



# Audubon

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

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By *Natalie Hefter*

Spring has arrived and finally we are seeing some warmer weather around the Lowcountry. As the spring arrives, our HHI Audubon year begins to wind down. Our April meeting will be held at the Coastal Discovery Museum on April 11th at 3 PM. This is our last daytime presentation for the year. We will wrap up at our annual picnic in May. Our Program Chair and Vice President, Rick Riebesell, has done an outstanding job of coordinating our monthly presentations for the past two years. He has brought a wide variety of speakers and subjects to our club's attention. I hope you've enjoyed the meetings as much as I have. Thank you, Rick, for a job well done!

We appreciate all of you who have rejoined as local members of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society. If you've not rejoined yet, please do. In the future, we are planning to have special benefits for our members and early announcements about events and tours.

I hope that most of you have had a chance to get to the Audubon Newhall Preserve to see the hard work of the committee, led by Jack Green-shields. Jack has a great crew of trail monitors and hard workers who've kept the place looking great. And, the visitors have noticed too. Donations in the money post are always appreciated!

If you have any birding trips planned this summer, please consider writing a short summary of the experience and sharing some photos with the *Ecobon*. It's always fun to hear about where our members have been lately. Call Joan Wilson if you'd like to submit an article to a future issue.

As my time as your President winds down, I wanted to let you know how much I've enjoyed being a part of the organization and the board. I'll look forward to continuing to help in the future.

## APRIL PROGRAM *by Rick Riebesell*

Thursday, April 11, 2013, 3:00 p.m.

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

### **"The World of the Salt Marsh"**



Charles Seabrook, author and environmental journalist, will be speaking on "The World of the Salt Marsh" at the April 11 meeting of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society.

The salt marsh along the Southeast coast of the United States is one of the most productive ecosystems on the planet. Home to a diverse blend of flora and fauna, the salt marsh constitutes a vital area between the land and the sea. Seabrook, a native of Johns Island, South Carolina, will discuss his upbringing along the salt marsh, the culture surrounding it, and what must be done to save it.

Seabrook has won awards from the National Wildlife Federation, the Southern Environmental Law Center, and various press organizations. His investigative series on Georgia's kaolin mining industry earned him the Investigative Reporters and Editors' Best Story of the Year award in 1994 and led to his first book, *Red Clay, Pink Cadillacs and White Gold: The Kaolin Chalk Wars* (co-authored with Marcy Louza). In 2001, the state of Georgia gave him the R. S. "Rock" Howard Award, the state's highest conservation award. In 2002, his masterful series on Georgia's vanishing songbirds received the Best of Cox Award for feature writing from the Atlanta Journal-Constitution's parent organization. He has also been given the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Atlanta Business Chronicle. Charles Seabrook joined the Atlanta Journal in 1972 as the newspaper's first science and medicine writer. He went on to write for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution for 33 years, becoming the newspaper's environmental writer in 1986. He has traveled the world reporting on topics as varied as the destruction of the tropical rainforests in the Amazon region of Brazil, the illegal smuggling of wildlife, the impact of drilling on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and native people, and the oil spill from the Exxon Valdez in Alaska. He has written in-depth articles about the loss of wetlands in the Florida Everglades and wrote extensively about the pollution of the Chattahoochee River, helping to expose chronic sewage problems and to develop public support for a multi-billion dollar upgrade of the Atlanta sewer system.

Seabrook holds a B.A. degree in journalism and a B.S. degree in biology from the University of South Carolina. He resides in Decatur, Georgia with his wife Laura.

Charles Seabrook is the author of three books: *Red Clay, Pink Cadillacs and White Gold: The Kaolin Chalk Wars* (Longstreet Press, 1995, Atlanta); *Cumberland Island: Strong Women, Wild Horses* (John F. Blair, Publisher, 2002); and *The World of the Salt Marsh* (University of Georgia Press, 2012, Athens).

