



Audubon

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By *Natalie Hester*

It's been a busy February for our Audubon Society chapter. We had another 'standing room' only meeting this month featuring a presentation by photographer Robert Rommel. His 'Beaks and Bills' presentation even included an interactive quiz at the end – from the results, it looked like we all learned a lot about the shape of birds' beaks and determining what sort of food they prefer. Thanks, Robert, for another informative and entertaining program.

Annette Hausman and Wendy Hansen organized and led a walk over at the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge last month. They had a beautiful day – and even saw the Cinnamon Teal while they were there. At the end of the day, they'd observed around 50 different species of birds. This month, Jane Hester has coordinated a trip up to the Webb Wildlife Center. Please see the details in this issue of the Ecobon. Kathy Greider will have news about the April field trip to Magnolia Plantation at our next meeting. Thank you to everyone who has volunteered to lead these outings.

Our Local Membership numbers have been growing. Thank you to all who heeded our call and joined or rejoined the local chapter. We will have membership applications at the March meeting if you have not had a chance to renew yet.

As we look forward to the spring, it's time to begin planning for next year's leadership of the chapter. At this time, we are looking for a few new board members and also committee chairs. Please consider helping your chapter by volunteering to lead a field trip, plan monthly programs, or assist with education programs. If you have any questions, please contact me.

MARCH PROGRAM *by Rick Riebesell*

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

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

"Low Country Habitats"

Diana Churchill, Birder and Author

Diana Churchill will be presenting "Low Country Habitats" at the March 14 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.

Diana Churchill has a passion for birds. She loves watching them, photographing them, and reading about them. Diana especially loves sharing her passion with others. Whether working at Wild Birds Unlimited, leading field trips, or writing articles, Diana's enthusiasm for birds is contagious. Since 2001, Diana has been writing a twice-monthly column, "Birder's Eye View," for the Savannah Morning News. Now Diana has assembled 53 of these articles into a book. *Birder's Eye View: Savannah & the Low Country* includes an overview to each season followed by four articles per month. Articles feature particular bird families that visit the Low Country during a given season, showcase celebrity birds, or provide information about seasonal bird events, such as nesting or migration. The book is illustrated with nearly 500 color photographs, almost all taken by Diana herself. Written with both the casual bird watcher and the dedicated enthusiast in mind, *Birder's Eye View* offers guidance for turning your yard into a welcoming bird habitat, as well as a detailed list of thirty-four of the Low Country's top bird watching locations, ranging from Charleston, South Carolina down to Cumberland Island, Georgia.

Diana Churchill grew up in Savannah and developed an early love of the beaches, marsh, tidal creeks, and birds of the Low Country. She attended Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida where she majored in Spanish. She took one formal class in ornithology and spent a month riding around the state of Florida watching birds. After graduating from the Boulder School of Massage Therapy, Diana moved to Massachusetts where she had a private massage practice for 17 years. There, she joined the Brookline Bird Club and got seriously hooked on birds - particularly the spring migration of songbirds. She got her bird education in the field, attending walks led by expert birders.

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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.

MARCH FIELD TRIP *by Natalie Hefter*

Tuesday, March 26, 2013 at 9:00 am

A birding trip to the **James W. Webb Wildlife Center** in Hampton County is planned for Tuesday March 26th. Leading the trip will be April Attkinson wildlife technician with the SC Department of Natural Resources. Local expert, Barry Lowes is also planning on joining us on



this outing. While at Webb, DNR will provide transportation in the trucks frequently used by hunters. These trucks are equipped with steps and a handrail for easy access. Webb, which abuts the Savannah River, has 5,866 acres and includes a variety of habitat: cypress swamps, pine forest, black water streams, freshwater ponds, open fields, sand ridges, and hardwood bottom forest. Among birders it is most noted as the home of Red-cockaded woodpeckers.

The center, about an hour drive from Bluffton, is just north of Garnett, SC, and it is located on S.C. 20. We will meet in parking lot of the Dollar General on May River Road (Hwy 46) in downtown Bluffton. If you are going please plan to be in the parking lot at 7:20 as we hope to check in, carpool and be underway by 7:30 in the morning. Restrooms are available when we arrive at Webb. We should be finished with the tour by 12:30. Picnic areas are available both near the main buildings and by one of the ponds. Bring a lunch, if you plan on staying and joining us for some additional birding. For those wishing to return home the closest places to eat are in Hardeeville, SC. Space is limited for this trip, so sign up early by contacting Jane Hester at 757-3118 or im4dbirds@gmail.com. We look forward to a wonderful wildlife experience.

