

A Message from Our President

Now that May is upon us, migrating birds are making their way across North America in order to reach their prime breeding grounds. In the grips of a relentless urge to stake out a territory and begin a family, many birds have traveled thousands of miles. Tuned to the increase in daylight, birds move when instinct tells them chances are highest for nesting success.

For us in the Lowcountry, this means the loss of our wintering birds as most waterfowl, shorebirds, sparrows and others leave us for their summer residences. Now we begin to hear the Chuck-will's-widow and see the much sought after Painted Bunting and all the others that summer with us.



Chuck-will's-widow. Photo: Rob & Ann Simpson/VIREO for National Audubon

More fleeting are the birds just passing through; these visitors give us a twice-a-year window of viewing opportunities. They are the stars of the spring and fall shows.

While we are not as blessed as some other areas of the country, catching sight of migrants is still possible, if one takes the time to look. Finding the right habitats greatly increases the odds for good sightings. The confusing warblers are often atop any list of desired spring migrants. Small, often brightly colored birds, which seem to move to a different branch just as soon as the binoculars are raised, they can be frustrating. I always prefer those that feed in low branches, instead of those high atop the tree where only butts and bellies are seen.

My best warbler day in the Lowcountry had a count of 13 species, and that was led by Dr. Chris Marsh who first sighted and identified most of those. My best days by count numbers, had only around 100 birds, and that was in the North Carolina mountains. This is nothing compared to the

more than 700,000 warblers seen by Ian Davies and his five member expert team in just nine hours. At the end of May last year, they were staked out in the dunes at Tadoussac Bird Observatory in Quebec, Canada. Conditions were just right as the birds flew low off the St. Lawrence. You can read about this event at <https://www.audubon.org/news/eBird-report-record-warbler-flight-Tadoussac-Canada>

If it is warblers you want, you must be ready to do a little traveling or at least visit a local hot spot. Sea Pines Forest Preserve has produced good numbers in the past and it is relatively easy access. A car trip westward up the Savannah River also offers fine opportunities. Take the even less traveled roads and visit the boat landings that are right on the Savannah River. Fine woods and flood plains border these. A chance for a Prothonotary Warbler, Ovenbird and Water Thrushes as well as others await you. As you make your way farther west to Webb, there is also the lesser explored Palachuola and Tillman Sand Ridge WMAs. May at Webb Wildlife Management Area can be a treat. Almost sure to hear, if not see, on the oak drive as you enter are Bachman's Sparrows. That drive usually produces warblers and Red Cockaded Woodpeckers. A sure bet on the path past the Ox-bow Lake are Prothonotary Warblers and other flood plain species. Areas that are planted for game birds also attract gGrosbeaks, and Indigo Buntings. In the past we have seen Scarlet Tanagers, Yellow Breasted Chats, and Summer Tanagers.

This year I am trying to up my game by learning a few more bird songs. This, for me with the tin ear, is not an easy task. Much easier if you can make their calls a mnemonic, like the old, "Who cooks for you?" or "Hear, me? Can't see me?" Bird apps are a big help as I like to play the songs just before arrival so they can be fresh in my mind. So this year like all others, I'm



Bachman's Sparrow. Photo: Alan Schmierer/Flickr for National

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President's Message (con't)

crossing my fingers and hoping to add to my life list, but even if I don't, I will have had fun trying. Good sightings to all.

One final word, a big thank you to all of our Board members and our many volunteers who have helped make this year a tremendous success here at Hilton Head Audubon. Our special thanks to Carol Clemens and Fran Baer for their tireless support as leaders of our Membership Committee.



Welcome New Members

Hi fellow birders!

Welcome to the following new members who joined since the last Ecobon was published.

Deonne Parker

Claudette Schaus

After seven years of handling memberships, Fran and I are retiring from our positions. **We thank all of you for your support!** As of May 9, all questions about membership should be directed to our new membership co-chairs, Marina Bloomfield at marina.bloomfield8@gmail.com or Lynn Hodgson at hodgson.lynn@aol.com.

Carol Clemens and Fran Baer



Community Event

Purchase your tickets now for the 32nd All Saints Garden Tour to be held on Saturday, May 18 from 10am-4pm. The 2019 self-guided tour features seven private gardens: four on Hilton Head Island and three in Bluffton, SC and will provide inspiration for gardeners at all levels.

There are unique features in some of the gardens, for example one features native plants.

Tickets are \$35 and include lunch which is served in the All Saints Episcopal Church social hall from 11am-2pm. Also at the church you will find items made by local artisans as well as master gardeners who will answer questions. All net proceeds from the Tour are donated to local charities.

Tickets will be available at local nurseries and merchants or online at www.allsaintsgardentour.com. For more information, visit the website above or call (843) 681-8333.