# HHI Audubon

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### Bird Seed Sale

Ed Nash 681-5725

### Christmas Bird Count

Charlotte White 837-4597

### Education

Mary Jane Major 342-5804

### Historian

Shelia Johnson 295-5562

### Hospitality

OPEN

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Clem Dietze 837-2612

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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.

## • APRIL FIELD TRIP *by Natalie Hefter*

• Tuesday, April 2, 2013 at 9:00 am

• Hi Birders,

• Kathy Greider will be leading an Audubon field trip to beautiful Magnolia Gardens near Charleston on April 2. Please give her a call if you are interested in joining the group. See details below.

### • Magnolia Gardens and Audubon Swamp Trip ~ North Charleston

• The Great Blue Herons have chicks in the nest!! The Cormorants and Great Egrets are sitting on eggs. By April 2nd there will be more nest and hopefully more chicks. In addition to the wading birds there are lots of ducks and song birds. This is a beautiful and very special right here in the Low Country.

• There are boardwalks and easy paths through the rookery along with lots of trails throughout the garden to see birds.

• There is a fee to get into the Gardens and Audubon Swamp. It is \$18, but there is a Senior Citizen Discount.

• We will leave from the Moss Creek Shopping Center parking lot where other Audubon trips leave and carpool from.

• 7:30 a.m. -- Depart Moss Creek

• 9:45 a.m. -- Arrive Magnolia Gardens

• Bring a snack plus picnic lunch (they also have a lunch shop with soup/sandwiches/water/coffee/desserts, etc to purchase.

• 3:00 p.m. or earlier -- Depart Magnolia Gardens

• 5:00 p.m. -- Arrive back in Hilton Head

• Please call me if you or any members have questions. 404.313.8208.

## • Annual Picnic

• The annual picnic of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society will be held Monday, May 6 at the Dolphin Head Recreation Facility in Hilton Head Plantation. Only current Hilton Head Audubon Society members may attend.

• At 5:00 pm Carlos Chacon will be leading a guided walk to Pine Island. After the guided walk will be a presentation by the Dolphin Project.

• Audubon will provide Kentucky Fried Chicken, plates, silverware, napkins, soft drinks, and water. The fee for attending is \$10 per person, payable at the picnic, which includes a donation to the Dolphin Project.

• Attendees are advised to bring insect repellent, camping chairs, flashlights, a side dish – for last names A - O bring a salad or vegetable plate and for last names P - Z bring a desert, and if Kentucky Fried Chicken is not a desired food a main dish. You may bring adult beverages.

• Space is limited and reservations are required. Reservations are by email at [audubonhhirsvp@gmail.com](mailto:audubonhhirsvp@gmail.com). Please indicate in your email the names of all persons attending, whether a Hilton Head Plantation gate pass is needed, and confirm the side dish you are bringing.

• The Hilton Head Plantation gate passes will be arranged approximately 48 hours before the picnic, so be sure to make your reservation early.

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## NOTES FROM THE NEWHALL PRESERVE

by Jack Greenshields

Spring has arrived at the Preserve. Highbush blueberries are in full bloom and the fedderbushes are not far behind. Our state flower, the Carolina jasmine is casting a yellow tint to the bushes that it is climbing. In the parking area, the eastern redbud is in full bloom with its red flowers. Ferns are sprouting.

Our three alligators remained active all winter, warming themselves on the pond banks in the sun. On a warm day, even a small rat snake was observed looking for a meal. There are many birds. A noisy eastern towhee greets visitors in the parking area.

Thanks to all that have turned out for helping to maintain the Newhall Preserve. Bob Clemens did a great job as our new trail monitor for the month of February. Bill Jordan has returned to provide this service for March.

Guided walks are offered on Thursday mornings at 10am during the spring months of March, April, and May. I led the first walk in March with a good turnout and Joanne McMenamin had 15 participants the following week.