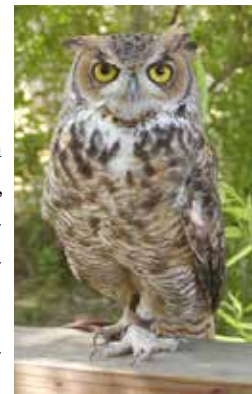
BOOK REVIEW *by Joan Wilson*

"Wesley the Owl" by Stacey O'Brien

This is a fantastic story of the 19 year bonding between a barn owl and his foster mother. Watching Wesley mature, with a tender heart and a scientist's eye, O'Brien made amazing discoveries about owl behavior, intelligence and communication. They developed a language all their own.

When O'Brien becomes sick with a life-threatening illness, the constant love and courage of her close companion, a 'wild' animal, helps her through the crisis.

"Wesley the Owl" is a heart-warming, often funny story of a complex, non-human capable of play, reason, love, and loyalty. Stacey O'Brien is trained as a biologist specializing in wild animal behavior. She graduated from Occidental College and continued her education at Caltech.



NOTES FROM THE NEWHALL PRESERVE

by Jack Greenshields

Thanks to everyone who assisted in our workdays at the Newhall Preserve on January 19 and February 16. We removed some fire hazards, cut several dead trees, cleared out some brush, spread a double load of mulch, and removed some unwanted vegetation around the pond. Sea Pines CSA promptly removed our large debris piles. Roy Havens repainted the bulletin board area and installed new No Smoking signs and Matt Mattoon repaired the observation deck and installed our new sign post at the Newhall Trail entry.

It seems that winter never really arrived this year at the Preserve. Our two smaller alligators remain active and move around the pond during the day to catch the best sun rays. Our resident anhinga and blue heron are major attractions to visitors. The Preserve is enjoying a dense population of yellow-rumped warblers. The mottled trillium planted near the parking lot last year emerged early and is in bloom.

Mike Bozzo of the South Carolina Forestry Commission traveled from Columbia to meet with Audubon members and Sea Pines residents on February 13. He provided a very informative presentation regarding the fire danger and benefits of fuel breaks in the Newhall Preserve. He also showed what homeowners could do on their property to reduce the fire risk. Representatives at the meeting also included Sea Pines CSA and Hilton Head Fire Chief Lucas with two of his senior officers. The next step in this process is to conduct a property survey of the Preserve marking the potential locations of buffers and fuel breaks. Audubon will also invest in installing more permanent fiberglass markers at 100 foot intervals.

Joan Shulman, Joanne McMenamain, Marie McClune, and Jack Greenshields assisted in providing tours on February 4 for the A-Chivers woman's club. Weekly tours for the public are scheduled for Thursdays at 10am during March, April, and May. If you would like more information on these guided walks, please call Jack Greenshields at 651-491-1851.

Thanks go out to recently retired and new trail monitor Bob Clemens for his efforts in February.

RECENT AREA BIRD SIGHTINGS

by Jack Colcolough

It's been a banner month for us ... very active reporting of many rare and uncommon bird sightings! A large numbers of winter ducks have been observed in our area. With some of our recent warmer winter days, we have seen a little "hint of Spring" to come.



Snowy Owl

An unusually high number of rare sightings was reported this month including: Snowy Owl, Iceland Gull and Parasitic Jaeger (seabird) at Tybee Island, Cinnamon Teal, possible Northern Goshawk, Reddish Egret and Barn Owl at Savannah NWR, Western Kingbird on Hutchinson Island, Buff-bellied and Black-chinned Hummingbirds on Skidaway Island, Red-breasted Nuthatch on Hilton Head Island and White-winged Dove in Savannah.

Out-Of-Season birds reported were: Rose-throated Hummingbird (present every day for >3 years - very unusual), Purple Gallinule, Northern Waterthrush, Purple Martin and Painted Bunting.

Uncommon bird species included: Endangered Piping Plover (19), Peregrine Falcon, Baltimore Oriole, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, Orange-crowned Warbler, Canvasback, Common Goldeneye, Redhead, American Wigeon, Mottled Duck, American Black Duck, Ruddy Duck, Glossy Ibis, Long-billed Dowitcher, Red-throated Loon, American Kestrel, Greater and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Rusty Blackbird.

Other good birds reported included: Bald Eagle, Sora, Common Yellowthroat, Wilson's Snipe, Northern Gannet, Black Scoter, Gadwall and many other common winter ducks, shorebirds and songbirds.

Many thanks to all who reported their sightings: Barry Lowes, Jane Hester, Nan Lloyd, Robert Rommel, Diana Churchill, Carol Clemens, Susan Taylor, Rita Kernan, Dorothy Mosior, Joanne McMenamain, Kathy/Grant Greider, Karen Marts, Dottie Bass, Miriam Waterhouse, Shelia/Roger Johnson, Kay Hodnett, Bill Nicol, Sally Krebs, Myra Stinnet, Marianne Currie, Mary Jane Major, Wendy Hanson, Fran Baer, Annette Hausman, Mary Ann Lueckel and several visitors.



