk the beach, see the birds going about their business without running away from us, then we are "doing it right."



It's almost nesting time again, and that means time to check your bird boxes and see if they need to be replaced, or to put up your first box if you don't have one yet. We have blue bird boxes for \$30, and screech owl boxes for \$45. Steel poles for mounting the blue bird boxes are available. Please call the Curries at 681-8525 to place your order.





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](mailto: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**

# Audubon



Issue #: 334

Hilton Head, South Carolina 29938

P.O. Box 6185

Organization: Hilton Head Island Audubon Society

Frequency: Monthly Sept.-May

Issue Date: February 2013

Title: Ecobon

Hilton Head Island, South Carolina 29938

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## FEBRUARY ~ MARCH 2013 Calendar

### FEBRUARY

- Thurs. Feb. 7 **Board Meeting** ..... 1:30 pm  
at the Armstrong-Hack Conference Room at Honey Horn
- Thurs. Feb. 14 **Monthly Meeting** at Honey Horn ..... 3:00 pm

### MARCH

- Thurs. Mar. 7 **Board Meeting** ..... 1:30 pm  
at the Armstrong-Hack Conference Room at Honey Horn
- Thurs. Mar. 14 **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.