



Ecobon

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

JANUARY PROGRAM *by: Kathy Greider, Program Director*

Thursday, January 8, 2015 , 3:00 pm

at the Coastal Discovery Museum at Honey Horn, 70 Honey Horn Drive, Sea Island Room

With the start of the New Year 2015 (and yes it really will be 2015 !) we have some great programs coming up. For January 8th Amber Kuehn will present a program on the **Unique Ecosystem in the Lowcountry Marshland**, the place Amber and many of us call home. Amber is a fourth generation Bluffton resident and has spent much of her early life on the Lowcountry waterways. She has returned to the area and has done great things for HHI's sea turtles, but has had an interesting journey to get her vast experience of ocean life and wetland science from HHI to Maui and back.

Amber grew up in Bluffton SC. She graduated with a Biology degree from University of Georgia in 1997. She became a professional boat captain in 1999. She started working with the Coastal Discovery Museum from 1998 - 2001 and went on to graduate school for a master's degree in Marine Biology from Nova Southeastern University Oceanographic Center in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. She made her living as a scuba instructor and dive boat captain while studying Leatherback, Green, and Loggerhead sea turtle nesting on Broward county Beaches. In 2004 she moved to Maui for a career in the diving industry and to study Green and Hawksbill sea turtles. Husband in tow, she returned to the Lowcountry in 2006 and has been with the HHI Sea Turtle Protection project for 9 consecutive seasons and currently manages the project. Amber heads up the volunteer marine mammal stranding network in Beaufort County, and performs necropsies in the field for NOS (National Oceanic Services, a division of NOAA). She also received an award in 2014 for her dedication to sea turtle stranding response. She owns **Spartina Marine Education Charters**, operating a Jones Brothers Bateau carrying 24 passengers. She educates tourist and locals on the unique ecosystem in the Lowcountry marshland, her own back yard. I believe she will also give us information as to how we can learn more on one of her interesting trips. Please join us on January 8th.

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Education Committee ... by Grant Greider

Watch for upcoming Education Programs especially in coordination with Earth Day. We have one program scheduled at the HHI Library for April 6th at 6:30 p.m. in the HHI Library for 3rd to 6th grade students.

We hope to present some other programs to young people. If you know of a church group or other local children's groups (between pre-school and high school) give them my name -- Grant Greider and have them call me at 404.313.8208 for more information. We would also be happy to provide programs for the local schools also.

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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.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *by Rick Riebesell*

From Hunting to Counting to Saving

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 new 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 brave winter weather to add a new layer to over a century of data.

The longest running citizen science survey in the world, Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count helps identify birds in most urgent need of conservation action, and it reveals success stories. The Christmas Bird Count helped document the comeback of the previously endangered Bald Eagle, and significant increases in waterfowl populations, both the result of conservation efforts.

Nan Lloyd, Charlotte White and Barry Lowes, among many others, worked on and systematized the Christmas Bird Count process for the Hilton Head island Audubon Society. This year Susan and Kelly Murphy had the responsibility of managing the count. On December 15 the count was conducted and the hard work of tallying the results begun. This year, we had a beautiful clear day for the count, and HHIAS maintained its high standards of performance in conducting the Christmas Bird Count.

The data from Christmas Bird Counts was a significant part of the data used in preparation of the National Audubon Climate Report. The report and a summary of its findings is available on the National Audubon Society website (www.audubon.org). 588 North American bird species were studied, and more than half were found to be in jeopardy. The models developed indicate that 314 species will lose more than 50 percent of their current climatic range by 2080. Of these 126 are classified as climate endangered, meaning that they are to lose more than 50 percent of their current range by 2050.

This information tells us that we need to establish and maintain bird habitat in our back yards and in our communities for common and migrant birds. If we eliminate all brushy areas, should we be surprised if we do not see so many warblers? Removing all dead trees from our lots, should we be surprised that we do not see woodpeckers? As we remove vegetation from around ponds and lagoons, should we be perplexed that we do not see so many roosting and nesting birds?

To help birds survive, we should work to ensure that habitat is managed and preserve for bird health. This is true for all habitats, whether on public lands or in backyards. When a migrating bird stops, whether in a public park or backyard, it needs native plants, food sources, water, and protection. By now we understand the equation, conservation happens step by step. One person, one backyard, one native plant, one nest box . . . , all together providing a better chance for bird species to survive. The Christmas Bird Count reminds us that we need to continue to work together through the Audubon Society and take our own actions to save the birds.