Audubon Newhall Preserve

by Bob Clemens
Audubon Newhall Chairman

The highlight of last month at the Audubon Newhall Preserve was a Gate Dedication Ceremony honoring former Preserve Chair, Jack Greenshields. Jack labored tirelessly to maintain and improve the Preserve, and one of his dreams was to build a new, more attractive gate for the Preserve. Jack passed before his plan could come to fruition, but the new gate is now in place, and we held a small Dedication Ceremony on Saturday April 6 to unveil a sign honoring Jack's legacy. Several Audubon Members shared memories of Jack's service to Audubon generally, and the Preserve in particular.

March was a busy month at the Preserve, as the visitors log reflected 137 entries from 37 states and 4 foreign countries. Perhaps the most interesting recorded sighting was that we are hosting Wood Ducks in the nest box at the pond, and we believe we have a mother duck on the nest! Please spread the word about this Hidden Gem, and bring your friends to visit!

Rita Kernan will continue to lead nature walks in the Preserve on Thursdays from 10-11:30 am through the month of May.



Attendee Barry Lowes, Board Member Emeritus and past long-time Christmas Bird Count Chairman, at the Gate Dedication



L to R: Matt Matoon, Tom Hennessey, Rita Kiernan, Bob Clemens

Notes From The Field

*by Bob Speare
Audubon Field Trip Coordinator*

Our April field trip featured a visit to Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge where we tallied 36 bird species, including a couple new arrivals; Northern Parula, and Great Crested Flycatcher. Of course, one of the highlights of Pinckney at this time of the year is the rookery at Ibis Pond, featuring nesting colonies of a variety of herons and egrets, and this year is no exception. There were even a couple alligators bellowing that morning to add to the ambiance! We were also pleased to see that there's a lot of action at the rookery at Starr Pond this year as well! The amazing activity at these places will continue on for the next couple of months, and with all the other flycatchers, warblers, birds of prey, shorebirds and more visiting Pinckney throughout the summer months, make a point to get out there!

Our Beginner Birders Walk was held at Fish Haul Beach Park, and although we decided to hit the board walk and surrounding forest edges instead of the beach, we saw or heard 21 different species including Eastern Kingbird, Clapper Rail and Sedge Wren among the many Northern Cardinals and Carolina Wrens!

Last, but certainly not least, we've had a lot of fun on our Tuesday walks at Audubon Newhall Preserve throughout April, seeing migration happening on a weekly basis. One of the many highlights there included watching a pair of Wood Ducks visiting the pond, and hopefully nesting in the box there! Note that we'll have three walks in May, so join us if you can!

May Field Trip

When: Tuesday, May 14, 2019

Where: Webb Wildlife Management Area, Garnett, SC

Time: 8:30 am - Meet at Webb WMA Visitor Center

Leader: Bob Speare and Webb WMA Staff

Limit: 20

For our grand finale of field trips for the spring season, we will return to Webb Wildlife Management Area in Garnett! With over 12,000 acres of varied habitats including longleaf and loblolly pine forests, mixed hardwood forests, old growth cypress stands, freshwater ponds, and cultivated open fields, Webb WMA is a fantastic birding location to seek both migrating and resident bird species. After checking in at

the Visitor's Center, we'll load into their pick-ups, and their field staff will transport us to some of the best birding areas on the property. Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Bachman's Sparrow—both endangered species—will be among the number of specialties we'll be on the lookout for on this outing.

Carpooling is encouraged (please indicate when you register), and carpoolers should meet at Moss Creek Village and ready to depart by 7:15 am. The travel time to Webb from there is just over an hour. Directions and more information on Webb WMA is available at www.dnr.sc.gov.

This field trip is free to Hilton Head Audubon members, \$5 for non-members.

To sign up for this field trip, please contact Bob Speare at FieldTrips@hiltonheadaudubon.org, or 843-715-9772.

Beginner Bird Walk at Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge

When: Saturday, May 11; 2:00-4:00 pm.

Leader: Bob Speare

Limit: 20

Designed for new members, non-members, and folks new to birding, this walk will introduce participants to some of our local birds and ways to identify them in the field.

This walk is free to HHI Audubon members; \$5 for non-members.

To register, contact Bob Speare at FieldTrips@hiltonheadaudubon.org, or (843) -715-9772.

Tuesday Bird Walks at Audubon Newhall Preserve: May 7, 21, & 28 from 8:30-10 am

Join us at this terrific birding location on Hilton Head Island. Lynn Hodgson and others will lead the group on a leisurely walk through this wonderful property where you can learn more about songbirds, woodpeckers, and more that call Newhall their home!

These walks are free of charge and do not require registration - just show up! The Newhall Preserve is located on Palmetto Bay Road, HHI.

