



## 2020 Christmas Bird Count

by Susan Murphy  
Christmas Bird Count Liaison

### Count Day is Coming

This year's Christmas Bird Count is upon us, and even though COVID-19 has changed some of our plans, we are looking for another strong showing. Our CBC consistently ranks among the Top 10 in the country in terms of participation.

### December Meeting

Our annual Christmas Bird Count meeting is on Thursday, December 10, via Zoom. Our meeting will get underway at 7 pm, when we will be announcing the results of our virtual silent auction. At 7:30 pm, Robert Rommel, our science advisor for the CBC, will discuss some of the birds we are likely to see and offer some helpful identification tips. Robert is past president of Hilton Head Audubon and an accomplished wildlife photographer and author.

### Silent Auction Results at Christmas Bird Count Meeting

The silent auction is well underway! Some terrific items are up for bids - check them out here:

[https://www.32auctions.com/HHI\\_2020\\_Xmas-Bird\\_Count](https://www.32auctions.com/HHI_2020_Xmas-Bird_Count)

Winners will be announced at 7 pm on December 10 - just prior to the Christmas Bird Count meeting.

### Count Day...

Is Tuesday, December 15, for the Hilton Head area. You can participate on a field team or as a feeder watcher from your home. Please e-mail Susan Murphy at [HHICBC@gmail.com](mailto:HHICBC@gmail.com) and she will have an Area

### Silent Auction

The auction is up and running and ends on December 9. Click on this [link](#) to see the terrific items we have.

Winners will be announced at the Christmas Bird Count meeting at 7 pm

**Silent Auction Winners Announce:  
Thursday, Dec. 10 - 7 pm**

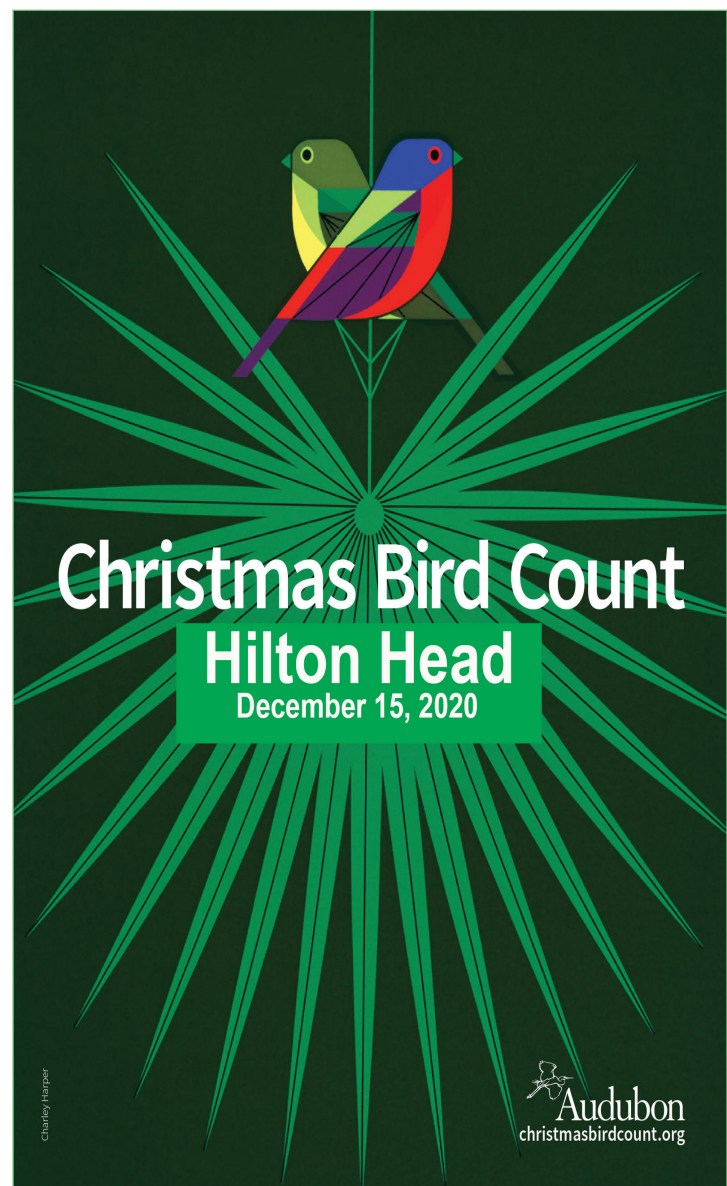
**Christmas Bird Count Meeting: 7:30 pm**

**How to Join:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7819826859>

**Meeting ID: 781 982 6859**

**Speaker: Robert Rommel**



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Subscription is a benefit of membership.

