



January Program - Nemours



Dr. Ernie Wiggers

Rice farming, which dates back more than 300 years, left a man-made footprint on the marshes and wetlands of coastal South Carolina. Remarkably, the infrastructure of this long ago agricultural system has been sustained over time and is still used today for wildlife conservation purposes. Much of the technology used during

the rice growing era to manipulate water management is still used to create habitats for a diverse suite of migratory birds.

Our historic rice fields were critical in the recovery of the Bald Eagle and American Alligator in our state and

Title: *The Convergence of Historic Rice Fields into Cornerstones for Modern Day Conservation in the Lowcountry*

Speaker: Dr. Ernie Wiggers, President and CEO, Nemours Wildlife Foundation

Date: January 14, 2021

Time: 3-4:30 pm

[Click here to join](#) - Passcode: 027687

are responsible for a new suite of bird species that have found Lowcountry marshes.

Dr. Wiggers and his staff have been helping lead research projects with various agencies and universities to learn more about our wildlife and the rich natural resources we enjoy. He will talk about how historic rice fields are used today in wildlife conservation and bring everyone up to date on the activities of the Nemours Wildlife Foundation that he directs.

Hilton Head CBC: Thanks to our Intrepid Birders!

We had a very successful Christmas Bird Count on Tuesday, December 15. The day was chilly and windy, with gusts up to 25 miles per hour, but our intrepid teams got out there and counted more than 25,000 birds. The final numbers will be in the February *Ecobon*.

As we've all adjusted to Zoom meetings and following COVID precautions, our Christmas Bird Count meeting was well attended with Robert Rommel's informative virtual presentation. This annual, pre-count meeting was enjoyed by about 100 enthusiastic participants. If you missed the meeting, go on our [YouTube channel](#) to view it.

The pre-meeting silent auction raised almost \$860 for conservation and education programs in our area. Thanks to Membership Chair Marina Bloomfield for coordinating the auction. We appreciate everyone who bid and the donations from businesses and individuals.

A big thanks also to the Area Captains and Review Panel members Robert Rommel, Bob Speare and Carlos Chacon. And of course, thanks to all who participated. Every bird counts!



President's Message

Board of Directors

President John Bloomfield
Vice President Lynn Hodgson
Treasurer Wendy Dickes
Recording & Corresponding Secretary
Jane Hester

Member-at-Large

Alan Biggs
Julia Buzzard
Kay Grinnell
Carol Tunnicliffe

Christmas Bird Count Liason

Susan Murphy

Past President Jane Hester

Standing Committees

Audubon Newhall Preserve

Bob Clemens Rita Kernan
Tom Hennessey Matt Mattoon

Bird Walks/Field Trips

Carlos Chacon

Conservation

John J. Coleman III

Communications/ECOBON/Website

Marina Bloomfield

Education

Lois Lewis
Mary Ellen Blankenship

Membership

Marina Bloomfield

Web: www.hiltonheadaudubon.org

Subscription is a benefit of membership.

Direct inquiries to:

P.O. Box 6185
Hilton Head Island, SC 29938

Email:

hiaudubon@hiltonheadaudubon.org

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



New years are all about new beginnings.

That's perhaps truer in 2021 than ever before – for at least the hope of a new beginning lies down an admittedly bumpy road ahead. But we will get there all the same.

The new year is also when we at Hilton Head Audubon start thinking about leadership changes as our nominating committee process gets underway. We will have several

key vacancies to fill, including a new president (more on that later), treasurer, membership chair and communications chair.

That seems like a big challenge for a small organization like ours, but I view it as an opportunity for continued evolution and growth. Our vision is to be a leading voice for conservation in the Lowcountry and we are well on our way toward that goal. New volunteers will take us to the next level.

A common misconception about organizations like ours is that you need to know a lot about birds to get involved. Birding will always be central to our mission, but the larger purpose of Audubon is to create an environment where people and wildlife thrive together. What it takes is an appreciation of wildlife, not necessarily the ability to correctly identify shorebirds in winter plumage.

What do we need? People with a business or professional background who want to put their expertise behind a good cause. Educators looking to ignite the fire of conservation in young people. Volunteers eager to extend our reach to those who may have felt excluded by traditional Audubon stereotypes – including people of color and the disabled.

Mostly we need people who want our island – and the broader community – to always remember that one of the primary reasons people choose to live here is the stunning beauty of the Lowcountry. We want people who want to keep it that way.

