



Ecobon

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *by Rick Riebesell*

Participation

Most of us would rather be outside than in a room attending a meeting. We appreciate nature and are less enchanted with the imperfect, if not comical and tragic, machinations of humans, as they attempt to relate to one another. The Hilton Head Island Audubon Society is an organization with an important mission and accomplishes a great deal. But the Society can be much better. We need to have more members participate. The Society will accomplish more, and it will be a more enriching experience for all of us.

At a recent board meeting of the Society, Robert Rommel said something to the effect of "If you cannot get volunteers for a certain activity, you have to question whether the activity is worthwhile." An excellent point, and an important guideline.

We have good attendance at our meeting because the attendees enjoy seeing programs about nature, especially about birds. We have excellent participation in the Christmas Bird Count, where Barry Lowes and Charlotte White have organized team captains and areas into one of the nation's best Christmas Bird Counts. The Newhall Preserve Committee chaired by Jack Greenshields, has continued the fine work of prior chairs, Mary Alice Walker and Joan Schulman, both of whom are still on the committee. The Newhall committee has at least twelve members and meets regularly. There is no dispute that the meeting programs, Christmas Bird Count, and the Newhall Preserve have the support of the membership. These activities are most visible to members, and the members have agreed they are worthwhile by participating.

The Hilton Head Island Audubon Society has over 150 members. The Bylaws provide for standing committees that do the work of the Society. The working standing committees are Membership, Education, Conservation, Field Trips, Programs, and Newhall Preserve. Membership, Programs, and Field Trips do not need to be big committees but they should have more than one person responsible for the activities of the committee. Currently these committees consist only of the committee chair. Education and Conservation could be a large committees, they are not.

We have asked at the meetings for volunteers. We have asked certain people to do certain tasks to get them involved. We will continue to recruit members to do more. Does the fact that we do not have volunteers for these standing committees, indicate that their activities are not worthwhile?

I think the answer is that members have not been properly informed about the activities of the standing committees. I am confident that once members understand the activities of the standing committees and the benefit their work brings to the Society, they will affirm the activities by participating. It is the responsibility of Society leadership to communicate to the members about these worthwhile activities and the importance of these activities to the Society and its mission.

For the Society to be effectively active for a long period of time, a large percentage of the membership needs to be involved. We have all been part of organizations where certain long-time members have carved out fiefdoms and exerted control according to personal agendas or whims. We are not that type of organization. We do not ask for accomplishment by having a small number of dedicated volunteers make personal sacrifices for the work of the organization. Rather, we would like a large involvement of members to accomplish more overall at a lesser level of personal sacrifice (staying inside or going to a meeting). Moreover, organizations having only a few people contributing are unlikely to carry on when one or more of the active members cease participation. By my rough calculation, we have about 20 participating members. This is 13% of the membership involved.

I am often asked, "Why don't we do a bird festival or a birding event." When I was chair of Programs, I looked into birding fests and found they were popular, would attract visitors, and could be funded with government contributions. I sent around a notice asking who might be interested in working on such a project. No one responded. I was told that a birding fest was held several years ago through the dedication and hard work of one couple, who took all the work on themselves. The event occurred, but was never repeated. To sustain an event such as a bird fest, we need a large number of members who will each work a reasonable amount. Having a few members sacrifice to accomplish a group activity will not sustain the activity. Given the response to my inquiry about member interest, I determined that the Society was not ready for a project on the scale of a bird fest. I would like to see us at an activity level where we could take on something similar, and find it enriching not exhausting. That takes a vibrant organization with a high percentage of members actively accomplishing the tasks of the organization.

Here is my suggestion. We on the leadership end need to make more of an effort to tell the membership about the activities and goals of the standing committees. Members, for any area of interest you have, email the committee chair to let them know of your interest. Go on as many field trips and attend as many meetings and classes as you can. Get to know the participating members, find out what they do, and offer to help. If you are not a full-time resident, whatever you can do will be welcome. We are not an organization with tightly guarded fiefdoms. We are an open group that welcomes newcomers and those who want to learn. Bring your perspectives and interests into the Society -- we will all be the better for it. It is inevitable that your participation or decision not to participate will affect the future of the Society, for better or worse.

HHI Audubon

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Marianne Currie 681-8525

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Christmas Bird Count Liason

Joan Wilson 837-2874

Ecobon Editor

Immediate Past President

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Standing Committee Chairs:

Audubon Newhall Preserve

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Clem Dietze 837-2612

Bird House Construction

Jim Currie 681-8525

Bird Seed Sale

Ed Nash 681-5725

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Sun City Representative

Richard Matheny 304-531-1039

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.

