

## Hilton Head Christmas Bird Count 2019

Now in its 120th year, the Christmas Bird Count is the longest-running community-based science survey of bird populations across the U.S., Canada and other Western Hemisphere countries. How does this venerable citizen-science survey fit into the matrix of other bird studies used today to help protect birds in a changing world? Bob Speare, our featured speaker, will seek to answer this question and provide bird identification tips to help our count participants.

Bob has more than 25 years of experience as a professional naturalist and enjoys teaching about all aspects of natural history. He has conducted birding tours across the U.S. and internationally. He moved to Hilton Head Island in 2015 after 23 years with the Massachusetts Audubon Society. He is a Lowcountry Master Naturalist and South Carolina Master Gardener. Many of you may know Bob as Field Trip Coordinator for Hilton Head Audubon.



Brown Pelican by  
John Bloomfield

Join us for an enjoyable evening at our special December meeting. Many of our CBC Area Captains will be there, and you will be able to meet some of

### Watch. Revere. Love. Repeat

**An evening with Drew Lanham** *by John Bloomfield*

"I believe the best way to begin reconnecting humanity's heart, mind, and soul to nature is for us to share our individual stories," writes Dr. J. Drew Lanham in his 2016 book, *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature*.

Ornithologist, wildlife ecologist, Clemson Professor and self-described "eco-addict," Drew shared his story with us on November 19 in a program at the Coligny Theater, co-sponsored by Hilton Head Audubon, the Coastal Discovery Museum and Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park.

Born in rural Edgefield, SC, Drew's passion for conservation is deeply rooted in the land, advocating the preservation of "wild places – not strictly as havens for birds and wildlife but for what these places teach

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**When: December 12,  
Social: 7 pm; Program 7:30 pm**

**Where: First Presbyterian Church  
Fellowship Hall, 540 Wm. Hilton Pkwy, HHI**

**Speaker: "CBC—How it Informs Bird Conservation Today" presented by Bob Speare**

your team members and other enthusiastic birders.

Coffee will be provided, and we invite our generous members to bring cookies, cakes and other goodies! We will also be conducting a Silent Auction for some beautiful gifts as well as holding a raffle for your holiday gift giving!

#### A few reminders about the CBC

**Count Day is Monday, December 16.** Our 19 Area Captains are putting their teams together now. Our area is a 15-mile diameter circle covering Hilton Head, Daufuskie and Pinckney Islands, and Bluffton extending out to Palmetto Bluff and Colleton River Plantation and our local waterways.

If you would like to participate in the count as a member of a field team or at home as a feeder watcher, please email me, Susan Murphy at [HHICBC@gmail.com](mailto:HHICBC@gmail.com), and I will have a captain get in touch with you.

### Welcome New Member

A warm welcome to our new member:

Judith Demint

We now have an online membership process where you can join, renew or make donations by using 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*.

Prior membership forms are void after September 1, 2019. If you have any questions about membership, please email Marina Bloomfield at [hiaudubon@hiltonheadaudubon.org](mailto:hiaudubon@hiltonheadaudubon.org).

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The Ecobon is a monthly publication (September through May) of Hilton Head Audubon, a chapter of the National Audubon Society.

Subscription is a benefit of membership.

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## President's Message

Perhaps because they grace our dinner tables as main offerings, birds are often associated with holidays. When not being consumed as Thanksgiving turkeys, the Christmas goose, or the Fourth of July fried chicken, birds are intertwined in our holiday traditions. Who does not know the carol, *The Twelve Days of Christmas*? After some investigation, it turns out that the birds mentioned are not what I always thought. The famous "five golden rings" may be referring to Ring-necked Pheasants, which have a golden neck ring. The "calling birds" it seems are collie birds (or blackbirds) and those "French Hens" are sometimes described as fat ducks. Not counting the golden rings, that still means half of the Christmas gifts were birds.