As the weather improves, we are anticipated to start work on a small butterfly garden around the observation pond deck. A few volunteers are very much needed to assist in this project. If interested please call me at 651-491-1851.

Property line identification labels have been ordered for the Newhall Preserve. The boundary of the preserve should be surveyed and labeled in approximately six weeks.

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## RECENT AREA BIRD SIGHTINGS

by Jack Colcolough

Spring is here and several early arrivals and migrants have been reported in our area. Some of our winter ducks, shorebirds and songbirds have departed and the remainder will soon.

Rare birds sighted during the month included: Snowy Owl (last seen on 2/21) and Purple Sandpiper at Tybee Island, Virginia Rail at Savannah NWR, Rufous Hummingbird at Skidaway Island, Western Kingbird at Hutchinson Island and Red-breasted Nuthatch on HHI.

Uncommon species reported were: Endangered Piping Plover, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Canvasback, American Bittern, White-winged Scoter, Red-throated Loon, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Greater Scaup and Pine Siskin.

Early Spring arrivals and FOTS birds found to date include: Prairie and Yellow-throated Warblers, Louisiana Waterthrush, singing Northern Parula and singing White-eyed Vireo.

Other good birds reported: Ruby-throated Hummingbird (several wintering here), Bald Eagle (nesting), Sora, Bonaparte's Gull, Hermit Thrush and endangered Wood Storks.

Thanks to all reporting their finds: Jim Groove, Diana, Churchill, Carol Clemens, Annette Hausman, Russ Wigh, Dottie Bass, Miriam Waterhouse, Karen Marts, K. Finnan, Dianne Faucette, Fran Baer, Shelia/Roger Johnson, Jane Hester, Mary Jane Major, Tom Moxley, Dorothy Mosior and Joanne McMenamin

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@yahoogroups.com](mailto:BirdingFriends@yahoogroups.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.

It's Spring migration and now is the time to go birding for those newly arriving and migrant birds at your favorite spots in our area and/or join us on one of our field trips.

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## Spring Brings New Urgency for Keeping Cats Indoors

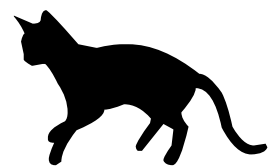
Spring means greening grasses, budding flowers, and the construction of nests by just-arrived migratory birds. Sadly, a great number of the young birds that leave those nests will die unnatural deaths, thanks primarily to outdoor cats.

To find out what was happening to spring-born birds that didn't make it through the summer, researchers from the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and Towson University monitored Gray Catbird nests during incubation and brooding and affixed tiny radio transmitters to 69 newly fledged catbirds. The transmitters recorded the birds' location every other day until they died or left the study area.

Forty-two of the catbirds died before reaching independence. Not only did predators kill 33 of the birds that didn't make it (79 percent), but, in two neighborhoods, nearly half of the deaths attributed to predators were caused by outdoor cats.

The most significant factor affecting a fledgling's survival was not parental age, brood size, sex, or hatching date but predation. The vast majority of deaths occurred in the first week after a bird left the nest. Because fledglings beg loudly and are not yet alert to predators, they are easy prey for domestic cats.

Groups like American Bird Conservancy recommend that communities halt actions that endorse or nurture feral cat colonies. ABC urges cat owners to keep their pets indoors. At the very least, owners are asked to limit their cats' outdoor roaming during the breeding season.



*American Bird Conservancy in Birdwatching Magazine*

# THE GOLDEN AGE OF TRACKING *by Anne Murray, Birdwatching Magazine*

The breakthrough came thanks to a tiny battery-powered gizmo known as a geolocator. Embedded in an innocuous tag that sits harmlessly on the back of owls, warblers, swifts, and other far-flying birds, as well as sparrows, it does a simple task very, very well: It records sunlight levels at regular intervals.