DECEMBER PROGRAM *by: Kathy Greider, Program Director*

Wednesday, December 4, 2013

7:00 pm - Social Hour 7:30 pm - Bird Presentation

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SHOW

This program by Barry Lowes, will be a wonderful review of the birds we are most likely to see on Bird Count Day, Saturday, December 14, 2013. Many members have remarked about how helpful the show has been as a refresher. The identification highlights and markings awaken their memories and aid them both on Count Day and throughout the year.

The show will be held again at the First Presbyterian Church on Highway 278, next to the Bargain Box.

NOTE: the entrance to our meeting room is at the SIDE door not the front door. One of our members will be outside to welcome you. Parking is available and convenient.

REFRESHMENTS from 7:00 to 7:30 pm, provided by generous members who bring cookies, cakes and other goodies. Drinks will be served.

DONATIONS - We are paying a significant donation to the church to cover their expenses. Your donation toward this rental is optional.

We look forward to sharing this special birding night with all of our members and guests.

ENDPOINTS AS CLUES

How the destination a fleeing bird chooses can help you identify it.

Winter birding often involves waiting for sparrows and other drab little birds to pop out of the grass and fly away. This can be frustrating, since such birds offer scant clues to their identity, and it takes experience to be able to judge flight style and tail length. One useful clue is the destination the bird chooses. You can learn a lot by watching where a bird goes when it flies away.

Some birds will fly a short distance and drop back into the grass. Any species can do this, but Grasshopper Sparrow, Le Conte's Sparrow, Sedge Wren, and a few other species rarely do anything else. They simply fly weakly just above the grass before dropping back into dense cover.

Many birds will fly into low brush at the field's edge. This is the choice of Song, White-crowned, and most other sparrows, as well as Yellow-rumped Warbler or Common Yellowthroat. Even secretive grass sparrows like Le Conte's will head into the bushes, this behavior would be unusual for goldfinches, longspurs, or pipits.

Relatively few species will head for the treetops. Among the sparrows, only Savannah, Vesper, Lark, and Chipping will sometimes do this. This is typical behavior for finches - goldfinches, redpolls, House Finch - and also for Yellow-rumped Warbler.

Finally, if a bird flies into the open sky and away over the treetops, you can immediately rule out most of the sparrows. A Song Sparrow or White-crowned Sparrow will simply never do that. The same sparrows that perch in treetops might also fly over the treetops heading for another field, but for high-flying birds, you should generally be thinking of finches, longspurs, or American Pipits. That these birds are usually in flocks is an additional clue, as is that they call constantly when flying.

You won't be able to name a bird simply by the destination it chooses, you'll need other clues, but seeing where a bird goes can help narrow the possibilities. BirdWatching from David Allen Sibley

NOTES FROM THE NEWHALL PRESERVE

by Jack Greenshields

Fall has definitely arrived at the Audubon Newhall Preserve. The winged sumac and red maple are showing their colors while the bald cypress is indeed going "bald". Several warbler species have been reported in our visitor comment book.

Our Thursday morning guided walks program has completed its Fall series with the last walk on November 21st. The walks will begin again in the Spring. Thanks to our group of very talented tour guides who have led this very popular program this season: Rita Kernan, Joan Shulman, Karen Marts, Mary Alice Walker, and Marie McClune.

With the cooler weather, we have had volunteer workdays on October 26 and November 16. Helping to remove many "volunteer" trees and bushes that were restricting the view of the pond were Joe and Rita Kernan, Tom Hennessey, Bob Clemens, Judy and Ed Rollins, Matt Mattoon, Steve Rupprecht, Jim Riggs, and Lee Wilwerding. We will continue our efforts after the holidays in January.

The Newhall Committee met on November 5th at TidePointe. We reviewed some potential uses of our reserve funds such as enhancing the front entrance, the addition of a bicycle rack, and the installation of a second bird bath with a water supply near the observation deck which would allow for easier watering of the plants without encountering the reptiles at the edge of the pond. Bicycle access, the fuel break design, and public safety issues were also discussed.

As usual, if there are any questions regarding the Audubon Newhall Preserve, please e-mail me at jackg308@gmail.com.

Please welcome our new members who have joined since mid-October.

Doreen and Jim Cubie

The response to the quarterly dues email reminders has been excellent! Thanks to all those who have renewed their membership in our local society. Your dues help support our programs and activities. Not sure if your dues are current? Changed your contact information? Email Carol Clemens at cclemens318@roadrunner.com and she will help.