Direct inquiries to:

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Hilton Head Island, SC 29938

Email:

[hiaudubon@hiltonheadaudubon.org](mailto:hiaudubon@hiltonheadaudubon.org)

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

## President's Message



About a month ago, on a morning I had planned to be out birding, two of our members contacted me about the vacant Mid-island Tract on the island, known to many of us as the former Planters Row golf course. In the interest of public safety, the town was planning the removal of a large number of dead, leaning or diseased trees on the site, particularly those near the old cart paths.

From Christmas Bird Counts and other less formal surveys, we have discovered that the tract contains the only known nesting colony of Red-headed Woodpeckers on Hilton Head Island: a dozen or so can be seen there on a good day.

We were certain this fact would be of interest to the town, but a lot less certain the town would be aware that these birds favor the snags and limbs of dead trees – which we feared would be among the first to go as the site was tidied up.

We immediately contacted town officials, surveyed the property with them and pointed out the woodpecker habitat of concern to us. To our gratitude and relief, the town promised to spare these trees from its project.

In this holiday season we should be thankful we live in a place where people and nature can thrive together, a town that recognizes that conservation and sustainability are core to its brand. We fervently hope it remains that way.

Of course, this is not the end of the story. We don't know what will happen to the Mid-island Tract as the town develops its long-term Parks and Recreation master plan. We want to thank everyone who took the time to provide input into the town's survey – it's important to let our leaders know that opportunities to enjoy nature should be part of any such plan.

Preserving an environment for our red-headed friends is important. So too is creating and preserving green space for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Please continue to advocate for birds and the places they need with your friends, neighbors and our public officials. Birds sing for us, we need to sing for them.

Have a safe and healthy holiday season.

John Bloomfield

# The Season for Giving

At Hilton Head Audubon, we have been blessed by the generosity of our donors. Since initiating our Leaders Circle giving level (\$100 or more), more than 40 members have joined, bringing in vital funds at a time when our programs are restricted due to the pandemic. These gifts have ranged from the minimum \$100 to more than \$1000, with several being matched through corporate matching gift programs.

To help us with our mission of protecting birds and the places they need, please consider a year-end contribution in addition to your base membership. Your gift supports our conservation and education initiatives like the Barry Lowes Scholarship Fund for local students, our Motus tower project and ongoing efforts to maintain and enhance the Audubon Newhall Preserve.

There are many ways you can give, including:

**A Year-End Donation.** This year, the CARES Act makes a new “above the line” deduction available for up to \$300 per taxpayer (\$600 for a married couple) in annual charitable contributions.

**A Gift from your IRA.** A Qualified Charitable Distribution could be a good option for giving if you are 70-1/2 or older, have an IRA, and are interested in reducing your taxable income. To make a gift, contact your IRA administrator to request

a charitable rollover to Hilton Head Audubon before 12/31/2020. Our tax identification number (EIN) is 51-0168071.

**A Gift from a Donor-Advised Fund.** Hilton Head Audubon also welcomes gifts from donor-advised funds to support our programming. If you direct a gift from your fund, please let us know so we can thank you.

**A Matching Gift.** Did you know that you can potentially double, or even triple, your gift to Hilton Head Audubon? Ask your employer, or if retired, your former employer, if they offer a matching program for your donation.

**A Gift of Membership.** Give a Hilton Head Audubon membership for the holidays. Your loved one will join a flock dedicated to making a difference for birds. Or consider making an additional gift in addition to your current membership.

**A Gift of Time.** We are an organization operated entirely by volunteers – from field trip leaders, to conservation, education and finance committee members to the workers who maintain the Audubon Newhall Preserve. Have a special skill or area of interest? Send us an email at [hhiaudubon@hiltonheadaudubon.org](mailto:hhiaudubon@hiltonheadaudubon.org).

We are grateful for your support, whatever form it takes.



# Newhall News

by Bob Clemens  
Audubon Newhall Chairman

It was a busy month for the Audubon Newhall Preserve. Our November workday was focused on cleaning out the bluebird houses and owl boxes and trimming trails. Our two owl boxes appear to have sheltered Rocky the Flying Squirrel and a nest of red ants (both now homeless). Lynn Hodgson's crew cleaned out 11 of our 13 bluebird houses, but two remain in hiding. We also posted new signage for the Pine Flatwoods and the Pond terminus of the South Woods Trail. Thank you to all our volunteers!

