

Purple Martin Tips

Our February speaker series features Jennifer Tyrrell, President of Charleston Audubon for a discussion about Purple Martins.



Jennifer McCarthy Tyrrell came to the Low-country to attain her Masters in Environmental Science from the College of Charleston and has been working in the conservation community here ever since.

As the Bird Friendly Communities Coordinator for Audubon South Carolina, Master Bird Bander, and the President of Charleston Audubon, Jen works with birds and conservation in many different ways, including Purple Martin and Painted Bunting research. She



Purple Martin by John Bloomfield

also works tirelessly to spread the word about bird-friendly communities and the benefits of native plants. Before joining Audubon, Jen worked with Wild Birds Unlimited and the Center for Birds of Prey.

Come learn about Purple Martins, their

nesting needs, colony maintenance and management, and tips on how to successfully host a healthy Purple Martin Colony.

Here are some links you may also enjoy:

[Bird-friendly Communities](#)

[Bird Banding](#)

[Painted Bunting Research](#)

When: February 13, 3 pm

Where: Palmetto Electric
111 Mathews Dr., Community Room, Hilton Head Island

Speaker: Jennifer Tyrrell, President of Charleston Audubon
"How to be a Purple Martin Landlord"

Christmas Bird Count Update

by Susan Murphy
CBC Coordinator

We had another great CBC day on December 16, 2019.

Total number of birds: 28,722 (last year was 25,561)

Total species: 130 (last year was 137)

There were a few species that we identified after the 2018 count that were missed but we found this year. These included one Loggerhead Shrike, two Sharp-shinned Hawks, nine Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks and two Orange-crowned Warblers. There was only one Rock Pigeon in 2018 but we found 21 this time.

Rare Bird Forms were submitted (with photos) for Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, Purple Sandpipers, and a count week Painted Bunting.

Other unusual finds

Four Wild Turkeys (Pinckney NWR), one Merlin (Daufuskie Island), one Virginia Rail (Palmetto Bluff), one Nelson's Sparrow (Fish Haul), seven Blue-headed Vireos, 13 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, eight House Wrens, 13 Marsh Wrens, and three Baltimore Orioles.

Robert Rommel's summary of the count mentioned a few birds that we typically have in low abundance but are regular on most years. These include Mallard, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Cattle Egret, Red Knot, Eurasian Collared Dove, Eastern Screech-Owl and Golden-crowned Kinglet. He commented on the low numbers of waterfowl but we don't have enough data to determine if this is a trend.

The Regional Editor approved our report on January 24, noting everything looked great. He agreed that waterfowl numbers have been very low this winter and this is reflected in other CBCs as well. He congratulated us on the Purple Sandpipers (Port Royal Plantation).

We had record participation again this year. In December 2018 we had the 3rd highest number of participants

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Subscription is a benefit of membership.

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P.O. Box 6185
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[click here for HHI Audubon email.](#)

President's Message

For unknown and somewhat irrational reasons, I associate woodpeckers with birds mostly seen during winter months, even though they are seen here throughout the year. Perhaps the fall leaf loss makes them more visible, but our species count only increases by one, as the only eastern migratory woodpecker, the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, moves in.



Rarely hard to spot, most woodpeckers sport bright contrasting black-and-white patterns accented with reds. They also call attention to themselves with their noisy tapping and loud drumming. Calls to keep in touch with mates or ward others away also announce their presence. For the most part, my encounters with woodpeckers have been positive and entertaining as they have allowed us easy viewing of nesting and feeding.

The exceptions both involved Red-bellied Woodpeckers, one of whom took it upon himself to exterminate the carpenter beetle larvae in our fascia boards.

As the name implies, woodpeckers do just that in their search for insects, fruits and nuts. Even our ground foraging Northern Flickers with their barbed tongues, like to have a forest nearby, and all of our woodpeckers, who are cavity nesters, rely heavily on trees for nesting sites. A lightning strike three of summers ago killed two pines just outside our property line. For the last two springs, woodpeckers have raised families in them, first a pair of Pileated and the next year Red-bellied Woodpeckers. This fall a pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers took up residence.