Not just limited to cuisine, birds also are desirable for decoration at this holiday season. In traditional Lowcountry Christmas décor, feathers of game birds, or even stuffed game birds themselves, were used with local greenery to adorn mantles and tables. Today there seems to be no end to the diversity, but the bright red male Cardinal appears preferred. Chickadees, Blue Jays, hummingbirds and Snowy Owls also hold their own in ornament and greeting card divisions. For the life of me, I cannot figure out how penguins are now also included. I must have missed an animated feature somewhere along the line. All these birds got me thinking about what type of birds might have been seen on the very first Christmas season.

We will soon be making our own Christmas list, in keeping with the first Audubon Christmas Bird Count. From those first 27 birders that Frank Chapman, an ornithologist with the American Museum of Natural History, organized at the end of the 19th century, we have certainly grown. They managed 90 species, across the county and in a part of Canada. The count now includes Latin America and Hilton Head alone logs more than 90 species.

So whether as a main course, a decoration, or their important part in the natural world, let us give thanks this holiday season for our birds and the delight they bring.



# Year-End Appeal

by John Bloomfield

Here in the Lowcountry we are blessed with an abundance of natural beauty, where the birds, beaches, marshes and maritime forests and part of the fabric of our every-day life.

We also know that the birds we love and the places they need are always under threat, both from human activity and the climate-related extremes of recent years.

At Hilton Head Audubon, we are part of the strongest conservation network in America – more than 500 chapters strong, with some dating back more than 100 years! The primary strength of the Audubon network is the local chapter organization – in our case run entirely by volunteers – to assure that the conservation issues you care about are being addressed right here in Beaufort County.

In the past year, our Audubon volunteers delivered more educational programs in schools, expanded our birding programs, and advocated successfully for causes important to you – such as renewal of the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, which has helped fund conservation projects in every South Carolina county, as well as the South Carolina Energy Freedom Act, designed to broaden access to solar energy for South Carolinians.

We have significantly stepped up our monthly program offerings, with events such as the recent Hilton Head Sea Turtle Patrol report with Amber Kuehn and our recent evening with Dr. J. Drew Lanham, which we co-hosted with our partners at the Coastal Discovery Museum and the Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park.

In the New Year, we have plans to join the ever-expanding South Carolina Motus Tower network, which will help us monitor the migration status of the birds that use our beaches as resting spots along their migratory journey.


And we are continuing to offer high-quality monthly field trips with expert naturalists to locations such as the Savannah and Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuges, the Bear Island and Donnelley wildlife Management Area and the Webb Wildlife Center.

We are also continuing to invest in the trails and habitats of our own Audubon Newhall Preserve, our 50-acre oasis off Palmetto Bay Rd. Did you know that free bird walks are now being offered at Newhall every Tuesday morning?

As we look to the end of the year, we are asking for your help. Almost 90 percent of our organiza-

tion's income is raised from contributions made by people like you, and if we are to continue offering the high quality educational programs, birding events and activities you have come to rely on, we need you to act on your love for birds.

Birds bring beauty and enjoyment to our life each day – please consider a year-end gift to protect them and the places they need. [Donate Here](#)



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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

An Evening with Drew Lanhan, continued from page 1



us about our shared experience. While touring Mitchellville earlier in the day, that point was brought home when a Red-shouldered Hawk in brilliant rufous

plumage landed on the ground directly in front of us.

“This is significant, he said. “Looking at this magnificent bird, in this hallowed location – it’s hard to see it in isolation, as a tick [mark] on a bird list. It’s more than that. It’s a direct connection with the people who saw birds just like it when they lived and worked on this site in the 1860s, and the Yemassee and others who marveled at them long before.”

Warm-hearted, challenging and engaging all at once, Drew’s recipe for enjoying birds is simplicity itself: “Watch, Revere, Love, Repeat.” Speaking of the crisis facing birds in North America, he said: “The only way birds can fail me is if they cease to exist.” Then the professor in him prescribed some “homework” to help the audience enrich their experience with birds.

