

A Bird's Eye View



Birds are always on the move in more ways than one. In addition to migration, the distributions of birds change as people have altered the landscape. Dr. Marsh will share the stories of 12 charismatic bird species whose changes in range distribution help tell the history of our country.

Originally from Raleigh, North Carolina,

Dr. Marsh received his B.S. in Zoology in 1977 from N.C. State University and completed a Ph.D. in Zoology from Oregon State in 1984. Prior to moving to the Lowcountry, he was a biology professor at Coastal Carolina University where he taught ornithology, ecology, and animal behavior. While at Coastal Carolina he also served as a regional director of a statewide program to improve math and science education in South Carolina. Dr. Marsh became the executive director of the Spring Island Trust and Lowcountry Institute in 1998. He is a co-founder of the SC Master Naturalist Program and the Port Royal Sound Foundation. He works with local government to help improve water quality, land conservation practices, and management of lands.



Black Skimmer by Patty Kappmeyer

When: January 9

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

Speaker: Dr. Chris Marsh, – Executive Director, Spring Island Trust and Lowcountry Institute, "A Bird's Eye View of the Changing North American Landscape"

A Holiday Tradition

Blue skies and mild temperatures greeted hundreds of Hilton Head birders on December 16 as the 120th annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC), sponsored by the National Audubon Society, got underway. The CBC has become an island-wide tradition over the years: The Hilton Head count circle had the highest number of participants among all South Carolina counts last year and was third highest out of all 2,615 count circles in the Western Hemisphere. A total of 320 people participated in 2018 (232 field observers and 88 feeder watchers) and all signs point to another large turnout for 2019.

Our count circle covers all of Hilton Head Island, Daufuskie and Pinckney Islands, and parts of Bluffton.

Our CBC festivities got underway December 12 at the First Presbyterian Church with a



Fish Haul CBC captain Alan Biggs gets ready to count thousands of shorebirds along the beach. Photo: Blake Robinson

Continued on page 3

Welcome New Members

A warm welcome to our new members:

William Harvie
Annie Kosh
Diane Williams

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](mailto:Marina.Bloomfield).

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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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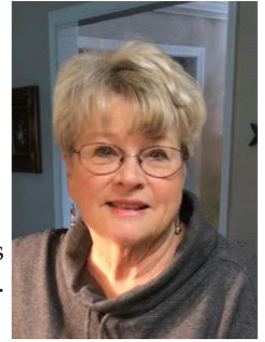
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President's Message

Winter has arrived, and that breeze that was so welcome in July and August is now met with a less appreciative eye. While some parts of the country may see a decrease in birds during the winter months, the Deep South welcomes many winter residents who come to enjoy the warmer climate.



For us in the Lowcountry, the stars of this newfound winter population are the waterfowl. South Carolina is especially attractive to waterfowl: the former rice fields and hunting grounds represented by areas like the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge and the Bear Island Wildlife Management Areas can be teeming with ducks on a good winter's day.

Then there are the three coastal rivers that comprise the ACE Basin: the Ashepoo, Combahee, and Edisto, sometimes called one of the last great places on Earth. The plantations that once relied on the water from these rivers no longer cultivate rice. But they once made South Carolina a rich colony and also greatly altered the landscape. African slaves and their descendants hand-dug almost 800 miles of canals and built 160,000 acres of impoundments and rice trunks in order to control water levels as required for rice cultivation.

After emancipation and the end of the Civil War, many rice fields went fallow and most plantation properties were bought by wealthy industrialists for use as winter hunting grounds. The old rice fields provided great habitat for ducks and geese, while the upland supplied deer, small game, quail and doves. For many years things changed little. But in the 1970s and 1980s, more and more people were seeking to retire to a less harsh climate, and developers began casting eyes on the vast tracts of land available on the South Carolina coast.

In 1988, the ACE Basin task force set out to protect waterfowl habitat. Today, over 250,000 acres are under protection. Consortiums of interests own these lands. Many are privately held, while others are the property of conservation groups, the State of South Carolina or federal entities. Some 77,000 acres are open to the public. All of it is within a two-hour drive. Delights of waterfowl, shorebirds and other are there for the birding enthusiast. Nature lovers can walk trails or just enjoy a slow ride. Most of it is just a short ride from U.S. 17.

The ACE Basin, a testament to the power of conservation, just turned 30 years old. You can read more about why it is special [here](#). I urge you to visit this national treasure.

Jane Hester

presentation by HH Audubon Field Trip Coordinator, Bob Speare, that was attended by approximately 100 people. A silent auction and raffle complemented Bob's presentation, the proceeds of which will be used toward 2020 conservation projects. More than \$2,000 has been pledged to the Motus project to date. More details will follow as our plans are finalized in the New Year.