Also in November a group of Heritage Coastal homeschoolers (11 students and 4 parents) toured Newhall with volunteer guides Lynn Hodgson, Tom Marko, and John Bloomfield.

There isn't a workday planned for December, but the work continues among the regulars.

Lynn Hodgson continues to lead bird walks from 8:30 to 10 a.m. on Tuesday mornings. Because of COVID-19 precautions, we limit the participants to 10 — first come, first served.

Whenever you are at the Preserve, please encourage visitors to sign the clipboard, as we use the information to support our ATAX Grant applications. Recent visitor comments included "Awesome!" "Informative Signs," "Cool Place," and similar accolades.

Comments, questions, and suggestions regarding the preserve may be directed to Bob Clemens at [RClemens318@gmail.com](mailto:RClemens318@gmail.com).



## Audubon Newhall Preserve



The Audubon Newhall Preserve was established in 1965 as the Island Wildlife Preserve, when Caroline "Beany" Newhall recognized the need to conserve woodlands on this rapidly developing island. She persuaded Charles Fraser of the Sea Pines Company to deed 50 acres of land for a nature preserve. Over the years, Beany devoted endless hours to saving plants from the paths of developers and transplanting them into this protected environment. In 1976, she deeded the Preserve to Hilton Head Audubon, together with an endowment fund, to ensure its ongoing maintenance. In 1993, the pond was restored, and this recreated an integral focal point for the Preserve. Thanks to the foresight and generosity of its founder, Beany Newhall, this woodland will forever remain a sanctuary for all to enjoy.

In 2016, Hurricane Matthew severely damaged the Preserve. In the aftermath, an army of volunteers, the local Rotary, Sea Pines CSA, and the SC State Forestry Commission, all pitched in to restore the Preserve. More than 300 downed trees were removed from the perimeter firebreak and nearly 400 trees were planted to restore the forest. Trail signage was restored and replaced. Memorial benches were donated or replaced. Milled asphalt has been donated by Sea Pines CSA to improve the parking lot and widen the roadway from Palmetto Bay Road. Most recently, pollinator gardens have been prepared at the back of Audubon Pond. In short, the Audubon Newhall Preserve has "bounced back" better than ever!

Click the map above of the Newhall Trail Guide to look inside

# Field Trips



## Members receive an email for signup

All members should have received an email with instructions to sign up for each trip. The information and links are not published to the website since these trips sell out quickly.

*Please note that these trips fill up quickly. To accommodate those who have not been able to register, if you have been on a recent field trip with us, please consider refraining this time out. Thank you for your patience, as we continue with our program modifications due to the pandemic.*

## December 5: Newhall Forest Preserve

HH Audubon Vice President Lynn Hodgson will lead a group on a birding and nature walk at Newhall Forest Preserve. Operated by Hilton Head Audubon, this south-island oasis offers easy-to-walk trails that will give you the chance to explore maritime forest, a fresh-water pond, pocosin and other Lowcountry habitats. Lynn is an expert bird watcher and naturalist who regularly leads outings on the preserve.

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Trail signage was restored and replaced. Memo-

*by Carlos Chacon, Field Trip Coordinator*

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More recently, pollinator gardens have been prepared near the preserve entrance and at the back of Audubon Pond. In short, the Audubon Newhall Preserve has “bounced back” better than ever!

Limit 10 people.

## December 19: Coastal Discovery Museum at Honey Horn Newhall Forest Preserve

The Coastal Discovery Museum is a great bird watching destination on Hilton Head Island. The 68-acre Honey Horn Property hosts several spectacular live oaks that are more than 300 years old, covered with Spanish moss and resurrection fern. The property has a combination of open fields, maritime forest and salt marsh, ideal to see a diversity of bird species.

Carlos Chacon, Manager of Natural History and expert bird watcher at the museum, will lead the group on an exploration of the Honey Horn museum grounds.

Limit 10 people.