The data it logs permit the position of a bird to be calculated, since day length varies with latitude and solar noon varies with longitude. Plotted over time, the positions offer researchers fascinating insights into migratory connectivity - how different locations are linked within a bird's lifecycle. Even more important, by revealing the winter, stopover, and breeding locations of different species and subspecies, the geolocator promises to be a powerful bird-conservation tool around the world.

Some amazing flights are being recorded during migrations. The development of geolocators have revealed these secrets. Here are a few examples of the marvels of flight.

## Northern Wheatear

Three birds have confirmed the astonishing migratory routes of Northern Wheatear. A bird from Baffin Island in northeastern Canada crossed the Atlantic to winter in western sub-Saharan Africa, and two wheatears tagged north of Fairbanks, Alaska, flew over the Bering Sea and through northern Russia and Kazakhstan before crossing the Arabian Desert to wintering areas in Sudan, Uganda, or Kenya. The Alaskan birds' average round-trip distance - 18,640 miles - is the longest known migration of any songbird.



## Burrowing Owl

Males and females that breed in Washington and Oregon spend winters far apart. In a study in which 25 geolocators were recovered from 93 tagged owls, researchers found that most females flew south to California for winter, while most males wintered in eastern Washington; males that nested in Oregon flew 'north' in fall. The scientists say males choose to stay close to their breeding areas so they can get back to their territories quickly in spring.

## Thank You Bird Seed Buyers *by Ed Nash*

Our annual Bird Seed Sale sponsored by Wild Birds Unlimited was warmly supported by over 55 buyers, with over 4860 pounds of seed sold to Audubon members. The sales totaled over \$5800, with \$700 in combined savings from the 5% price discount and 7% sales tax remission. The sales were strong in January and stronger in February this year, resulting in a net income of \$1200 to the chapter, which is nearly 20% better than last year.

The sales ranged from \$7 to \$750 with an average of \$106 per customer. Seed selections included all the blends available, with the top 6 being: Deluxe, Supreme, Choice, Black Sunflower, Thistle, and Safflower.

The chapter extends many thanks to Virginia Culter for her continuous support in many ways to us.



Festival Centre at Indigo Park  
45 Pembroke Dr., Suite 130  
Hilton Head Island, SC 29926  
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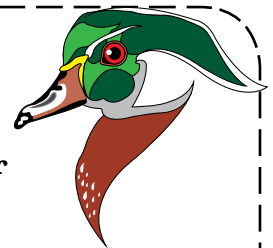
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## From Audubon's Christmas Bird Count program

*Dear CBC Participants, Compilers, and Regional Editors, past and present,*

Thank you for being part of Audubon's Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Your efforts are appreciated and make a valuable difference for science and bird conservation.

As you are aware, this year we are moving to digital delivery of the CBC results rather than printing and mailing the CBC summary report to participants. If you want to receive information regarding the digital edition of *American Birds* this year you must sign up online at [www.audubon.org/citizenscience](http://www.audubon.org/citizenscience) by entering your email address. Be aware that even if your email address is currently in the CBC system, you will only receive *American Birds* if you sign up through our new citizen science network.

Joining our online citizen science network this way ensures you will receive updates on our latest research results, reports from Audubon scientists, and notification when count summaries are posted online. In addition, you will learn about other citizen science programs and opportunities that may interest you. Please take a moment to sign up now and also invite participants from your CBC count circle to be part of the network.

Regards, Gary

Gary Langham, Chief Scientist, National Audubon Society

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## Year-round Songbirds Ready for Romance

*by Charles Seabrook, for the AJC*

It is early March, and romance is on the minds of many of our year-round songbirds. Their plumages are at their spiffiest and their voices are as fine-tuned as they will be all year. They seem anxious to get on with the task of baby-rearing. For some, the season already is under way.

### **Some observations:**

— Bluebirds are flitting about with nesting material in their beaks. And how glorious is their blueness. Other blue-feathered songbirds (blue jays, indigo buntings, blue grosbeaks, cerulean warblers) may be just as blue. But in early spring, I can't imagine a more brilliant blue than that of the bluebird.