RECENT AREA BIRD SIGHTINGS

by Jack Colcolough

Our Winter season is upon us and many of our Winter songbirds, shorebirds and ducks have arrived ... and a few late Fall migrants have moved through our area during the past month. The highlight of our month will be our annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on December 14th that is discussed in detail elsewhere in this issue.

Rare bird species reported this month were: Scarlet Tanager on HHI, Florida Scrub Jay in Bluffton, Roseate Spoonbill in Beaufort, Purple Sandpiper and White-winged and Common Ground Doves on Tybee Island and very rare Trumpeter Swan, late Swainson's and Hooded Warblers and Grasshopper Sparrow at Savannah NWR.



Trumpeter Swans

Uncommon sightings reported included: Migrating Rose-breasted Grosbeak, endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Black-bellied Whistling Duck, endangered Piping Plover, White Pelican, Greater and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Caspian Tern, American Avocet, Glossy Ibis, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Wild Turkey, Magnolia and Orange-crowned Warblers, American Kestrel, Merlin, Indigo Bunting, Winter and Sedge Wrens and Field Sparrow.

Other winter arrivals reported were: Black and Surf Scoters, Northern Gannet, Red Knot, Marbled Godwit, Ruddy Turnstone, Black-bellied Plover, Hooded Merganser, Northern Harrier, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, Bald Eagle, Yellow-rumped and Palm Warblers, Eastern Phoebe, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Northern Flicker, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Gray Catbird and Song, Swamp, Savannah and White-throated Sparrows plus other common birds.

Other warbler species reported in late Fall were: Migrating American Redstart, Black and White Warbler and Common Yellowthroat. Other good finds were: Eastern Meadow Lark, injured and rehabbed Barred Owl, American Oystercatcher and Sandwich Tern.

Many thanks to those reporting their sightings: Barry Lowes, Jane Hester, Karen Marts, Karen Petersen, Fran/Denny Baer, Carol Clemens, Rita/Joe Kernan, Dottie Bass, Kay Hodnett, Deb Beam, Annette Hausman, Diane Churchill, Buddy Campbell, Shelia/Roger Johnson, Doreen/Jim Cubie, Susan/Kelly Murphy, Jim Grove, Kathy/Grant Greider, Mary Ann Lueckel, Dawn Brut and several visitors.



Swainson's Warbler

To report a bird sighting that is Accidental, Rare, Uncommon, Out-Of-Season, First-Of-The-Year (FOTY) or First-Of-The-Season (FOTS) e-mail: BirdingFriends@yahoo.com or call 843-432-2661 (MUST dial the 843). Please state your full name, the bird species sighted, date and location of your sighting and any other pertinent information about the sighting.

Remember to join our Christmas Bird Count and do some "pre-CBC" birding before the official Count Week so you'll know where to find the birds in your assigned area.

DECEMBER FIELD TRIP *by Carlos Chacon*

Monday, December 9, 2013

Audubon Field Trip to Harbor Island - Visit to the mud flats and estuarine environments at Harbor Island.

Space is limited to the first 25 participants. Group will arrive at Harbor Island at 10:30 am. The guard at the island entrance will have directions for the group. Participants should park at the Condos parking lot. Two representatives from Harbor Island will welcome the group and be with the group during the visit. The group will bird watch through the morning and depart somewhere after mid-day. Participants should bring their own food, water, sun protection and weather protection.

Please contact Carlos Chacon at cchacon@coastaldiscovery.org or at 843-689-6767 ext 226 to sign up for this field trip.

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JANUARY FIELD TRIP *by Carlos Chacon*

Wednesday, January 22, 2014

Magnolia Plantation and Gardens in Charleston SC.

Located at : 3550 Ashley River Rd, Charleston, SC 29414.

The group should arrive at 8:45 am a local guide will welcome the group and lead the group in an exploration of the gardens and the Audubon swamp.

The tour has a cost of \$15 per participants. \$5 extra for non-members of the Audubon local chapter.

There are 254 migratory and year round bird species found at Magnolia Plantation. Bird walks are the best way to see as many of these wondrous creatures as possible. Founded in 1676 by the Drayton family, Magnolia Plantation has survived the centuries and witnessed the history of our nation unfold before it from the American Revolution through the Civil War and beyond. It is the oldest public tourist site in the Lowcountry, and the oldest public gardens in America, opening its doors to visitors in 1870 to view the thousands of beautiful flowers and plants in its famous gardens. So join us here at Magnolia Plantation to experience the beauty of its gardens and its rich history today. The Audubon Swamp Garden is a unique world where trees grow from the water, islands float, and everywhere wild creatures go about their secret lives. It boasts a diversity of living things almost unequaled anywhere else in America. Thousands of plant and animal species coexist amongst the cypress and tupelo gum trees, surrounded by blackwater. Each year, hundreds of egrets, herons, and other waterfowl nest within feet of the walking path. You can explore this wild and otherwise inaccessible landscape on boardwalks, bridges, and dikes.