COVID-19 has brought change and sacrifice to tens of millions of families across the country, and mine is no exception. Marina and I will be relocating to Texas early in the year for family reasons, but I will continue to serve through May as president and will always remain available for any help I can give.

It has been one of the great pleasures of my life to have served this Audubon for the past three years — most recently as president. Service can be one of the great pleasures of your life as well.

If you are interested in helping us, [drop us a line here](#). Best wishes for a safe and happy New Year.

John

A Resolution To Give Back

by Bob Speare

Here's to the New Year 2021, with hope on the horizon for better times ahead indeed! Have you made your New Year's resolution yet? Another attempt at losing those five pounds? Here's another thought. Being in the outdoors observing the natural world gives me some of the greatest pleasure in my life. So I'm thinking, how can I give back and support some of those that help provide these experiences for me at a time when they really need it?



Newhall volunteers

Even as one person, I can make an important contribution that, when multiplied by others, can turn into a real difference for wildlife. Think of the Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Many of us ventured out a couple of Tuesdays ago and compiled what may have seemed like an unexceptional list of birds. But when we add to it the sightings of others, even just in our Hilton Head area, we end up with an important set of data (and a pretty impressive number of birds too).

After a crippling year of reduced volunteer help, cancelled programs and fundraisers, and other financial challenges, many of our local conservation programs are in dire need of volunteers and support. And there's certainly no shortage of opportunities to volunteer in a way that meets your interest and availability. With just a couple hours a week or even a few hours here and there, you can make a meaningful impact. Here's just a few of the many programs near us:

To help birds both locally and throughout the area, you can volunteer with **Hilton Head Audubon** or the **Coastal Discovery Museum**, or just by watching birds in your backyard, you can take part in **Project Feeder Watch** and **The Great Backyard Bird Count**. And, if you simply commit to entering your sightings on **eBird**, you will add to what has become the most important worldwide database on bird populations.

You can support **Lowcountry Raptors** or the **Avian Conservation Center**, both committed to education and the well-being of these important charismatic birds. And regionally, both the **Coastal Conservation League** and **Audubon South Carolina** work tirelessly to preserve important habitats for all of us to enjoy.

If Sea Turtles are more your thing, consider supporting the **HHI Sea Turtle Patrol** or volunteer with their **Turtle Trackers** program. Additionally, the Coastal Discovery Museum has an "**Adopt a Nest**" program for sea turtles, a great way to get younger folks involved early in conservation.

For gardeners and butterfly enthusiasts there are many programs looking for volunteers to help keep their gardens and grounds looking pretty while attracting butterflies and other important pollinators. Gardens at our **Audubon Newhall Preserve** and the **Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge** are just two of several managed by local volunteers. George Westerfield has transformed the campus of the **Hilton Head High School** into an array of beautiful gardens – all cared for by volunteers, and he's always in need of a few more.

These projects and programs are just the tip of the iceberg of ways in which you can get involved through volunteering and support of local groups. They are a fun way to meet other like-minded people too, while doing something important for local conservation. Join me this New Year in giving back a little for all the good that wildlife does for us by supporting those that help make it happen. And who knows, we may finally lose those five pounds in the process too! Happy New Year and good birding!



Newhall News

by Bob Clemens
Audubon Newhall Chairman

The Audubon Newhall Preserve is happy to welcome the New Year! Open from sunrise 'till sun-down each day, the preserve hosts scores of visitors, many of whom contribute to the donation post and add compliments to the visitors' log.

Our thanks to Vice Chairs Rita and Joe Kernan, who once again adorned our entry gates with magnolia Christmas wreaths! Vice Chair Matt Matoon and Chair Bob Clemens continue to improve signage in the preserve, and recently started a project to line the pathways in the parking lot pollinator garden with logs.

Vice Chair Lynn Hodgson continues to offer guided tours on Tuesday mornings. See our website for details. Vice Chair Tom Hennessey is our liaison with Sea Pines, and we appreciate all of the invaluable assistance the Sea Pines CSA offers during the year. Thanks Tom!

Among our accomplishments in 2020, on our many Work Days, we re-activated irrigation and replanted the pond pollinator gardens, improved signage throughout the preserve, elevated portions of the often-flooded Branch Woods Trail, and added additional spaces to the parking area.