Cinnamon Teal Pair

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.

Our Spring migration is upon us and migrating birds will be moving through our area for the next several months. Plan to do some early Spring birding soon at your favorite spots and/or join one of our field trips!

Happy Birding!

FIELD TRIP REPORT *by Wendy Hansen and Annette Hausman (co-leaders)*

Hello Birding Friends!

Today, seven of us in the Hilton Head/Bluffton Audubon had a wonderful and wonderfully productive birding trip to the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge. Not only did we have great weather, we also had great birding. As my list below indicates, we saw at least 51 different species. Highlights included a Peregrine Falcon sighted on the way to the refuge, an American Kestrel, a Bald Eagle, a Sora, and a rare Cinnamon Teal sighted with the help of another birder, in the refuge a little ways past mile marker 1.5!!! So, here you go:

Peregrine falcon, Great egret, Tree swallow, Yellow-rumped warbler, Mockingbird, Cardinal (M & F), Mourning dove, Red-winged blackbird, Boat-tailed grackle, Red-bellied woodpecker, Downy woodpecker, Pileated woodpecker, Yellow-bellied sapsucker (immature), American coot, Ruby-crowned kinglet, Snowy egret, Pine warbler (F), Northern shoveler (M & F), Blue-winged teal (M & F), Cinnamon teal (M), Ring-necked duck (M & F), Ruddy duck, Gadwall, Blue-gray gnatcatcher, American crow, Song sparrow, Savannah sparrow, Little blue heron (mature & immature), Great blue heron, Black-crowned night heron, Pied-billed grebe, Belted kingfisher, Bald eagle, Turkey vulture, Black vulture, Common moorhen, Wilson's/Common snipe, Double-crested cormorant, Clapper rail (heard), Anhinga, American kestrel, Carolina wren (heard), Eastern towhee, Northern harrier (F), Red-tailed hawk (immature), Eastern blue jay, Tufted titmouse, Sora, Eastern phoebe, Catbird, Robin.

World's oldest known living wild bird gives birth at age 62

The oldest known living wild bird in the world has given birth to a healthy hatchling. The 62-year-old bird, "Wisdom," last made headlines in 2011, when the albatross survived the aftermath of the Japanese tsunami.

Wisdom has defied the odds in many aspects: She's already lived nearly twice as long as the average Laysan albatross. She was given her name after being tagged by a U.S. Geological Survey researcher in 1956. The USGS said in a statement that since being tagged, Wisdom has flown an estimated 2 million to 3 million miles, or "four to six trips from the Earth to the Moon and back again with plenty of miles to spare."

"To know that she can still successfully raise young at age 60-plus, that is beyond words," USGS bird banding program chief Bruce Peterjohn said. "While the process of banding a bird has not changed greatly during the past century, the information provided by birds marked with a simple numbered metal band has transformed our knowledge of birds."

And while there have been other albatross birds spotted in the wild who are estimated to be around 50 years old, Wisdom is the only one on record to have given birth at such an advanced age. Though, some scientists may have seen the feat coming, when Wisdom gave birth two years ago to another chick, and has given birth to a total of five chicks since 2006.

"While I have grown old and gray and get around only with the use of a cane, Wisdom still looks and acts just the same as on the day I banded her," said retired USGS scientist Chandler Robbins, who was in his 40s when he first banded Wisdom in 1956.

In 2001, Robbins "rediscovered" Wisdom, helping the USGS determine her age and track her record-setting reproductive habits. Because the Laysan albatross mates for life, USGS officials estimate that Wisdom has had to take on several "much younger" male partners over the years to help foster an estimated 35 chicks. "I'm trying to straighten out the record," Robbins said. "It takes a lot."



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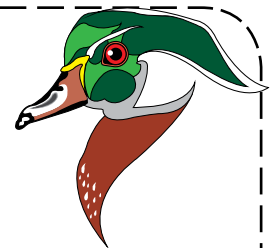
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Good evening all birders!