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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

A PICTORIAL REVIEW OF THE PROBABLE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SPECIES

BIRD COUNT DAY REMINDERS - December 14, 2013, Saturday

When you see the show on Wednesday, December 4, we will be only 2 weeks from the Big Day on December 14. Hilton Head Audubon will again be an important participant, joining thousands of counters throughout the Americas from the high Arctic to the Tropics of South America.

Over the years our chapter has ranked high in the number of counters and the total species identified. While the Bird Count is not a competition our results have been impressive and rank high when compared to all other counts. Remember that when you agree to join our team on December 14 you are contributing to Citizen Science. This project has been continuous for more than 100 years. The results provide valuable data which helps scientists to address the big questions about bird life, habits, migration and survival.

By this date you should be in contact with your area captain. If you have not been contacted or are new to this project, call Charlotte White, 540-3858 or Barry Lowes, 837-3537, and we will ensure that you are placed on a team. Hilton Head has always welcomed anyone - beginner or experienced. Don't be hesitant, there is a role for everyone. All of our veteran, knowledgeable counters started from zero.

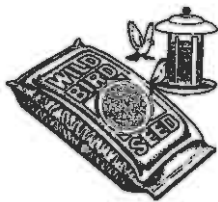
Your captain will outline what you need for Count Day, from proper clothing, rainwear, footwear, binoculars, camera, snack, etc. The captains are experienced birders and very considerate of how to make your day memorable. I predict that some will find a new rewarding lifetime interest and discover new friends. If you have any questions, call your captain. If you are not yet connected to a team, call one of us.

Remember that traditionally we seem to need one counter for each species we find. Last year 156 counters found 152 species and 30,003 individual birds. Your involvement is crucial to the yearly success of our chapter. The birds are all out there. All we have to do is find them! ENJOY THE EXPERIENCE.

Barry Lowes and Charlotte White

BIRD SEED SALE IS A'COMING!

The 2014 edition of our annual fund raiser is planned for January 2 to March 1. Our sponsor, Virginia Culter of Wild Birds Unlimited, once again has volunteered to host this program. This includes a discount on the seeds purchased within this sale period, a direct donation to our chapter, and the storage of your seeds until needed.



Order forms will be available on the HHI Audubon web program and in the January ECOBON, and at the Wild Birds Store in Indigo Park on January 2nd.



Festival Centre at Indigo Park
45 Pembroke Dr., Suite 130
Hilton Head Island, SC 29926
843-681-4461

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CACHING BIRDS

Several species of feeder birds cache food - but not just any food will do. Long-term storage means the food has to be nonperishable, so think seeds over fruit or peanut butter. Black-oil sunflower seeds are a favorite of chickadees, titmice and nuthatches, while peanuts and striped sunflower seeds are good options for larger species such as jays and woodpeckers.

In the forest the chickadees stash their seeds beneath the trees' peeling bark, or tuck them into cracks in the wood. Ultimately, they would cache hundreds and hundreds of seeds like Easter eggs throughout their territory. And they have a remarkable ability to remember every hiding place.

With some birds using hundreds of caches, the memory required to find what's been stored is no small thing. Some species, the chickadees and titmice in particular, have a straightforward physiological response to the need for memory: their brains grow. The hippocampus, the portion of the brain responsible for memory, increases in size in these species during the autumn and winter and then decreases in spring and summer.

Other caching species don't share this amazing capacity. Researchers hypothesize that these birds don't actually recall all the food locations; instead, they simply stock their territory, then "reforage" for their caches during the winter. From /David Shaw, Birds and Blooms



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DECEMBER 2013 - JANUARY 2014 Calendar

DECEMBER

- Weds. Dec. 4 **Bird Identification Program** 7:00 pm
at the First Presbyterian Church
- Thurs. Dec. 5 **Board Meeting** 10:00 am
at the Country Club of Hilton Head
- Mon. Dec. 9 **Field Trip to Harbour Island** 10:30 am
- Sat. Dec. 14 **Christmas Bird Count Day** All Day

JANUARY

- Thurs. Jan. 4 **Board Meeting** 10:00 am
at the Country Club of Hilton Head
- Thurs. Jan. 9 **Monthly Meeting** at Honey Horn 3:00 pm
- Weds. Jan. 22 **Field Trip to Camellia Plantation** 8:45 am
in Charleston

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. Meetings are held at the Coastal Discovery Museum, 70 Honey Horn Drive. 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.