Depending on the species, they build homes either in live trees with a damaged area or dead trees. Famously, our now endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker is so selective that it has not adapted well to the changes in forest brought on by our timbering practices. Since they strongly prefer longleaf pines with red heart disease, the loss of mature trees has devastated their numbers. Wildlife management practices are helping the species recover, and one strategy is to make artificial nest cavities in long-leaf pines. The Red-cockaded is not the only woodpecker in trouble. Due to habitat changes and loss of food supply, Northern Flickers and Red-headed Woodpeckers are also in decline. One problem for flickers is loss of suitable nesting sites; however, plans for nesting boxes are available online for those who would like to try to lure them to your yard.

If you are like me and enjoy watching and hearing woodpeckers and want them in your yard, remember that dead trees and branches are a big part of attracting and sustaining woodpecker families. Our very common Downy Woodpecker and the less common Hairy Woodpecker both like to use dead branches in living trees for their nests. So unless they are endangering life and limb, it is best

for birds if you don't trim every dead branch or remove every dead tree.

Good birding everyone.

Jane

Christmas Bird Count continued

of all of the 2,615 count circles at 320. This year, there were 346 participants: 266 field observers and 80 feeder watchers. We continued to add new birders to our count, with 111 first timers this year. This number included 40 students from HHI Elementary School and their two teachers.

The updated 10-year history of our count is now on the website. Please take a look at it to spot trends and identify any species you might want to seek out in the next count.

The Regional and International Summaries for the 2018 count are now on the [Audubon website](#).

Thanks to all who participated and a special thanks to the Area Captains who spent time and effort organizing and tabulating to make this count happen. Thanks to our panel, Robert Rommel, Bob Speare and Carlos Chacon who met with each captain to discuss and review the reports. We had some last minute leadership and boating substitutions this year, and we thank all who volunteered.

The next Hilton Head count is Tuesday, December 15, 2020.

Welcome New Members



A warm welcome to our new members:

Rain Galloway
Beth Higley
Mary Ann Hoffman
Susan Meyer
Mary Rava
Justin Stokes

Members and non-members can join, renew or make donations on our website. We accept Visa, Mastercard or Discover. An email will be sent when your membership is due. You may choose to pay online through our secure portal or mail in a check (the website has a form for you to fill out and mail with your check). Please do not mail in a check without the form. We continually update our records and want to make sure you're receiving our emails and *The Ecobon*. If you have any questions about membership, please email [Marina Bloomfield](#).

Audubon Newhall Preserve

by Bob Clemens
Audubon Newhall Chairman

Last year was a great year for the Audubon Newhall Preserve. Our final visitor count was 739 family units from 47 states and a dozen foreign countries and Canadian provinces. Our donation post collections totaled more than \$2,200. For the coming year, we have changed the format for the visitor logs in hopes of getting a better handle on how many individual visitors, as opposed to families, we host each month.

The Sea Pines CSA widened our roadway to double-wide, and it looks great. Credit goes to our Vice-Chair for Sea Pines Liaison, Tom Hennessey, for staying on the project. Matt Matoon has lined the east side of the roadway with logs to discourage offroad-ing. Vice-Chair Rita Kernan and husband Joe made



beautiful holiday-season magnolia leaf wreaths for the Preserve gate posts.

Audubon member Mike Kizis and his two grandsons have placed seven new bluebird houses in the preserve. Mike also relocated two older birdhouses to better locations.

Rita Kernan secured an \$870 grant from the Women's Association of Hilton Head Island to purchase a pond pump and sprinkler system for the Preserve's butterfly garden. We are working on getting electrical service to the area for the pump system.

A work day has been scheduled with the local Rotary for Saturday, March 7 at 9 am, and everyone is invited to come and help. Rita will supervise renourishing the soil in the butterfly garden, so bring shovels, garden rakes, and wheelbarrows or carts. Please email any questions to Rita at rakhhi@aol.com.

Thank you to our trail monitors, who are walking the trails and sweeping the deck and boardwalks weekly.