Join Us for the First Field Trip of 2015! *with Paul Weatherhead*

The first field trip of the new year will be Saturday, January 3rd, 9:00 AM at the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge. The migratory birds have arrived including gadwalls, mallards, teals, shovelers, mergansers, meadowlarks, and more. Year-round favorites include wood ducks, moorhens, herons and egrets.

The tour starts at 9:00 AM at the Laurel Hill Wildlife Drive entrance south of SC 170. We'll take a walk around the wooded area surrounding the entrance parking lot to see what tree birds have come to greet us. Then we will start our caravan through the dirt drive of the former rice plantation.

The trip will include:

In-car stops when we see any interesting bird concentrations. Many sightings can be made from the comfort of your car. A visit to the Cistern and Photo Blind.

A walk through part of the Plantation Island Trail to get an up-close view of the wetland homes of the waterfowl.

A walk through the southern tip of the Wildlife Drive where we will see wooded, wetlands and open fields.

From the southern tip northward the photographers will have good sunlight to their backs to take pictures of any good bird sightings. The Laurel Hill Wildlife Drive is 4.5 miles long, and much of the trip will be made in a slow-moving caravan of vehicles. There will be frequent, yet unplanned stops, so we will need to be careful. Fortunately, most visitors to the Refuge are nature lovers and understand the desire to drive slowly and make frequent stops.

There is a small fee for non-members of \$5.00 to be collected.



Spot Something Illegal on a Wildlife Refuge?

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has established a Turn In Poachers (TIPs) Line to help the public report violations occurring on national wildlife refuges and other Service-managed lands. People can call 1-844-NWR-TIPS (697-8477) or e-mail NWR_TIPs@fws.gov 24 hours a day.

You will be asked for the type of incident as well as the date, place (refuge name or county/state) and approximate time of the incident. People may leave their name and contact information, which will aid law enforcement in the response and investigation. They also may remain anonymous. Any contact information provided will be used for official purposes only.



Why Birds Change What They Eat

Birds take advantage of nature's most bountiful resources throughout the year. For example, during spring and summer, many songbirds eat and feed their young plentiful, high-protein insects. In the fall, when fewer insects are available but trees and shrubs are full of berries, the same birds may switch to a diet high in fruit.

Species that stay in northern latitudes all year may rely on seeds or nuts over the winter. Birds that fly south for the non-breeding season find spring- and summer-like conditions in the tropics, where insects and fruit are abundant.

From BirdWatching Magazine

KEEP IT CLEAN

Water is one of every living creature's most critical needs. In summer, people are more likely to provide their backyard birds with water than food.

New York City, where the American outbreak of West Nile virus began in 1999, passed a regulation more than a decade ago that subjects landlords to a fine if stagnant water is found on their property. The rule was amended to include "standing" water. Four New Yorkers actually were fined for having birdbaths. Their health department recommended replacing the water in the birdbath every two or three days to prevent mosquito breeding. Changing birdbath water on such a schedule is important for birds as well as for us. West Nile virus is far more lethal to many species of birds than it is to humans, and mosquitoes transfer other dangerous pathogens to and among birds as well as humans.

It's also important to remember that more birds drink from birdbaths than bathe in them, so water should be kept clean enough for drinking. Bathers often leave the water messy, and some birds, such as Common Grackles, seek out birdbaths for disposing of nestlings' fecal sacs. Keeping the water sparkling will benefit our whole community - avian and human.

From BirdWatching Magazine



RECENT AREA BIRD SIGHTINGS

by Jack Colcolough

Our last month has been very active 'birdingwise' with some Rare and many Uncommon species reported in our area with the arrival of many Winter ducks, shorebirds and songbirds.



Our best sighting of the month were two very Rare and beautiful Ross's Geese at Savannah NWR. Sadly, both of these birds meet with their demise ... one by a bobcat and the other, of unknown cause. Also,

their cousin, the Rare Snow Goose, was seen there on several occasions.

Other Rare sightings reported during the month were: Lark Sparrow at Savannah Airport, Purple Sandpiper at Tybee Island and Roseate Spoonbill in Sea Pines.

Uncommon species sighted were: American Woodcock, early Pine Siskin, ducks - Canvasback, Redhead, Northern Pintail, Ruddy Duck, Greater Scaup and Mottled Duck, Lesser and greater Black-backed Gulls, early Rusty Blackbird, Orange-crowned Warbler, Saltmarsh Sparrow, Baltimore Oriole, American Kestrel, White-breasted Nuthatch and Black-bellied Whistling Duck.

Out-of-season birds reported were: Northern Waterthrush, Painted Bunting and Ruby-throated Hummingbird.