We'll have more results from the CBC to share with you next month, but in the meantime, enjoy these photos from the count meeting and count day on the island, as well as Dennis Forsythe's summary of the 2018 counts in [South Carolina: South Carolina CBC 2018 Results](#)



Palmetto Hall's CBC team: Top row: Jerry Griffin, Kathy Greider, Steve Laxdal, Joe Cochran, Linda O'Rourke, Carl Samberg and Bob Moore; Front row: Grant Greider, Susan Moore and George Banino.

Silent Auction Winners



Karen Seminary with the Wild Birds Unlimited gift basket.



Annie Kosh with one of two handmade bird feeders



Stephen Dickson won 2 baskets! The Kids Backpack and the other handmade bird feeder.



Patty Kappmeyer with HH Audubon VP John Bloomfield. Patty won the signed David Sibley book.

Notes From The Field

by Bob Speare
Audubon Field Trip Coordinator

Goodbye 2019 and Hello 2020 - An exciting New Year of bird walks, field trips and birding workshops!

We had a lot of fun and saw some terrific birds in December. On December 8, we closed out our 2019 Field Trip series with a unique wagon ride through Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge. Although it started out a bit brisk, the bright sun kept us warm and the birds were out in good numbers. In just about three hours, visiting a variety of locations on the refuge, we spotted 49 species of birds, including Horned Grebe, American Oystercatcher, Spotted Sandpiper, Orange-crowned Warbler and a singing Hermit Thrush!

Our Tuesday Morning Walks at the Newhall Preserve continued to welcome both local and visiting birders throughout December and showed how important this property is to our wintering populations of birds. In addition, our fall Birding 101 series graduated another class in December.

Here's what we have planned for January:

January Birding Field Trip - Winter Songbirds and More

Where: Savannah National Wildlife Refuge (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, Executive Director of Spring Island Trust, outdoor educator and birding expert for a morning walk with a focus on identification of wintering songbirds at the Savannah NWR. After a brief indoor introduction, we'll head out onto the Tupelo Trail, which parallels canal and marsh wetlands, and is bordered by a variety of trees and shrubs — ideal passerine habitat. Here, we'll learn about the field marks, calls and specific behaviors that help us identify these wintering kinglets, warblers, sparrows, flycatchers and more. Along with these, we'll be sure to point out and discuss the raptors, waterfowl and other bird species that are found on the refuge during these winter months.

This will be a wonderful opportunity to learn some unique identification techniques from one of our best local birding educators. Expect a 2-3 mile leisurely walk on dirt trails.

Directions and additional details will be available upon registration.

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

February Birding Field Trip - ACE Basin Birding

Where: Bear Island and Donnelly WMA

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

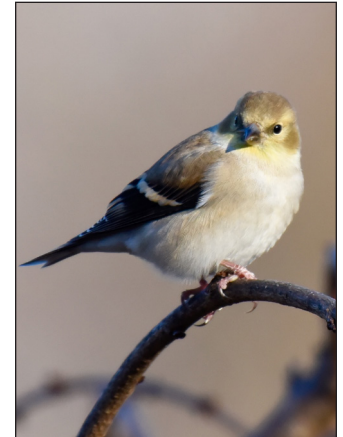
Leader: Buddy Campbell

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 WMA is another must-visit birding location in this rich region. With more than 260 species seen, Donnelly also attracts a large diversity of waterfowl, waders and songbirds. It also features a population of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers that 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!

Carpooling will be strongly encouraged to reduce the number of cars traveling through these WMAs.

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

Start out your New Year and your 2020 bird list with us on these easy weekly bird walks! No registration and no fee — just join us for a leisurely two-hour walk through the native trees and wildflowers to look for migrating and resident bird species found on this wonderful 50-acre property. New birders are always welcome!

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Audubon Newhall Preserve

by Bob Clemens
Audubon Newhall Chairman

Happy New Year from the Audubon Newhall Preserve

The Audubon Newhall Preserve Board met in November and 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. By mid-December, the Sea Pines CSA had dropped and spread two loads of asphalt millings to widen the roadway from the gate to the parking lot. We still have some "touch-up" work to do, but two vehicles now ought to be able to safely pass one another on the roadway.

By the time you read this, we will have installed 10 new bluebird houses in the Preserve, all built by Mike Kizis. Mike has coordinated with Alan Biggs ("Bluebird Czar") regarding placement of the bird houses, and Mike and his two grandsons will install them over the holiday break as part of their Boy Scout project.

Rita and Joe Kernan created two large magnolia leaf Christmas wreaths that we installed on the entry gate posts. They are very beautiful and almost entirely natural.



Bob Clemens and Rita Kernan

As of our November tally, our 2019 visitor logs reflect visits by 680 families from 47 states and 12 foreign countries and Canadian provinces. 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 the whitetail bucks from rubbing their antlers on our young trees and other deer from nibbling the leaves. Vice-Chair Matt Matoon 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".