Finally, our gratitude goes to the pollinator garden volunteers: Karen Penale, Mary Ellen Blankenship, Karen Seminary, Lynn Hodgson, and Rita Kernan. Each has contributed to the design and planting of both pond and parking lot pollinator gardens during 2020.

Happy New Year and stay safe!



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 Palmto 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

by Carlos Chacon, Field Trip Coordinator



Members are emailed a link for signup

All members will receive 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. If you find you are not receiving our emails, please let us know – [click here](#).

All trips are limited to 10 people. Face coverings are required and social distancing enforced.

We try to accommodate those who have not been able to register, but signup is on a first-come, first-served basis.



January Field Trips

January 9 — Kingfisher Pond Recreation Area

Kingfisher Pond is part of the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge and is located north of the Visitor Center on U.S. Hwy 17. HH Audubon Vice President Lynn Hodgson will lead the group on an easy walk of the one-mile trail around the pond. There are good chances to see waterfowl as well as forest birds in a wooded setting.

January 16 — Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge

With more than 5,000 acres of bird-friendly habitats, Pinckney Island is a fantastic bird haven, sitting right between Hilton Head Island and Bluffton. Naturalist Bob Speare will lead the group in an exploration of the Maritime Forest, Salt Marsh and freshwater pond habitats found on the island.



January 23 — Crystal Lake Recreational Area

Crystal Lake Park is located across the bridge from Beaufort, on Lady's Island. The 25-acre park winds through forested habitats, salt marsh and the scenic seven-acre Crystal Lake. Beautiful boardwalks are part of the trail, which allow you to see the salt marsh environment up close. Songbirds, wading birds, birds of prey, migratory waterfowl and many other species can be found in the park. Naturalist Jake Zadik will be leading this trip.



Through Our Binoculars

by Jack Colcolough

Bird sightings in our area continue to be amazing, with a 11 birds rare in our area, along with six out-of-season, and many, many uncommon species reported. This follows an awesome fall migration. Irruptive species, such Red-breasted Nuthatches, Purple Finches and Pine Siskins have been sighted at several locations in the Lowcountry. Most of our winter ducks and shorebirds have arrived in good numbers.



Bullock's Oriole by Bob Speare

Rare species

- Bullock's Oriole at Rose Hill, (second year running)
- Snow Goose at Moreland Ponds
- Red-breasted Nuthatch at several locations
- Tennessee Warbler at Pinckney Island NWR
- King Rail at the Ace Basin NWR Combahee Unit
- Yellow-breasted Chat at Skidaway Island,
- Sandhill Crane flying over HHI
- Fox Sparrow in Savannah
- Virginia Rail at the Nemours Wildlife Foundation
- Brown Creeper on St. Helena Island,
- Common Ground Dove at Harbor Island
- White-winged Scoter

Out-Of-Season species

- Ruby-throated Hummingbird
- Roseate Spoonbill
- Painted Bunting
- Black-Throated Blue and Prairie Warblers
- Summer Tanager
- Red-eyed Vireo



Snow Goose by Mary Alice Tartler

Uncommon Species

- Purple Finch
- Pine Siskin
- Piping and Wilson's Plovers
- Redhead
- Rusty Blackbird
- Baltimore Oriole
- Long-billed Dowitcher
- Great and Lesser Black-Backed Gulls
- Glossy Ibis
- Golden-crowned Kinglet
- Dark-eyed Junco
- Northern Gannet
- Reddish Egret (continuing)
- Caspian Tern
- American Avocet



Yellow-breasted Chat by John Bloomfield



Purple Finch by Carol Tunnicliffe

- Mottled Duck
- American Kestrel
- Merlin
- Peregrine Falcon

- American White Pelican
- Sharp-shinned Hawk
- Sedge and House Wren
- Northern Bobwhite
- Red-cockaded and Hairy Woodpeckers
- Ruddy Duck
- Loggerhead Shrike
- Saltmarsh, Nelson's and Seaside Sparrows
- Eurasian-collared Dove
- White-breasted Nuthatch
- Blue-headed Vireo
- Rusty Blackbird

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 great find, email birding-friends@googlegroups.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. We also encourage you to record all of your birding observations on eBird.

Many thanks to all reporting your bird sightings.

Welcome to our New Members

A warm welcome to our new members:

Steve Edelstein

Linda Maslowski

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:

hiaudubon@hiltonheadaudubon.org

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 [Hilton Head Audubon](#). In addition if you have an interest in serving on the board or a committee,

What Was Your Spark Bird?