Winter arrivals and 'good finds' reported included; early American Goldfinch, Sora, Common Loon, early Robin, Tree swallow, American Widgeon, Gadwall, Mallard, Lesser Scaup, Northern Shoveller, Ring-necked Duck, Green- and Blue-winged Teals, Bufflehead, Wood Duck, Northern Gannet, Hooded and Red-breasted Mergansers, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Eastern Meadowlark, Wood Stork, early Cedar Waxwings, Northern Harrier and many Bald Eagles.

Many thanks to all reporting their sightings: Jane/Adie Hester, Robert Rommel, Dottie Bass, Carol Clemens, Fran/Denny Baer, Joanne McMenamain, Cindy/Ken Groff, Shelia /Roger Johnson, Karen Petterson, Paul Weatherhead, Susan/Kelly Murphy, Kathy/Grant Greiger, Rita/Joe Kernan, Ellen Lebeouf, Annette Hausman, Karen Marts, Dawn Brut, Doreen Cubie, Mary Alice Cruise and several visitors.

To report a bird sighting that is Accidental, Rare, Uncommon, Out-Of-Season, First-Of-The-Year (FOTY) or First-Of-The-Season (FOTS) or a species that you consider to be a "good find" 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 other pertinent information about your sighting.

This kind of active birding month should lead us into a great annual Christmas Bird Count this year!

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Protects Red Knot as Threatened Under the Endangered Species Act

Designation highlights concern over impacts of climate change, development across Americas

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) today announced federal protection for the rufa subspecies of the red knot, a robin-sized shorebird, designating it as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. A “threatened” designation means a species is at risk of becoming endangered throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

“The red knot is a remarkable and resilient bird known to migrate thousands of miles a year from the Canadian Arctic to the southern tip of South America,” said Service Director Dan Ashe. “Unfortunately, this hearty shorebird is no match for the widespread effects of emerging challenges like climate change and coastal development, coupled with the historic impacts of horseshoe crab overharvesting, which have sharply reduced its population in recent decades.”

Since the 1980s, the knot’s population has fallen by about 75 percent in some key areas, largely due to declines in one of its primary food resources – horseshoe crab eggs in Delaware Bay, an important migratory stopover site. Although this threat is now being addressed by extensive state and federal management actions, other threats, including sea-level rise, some shoreline projects and coastal development, continue to shrink the shorebird’s wintering and migratory habitat.

Changing climate conditions are also altering the bird’s breeding habitat in the Arctic and affecting its food supply across its range, in particular through climate-driven mismatches in migration timing that affect the peak periods of food availability. The bird must arrive at Delaware Bay at exactly the time when horseshoe crabs are laying their eggs.

“Although historic threats in the Delaware Bay area have been ameliorated thanks to the actions of federal and state partners, our changing climate is posing new and complex challenges to the red knot’s habitat and food supply,” Ashe said. “It has never been more critical that we take positive action to save this bird.”

One of the longest distance migrants in the animal kingdom, some rufa red knots fly more than 18,000 miles each year between breeding grounds in the Canadian Arctic and wintering grounds along the Gulf Coast, southeast United States and South America. One bird, banded by biologists in 1995 in Argentina, has been nicknamed Moonbird because he has flown the equivalent of a trip to the moon and at least halfway back in his 21 or more years of migrations.

Along its epic migration, the red knot, which can be identified by its rufous breast, belly and flanks during breeding season, can be found across 27 countries and 40 U.S. states in flocks ranging from a few individuals to several thousand. Although rufa red knots mainly occur along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, small groups regularly use some interior areas of the United States during migration. The largest concentration of rufa red knots is found in May in Delaware Bay, where the birds stop to gorge themselves on the eggs of spawning horseshoe crabs; a spectacle drawing thousands of birdwatchers to the area. In just a few days, the birds nearly double their weight to prepare for the final leg of their long journey to the Arctic.

International, state and local governments, the conservation community, beachgoers and land managers are helping ensure red knots have safe areas to winter, rest and feed during their long migrations. These partners help knots in a variety of ways, including managing the harvest of horseshoe crabs (which are caught for use as bait in conch and eel pots), managing disturbance in key habitats, improving management of hunting outside the United States, and collecting data to better understand these birds.

In making its decision, the Service analyzed the best available data in more than 1,700 scientific documents, and considered issues raised in more than 17,400 comments provided during 130 days of public comment periods and three public hearings. Protections under the ESA will take effect 30 days after publication in the Federal Register.