Notes From The Field

by Bob Speare
Audubon Field Trip Coordinator

January 5 Quick Bird Trip to Shelter Cove Community Park

Eleven of us got together for a New Year Quick Trip at Shelter Cove. I have birded this location several times and the birding is surprising good, as it was on this trip. In about 1.5 hours, we covered just over a mile and tallied 36 species. Yes, this is the place behind the shopping plaza! Highlights included 12 Black-crowned Night-herons, 39 White Ibis and four sparrow species. Hope to see you on our next Quick Trip.

A wonderful January day with Dr Chris Marsh

Our January field trip featured a morning with Dr. Chris Marsh, Executive Director of the Spring Island Trust, exploring the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge. Even though the Wildlife Drive is closed during the week, and only opened on some weekends, plenty of birding is available at other parts of the refuge as we discovered. After a brief introduction in the auditorium, Dr. Marsh led



Dr. Chris Marsh

us along the Tupelo Trail in search of the "LBB's" or little brown birds – the sparrows, wrens and warblers found in the shrubby edges along the canals, woodlands and marshes. It was a perfect January morning, and by the end, we had identified 43 species including a terrific view of

a Merlin, Rusty Blackbirds, and an Orange-crowned Warbler.

Later in the day, Dr. Marsh spoke at our January Program Meeting on the changing landscape for North American birds. Using satellite maps and eBird data, Dr. Marsh showed how the loss of habitat is dramatically affecting bird populations and migration patterns.

We are grateful to Dr. Marsh for a wonderful January day; we are fortunate to be able to share his expertise with our members.

The birding around Hilton Head is heating up—Here's what's coming up in February and March:

February Birding Field Trip - ACE Basin Birding

This trip is Sold Out.

Where: Bear Island and Donnelly Wildlife Management Areas

When: Sunday, February 16; 9:00 am - 2:00 pm

Leader: Buddy Campbell

Limit: 20 participants

Fees: \$10 for members, \$15 for non-members

Bear Island WMA is touted as one of the top birding locations in South Carolina and with good reason. With over 12,000 acres of mixed forests, agricultural fields, tidal marsh and freshwater impoundments, Bear Island attracts thousands of waterfowl, waders and shorebirds each year. Among them are some species we don't tend to find regularly in such good numbers, including American Avocet, American White Pelican and Tundra Swan. The nearby Donnelly Wildlife Management Area is another must-visit birding location in this rich region. With over 260 species seen, Donnelly also attracts a large diversity of waterfowl, waders and songbirds. It also features a population of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers which were released in an effort to re-establish this endangered species into parts of the ACE Basin. With local birding expert Buddy Campbell leading the way, this promises to be a fun and rewarding birding adventure!

March Birding Field Trip - Birding the Mobley Tract

Where: The Port Royal Sound Foundation Maritime Center

When: Saturday, March 7; 9:00 am - noon

Leader: Juliana Smith, South Coast Project Manager, Coastal Conservation League

Limit: 20 participants

Fees: \$10 for members, \$15 for non-members

As we all know about birding in March in the Lowcountry – anything can happen. Join us for a fun and educational morning bird walk along the 95-acre Mobley Tract at the Maritime Center in Okatie. Preserved in 2016 by the Beaufort County Land Preservation Program, this property sits along the beautiful rural greenway between northern and southern Beaufort County. The trail will lead us through rich maritime forest and salt marsh habitats, where a variety of birds, plants and other organisms can be found. We'll search for warblers

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and other songbirds as well as shorebirds, waders, raptors and more.

We're thrilled to have local naturalist and seasoned leader, Juliana Smith, lead this walk for us. Juliana's bird research has included banding Marsh Sparrows, shorebirds (including Red Knots) and a variety of neotropical migrants to help biologists better understand migratory patterns of these local birds. She's been a naturalist on Kiawah Island, leading hundreds of birding trips, and now brings her many talents to the Coastal Conservation League.

Directions and additional details will be available upon registration.

Preregistration required – to register, [please click here](#).