Many birders have what they call a spark bird, one that really ignited their passion for birding and conservation. Spark birds can run the gamut, from the Northern Cardinal in your back yard, to the Hooded Merganser in a neighborhood lagoon, to the majestic Bald Eagle whose recovery is one of the great conservation success stories of our lifetime.

For January's photo essay, we wanted to know what was your spark bird, and why? Here's what our readers had to say.



Alan Biggs

Robins were a harbinger of spring in central Pennsylvania where I grew up. Our small yard in the suburbs of small-town Lewisburg was always alive with several species of birds in the 1950s, but the robin was the most fascinating to me. Walking across the lawn, head turned sideways searching for worms, then grabbing one and fighting the fight to get it out of the ground – sometimes los-

ing but more often winning. "That's a robin, Alan," said my father in one of his man-of-a-few words explanations. He then gave me a copy of *The Golden Book of Birds*. "Here's the book my Dad gave me," he said. I never looked back after that.

Here is an American Robin with some leucistic markings taken at the Hilton Head Plantation farm plots earlier this year.



Steve Edelstein

In June 2018, a few months after moving to HHI full time, my wife "commissioned" me to take some photos of birds. Although I'd been a photographer since childhood, photographing birds was something I had never done before, and never envisioned doing. I accepted the challenge and headed out to the Whooping Crane Conservancy the next morning. Within minutes I spotted an ibis, stark white against the lush green background. It was the kind of scene I immediately knew would make a good photo. In fact the resulting, somewhat stylized, photo won first prize at the 2019 SoBA contest. That was all the spark I needed. I've posted some of the photos I've taken since on my website, HiltonHeadBirds.com.



Blake Robinson

My spark bird is really a broad group of birds – all large egrets and herons. I first fell in love with egrets nesting in the spring at Ibis Pond on Pinckney Island. I was blown away by their majestic flight as they flew out and back with sticks to build their nests. This Great Blue Heron was photographed on a raw, frigid and windy Christmas Bird Count this year at Fish Haul Beach. He was on a railing, just sitting quietly, seemingly unbothered by the dreadful weather. I was able to walk up slowly to within 15 feet and just waited for him to take off. He seemed so confident and relaxed, and with a few graceful flaps of the huge wings, he took off and was gone. A very special and magical moment for me!



Fran Baer

What I remember as my spark bird goes back to my pre-teen years. Our home was in a small Pennsylvania subdivision adjacent to some farmland. As kids will explore, my siblings and I ventured over to a pasture to see cows close up. In doing so, we scared up a colorful male Ring-necked Pheasant. We didn't know what it was – but it sure did startle us! We paid a visit to the elderly couple who lived in the farmhouse, and we described what we saw. We got our answer ... and it was onward from there for me. I started paying closer attention to our winged neighbors and it still goes on today.

On a drive through the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, this adult male – most likely an escapee from a nearby property – was spotted along the roadside.



Mary Alice Tartler

I knew the first time I saw an Osprey hit the water and scoop up a fish that I wanted to capture that magnificent image through my camera lens. That challenged me to expand my photography skills to include something I knew nothing about – wildlife photography. I would practice several days a week at the pond behind where Kroger sits today, and shoot the many birds that would come into roost for the night. It is where I finally mastered capturing birds in flight. I owe a big debt of gratitude to Birding Friends for providing me the motivation to learn bird identification and specifically, to Carol Clemens, Jack Colcolough and Robert Rommel for so being patient with me when I was still a bird novice.

January, February, March 2021 Calendar

January 2021

Thursday, Jan. 14 3 pm HH Audubon Program Meeting **Speaker:** Dr. Ernie Wiggers
via Zoom CEO/President at
Nemours Wildlife Foundation

February

Thursday, Feb. 11 3 pm HH Audubon Program Meeting **Speaker:** TBD
via Zoom

March

Thursday, March 11 3 pm HH Audubon Program Meeting **Speaker: Dr. Sidney Gauthreaux**
via Zoom Retired LSU and Clemson
Professor and Head of the Edisto
Open Land Trust

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 are welcome.



- Bird Seed, Blends & Suet
- Bird Feeders & Houses
- Mounting Hardware
- Birdbaths & Accessories
- Binoculars & Field Guides
- Nature Books & Gifts

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

HiltonHeadWBU@yahoo.com

To order online - [click here](#)