



October 2015
No. 357

Ecobon

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

OCTOBER PROGRAM *by: Kathy Greider, Program Director*

Thursday, October 8, 2015 at 3:00 pm

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

Fall Migrants on South Carolina's Coastal Beaches

Presented by Nicholas Wallover

Every fall, thousands of shorebirds representing over 20 species arrive on the beaches of the South Eastern US on their way to their wintering grounds. Come discover and discuss this exciting time of the year, and learn about the local trends based on ongoing survey data.

Nicholas Wallover is currently the Regional Biologist for the ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve, a 140,000 acre region of the South Carolina Coast stretching from Charleston to Beaufort Counties, and Manager of the McKenzie Field Station at Bennett's Point. The ACE Basin includes some of the finest birding locations in the Southeast (Bear Island WMA, Donnelley WMA, Hollings NWF plus some additional smaller but not less important natural areas. Nick has worked on numerous research and management efforts up and down our state's coast, with an emphasis on protected species, including bald eagles, sea turtles, shorebirds, and dolphins.

FREE ~ Open to the public without registration. **VISITORS ARE WELCOME!**

For More Information Contact: Coastal Discovery Museum at 843.689.6767

or visit our website: www.hiltonheadaudubon.org



HHI Audubon

Board of Directors:

President

Robert Rommel 734-274-1796

Vice President

Jack Greenshields 715-0340

Treasurer

Pauline Jones 715-9405

Recording Secretary and Corresponding Secretary

Marianne Currie 681-8525

Members-at-Large

Susan Murphy 686-3733

Christmas Bird Count Liaison

Joan Wilson 837-2874

Ecobon Editor

Immediate Past President

Rick Riebesell 681-6424

Emeritus

Barry Lowes

Standing Committee Chairs:

Audubon Newhall Preserve

Jack Greenshields 715-0340

Bob Clemens 689-2903

Bird Walks/Field Trips

Cindy & Kenn Groff 682-3840

Christmas Bird Count Liaison

Susan Murphy 686-3733

Conservation

Bill Nicol 671-4721

Robert Rommel 734-274-1796

Education

Grant Greider 404-313-8208

Membership

Carol Clemens 689-2903

Fran Baer 686-6348

Programs

Kathy Greider 404-313-8208

Dorie Cubie 843-991-1054

Publicity

Natalie Hefter 304-9789

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.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *by Robert Rommel*

The Dire State of Birds

A month ago I was marveling at a beautiful Michigan lakeshore and unexpectedly ran into a Piping Plover that was foraging on rocks. These adorable shorebirds are a winter visitor to the island, but Hilton Head's birds come from the Atlantic subspecies. This subspecies is 'merely' threatened with a population of around 3,500 birds. The Great Lakes population on the other hand is severely endangered. Historically it was never large, with around 500 breeding pairs a hundred years ago, but that crashed down to 12 pairs twenty five years ago. With recovery efforts and Endangered Species protection, the population has now risen to roughly 50 breeding pairs. This carefree bird ranks among the rarest of birds that I have seen – hopefully it will make it through the winter!

It is easy for us to think that the birds that are in trouble are birds in the rainforests, birds that live in unusual habitats like the dune-preferring Piping Plovers, or a few rare species in our country. We quickly think of the remarkable recovery of the Bald Eagle, Osprey, and Peregrine Falcon. But to be blunt, these birds are anomalies. Most of our birds are in serious trouble. Of the roughly 800 species that can be found in our country, about 1/3 are endangered. We have 30+ species that are in serious rates of decline (losing 50%-90% of their population every 20 years). From the last data and reports that I saw, we don't have the data out there to tell exactly how many of our species are declining but we know that at least 1/4 of all our species are and the number may be as high as 1/2 of the species.

We tend to focus on the rare birds, but the problem is much bigger than this. Many of our common birds are not doing well. Common Grackles, Northern Bobwhites, Snowy Owls, Rusty Blackbirds, Common Nighthawks, Black Terns, Eastern Meadowlarks, even the ubiquitous Herring Gull are all in steep decline. It seems impossible to think of these birds as becoming rare, but if nothing changes that is how it will be in a generation or two.

We have made progress. We've done a great job of protecting wetlands in the last few decades and that has led to rebounding populations of herons, egrets, and ducks. But the birds of the forests, grasslands, and oceans are not so fortunate. It is easy for us to get mired down in small details. There are intense arguments against the construction of wind power turbines on the grounds that they can kill birds in flight. Certainly we should place wind power in spots that will mitigate the losses but turbines kill an estimated 400,000 birds a year whereas crashes into cell phone towers kill 6 million a year. Over 500 million birds die a year from crashing into windows. More than half of these crash into residential houses and apartments. And we're still talking small numbers here – estimates for the deaths due to household cats range from 2-7 BILLION. To put the numbers into perspective we have about 10 billion birds that breed in the US rising up to around 20 billion during migration so cats are killing at least 10 percent of all the birds in the country.