Tuesday Morning Bird Walks at Audubon Newhall Preserve

Where: Audubon Newhall Preserve, 88 Palmetto Bay Rd, HHI

When: Tuesdays; 8:30 - 10:30 am

Come out and join us for a Tuesday morning walk at the Newhall Preserve. We're there every Tuesday from 8:30 to about 10:30, identifying and discussing the variety of bird species found at this beautiful site. As always, you don't need to sign up, and there's no charge - just show up. New birders are always welcome. Hope to see you there!

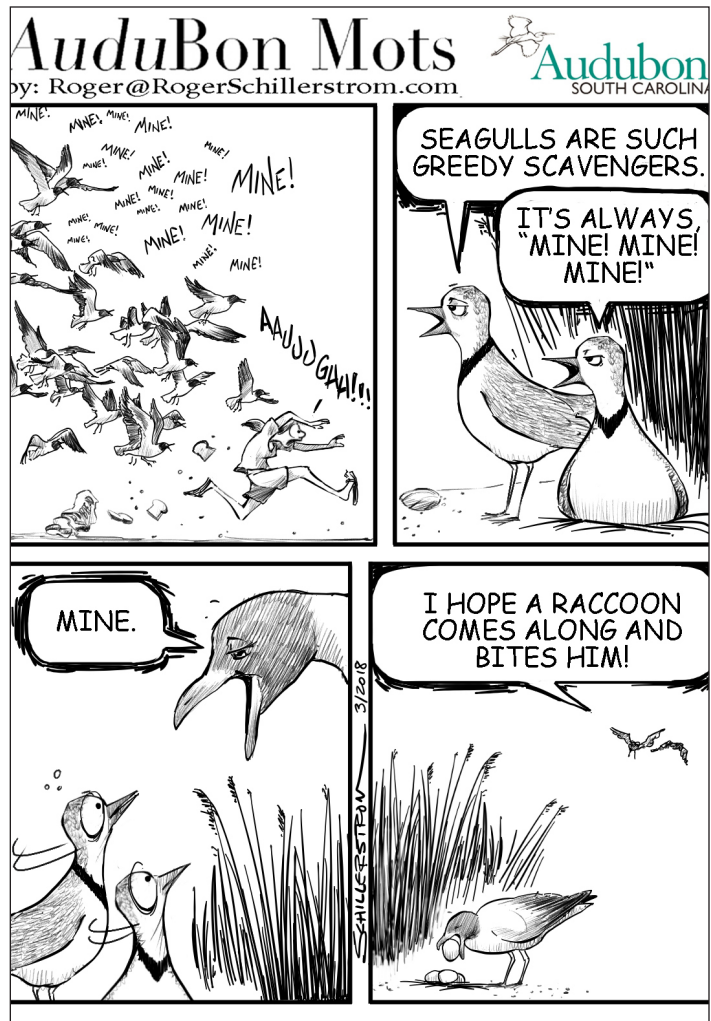
Birding 101 Spring Session


Our spring Birding 101 series is underway, and our population of birders in the area is increasing. If you're interested in getting on board with this series, we'll have another one coming in the fall. It's a great way to learn more about the birds in our area and how to identify them.

The spring series is **SOLD OUT**.

Quick Bird Trips

Because birds don't always wait around for us to publish the next Ecobon, we've created the Hilton Head Audubon Quick Trip List. When we hear about a sudden birding occurrence that we'd like to see in the next day or two, we'll send an email to folks on the list to see who might be able to join us. If you'd like to be added to the list, just send an email to FieldTrips@hiltonheadaudubon.org, and we'll get you signed up.





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Festival Centre at Indigo Park
45 Pembroke Dr., Suite 130
Hilton Head Island, SC 29926
843-802-2010
HiltonHeadWBU@yahoo.com

Have Orioles In Your Yard?



Baltimore Oriole by Mary Alice Tartler

South Carolina's 2020 Baltimore Oriole Winter Survey reported the largest number of orioles wintering in the United States for the fifth year in a row.

"We would like to thank everyone who participated in the survey," said Lex Glover, Wildlife Technician with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) Bird Conservation Program. "Your time and efforts are greatly appreciated."