— Just as brilliant is the redness of male cardinals. I regularly hear them singing their courting songs now, trying to win over a female while at the same time warning other males to stay away. As an extra touch, a male cardinal will try to woo a female by feeding her seeds. If she accepts, they will mate and then sing to each other in soft, bubbly whistles for the rest of the year. It's one of the strongest pair bonds in the bird world.

— Male white-breasted nuthatches also offer food morsels to potential mates. To further impress a female, a male nuthatch bows and spreads his tail and droops his wings while swaying back and forth before her, as I observed this week. White-breasted nuthatches nest in cavities, as do Carolina chickadees, tufted titmice and brown-headed nuthatches, all of them potential competitors for nesting sites.

— Another favorite songbird in full voice now is the brown thrasher, Georgia's official state bird, which has one of the largest repertoires (as many as 2,000 songs) of any bird, including the mockingbird, which also is singing loudly and lustily now.

— Carolina wrens, which sing cheerily all year long but with seemingly more vigor in early spring, started nesting in late February, according to a neighbor, but I haven't seen any of their nests yet. They also are cavity nesters but aren't very particular about where they nest.

But this is only the beginning. The full glory of the spring nesting season in Georgia is still weeks away, when our neo-tropical songbirds — warblers, tanagers, flycatchers, vireos, thrushes, ruby-throated hummingbirds — return from their winter homes in Latin America. It is then, on a morning in April, that you may hear more than 30 species singing vibrantly at the top of their little lungs.

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## Osprey Watch

We need a pair of eyes in each of the communities below to monitor osprey nests once a month through August for 10-15 minutes.

**Sea Pines  
Wexford  
Long Cove Club  
Port Royal Plantation  
Shipyard  
Windmill Harbour**

If you live in one of these communities and are interested in helping in a county-wide osprey monitoring project, please call or e-mail us and we'll give you the details. We've been involved in this study for the past four years—it's very rewarding and a lot of fun! Please contact us.

John and Dianne Faucette  
[johnfaucette@yahoo.com](mailto:johnfaucette@yahoo.com)  
785-2899

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## Conservation 365 - Washo Reserve

Like many of South Carolina's conservation parcels, Washo Reserve was once a hunting preserve, part of 24,000 acres acquired by TNC (The Nature Conservancy) in 1974 from the Santee Gun Club. Today this 1,040-acre parcel within the Santee Coastal Reserve harbors a 200-acre cypress lake and one of the oldest and longest continuous-use rookeries in North America.

Home to more than 200 wood stork nests each year, Washo's rookery rests on an old, stagnant impoundment now threatened by encroaching vegetation and dying cypress trees. Although hard woods are sprouting from the base of dying trees and on floating vegetation, it is uncertain if these new trees (mostly tupelos) are adequate for wood stork nesting. Without more cypress regeneration and a means to remove the floating vegetation, it may be hard for wading birds to continue to be successful.

TNC is implementing a new management strategy to ensure Washo's long-term rookery viability. After gathering a group of experts with knowledge of wetland impoundments and wading bird management, TNC is building a drawdown structure to manipulate water levels, reduce aquatic vegetation and aerate cypress roots, promoting regeneration. TNC will monitor both vegetation changes and nest success throughout this process to better understand how this management strategy will impact the nesting habitat.

This project will not only guide TNC in stewarding Washo Reserve, but will help other land managers with similar habitat parameters.

SOUTH CAROLINA update



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**

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# Audubon

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

## APRIL ~ MAY 2013 Calendar

### APRIL

- Tues. Apr. 2 **Field Trip** to Magnolia Gardens ..... 7:30 am
- 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

### MAY

- Thurs. May 2 **Board Meeting** ..... 1:30 pm  
at the Armstrong-Hack Conference Room at Honey Horn
- Mon. May 6 **Annual Picnic** ..... 5:00 pm  
at Dolphin Point - Hilton Head Plantation

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.