# Through Our Binoculars

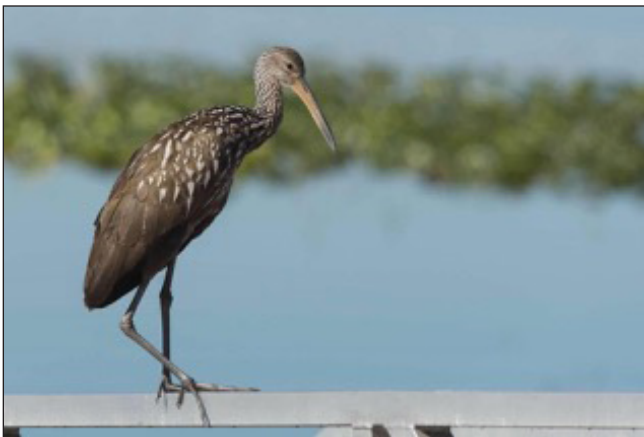
by Jack Colcolough

Our fall 2020 songbird migration is past us, and it was a memorable one. Our totals included 27 warbler species and 21 other migrant species. Last month's sightings include the ongoing Limpkin in a Bluffton community and 15 species rare to this area, that are listed below.

Most of our winter arrivals are now here, including our common winter duck species, although not in large numbers as yet. A very rare migrant Connecticut Warbler was also reported.

## Accidental species

Limpkin - a bird whose U.S. range was restricted to Florida until just a few years ago



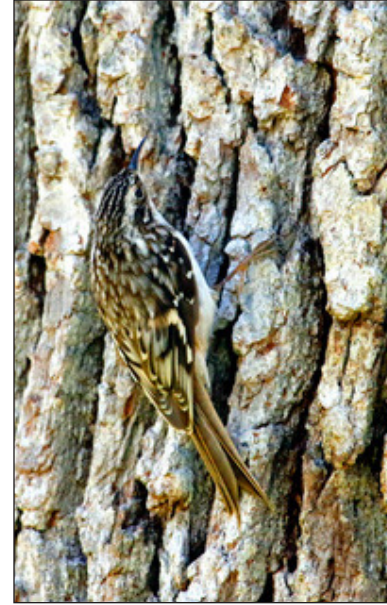
Limpkin by Carol Clemens

## Species rare to this area

- Connecticut Warbler in Palmetto Bluff
- Roseate Spoonbills on Pinckney Island and at Crystal Lake in Indigo Run
- Ash-throated Flycatcher at Skidaway Island
- Least Flycatcher at Fort Pulaski
- Bachman's Sparrow at Webb WLC
- Solitary Sandpiper at Palmetto Bluff
- Scarlet Tanager at SP Forest Preserve
- Brown Creeper and Tennessee Warbler at Pinckney Island
- Cape May Warbler and Virginia Rail at the ACE Basin NWR Combahee Unit
- Black-throated Green Warbler at Oak Grove
- Common Ground Dove in Chatham County, Georgia
- Bullock's Oriole in Bluffton
- Clay-colored Sparrow at the Port Royal Boardwalk.

## Uncommon Species

- Pine Siskin
- Piping and Wilson's Plovers
- Baltimore Oriole



Brown Creeper by Fran Baer

- Rose-breasted Grosbeak
- Long-billed Dowitcher
- Orange-crowned and Prairie Warblers
- Ovenbird
- Northern Waterthrush
- Northern Gannet
- Reddish Egret
- Pectoral and Stilt Sandpipers
- Caspian Tern
- Least Tern
- Whimbrel
- Peregrine Falcon
- American Avocet
- American White Pelican
- Glossy Ibis
- Sedge Wren
- Red-cockaded Woodpecker
- Redhead (duck)



Redhead by Bob Speare

- Mottled Duck
- Ruddy Duck
- Chimney Swift
- Wild Turkey
- Wood Thrush
- Swainson's Thrush
- Blue Grosbeak
- Indigo Bunting
- Glossy Ibis
- Black-bellied Whistling Duck
- Loggerhead Shrike
- Salt Marsh
- Nelson's and Seaside Sparrows
- House Wren
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo
- Eurasian-collared Dove
- American Kestrel
- Veery
- Blue-headed Vireo
- Dark-eyed Junco
- Greater and Lesser Black-backed Gulls
- Mississippi Kite
- Bobolink
- Purple Finch
- Rusty Blackbird
- Purple Sandpiper

#### Good Finds of Interest

- Ruby-throated Hummingbird
- Painted Bunting
- Bald Eagle
- American Wigeon
- Common Loon
- Horned Grebe
- Hermit and Swainson's Thrushes
- Summer Tanager
- American Goldfinch
- Cedar Waxwing

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" e-mail: [BirdingFriends@yahogroups.com](mailto:BirdingFriends@yahogroups.com) or call 843-432-2661. Please keep up the good work of reporting your good birds to Birding Friends.