As required by the ESA, the Service is also reviewing the U.S. range of the rufa red knot to identify areas that are essential for its conservation, known as critical habitat. The Service expects to propose critical habitat for the rufa red knot for public review and comment in 2015 after completing the required review of economic considerations.

Visit <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/redknot/> to read the final rule and response to comments; view and download video, photos and maps; and explore more resources, such as an interactive timeline and infographic. The rule will be available at www.regulations.gov on December 11, 2014, under docket number FWS-R5-ES-2013-0097.



Tagged Red Knot, Mispillion Harbor, Delaware.
Credit: Gregory Breese/USFWS

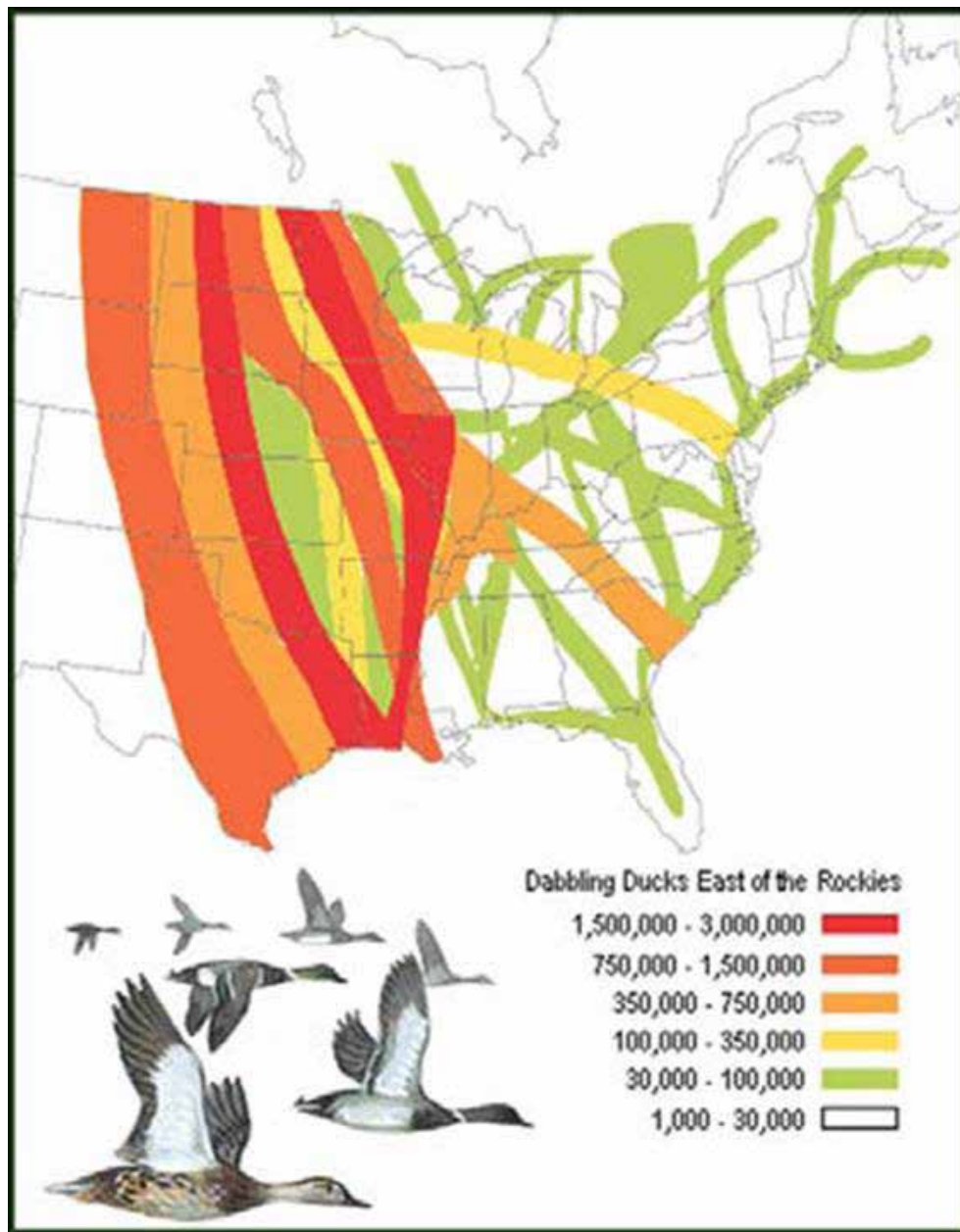
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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit www.fws.gov, or connect with us through any of these social media channels: Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube.