This year's official count days will be Feb. 14-17, 2020, in conjunction with the Great Backyard Bird Count. However, orioles seen at any time during the winter should be included, not just those spotted on the February dates. If you have orioles frequenting your feeders during the winter months or know someone who does, SCDNR would like for you to participate in the survey. For more information and a link to the online form, contact Lex Glover at gloverl@dnr.sc.gov.



Baltimore Oriole courtesy of David Sibley, National Audubon

Osprey Watch 2020

During the 2019 Osprey season, 42 Hilton Head residents participated as monitors or back-up monitors for 65 osprey nest sites for the international Osprey Watch program through the Center for Conservation Biology. The data compiled is part of the Lowcountry Institute's monitoring program, which collects data to monitor challenges to aquatic ecosystems, climate change, depletion of fish stocks, and contaminants. While not all the 65 sites were active, 37 nests produced 62 successful fledglings, which was a significant increase from the 44 fledglings in 2018.

We will need a few more people to serve as a nest monitor or back up monitor. This is a great activity to do with a friend. For more info, please email Carol Clemens at cclemens318@gmail.com now or call 317-370-2444.



Osprey in flight by John Bloomfield

Submissions to Ecobon

If you have an item you would like to submit for publication in Ecobon, please send an email to HHlaudubon@hiltonheadaudubon.org. Articles must be received by the 15th of each month for the next month's issue. All editorial decisions are final.

Follow us on Social Media. You can find us on Facebook [here](#). Once there, join our member page, where you can share photos and interact with other local birders. You can also share photos with us on Instagram. Tag your photo #**hiltonheadaudubon** for a chance to be featured on one of our social media platforms.

Through Our Binoculars

by Jack Colcolough

Our recent winter bird sightings have been good but a little slower than normal due to our very late warm weather but are improving. Out-of-season sightings have also increased due to the warmer weather. Most of our winter ducks have arrived, but not yet in larger numbers. Many of our winter songbirds have arrived but only a few of our winter finches and none of our irruptive species to date, as was the case last year.

Accidental species reported in the last month

- Limpkin at Sun City (normally a Florida-only bird until recently)

Rare species reported

- Bullock's Oriole at Rose Hill
- Yellow-headed Blackbird on Tybee Island
- Eared Grebe at Savannah Spoils Site
- Virginia and King Rails at Savannah National Wildlife Refuge
- White-winged Dove in Savannah, GA.
- Purple Sandpiper and Ash-throated Flycatcher on HHI
- Lincoln's Sparrow at Fish Haul Creek Park on HHI
- Bachman's Sparrow at Webb Wildlife Center



Yellow-headed Blackbird, by John Bloomfield

Out-Of-Season species

- Yellow and Prairie Warblers
- Northern Waterthrush
- Painted Bunting
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird (many)



Ruby-throated Hummingbird courtesy of David Sibley, National Audubon

Uncommon species

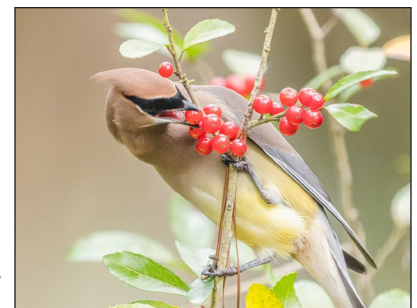
- American White Pelican
- Baltimore Oriole, White-breasted Nuthatch, Orange-crowned Warbler, Blue-headed Vireo, House Wren
- Piping Plover (endangered), Glossy Ibis
- Peregrine Falcon, American Kestrel, Merlin, American Avocet, Sharp-shinned Hawk
- Loggerhead Shrike, Rusty Blackbird
- Northern Pintail, American Wigeon, Ruddy, Mottled and American Black Ducks, Lesser Scaup
- Red-cockaded Woodpecker



Red-cockaded Woodpecker by Mary Alice Tartler

More Common or Good Finds

- American Goldfinch (arriving)
- Cedar Waxwing
- Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (arriving)
- Northern Gannet, Marbled Godwit, Sora
- Bufflehead (duck), Hooded Merganser
- Hermit Thrush
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Black & White Warbler
- Gray Catbird, American Robin
- Bald Eagles (nesting)



Cedar Waxwing by Patty Kappmeyer

continued on next page

Through Our Binoculars continued

Many flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds, Cedar Waxwings, White Ibises, Boat-tailed Grackles and others have also been seen.