#### Drew’s rules

- Love and appreciate all things with feathers.
- Listen to everyone’s bird story without judgment.
- Appreciate the beauty in common things.
- Slow down.
- Every bird is a life bird – every day.
- Don’t take yourself seriously.
- List with your heart first.
- Keep a life list of people and places.
- Be the bird. See the miracle in every one of them.
- Find a way to share your love of nature with others, including those who are not like you.
- Don’t be afraid to misidentify a bird. The bird doesn’t care what you call it.
- Conserve the thing you love, even if you can’t name it.
- Don’t be that birder. (*You know the one*)
- Respect all people, places and the birds we see.
- Don’t be afraid to fall in love with a bird.

As one of the participants wrote to us after the event: “Hope is still the thing with feathers, and sometimes it’s also a storytelling scientist with binoculars and the vision to see beyond them.”

## A Banner Year for Sea Turtles

From the rare Kemp’s Ridley sea turtle that came ashore on Hilton Head Island in April, to Squirt and Crush, the nationally reported two-headed Loggerhead hatchling found on the island in August, this was a banner year for sea turtles on Hilton Head Island.

Amber Kuehn, marine biologist and leader of the Hilton Head Island Sea Turtle Patrol, reflected on the nesting season to a packed audience at the Hilton Head Library for our November 14 program meeting.

Amber reported that 2019 was the most successful season reported to date on the island, with 463 nests producing 33,690 hatchlings.

During her presentation, Amber recounted the arduous journey sea turtles make, from their tiny beginning as hatchlings on beaches such as ours to their return many years later to mate and give birth. The turtles face countless hazards along the way, from natural predators to plastic pollution to careless beach-going practices (such as digging large holes in the sand and neglecting to fill them in at the end of the day).

Amber advocated for stricter enforcement of current beach laws as well as new legislation mandating amber-colored lighting along beachfront

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homes to further protect the turtles during nesting season.

Since 1985, Sea Turtle Patrol Hilton Head Island has been monitoring Hilton Head's beaches for sea turtle nesting and hatching activity (annually from April through October) to promote the existence of these endangered species and to spread awareness of their struggle through public education and outreach.

Amber's presentation will soon be uploaded to our website. You can click [here](#) to view all presentations.

### DON'T DISTURB THE BIRDS!

North America's shorebird species are in decline. One often overlooked reason is the chronic disturbance of birds on beaches. Birds on a public beach may be disturbed over 50 times a day. These birds need time to rest and feed. Many over disturbed birds leave our shores underfed and exhausted. Some simply disappear over the oceans, never to reach the next stop.



We can stop this trend by changing the small things that we do at the beach. Please, while visiting the South Carolina coast don't disturb the birds! Here's a list of DO's and DO NOT's to help maintain shorebird populations.

#### DISTURBANCE DO NOT'S

- DO NOT let your pet chase shorebirds or disturb nests
- DO NOT run or walk through large flocks of birds
- DO NOT try to get too close to shorebirds
- DO NOT create loud noises near shorebird flocks

#### DISTURBANCE DO'S

- DO leash your pet when birds or nests are near
- DO move around flocks and not through them
- DO observe birds from a distance
- DO contact Audubon to learn more about conserving shorebirds

#### IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

MANOMET CENTER FOR CONSERVATION SCIENCES  
 CHARLESTON NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY  
 HILTON HEAD ISLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY  
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#### SPECIAL THANKS TO:

GRAHAM CHALLENGE FUND  
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FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SHOREBIRD  
 CONSERVATION PLEASE CONTACT  
 THE FOLLOWING:

HILTON HEAD AREA : (843) 842-9447  
 CHARLESTON AREA: (843) 928-3702  
 MYRTLE BEACH AREA: (843) 347-5810

## Audubon Newhall Preserve

by Bob Clemens  
 Audubon Newhall Chairman

The Audubon Newhall Preserve Board met in November, and we added Jack Coleman and Lynn Hodgson as Members-at-Large. We discussed future improvements to the preserve, including adding a sprinkler system to the butterfly garden and widening the access road from the Greenshields Gate to the parking lot.

As of our mid-November tally, the visitor logs for 2019 reflect visits by 634 families from 47 states and 12 foreign countries and Canadian provinces. Our visitors report sightings which range from "big gator," to very specific bird species, or just to the generic "very cool" -- and we heartily agree! Whenever we encounter visitors, they are always complimentary about their experiences at the preserve. Jack Greenshields would be proud.