Now is a good time to look for very late migrants or possible overwintering birds. Also, come join us for and enjoy Project Feeder Watch in your own yard for the next six months.

## Help Our Nominating Committee

HH Audubon assembles a nominating committee to help identify individuals who would be interested in serving on the board or serve on other project committees. The nominating committee meets in February and March and helps interview prospective board candidates in order to assemble a slate of individuals that can be presented to the membership.



If you'd like to help in this short-term assignment, please contact [hhiadubon@hiltonheadaudubon.org](mailto:hhiadubon@hiltonheadaudubon.org).

In addition if you have an interest in serving on the board or a committee, email us as well.

## Welcome to our New Members

A warm welcome to our new members:

Robert Bellion  
 Peter Cram  
 Beth Giebel  
 Marcia Jenkins  
 Richard Schies

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:

[hhiadubon@hiltonheadaudubon.org](mailto:hhiadubon@hiltonheadaudubon.org)

# Life Bird Photo Essay



Although common here in SC, my first Painted Bunting (at our feeder) was a real thrill! The colors of this bird are outstanding, and each time we attract another, the excitement is still there.

Laury Maass



Although I have been lucky to photograph two Chuck-wills-widows on HHL, I selected my first as my most thrilling Life Bird and most challenging to shoot. I found this bird (or rather it found me) in the parking lot of HHP's Whooping Crane Conservancy in 2017. As soon as I exited my car, this CWWI flew directly at my head and was making very loud defensive noises as it darted at me. I most probably was too close to its nest, but had no idea what I had done to deserve its wrath. I hardly had time to get my camera gear up and running, but fortunately it continued to try to drive me away for about 30 minutes so I had the opportunity to get some nice shots.

Mary Alice Tartler



What a torturous task you have assigned!!!

Denny and I took a trip to Bosque del Apache, NM in Nov. 2017. That was on our bucket list for a long time (Barry Lowes said if we go nowhere else, we HAD to visit Bosque).

We saw a good number of lifebirds: Vermillion Flycatcher, Roadrunners, Gambel's Quail, Red-naped Sapsucker, Western Scrub Jay, Steller's Jay, Western Bluebird, Mountain Chickadee, Bushtit, Sage Thrasher, American Pipit, Northern Shrike, Phainopepla, Cassin's Finch, Prairie Falcon, Pyrrhuloxia, and a Bewick's Wren.

"Among all of the lovely/handsome/beautiful new birds we saw, here is the Bewick's Wren. I was by myself when I heard it and then spotted it. At one point, it decided to study ME for a while...by hanging onto a branch up-side-down! I was totally captivated by this behavior and just found this bird irresistible. *Note: this photo was NOT just turned upside-down..."he" really DID this (-)*

Fran Baer



I am always on the look-out for spoonbills and have captured a few over the past several years. None of them had the preening behavior I was looking for.

In early November, I arrived at Donnelly WMA at sunrise in search of spoonbills. I found several feeding in low water, which resulted in images with their heads down looking for food.

Once they tired of feeding, they moved to a better area for photographing and I was able to capture the image.