The biggest problem by far for birds is habitat loss due to development. The second largest problem is household cats followed by pesticide use. Everything else falls distantly behind these three. I remember coming to Hilton Head Island as a child and seeing my first Northern Bobwhites and Common Ground Doves. These two birds are now very difficult to find in the area but were very common then. I hope we make progress in these issues over the next decade so that more birds don't fall into this category. As I look out my window, I reflect that more people live on my short street than Piping Plovers live in the entire Great Lakes region.

RECENT AREA BIRD SIGHTINGS

by Jack Colcolough

Our best birding time of the year is here ... Our Fall migration! Fall migrants are moving through our area, shorebirds and songbirds are arriving for the Winter and some of our Summer birds are still here before departing soon for regions southward.

Our Fall migration is off to a great start with the best yet to come. Twenty-two warbler species have already been reported in our area to date including: rare Nashville, Blue-winged, Hooded, Cape May, Worm-eating and Kentucky warblers as well as Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Blue, Yellow, Magnolia, Prairie and Prothonotary Warblers and Ovenbird, American Redstart and both Waterthrushes plus others.

Eighteen other Fall migrants have been reported including this Fall: very rare Long-billed Curlew in Bluffton, rare Wilson's Phalarope in Savannah, Common Tern and Solitary Sandpiper at Tybee Island, Black Tern at Fish Haul Creek, Scarlet Tanager in Beaufort, Buff-breasted and Pectoral Sandpipers at Hutchinson Island and Cliff Swallow at Skidaway Island as well as Baltimore Oriole, Bobolink, Swainson's Thrush and Whimbrel.



Nashville Warbler



Scarlet Tanager

Rare species reported during the month are covered above except for: Gray Kingbird at Tybee Island and Roseate Spoonbill at Bluffton, Indigo Run and Skidaway Island.

Uncommon species this month include: endangered Piping Plover, Caspian Tern, Loggerhead Shrike, Mississippi Kite, Blue Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Yellow-throated and Blue-headed Vireos, Eurasian-collared Dove, Seaside Sparrow, Stilt Sandpiper, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Mottled Duck, Black-bellied Whistling Duck and Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

Other good finds include: Marbled Godwit, Painted Bunting, Summer Tanager, Common Night Hawk, Black & White Warbler, Red-headed Woodpecker, early Pie-billed Grebe, Gull-billed Tern, many Ruby-throated Hummers and returning shorebirds. Bald Eagles have also recently returned to our area.

Many thanks to all reporting their sightings: Kathy/Grant Greider, Diana Churchill, Carol Clemens, Chris Marsh, Fran/Danny Baer, Susan Taylor, Rita/Joe Kernan, Cindy/Ken Groff, Joanne McMemamin, Jane/Abie Hester, Dorothy Mosier, Mark Hymer, Doreen Cubie, Steve Calver, Russ Wigh, Dick Phillips, Buddy Campbell, Mary Ann Lueckel, Mary Alice Cruise and a number of 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.

It's a best time to be in the great outdoors and enjoy our wonderful October birding and weather!



Long-billed Curlew
(wikimedia)

BOOK REVIEW

The Narrow Edge...A Tiny Bird, An Ancient Crab,
and an Epic Journey
by *Deborah Cramer (2015)*

In *The Narrow Edge*, the author gives us a first hand account of her journey following Red Knots from South America's Tierra del Fuego, to their feeding stops in South Carolina and the Delaware Bay, to their breeding grounds in the Arctic.

The theme of the book is the interrelationship of the Red Knot and Horseshoe Crabs and how if just one tiny element is "off", there are problems. As she says in the book: "The foundation of food webs may not be apparent until they fray, the value of individual threads unseen until the fabric is torn." In this well-written and well-researched book, the author presents the Red Knot and Horseshoe Crabs as two threads in the fabric.

While scientific, *The Narrow Edge* is written as an easy to follow, interesting story. Even those who are familiar with the incredible story of the red knots and horseshoe crabs will find a wealth of information in this book.



Reviewed by
Carol Clemens



Our first field trip for the fall season

Location: Spoil Site SNWR (a restricted area)

Date: Saturday, October 3, 2015

Start time: 8:00 am till noon

Leader: TBD

Participants: Limited to 20

Additional Information: There are no restrooms on the property.

Mandatory Special instructions per the Spoil Site:

Long pants, long sleeved shirts, closed toed shoes (boots are recommend), Bug spray.

Upon arrival you will be required to sign various forms required to access this restricted area. Four wheel drive and SUV vehicles preferred. We are permitted a maximum of 5 vehicles.