Vice-Chair Rita Kernan and her crew have installed several new plastic tube sapling protectors to discourage deer from nibbling the leaves and the whitetail bucks from rubbing their antlers on our young trees. Vice-Chair Matt Mattoon has widened the trails from the summer overgrowth and corrected the aeration timers, which had been knocked off-schedule by power outages during Hurricane Dorian. A compressor failed on our pond aeration system, and Matt ordered the parts and repaired it himself -- it pays to have an engineer on the team! Matt also painted the new boardwalk leading to the deck on the pond. He is truly a "Matt of all trades!" Readers who wish to volunteer at Newhall should contact Bob Clemens at [RClemens318@roadrunner.com](mailto:RClemens318@roadrunner.com).

Finally, we note that visitors are taking home both our birding brochures and the Coastal Discovery Museum brochures we stock in the map box. We restock the maps and brochures two or three times a week, just to keep up.



# Notes From The Field

by Bob Speare  
Audubon Field Trip Coordinator

December is a busy month for Hilton Head Island birders and birds, and we hope to see you at one or more of our upcoming birding events.

While our amazing fall songbird migration finally waned in November, shorebird sightings remain strong and waterfowl birding picked up throughout the island – and should get better.

Our fall field trip series continued in fine fashion with Robert Rommel leading his ever-popular shorebird workshop at Fish Haul Creek Park and Mitchelville Beach on November 2. This location along the Port Royal Sound is certainly a top spot for seeing shorebirds on Hilton Head Island, especially during migration. Although the morning was a bit brisk, that didn't keep the birds away as 36 species were seen with especially good views of American Oystercatchers, Marbled Godwits, Piping Plovers and more. Thanks to Robert for once again sharing his knowledge and experience with us.

Our weekly Tuesday morning walks at the Newhall Preserve continue to be a terrific way to watch the seasonal changes in our birds. Our fall Birding 101 series held two more sessions in November as well.

Here's what's on tap for upcoming birding opportunities along with our Christmas Bird Count.

## December Birding Field Trip by Wagon

**Where:** Pinckney Island NWR

**When:** Sunday, December 8; 8:30 - 11:30 am

**Leader:** Bob Speare and Aaron Palmieri

**Limit:** 20 participants

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

Any local birder knows that Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge is a birding hotspot any day of the year. Consisting of more than 4,000 acres, 10 miles of trails to explore, and 243 recorded bird species, it is truly an amazing and important wild space splitting two bustling communities. Join us for an early December exploration by wagon of some of the lesser-traveled areas of Pinckney Island. After stopping to bird around Ibis Pond, we'll continue down the roads and through the woodlands, ponds and marsh edges to explore a variety of areas such as Dick Point, Bull Point, Shell Point and others. Some of the winter specialties we might see are freshwater and saltwater ducks, woodpeckers, sparrows, warblers and some shorebirds, raptors and more. This promises to be a great day and a terrific warmup for Christmas Count birding.

Preregistration is required. To sign up, [click here](#).

## January Birding Field Trip - Winter Songbirds and More

**Where:** Savannah NWR

**When:** Thursday, January 9; 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

**Leader:** Dr. Chris Marsh

**Limit:** 20 participants

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

Join Dr. Chris Marsh, Exec. Dir. of Spring Island Trust, outdoor educator, and birding expert for a morning walk at the Savannah NWR, with a focus on identification of wintering songbirds. After a brief indoor intro, we'll head out onto the Tupelo Trail, which parallels canal and marsh wetlands, and is bordered by trees and shrubs – ideal passerine habitat. Here we'll learn about the field marks, calls and specific behaviors that help us identify wintering sparrows, wrens, warblers, and other thicket dwellers. Along with these, we'll be sure to look for raptors, waterfowl and other bird species that are found on the refuge during these winter months.

This will be a terrific opportunity to learn unique identification techniques by one of our best local birding educators. Expect a leisurely walk of up to 2-3 miles on dirt trails.