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.

40 Young Birders Involved in CBC

Thanks to the efforts of two Hilton Head Island Elementary teachers, our 2019 Christmas Bird Count (CBC) now has a youth birding component. Karen Penale and Colleen Wynn involved 40 students in this year's count.

Karen's students are in her dual-language classes and spent 30 minutes birding the campus. Colleen's students are from her weekly Birding Lunch Group students who spend part of their lunchtime birding on the school grounds.

The teachers used the CBC to inspire a love of nature in their students and an appreciation of birds. The teachers taught their students the basics of using binoculars and had them journal about the birds they saw.

by Carol Clemens

We are grateful to the students who participated and to the leadership of Karen and Colleen for helping create the next generation of Hilton Head birders.

To see the students in action, here is a link to the [YouTube Christmas Bird Count Video posted by Beaufort County Schools](#).



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Birding 101 Winter/Spring Session

Where: Coastal Discovery Museum

When: Saturdays; Jan. 25, Feb. 1, 15, 29, and April 11, 2020; all sessions are 9 am - 12 pm.

Limit: 20 participants

Fees: \$40 for members, \$50 for non-members

Designed for beginning birders, Birding 101 introduces participants to a number of topics that will increase their general knowledge of local birds and bird identification. A series of classroom sessions will feature interactive lectures and hands-on exercises to describe bird anatomy, bird taxonomy, feathers, vocalizations, migration, field guides, binoculars and more.

Field trips to various habitats on the Island will reinforce classroom materials and put into practice the bird identification techniques we'll learn. Each participant will receive a copy of *Sibley's Birding Basics* book, which we will use throughout the course. Sign up early for this popular birding course!

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

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, send an email to FieldTrips@hiltonheadaudubon.org, and we'll get you signed up.



American Oystercatcher by Patty Kappmeyer

All About Owls Docent Training



Photo courtesy of National Audubon

Where: Coastal Discovery Museum:

When: January 27, 2020 at 2:00 pm

Our partners at the Coastal Discovery Museum are looking for some enthusiastic volunteers who are interested in teaching elementary school students, second grade and up, about the special adaptations that make owls the ultimate nocturnal predator. To be one of the Museum's All About Owls education docents, you should have good public speaking and people skills, an interest in teaching students about local species of owls, and the ability to guide students through a unique owl-pellet dissection activity. The Museum is conducting a training/information session on Monday, January 27, at 2 pm in the Discovery Lab.

Please contact Dawn Brut at 843-689-6767 x228 or email dbrut@coastaldiscovery.org to reserve a seat at this CDM docent training session.



Barred Owl by John Bloomfield

Through Our Binoculars

by Jack Colcolough

Our winter bird sightings have been good; however, things seem a little slower after our spectacular fall migration. Our winter ducks have arrived, including a few Canvasbacks and Red-heads, but we are not seeing our common wintering waterfowl in large numbers yet. Most of our winter songbirds have arrived, including a few early American Goldfinches and Dark-eyed Juncos. We are hoping that a few of our out-of-season species will overwinter in our area.

Rare species reported in the last month:

- Eared Grebe
- White-winged Dove
- Virginia Rail
- Willow Flycatcher
- Roseate Spoonbill
- Purple Sandpiper
- Common Tern



Breeding Eared Grebe by John Bloomfield

Out-of-Season species:

- Black-throated Blue Warbler
- Prairie Warbler
- American Redstart
- Northern Waterthrush
- Painted Bunting
- Orchard Oriole
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird (many)

Uncommon Species:



Orange-crowned warbler (bottom) and Pine Warbler (top) by Fran Baer

- Peregrine Falcon, American Avocet, American Kestrel, Sharp-shinned Hawk
- Piping Plover, Long-billed Dowitcher, Glossy Ibis, Stilt Sandpiper
- Canvasback, Red-head, Common Goldeneye, Ruddy Duck, Mottled and American Black Ducks, Black-bellied

Whistling Duck, Lesser Scaup

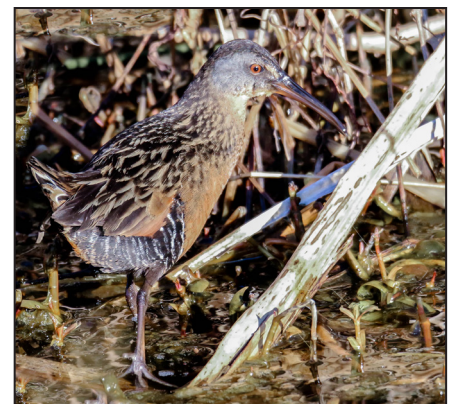
- American White Pelican, Caspian Tern
- Orange-crowned Warbler, Blue-headed Vireo, Golden Crowned Kinglet, Loggerhead Shrike
- Winter, Sedge and House Wrens
- Baltimore Oriole
- Rusty Blackbird
- Saltmarsh, Nelson's, Vesper and Seaside Sparrows, Dark-eyed Junco
- Hairy Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch and others.