Many thanks to all for reporting your bird sightings: Jane/Abe Hester, Bob Speare, Dottie Bass, Mary Alice Tartler, Carol Clemens, Carol Tunnicliffe, Fran/Denny Baer, Shelia/Roger Johnson, Kay Grinnell, Alan Biggs, Dick Phillips, Kathy/Grant Greider, John Bloomfield, Lynn Hodgson, Tom Marko, Aaron Palmieri, Diana Churchill, Steve Calver, Russ Wigh, Buddy Campbell, Chris Marsh and many visitors and others.

To report a bird sighting that is Accidental, Rare, Out-Of-Season, Uncommon, First Of The Year or First Of The Season or a species that you consider to be a Good Find, email: BirdingFriends@yahoo.com or call 843-432-2661. Please state your full name, the bird species sighted, date and location of your sighting and other pertinent information. Please keep up the good work of reporting your bird sightings on Birding Friends.

Now is a great time to wrap up warmly and try to find some of our arriving winter birds, out of season species and hopefully, a few of the irruptive species at your favorite birding spots!



Peregrine Falcon by Ken Groff



Purple Sandpiper by Tom Marko

Did You Miss a Meeting?

Hilton Head Audubon understands that some members can't attend our meetings due to schedule conflicts. We are trying a new concept. As of September 2019, our guest speakers are being videotaped, with their permission, and their talks are available online - [click here](#). Here you can watch our monthly speakers at your leisure. For future meetings, there may be cases where we will not be able to video the meeting, and we will respect the privacy of those speakers.

Each talk can last from 30-45 minutes. Please take a moment to tune in.



February - March 2020 Calendar

Free Bird Walks Every Tuesday Morning at Audubon Newhall Preserve
8:30 - 10:30 am – 88 Palmetto Bay Rd, Hilton Head

February 2020

- Feb. 1, 15, 29** **Birding 101 Winter/Spring Sessions**
Coastal Discovery Museum (**SOLD OUT**)
- Thursday, Feb. 13** **HH Audubon Meeting** 3 pm
Jennifer Tyrrell, President of Charleston Audubon
"The Purple Martin Story"
Palmetto Electric Community Room
111 Mathews Drive, HHI
- February 14-17** **Great Backyard Bird Count**
Contact Lois Lewis at oeblewis@gmail.com for more information
- South Carolina Baltimore Oriole Winter Survey**
contact Lex Glover at gloverl@dnr.sc.gov for more information
- Sunday, Feb 17** **February Field Trip - ACE Basin Birding** 9 am - 2:30 pm
Bear Island and Donnelly WMA (**SOLD OUT**)

March 2020

- Wednesday, March 4** **C-Change Primer** 3 pm
Hear a special presentation that provides a science-based overview of our changing climate and the potential risks ahead.
Hilton Head Library
11 Beach City Road, HHI
- Saturday, March 7** **March Field Trip - Birding the Mobley Tract** 9 am
The Port Royal Sound Foundation Maritime Center
- Saturday, March 7** **Audubon Newhall Work Day w/ the Rotary** 9 am
Everyone is invited. bring shovels, garden rakes, and wheelbarrows or carts. Direct any questions to Rita Kernan at rakhhi@aol.com
- Thursday, March 12** **HH Audubon Meeting - Plants for Birds** 3 pm
Long-time member Jim Cubie reveals how Sun City is creating a more bird-friendly landscape
Palmetto Electric Community Room
111 Mathews Drive, HHI

Monthly meetings of the Hilton Head Island Audubon Society are regularly scheduled at 3:00 pm on the second Thursday of each month, September through May. Members and guests welcome.