Additional details will be available upon registration. Preregistration required – to register, [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

No registration and no fee – just join us for a leisurely 2-hour walk through the native trees and wildflowers to look for migrating and resident bird species that are found on this wonderful 50-acre property. New birders are always welcome!

## 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 anyone 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](mailto:FieldTrips@hiltonheadaudubon.org), and we'll get you signed up.

# Through Our Binoculars

by Jack Colcolough

Our fall migration has been one of our best ever. Thirty warbler species were reported, including ten rare species as well as 19 other transient bird species. Many of our winter ducks, songbirds and other species have arrived just in time for our Christmas Bird Count.

Warbler species that were reported during the past month were:

## Rare

- Blackburnian Warbler
- Black-throated Green Warbler
- Mourning Warbler
- Tennessee Warbler
- Nashville Warbler
- Cape May Warbler
- Blackpoll Warbler
- Bay-breasted Warbler
- Worm-eating Warbler

## Uncommon

- Chestnut-sided Warbler
- Northern Waterthrush
- Magnolia Warbler
- Yellow Warbler
- Orange-crowned Warbler
- Ovenbird
- Prairie Warbler



*Black-throated Green Warbler by Mary Alice Tartler*



*Chestnut-sided Warbler by Carol Tunnicliffe*

## Fairly Common/Common

- American Redstart
- Black-Throated Blue Warbler
- Black-and-white Warbler
- Common Yellowthroat

- Northern Parula
- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Yellow-throated Warbler
- Pine Warbler

## Other recent transient migrants found

- Philadelphia Vireo (rare)

## Uncommon

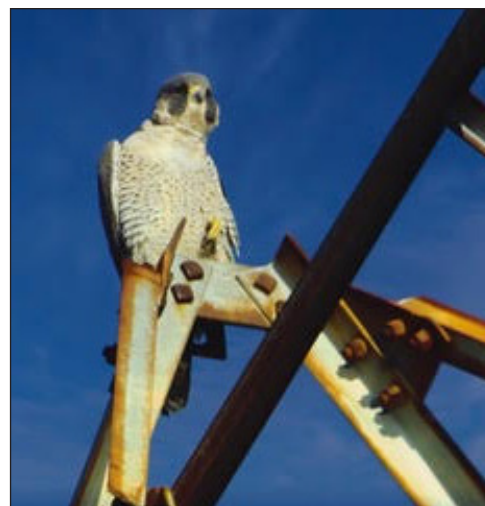
- Bobolink
- Veery
- Swainson's Thrush
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Baltimore Oriole, Scarlet Tanager
- Whimbrel, Least Bittern, Stilt Sandpiper
- Eurasian-collared Dove
- Common Tern

## Other Rare Finds (not migrant)

- Roseate Spoonbill
- Northern Bobwhite
- Least Flycatcher

## Other Uncommon Sightings

- Peregrine Falcon, American Kestrel, Merlin, Sharp-shinned Hawk, American Avocet, Loggerhead Shrike
- Reddish Egret, Piping Plover



*A Peregrine Falcon has been seen multiple times on the utility towers near Windmill Harbor. By John Bloomfield*

- Franklin's Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Caspian Tern
- Purple Gallinule, Black-bellied Whistling Duck
- Rusty Blackbird

continued from previous page

- Saltmarsh Sparrow, Nelson's Sparrow, Seaside Sparrow
- Blue-headed Vireo, Golden Crowned Kinglet, House Wren
- Hairy Woodpecker
- Indigo Bunting, Blue Grosbeak