To sign up, contact:

Cindy Groff@ 843-682-3840

or email smilingcin@yahoo.com

THE MIMIC

Some bird species obediently learn their song from their parents; some robotically inherit their script via instinct. The northern mockingbird and its cousins, the brown thrasher and gray catbird, evolved a third method. This method mixes the hardwiring of instinct with the mysteries of selection and improvised expression. Instinct compels it to listen to the randomly occurring sounds in its environment. It then, somehow, selects which sounds to store in memory. These selections comprise other avian vocalizations, animal sounds such as those made by dogs, crickets, and frogs, and a variety of mechanical noises, e.g., car alarms, rusty hinges, sirens, and the like. Upon maturing, it eventually assembles a repertoire of these audible phrases and sonic snippets. In the wild, the mockingbird lives about eight years; at this ripe old age a particular songster can have acquired a cornucopia of 200 separate vocalizations.

Steve Terr from BirdWatcher's Digest



(wikimedia)

Membership Report for September 2015 Ecobon

Please welcome the following new members who have joined the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society since our September Ecobon was issued:

Debby Boots
Kathy Collier
Donna Driscoll and Michael Reilly
Kae Jacobs
Mary Beth MacLeod
James McLain
Sue Murray



A Reminder About Our Local Dues:

Thanks to all who so generously support the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society by joining our group. Without your dues, we would be very limited in what we can do. Remember we get no support from National other than the first year that someone joins the National Audubon Society. After that, all funds come to us through your dues and donations.

Remember...we are not just for the birds! We have made donations to support other activities such as adopting a sea turtle nest through the Coastal Discovery Museum and the Sea Turtle Protection Project.

Wondering when to renew your membership in the local Audubon Society? We renew by quarters so that your dues are renewed one year from the time you paid. You will get an email reminder from us during the quarter in which your dues expire. You can either mail in the form and check or bring it to a meeting. Questions about membership?

Contact :

Carol Clemens cclemens318@roadrunner.com or Fran Baer seatwo@roadrunner.com

.....

The National Audubon Society has recently make some changes in their contact information regarding National Membership. While National Membership is not required to belong to our local group, it is a great way to help on the National level.

National Audubon Society, Inc.
225 Varick Street, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10014
Attn: Chance Mueleck

A new membership 800 number is now available for your use. Please use (844) 428-3826 for membership related questions. A new membership email address is now available for your use. Please use customerservice@audubon.org for membership related questions.

Carol Clemens
My nature photos: <http://hiltonheadnature.shutterfly.com>

NOTES FROM THE NEWHALL PRESERVE and Conservation Committee

by Jack Greenshields

- 1) The aeration system at Newhall is up and running. The new equipment is quieter and more efficient. Will consider a maintenance agreement with the contractor to ensure proper operation and longer life.
- 2) We had some AmeriCorps volunteers conduct some maintenance at the Preserve this summer. Trail monitors also worked hard in the heat and humidity. Property looks ok, but we need to schedule several workdays as the temperatures cool.
- 3) Construction of the pedestrian/bicycle crosswalk across Palmetto Bay road to the Preserve entrance is underway.
- 4) Donation post proceeds for the summer were on target and turned over to the Treasurer.
- 5) There has been considerable interest in our geocache.
- 6) Entry gate project needs to be advanced.
- 7) An Audubon member of the Conservation Committee has attended most appropriate Town meetings.
- 8) We will meet with the Shelter Cove developer shortly to review their plans. Audubon will comment at the September 15 public hearing.
- 9) Audubon continues to participate with the Eco Advocacy Initiative on its development of a position paper.
- 10) Audubon funds that were restricted for benefit of Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge have been pooled with those of the Friends of the Savannah Coastal Refuge System so that Fish and Wildlife could purchase and install a spotting scope at Ibis Pond on Pinckney.
- 11) Jack Greenshields will lead nature/birding programs for the Beaufort County Open Land Trust property at Widgeon Point at 6pm on September 9 and 23. These are open to the public.
- 12) Audubon has been contacted by the Independence Fund with a request for non financial assistance in developing the environmental aspects of their 62 acre property on Knowles Island. Jack Greenshields will meet shortly with their team. They work with wounded veterans. Jack Greenshields is asking anyone that is interested in assisting to contact him at jackg308@gmail.com

.....

Why are Cardinals Red?



carolinabirds.org

Some birds come in dull colors, perfect for hiding, whereas others are adorned with brilliant colors. In some species, only the males are colorful; in others both male and female have the same plumage. Some birds sing loud, melodious songs, and others are almost silent. Some always seem to be hiding; others are regularly seen in open conspicuous locations.

Flight is a fabulous adaptation, and it provides birds with a quick and effective escape from many predators.

As birds evolved, it seems that many that randomly developed bright colors, loud songs, and/or conspicuous behaviors still managed to survive and thereby pass their genes along to the next generation. In most birds, the female chooses which male she breeds with. In many species, females most frequently select the males with the brightest colors, the boldest songs, and/or the most elaborate courtship displays.