Wetland Restoration Work in Indiana impacts us

Restoration work along the lower Wabash River, Goose Pond, and other wetland areas in Southwest Indiana has created a new migratory corridor for birds, especially waterfowl. This corridor goes through our area of South Carolina, as show on the map.

Migration staging areas don't happen in small areas. The birds are in Indiana because the entire complex provides lots of opportunities to forage and rest. If one area is frozen over or lacks food, the birds have many other areas to go within the complex. Different species have different needs so it takes a large variety of habitats to provide for their needs.

Next time you see migrating waterfowl in our area, please say a word of thanks to those responsible for the wetland restoration projects in Indiana.



Information courtesy of the Nature Conservancy in Indiana.
map from: <http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/birds/migration/routes.htm>

Upcoming Programs in 2015

February 15th 3:00 p.m. Felicia Sanders with the SC Department of Natural Resources will tell us about the research going on to help shorebirds.

March 12th 3:00 p.m. Aaron Givens is the Assistant Wildlife Biologist for the Town of Kiawah Island. Aaron conduct research on local birds and during migration. He will speak about this banding program.

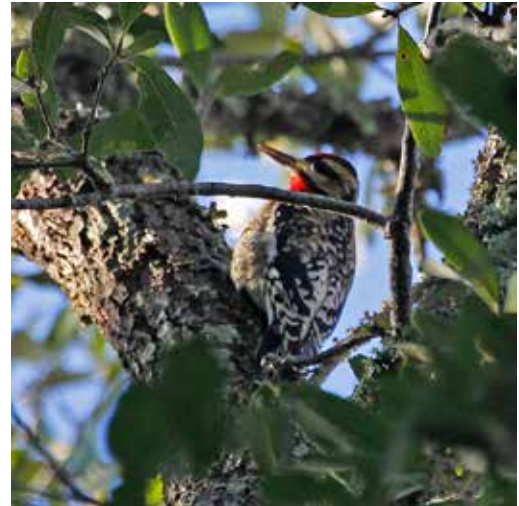
April 9th 3:00 p.m. Speaker to be confirmed
There will be an evening meeting in April, in addition to our regular afternoon meeting. The evening meeting is in response to the survey of our members and many of the attendees who became members during the recent Birding 100 course who requested some evening meetings. These additional meetings are a *Work in Progress* and we hope you will provide input providing feedback when we try something new.

The April date for our evening meeting will be announced in early January. The time for the evening meeting will be 5:30 p.m. The location of the meeting will be at the Palmetto Cooperative office on Mathews Drive on the Island. The speaker for the program will be Scott P. Liggett, PE. Scott is the Director of Public Projects & Facilities / Chief Engineer for the Town of Hilton Head Island, SC. Mr. Liggett will present information on the Beach Re-Nourishment project that will start next November. This meeting like all of our meetings will be open to the general public. This is a very important topic to not just HHIAS members but all HHI Residents.

May 7th at 5:30 p.m. The Annual Picnic for HHIAS Members at the Waddell Mariculture Center. Al Stokes, Manager at Waddell with give us a tour of the facility followed by our picnic. Tour will start at 5:45 p.m. Members may arrive anytime between 5 p.m. and 5:45 pm.

Our members have been very appreciative of the quality programs we have been able to provide at our meetings. My thanks goes out to many of our members who have suggested speakers or topics they would like to learn about. I can't do it without your input. Please take a minute to think about the topics you might enjoy learning more about and send them to me in an email at greider38@gmail.com or call me 404.313.8208.

Happy Birding - Kathy



December 6th Field Trip Report

We had 14 members attend, our leader was Robert Rommel we started at 3:00 pm and finished up about a little after 5:00. We saw 45 species, included Painted Buntings, a Bufflehead, Ruddy Turnstones, Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker, and a Greater Black-backed Gull just to mention a few.



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ECOBON
P. O. Box 6185
Hilton Head Island, South Carolina 29938

Title: Ecobon
Issue Date: January 2015
Frequency: Monthly Sept.-May
Organization: Hilton Head Island Audubon Society
P.O. Box 6185
Hilton Head, South Carolina 29938
Issue #: 351

JANUARY ~ FEBRUARY 2015 Calendar

Sat. Jan. 3 Field Trip Savannah Wildlife Refuge 10:00 am
Thurs. Jan. 8 Monthly Meeting 3:00 pm
at Honey Horn

February - *Bird Seed Sale at Birds Unlimited*

Thurs. Feb. 5 Board Meeting 10:00 am
Sat. Feb. 7 Field Trip 10:00 am
Thurs. Feb. 12 Monthly Meeting 3:00 pm
at Honey Horn

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 Ne-whall 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.