Through Our Binoculars

Bird sightings reported in our area in the last month have been very good as we entered our exciting 2019 Spring migration following our best ever winter birding season. Many of our summer species have arrived as well as some of our transient migrants and some of our winter birds are still here including the irruptive and overwintering species. Sixteen warbler species have been reported to date this spring as well as 15 other migrant species. Our spring migration appears to be a little late this year.



Prothonotary Warbler by Mary Alice Tartler

Rare species reported were: Nashville Warbler and King Rail at Savannah NWR; Barn Owl, Hooded Warbler, Henslow and Bachman's Sparrows and Red-breasted Nuthatch all at Webb



Dark-eyed Junco by John Bloomfield

WMA; Snowy Plover at Fripp Island; Scarlet Tanager at Skid-away Island; and White-winged Dove on HHI.

Irruptive species: Red-breasted Nuthatch, Purple Finch and Pine Siskin continue to be found

Spring migrant warblers arriving: Nashville, Hooded,



White-winged Dove, Mary Alice Tartler

by Jack Colcolough

Prothonotary, Yellow and Prairie Warblers, Ovenbird and Northern Parula.

Others arriving migrant species: Yellow-throated Vireo, Scarlet Tanager, Chuck-will's-widow, Swallow-tailed and Mississippi Kites, Black-necked Stilt,

Barn and Rough-winged Swallows, Stilt Sandpiper, Eastern Kingbird, Least Bittern and Chimney Swift.

Uncommon species: endangered Piping Plover, Red-cockaded and Hairy Woodpeckers, Blue-headed Vireo, Wild Turkey, American Kestrel, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Orange-crowned Warbler, Sedge and House Wrens, American Black and Mottled Ducks, Golden-crowned Kinglet, American Bittern and Rusty Blackbird.

Good find or common species: Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Common Yellowthroat, Black & White Warbler, Red-headed Woodpecker, late Black Scoter and many Bald Eagles and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds.

Many thanks to all reporting your bird sightings: Jane / Abe Hester, Bob Speare, Cindy / Ken Groff, Dottie Bass, Mary Alice Tartler, Carol Clemens, Carol Tunnicliffe, Fran / Denny Baer, Shelia / Roger Johnson, Kay Grinnell, Alan Biggs, Dick Phillips, Kathy / Grant Greiger, Kay Hodnett, Lynn Hodgson, John Bloomfield, Anne Brown, Diana Churchill, Steve Calver, Russ Wigh, Buddy Campbell and many visitors and others.

To report a bird sighting or a species that you consider to be a good find, e-mail Birding-Friends@yahoogroups.com or call 843-432-2661. Leave your full name, the bird sighted, date / location and other pertinent information. Our spring migration is in full swing; now is a great time to go birding and try to find some of our arriving spring migrants!

Conservation Corner – The US Forest Service

by John J. Coleman III, MD
HHI Audubon Conservation Chairman

As we examine our bird range maps we are reminded that many of the songbirds and other birds that are passing through Hilton Head now are bound for the boreal forests where they breed and fledge their offspring. Much of this woodland is owned by the Federal Governments of the United States and Canada and is managed by their respective Forest Services. The interesting history of the USFS is nicely told in **The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire that Saved America**, by Timothy Egan, Mariner Books, 2009.

After The Civil War, and with the Industrial Revolution and the move westward in full force, Congress formed the Office of Special Agent in the Department of Agriculture, to assess the condition of the Federal Forests. As the nation entered the Gilded Age, the demand for wood was insatiable. There were multiple new railways, transcontinental and otherwise, that used up millions of trees to provide ties for their tracks. The government gave gratis to the railroads 100 million acres of land for right of way and timber harvest. The reclamation of Boston's Charles River Basin into the fashionable residential area of 18 blocks, known as the Back Bay, required 200,000 60' tree trunks to serve as piles to support the land fill. Such real estate ventures were occurring in many cities. Many of the eastern forests had been decimated and the western migration, stimulated by the Homestead Act and several gold and silver strikes, was beginning to threaten the vast western forests. In 1891, the General Revision Act and The Forest Reserve Act passed under Benjamin Harrison reversed some of the dubious regulations that allowed industry to pillage the national lands and permitted the President to place specific land areas into National Reserves. Harrison added 13 million acres, Grover Cleveland 21 million and William McKinley 7 million in what is now Idaho, Montana and Washington.

The USFS was the offspring of the friendship of Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot. Gifford Pinchot was from a prominent Pennsylvania family whose fortune was acquired by his grandfather, Cyrille, a French immigrant whose commercial firm specialized in clear cutting forests for lumber. Pinchot studied Forestry in France. He graduated from the Yale School of Forestry and was appointed by Warren Harding as confidential forest agent. His

job entailed inspection of the Western forests and reporting on the practices of timber harvest and mining. He camped throughout Idaho, Montana, Washington and California and saw the forests as a national treasure that should be preserved for eternity for the benefit of the citizens of the US.