Those bold colors have other advantages as well. A male northern cardinal, for instance, uses color in displays that establish and maintain territories, and, because they are somewhat territorial for much of the year, it's important to maintain the bright color. In breeding season, they'll also use their bright color and vivid song to lure potential predators away the nest. It's easy to see why a female would choose a mate who is capable of protecting the eggs and hatchlings this way.

Mark Garland in BirdWatcher's Digest

Christmas Bird Count Dates



The annual meeting on the Christmas Bird Count is Wednesday, December 9, at the First Presbyterian Church, 540 William Hilton Parkway.

The Social begins at 7:00 PM and the Presentation by Robert Rommel begins at 7:30 PM.

Our official count day for the Hilton Head Count Circle is Monday December 14.

More details later!

Susan Murphy ~ HHICBC@gmail.com

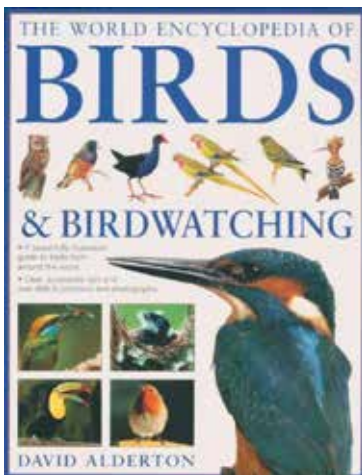
Other news:

The Sun City Christmas Bird Count is on Saturday, December 19.

Contact Jim Cubie at jimcubie@gmail.com if you are interested in participating.

TO MEMORIZE OR NOT

One of the great things about birding is that you can take it as seriously or as casually as you like. You'll find ample rewards at either extreme. If your interest is casual, by all means carry a guide on your birding trips as a reference. But first, leaf through the pages a few times to become at least a little familiar with all the possibilities and with how the guide is organized.



If you really want to learn the birds of a region, you might try birding without the guide. I wouldn't suggest just trying to memorize your observations, but I do recommend carrying a field notebook. Observe as much as you can and take notes or make sketches. Keep looking for more details as long as the bird is visible. The better you get to know a species, the more quickly you'll identify it in the future, even when viewing conditions are poor.

(from Mark Garland in BirdWatcher's Digest)



Monarchs, Milkweed, and More

What's not to like about Monarchs?

This year in particular, the campaign to save these insects seem to be surging. There has been a widespread increase in interest in this effort to assist the butterflies by planting milkweed and nectar sources in both small and large sites. This is intended to help offset such activities as the widespread uses of herbicides and frequent mowing along roadsides. The race is on to get even halfway close to the large monarch populations seen in the 1990s. Estimated losses since then range around 90 percent.

Each fall, hundreds of millions of monarchs travel to mountains in central Mexico. There, of course, they wait out the winter until conditions favor a northward return in the spring.

But it's not just the monarchs that benefit from the milkweed promotional efforts. Bird watchers should be pleased that American goldfinches, which finish breeding later than most North American birds, use milkweed, thistle, and other plants whose fibrous seeds are incorporated into the soft inner lining of their nests. At times, chickadees and orioles will harvest fibers from the previous year's milkweed stalks to supplement their nesting material.

from BirdWatcher's Digest



Find us on
facebook



Wild Birds Unlimited

- Binoculars & Spotting Scopes
- Field Guides
- Nature Books
- Nature Gifts
- Custom Seed Blends
- Bird Feeders & Houses
- Bird Baths & Fountains
- Water Gardening Supplies

We Bring People And Nature Together®
Visit us at www.wbu.com



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
- 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

Please detach and mail or bring to the next meeting.

Local Membership: select either 1 year individual \$15 or 1 year family \$25

I wish to make an extra donation of _____(amount)

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 Help with Field Trips Conservation Education Christmas Bird Count Publicity/Programs other _____

Please mail to: P.O. Box 6185 – Hilton Head Island, SC - 29938 (Rev. 2/2015)



Audubon

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

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

Title: Ecobon
Issue Date: October 2015
Frequency: Monthly Sept.-May
Organization: Hilton Head Island Audubon Society
P.O. Box 6185
Hilton Head, South Carolina 29938
Issue #: 357

OCTOBER ~ NOVEMBER 2015 Calendar

OCTOBER

Thurs. Oct. 1 Board Meeting at CCHH..... 10:00 am
Thurs. Oct. 8 Monthly Meeting 3:00 pm
at Honey Horn

Birding 101 Classes - Saturdays
10/17, 10/24, 11/7, and 11/14
9:30 AM - Coastal Discovery Museum

NOVEMBER

Thurs. Nov. 5 Board Meeting at CCHH..... 10:00 am
Thurs. Nov. 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.