#### More Common or Good Finds

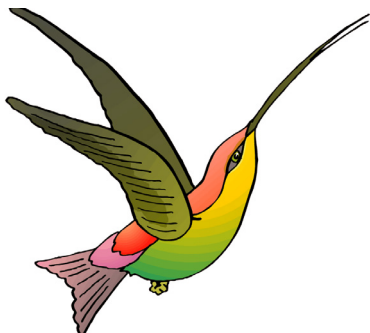
- Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird
- Hooded Merganser, Common Loon
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- Marbled Godwit, Wilson's Snipe, Sora
- Painted Bunting
- Northern Flicker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- Cedar Waxwing
- Bald Eagle
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Many thanks to all reporting your bird sightings: Jane/Abe Hester, Bob Speare, Dottie Bass, Mary Alice Tartler, Carol Clemens, Carol Tunnicliffe, Fran/Denny Baer, Nan Lloyd, Shelia/Roger Johnson, Kay Grinnell, Alan Biggs, Dick Phillips, Kathy/Grant Greider, John Bloomfield, Lynn Hodgson, Tom Marko, Peggy Jaeger, 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@yahoogroups.com](mailto:BirdingFriends@yahoogroups.com) or call 843-432-2661. Please state your full name, the bird species sighted, date and location of your sighting and other information. Please keep up the good work of reporting your bird sightings on Birding Friends.

Now that our wonderful fall songbird migration is over, it's time to turn your attention to our waters for waterfowl and other wintering visitors.

Good birding, everyone!



## Project Feederwatch

### Time to Join or Renew

Attention backyard birders: It's time once again to count your feeder birds for science. Project FeederWatch, the long-running winter bird survey conducted by Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada, kicked off November 9.

Many of our members count themselves among the 20,000 people who participate in Project FeederWatch — one member has been counting for more than 30 years.

FeederWatch is a winter-long (November-April) survey of birds that visit feeders at backyards, schools, nature centers, community areas and other locales in North America. Participants periodically count the birds they see at their feeders and send their counts to the project. Your bird counts help you keep track of what is happening in your own backyard and help scientists track long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance. With FeederWatch, your observations become part of something bigger.

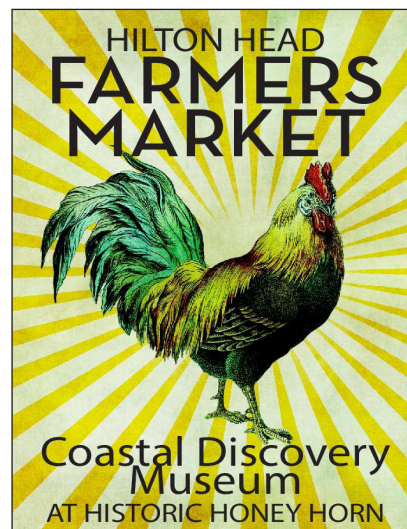
Anyone interested in birds can participate. FeederWatch is conducted by people of all skill levels and backgrounds, including children, families, individuals, classrooms, retired persons, youth groups, nature centers, and bird clubs. You can count birds as often as every week, or infrequently as time permits: the schedule is completely flexible.

Participation is easy: all you need is a bird feeder, bird bath, or plantings that attract birds.

[Click here to join or renew.](#)

### Visit the Hilton Head Farmers

Market at the Coastal Discovery Museum every Tuesday from 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. Free Parking.



Have your knives sharpened while shopping. Shop local, meet new friends, strengthen our community, and rebuild our local food economy! Closed Jan. 1.



## Did You Miss a Member 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 at <https://www.hiltonhead-audubon.org/meetings/hh-audubon-speakers/>. 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.

eBird

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<https://ebird.org>

eBird collaborates with National Audubon  
and is managed by the  
Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

### December 2019 - January 2020 Calendar

#### December 2019

Thursday, Dec. 12	<b>HH Audubon Pre-Christmas Bird Count Program</b> <b>Location:</b> First Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall 540 William Hilton Parkway, HHI	<b>7 pm</b>
Monday, Dec. 16	<b>Christmas Bird Count - Hilton Head Island</b>	
Tuesday, Dec. 17	<b>Christmas Bird Count - Sun City-Okatie</b>	
Saturday, Dec. 21	<b>Birding 101 (last session)</b> Coastal Discovery Museum, Discovery Lab	<b>9 am</b>

#### January 2020

Thursday, Jan. 9	<b>January Birding Field Trip</b> Savannah NWR	<b>9-12</b>
	<b>HH Audubon Meeting</b> "A Bird's Eye View of the Changing North American Landscape" Chris Marsh, Executive Director, Lowcountry institute Palmetto Electric Community Room 111 Mathews Drive, HHI	<b>3 pm</b>

*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.*