Roosevelt, a Harvard graduate, also loved the outdoors. In 1884, after the death of his first wife, Teddy moved to the Badlands of the Dakotas and spent two years as a cattle rancher. He, too, saw the natural world as a means to creating a healthier and stronger citizenry. Pinchot approached Roosevelt, then Governor of New York, on the pretense of planning a wintertime mountain climbing expedition on Mt. Marcy, New York's highest peak. After Roosevelt's usual entertainment of guests – a wrestling match which the Governor won and a boxing match in which Pinchot prevailed – they became close friends and quickly turned their love of the outdoors into the philosophical and practical concept of conservation. Both men were heavily influenced by the visionary naturalist and pied piper John Muir and the three spent much time together camping and exploring.

In 1901, Roosevelt was called back from a hike in the Adirondacks to find out that, with William McKinley's assassination, he was now president. He and Pinchot went on an extended tour of the West and saw the harmful effects that the unchecked actions of timber syndicates, mining concerns and the railroads wrought upon the forests. Their plans were severely contested in Congress. In 1904, Roosevelt was elected by the largest popular vote and Electoral vote margin ever. He used his immense popularity to push through the Transfer Act of 1905 which moved the Forest Reserves into the newly created division of the Department of Agriculture, the United States Forest Service. Gifford Pinchot was appointed the first Head Forester and was tasked to recruit suitably trained men to maintain healthy forests. Harvesting of timber in these Federal lands would be limited to Homesteaders of 160 acres who could clear the land for agriculture. Roosevelt also instructed Pinchot to survey as much adjacent or other suitable land for addition to these National Forests.

Roosevelt's and Pinchot's vision for the USFS persists to the present but as all political processes can be manipulated it has also had to evolve. An early benefit was the Weeks Act of 1911 that allowed the country to buy land along navigable

rivers for national forests. This facilitated the growth of national forests in the Eastern US. Franklin Roosevelt's, Teddy's cousin, Civilian Conservation Corps employed three million men between 1933-1942 and made important improvements in the National Forests. Although some of Pinchot's successors reintroduced wide spread logging to the USFS, it was ultimately recognized that this would deplete the forest reserves. In 1960 the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act dictated that the areas be managed in a way to use whatever resources available to the best benefit of the American people and that this be done in a fashion to achieve in perpetuity regular periodic output without impairment of the productivity of the land. Subsequently the Wilderness Act, the National Environmental Policy Act and the Clean Air and Water Act have helped to reemphasize many of Gifford Pinchot's founding principles.

Today the USFS oversees one quarter of American Public Lands, 193,000,000 acres comprising 154 National Forests and twenty National Grasslands. It allows harvesting of 1.5 billion trees a year although 59 million of its acres are without roads. The stated responsibilities of the Service are equally divided into Outdoor Recreation, Range, Timber, Watersheds, and Fish and Wildlife. Its \$6.1B budget funds these goals as well as divisions of State and Private Forestry to help private land owners and other government entities to manage land properly, Research and Development and International Programs to promote sustainable land management worldwide. Hopefully our public lands will continue to provide good homes for our migratory birds and be protected by wise elected public servants.

PICNIC

Hilton Head Audubon is pleased to invite you to our annual Member Picnic to be held on Wednesday, May 8 at the Coastal Discovery Museum Picnic Pavilion. We will be serving picnic delights such as fried chicken, sides and some vegetarian options (all utensils, plates and napkins will be provided). Water, tea and lemonade will also be available.

*Due to regulations at Coastal Discovery, **alcoholic beverages will not be allowed** during the event.*

Date: Wednesday, May 8 (rain or shine) - Pavilion is under cover

Where: Coastal Discovery Museum, Picnic Pavilion (located in the large field)

When: 5 pm - Social, come and join your fellow Audubon members and their guests
5:30 pm Dinner at the Picnic Pavilion
6:15 pm *Audubon Program:* Exploring the Tom People's Discovery Lab

Cost: \$10 per person - includes a donation to the Museum - Members may bring guests. (Fees will be collected at the picnic - cash or check).

Attending families are asked to bring a favorite dish to share – one that will serve 6-8 people.

If your last name starts with:

- A-I Please bring chips or appetizers
- J-R Please bring a side, salad or veggie dish
- S-Z Please bring a dessert or fruit dish

RSVP by May 4 to cclemens318@gmail.com



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

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May 2019 Calendar

May

Wed., May 8

HH Audubon Member Picnic
Location: Coastal Discovery Museum

5 pm

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. Members and guests welcome.