More Common or Good Finds:

- Hermit Thrush, American Robin
- Hooded Merganser, Common Loon
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- Marbled Godwit, Sora, Wilson's Snipe
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Northern Flicker
- Cedar Waxwing, Gray Catbird, Bald Eagle and others.

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, Shelia / Roger Johnson, Kay Grinnell, Alan Biggs, Dick Phillips, Kathy / Grant Greiger, John Bloomfield, Lynn Hodgson, Tom Marko, 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.



Virginia Rail by Mary Alice Tartler

New Year's Resolutions

New Years are so exciting because they are so full of promise. Dieting, self help, exercise — we're all making resolutions to do something different or better. Birders make New Year's resolutions too - starting off on a Big Year, getting better at song ID (or any ID), a nice trip or maybe a few new birds for the life list.

We asked our members for their birding New Year's resolutions. Here is what they told us:

Patricia Kappmeyer

My passion is conservation photography. My resolution is to be more active in sharing and raising awareness of the delicate balance between birds and the Lowcountry coastal environment.

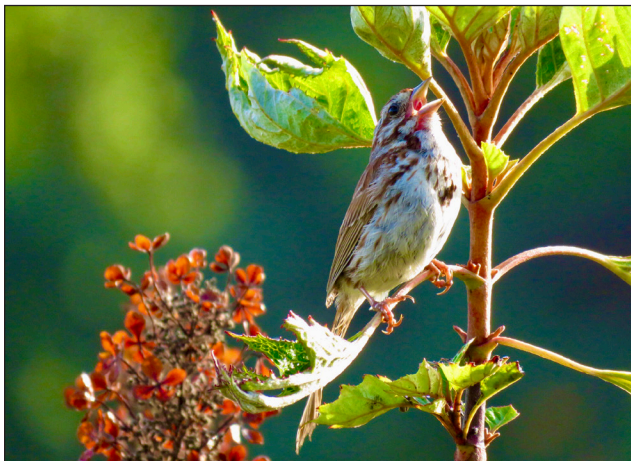


Shore birds by Patty Kappmeyer

Carol Tunnicliffe

I vow to expand my birding horizons by visiting some of the birding "hotspots" on my bucket list. And to start the year off right I signed up for a January tour of southeast Arizona with nine other birders from five different states.

I would also love to end the year with the capability to ID more birds in flight and by their songs and calls. Fun goals to have!



Song Sparrow by Carol Tunnicliffe

John Bloomfield

In this time of crisis for birds, my resolution is to enjoy every bird as if it were a life bird. May the words "it's just a mockingbird" never escape my mouth!



Northern Mockingbird by John Bloomfield

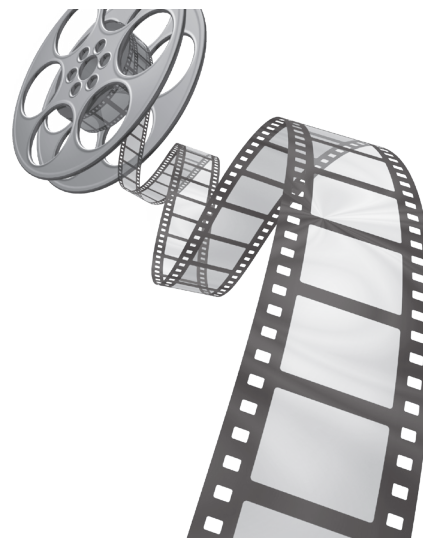
Kay Hodnett

I resolve to do a better job of preventing birds from crashing into my windows — perhaps by hanging parachute cords vertically on the outside of windows spaced 4" apart (not beautiful but said to be effective).

Whatever your New Year's resolution, all the best to you in 2020!

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.


Hilton Head Audubon wishes to thank Virginia Heinsch of Traditions of Hilton Head and Julia and Sean Dennis of Wild Birds Unlimited for their generous donations to our Silent Auction.



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HiltonHeadWBU@yahoo.com

January - February 2020 Calendar

January 2020

Thursday, Jan. 9

January Birding Field Trip 9-12
Savannah NWR

HH Audubon Meeting 3 pm
"A Bird's Eye View of the Changing North American Landscape"
Dr. Chris Marsh, Executive Director, Lowcountry Institute
Palmetto Electric Community Room
111 Mathews Drive, HHI

Saturday, Jan. 25

Birding 101 (1st Session)
Coastal Discovery Museum

February 2020

Feb. 1, 15, 29

Birding 101 Sessions
Coastal Discovery Museum

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

Sunday, Feb 17

February Birding Field Trip - ACE Basin Birding 9 am - 2:30 pm
Bear Island and Donnelly WMA

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.