If the amount of Eastern Bluebirds I've seen this winter are any indication of a very healthy population, then I am predicting an incredible second season for the Sea Pines Bluebird Project. Months ago I discovered Bluebirds at the Veteran's Memorial at Shelter Cove. Recently I barely got out of my car at Wal-Greens by the Sea Pines traffic circle and spotted an easy 15 birds! I am birding 24/7 folks! I am just one of the 5-6 volunteers for the project, started by an Eagle Scout. I didn't know what the condition of the 12 nest boxes would be since last August. By 1pm this past Sunday, it was a moderate 60 degrees. I parked by the lagoon near Fraser Circle and set up my "Bluebird Monitor" placard in the windshield. A spectacular Yellow-Rumped Warbler, heavy with winter feeding, sat in a pine tree above box E4. Four more warblers, each with a bright yellow spot on its rump and yellow markings flanking their creamy chests, flitted around as I brushed out the nest box. 2 mature White Ibis carefully picked at the mud at the edge of the pond. Determined to move quickly, having already spent a fabulous morning birding at Port Royal Plantation, I opened E7 and scraped out a wasp column attached to the inside. Across the way I spied 2 eight-foot gators, a six-foot gator, and 8 turtle friends. Female Anhingas studied the water, while a female Bluebird guarded the ever-popular E3 right next to the bike path. A Great Blue Heron was minding his own business over in Gator Land. The posse of 5 Crows started their warnings and followed me to the center of Fraser Circle. Last year E5 provided my first glimpse of a Carolina Chickadee nest; however, cockroach droppings were the only thing inside the box.

The day picked up as I approached E6...attached to a tall pine tree and facing Greenwood Drive, this box was by far the most active. A male Bluebird was standing on the roof! Notice me! I heard more Bluebirds in the surrounding trees, with Chickadees competing for air time. I jetted across the street toward the fire station to E2 in time to see a pair of Mourning Doves land in a tree. The box was covered in white webbing from an insect. All the boxes would need to be sprayed with bleach on the next go-round. I drove to Magnolia Crescent to inspect E1 where the Carolina Chickadees are numerous. Inspecting at a very high speed, or so I thought, E12 proved to be creepy. The interior was loaded with roach droppings, and I'm not sure I can cope with the horror of those bugs like last year. I made a note to ask if we can move this nest box. In order to provide the greatest chance for Eastern Bluebirds to reproduce, they need a nest box that is safe from predators, has a dry interior, and has an entrance hole made to exact specifications. A female Bluebird shyly observed me from a distance. I bet she is hoping for a bug-free interior! All of a sudden 10-12 Yellow-rumped Warblers were landing and playing in the grass. They would dip their heads down to find food and be completely hidden, then their bodies would pop up like a Jack-in-the-box! How delightful! They chased the female Bluebird when she tried to join them on the ground. I drove to E10 and removed an old Chickadee nest with 2 1/2 inches of Spanish Moss, noticing the back of the box had rotted. Above me I saw a Pileated Woodpecker, his red crest bright against the sky. What a treat! Then, a Red-bellied Woodpecker eating bugs appeared on a horizontal tree limb. I did a wrap-up with E8, 9, and 11 which are nailed to telephone poles. Flying squirrels had utilized E11 with 6 inches of Spanish Moss at the bottom and topped with reddish/brown grasses. A tunnel had been formed and 3 acorns left behind. It may be a month before the first Eastern Bluebird nest appears but I am looking forward to a terrific season!

Karen Marts and Freedom the Parrot

PIPING PLOVER SURVEY

Sally Krebs of the Town of Hilton Island staff has been doing surveys of piping plovers for the Town as part of their permit requirements for the newly installed Port Royal groin and associated beach renourishment. Her surveys have been in Port Royal Plantation. US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) would like to be sure she is not missing birds outside her survey area in Port Royal Plantation. Sally asked the HHI Audubon Society to have observers on Pine Island, Mitchellville Beach, the Folly, and Calibogue Sound in Sea Pines on 1 February at the same time she was doing her survey on the stretch from Port Royal Beach Club to Fish Haul Creek. This survey was a roosting survey and would start at 10:15 and go until about 12:15 on 1 February.

The Audubon Board agreed to support her request and we provided four teams to survey the areas she requested. The teams were: Joan Nicol and Marianne and Jim Currie—Pine Island; Jack Colcolough and Robert Rommel—Mitchellville Beach; Fran Baer and Susan Murphy—The Folly and Jack Greenshields and Rita Kernan—Sea Pines at Tower Beach/Calibogue Sound.

None of the four teams saw any plovers in their assigned areas. Sally's team which included USFWS representatives saw 19 birds, 9 of which were banded. They were all on the stretch between the new groin and the Port Royal Beach Club. There were no piping plovers at Fish Haul. It took her team an hour and a half to read all the bands; considering it was so windy. As a result of this effort now we know that the Piping Plovers that winter on Hilton Head Island seem to prefer the new groin area for roosting. These "snow birds" will be flying back north in late March/early April and will not be back until next fall.





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 _____

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MARCH ~ APRIL 2013 Calendar

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
- Tues. Mar. 26 **Field Trip** to Webb Wildlife Center 7:20 am

APRIL

- Thurs. Apr. 4 **Board Meeting** 1:30 pm
at the Armstrong-Hack Conference Room at Honey Horn
- Thurs. Apr. 11 **Monthly Meeting** at Honey Horn 3:00 pm

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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!



B E Q U E S T S

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.