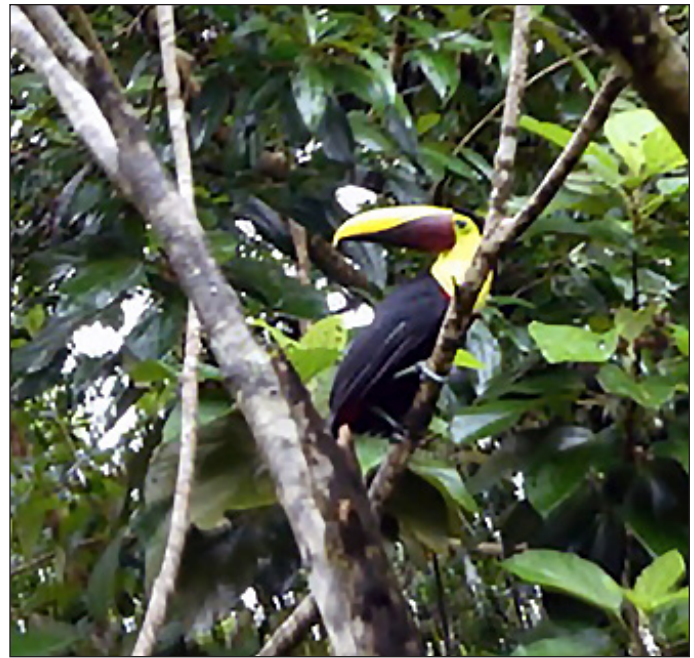
Debbie Staley





Without a doubt it was a Barred Owl. I have always had a special affinity for these amazing raptors, but had never seen one in the wild. I made it my mission to find one when we moved to HHI and was told there was a pair that nested in the Whooping Crane Conservancy. After 18 months of sleuthing and occasionally hearing them, I accidentally flushed one out of the vegetation at the end of the boardwalk. It flew up into a tree about 20 feet away and stared right at me as if to say, "This is your moment. Don't blow it"!

Carol Tunncliffe



This picture, while not my best, is a favorite. It was taken approximately November 12, 2019, near Tortuguero, Costa Rica. I was staying in a resort with individual cabins. One morning I went walking the paths at 6:30 am and saw this Toucan.

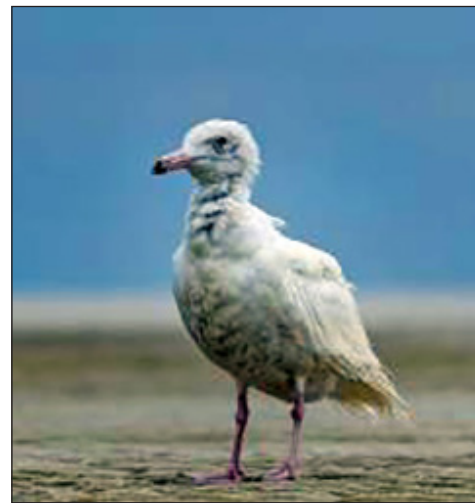
Lary Jones



This Seaside Sparrow was a long sought after lifer, and I finally got him to pose for this picture last week at Santee National Wildlife Refuge. He/she is special because 55 years ago my wife, Nancy, first visited Hilton Head with her best friend from New York who was staying at one of

the first homes in Sea Pines — the home was on Seaside Sparrow. From that visit in 1965, Nancy always knew she would eventually live in Hilton Head. It only took her until 1986 to buy our home on Bald Eagle Road. Ever since I retired and started birding, finding all the life birds with streets named after them in Sea Pines has been a goal. This Seaside Sparrow sighting has reduced the missing life birds for Sea Pines streets to one — Black Duck. Of course I will never find a Grey Wigeon since they don't exist, but I count my American Wigeon as close enough.

Mark Cavallo



My life bird is the Glaucous Gull described in the Audubon Field Guide as "A big, pale, ghostly gull of the far north. The only large gull common in the high Arctic." In June 2020, I had an unexpected encounter with this gull on

Jekyll Island, Georgia, while I was there to photograph nesting Wilson's Plovers. A young, local birder alerted me to its presence down the beach and told me it had been spotted in Florida so it seemed to be making its way north up the coast. This was a great opportunity to see this special bird with pink legs so far out of its range. The biggest challenge in photographing this bird was containing my excitement, not approaching it directly or too quickly lest it fly off. So I circled around and ended up crawling on my belly and used a 600mm lens to take this bird portrait.

Patty Kappmeyer

## December 2020 - January 2021 Calendar

### December 2020

**Wednesday, Dec. 9** **Online Silent Auction Bidding Ends at 12 noon** - winners will be notified by phone/email and announced at the Christmas Bird Count meeting, Dec. 10, at 7 pm

**Thursday, Dec. 10** **7 pm Silent Auction Winners Announced via Zoom**

**7:30 pm Christmas Bird Count Meeting**  
via Zoom

**Speaker:** Robert Rommel  
Former HH Audubon President

**Tuesday, Dec. 15** **Christmas Bird Count**

### January 2021

**Thursday, Jan. 14** **3 pm HH Audubon Program Meeting**  
via Zoom

**Speaker:** Dr. Ernie Wiggers  
CEO/President at  
Nemours Wildlife Foundation

To join the Member Programs via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7819826859> -  
Meeting ID: 781 982 6859

*Hilton Head Audubon holds monthly member programs from September to May at 3:00 pm on the second Thursday of each month. Information about meetings is listed on our [website](#) and in each issue of Ecobon. All welcome.*



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