



## Meet Your New Board of Directors

The Hilton Head Audubon 2021-2022 officers and directors were chosen through online balloting during the month of May.

**President** - Kay Grinnell

**Vice President** - Lynn Hodgson

**Secretary** - Jane Hester

**Treasurer** - Tony Johnson

**Communications** - Patty Kappmeyer

**Conservation** - Co-chairs David and Julia Buzzard

**Newhall Preserve** - Bob Clemens

**Membership** - Natalie Hefter

**Education** - Co-Chairs Lois Lewis and Mary Ellen Blankenship

**Field Trips** - Carlos Chacon

**Christmas Bird Count** - Susan Murphy

**Member At Large** - Alan Biggs

## HH Audubon May Meeting - CANCELED

Meetings will resume in September 2021



*Black-bellied Plover by Carol Tunnicliffe*

## News at Newhall

*by Bob Clemens  
Audubon Newhall Chairman*

The Audubon Newhall Preserve was extremely popular with both locals and visitors during April, with 269 visitors, bringing our year-to-date total to over 700 from 40 different states (and Washington DC). We know from simple observation that fewer than half of visitors sign the visitors log, and we're contemplating asking Newhall volunteers to act as receptionists during peak hours in tourist season to encourage visitors to sign the log ... and encourage them to donate to the money post. (Lynn Hodgson and Rita Kernan are particularly good at that!)



Matt Matoon and Bob Clemens have installed a new Bike Rack. On the day they did so, there were 13 bikes parked at the Preserve. We promptly ordered a second bike rack.

Steve Fishman volunteered to re-paint the deck at the Audubon Pond, and as with any project, that turned into replacing all of the deck boards with new treated lumber. See the before and after photos. A special thank you to Lowes in Bluffton, who sold us



the lumber at cost and donated the balance of the materials (screws, paint, etc.) to complete the project. Steve and Matt Matoon completed the deck tear down and rebuild in seven hours, and Steve and other volunteers will re-paint the deck once the boards cure.

The Newhall Board is working on a Strategic Plan for the Preserve, and we will present it to the Audubon Board

*continued on page 3*

# President's Message

## Board of Directors

**President** Kay Grinnell

**Vice President** Lynn Hodges

**Treasurer** Tony Johnson

**Secretary** Jane Hester

### Member-at-Large

Alan Biggs

### Christmas Bird Count Liason

Susan Murphy

**Past President** John Bloomfield

## Standing Committees

### Audubon Newhall Preserve

Bob Clemens Rita Kernan

Tom Hennessey Matt Matoon

### Bird Walks/Field Trips

Carlos Chacon

### Conservation

David Buzzard

Julia Buzzard

### Communications

Patty Kappmeyer

### Education

Lois Lewis

Mary Ellen Blankenship

### Membership

Natalie Hefter

Web: [www.hiltonheadaudubon.org](http://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](mailto:hiaudubon@hiltonheadaudubon.org)

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



Dear Members:

I'm honored to be communicating to you as your new president. A big thank-you to John and Marina Bloomfield as they shift their birding and nature contributions toward their new home community in Texas. John has kindly agreed to continue to serve on the board for this upcoming year to provide his much-appreciated guidance and to ensure a smooth transition.

I'm pleased to welcome our new and returning board members and am thrilled to have the opportunity to work with such a talented and committed board. In an all-volunteer organization such as ours, the president is only as capable as the board and volunteers. I think we, together, are equipped to continue this Audubon chapter's journey toward becoming a robust conservation organization. You might be thinking... what exactly does that mean?

I'm getting ahead of myself, because we're about to refresh and develop our strategic plan to further articulate our path. But let me share a few snapshots from my own bird-loving conservation-obsessed dreams.

We might find ourselves living in a bird-friendly community where habitats flourish and public understanding grows. Our role might be as one of the leading local environmental groups who work collaboratively toward protecting and promoting these habitats. We might join together to create more environmental stewards by providing high-quality education activities and experiences. We might strengthen our collective voice and advocate for policies on issues of importance to birds and their habitats — and therefore the environment we treasure.

These dreams will take years to accomplish, and will take a village, as the saying goes. We will need you as members to come forward with time and energy to help advance our progress one step at a time. I look forward to working with you as we continue our journey toward this important future.

Kay Grinnell



Newhall cont'd.



in the near future. Thank you to all of those who have contributed suggestions.

### Save the Date

Finally, a Work Day is planned for Saturday, May 15 from 9-10:30 am. Please save the date. Anyone with questions or suggestions regarding the preserve are encouraged to email Bob Clemens at [Rclemens318@gmail.com](mailto:Rclemens318@gmail.com).

## Welcome New Members

A warm welcome to our new members:

Rodger Bakken

Rich Jackson

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:

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

## Help Protect Shorebirds

Hilton Head beaches are visited by thousands of visitors each year – and thousands of shorebirds too. This year, as we enter the beginning of the high tourist season, consider doing something to protect birds while educating visitors and residents alike on bird-friendly beach behavior.

Audubon South Carolina is currently in need of volunteers to help educate beachgoers about the importance of sharing our shores through its **Shorebird Steward** program. If you are interested in getting involved, you can head to the following link to [watch a training video](#). After watching the video, you can then sign up to volunteer.

You do not need to be a shorebird expert to get involved. Everyone can help, by simply spreading awareness that these birds are here, and many are under great threat from human disturbances.



South Carolina's shorebirds face many challenges. Many of these amazing birds are in decline and have an uncertain future. The wide range of pressures on shorebirds include everything from habitat loss to chronic disturbance.

Shorebirds endure some of the longest migrations in the world and their time in South Carolina must be spent resting and feeding. While you are visiting South Carolina's beaches, remember that you can be part of the solution. Our shorebirds need their rest so please...

**DON'T DISTURB THE BIRDS!**



Howard Costa

**SOUTH CAROLINA: A MIGRATION STATION**

Each year a shorebird like the Red Knot pictured above will travel nearly 20,000 miles round-trip from South America to their breeding grounds in the Arctic. By its 13<sup>th</sup> birthday, a Red Knot will have flown far enough to travel to the moon and back. Along the way they and other shorebirds use critical areas along the Carolina coast to rest and feed.



Audubon Chapters Along the Coast Support Critical Bird Habitat

Help us make South Carolina a year-round haven for shorebirds. With your help our beaches will continue to nurture these amazing birds.

# Field Trips

by Carlos Chacon  
Audubon Field Trip Coordinator

**Please note: Members are emailed with information to sign up for field trips. All trips are first come, first served and are limited due to COVID restrictions. Please check your email to sign up.**

We will be wrapping up our spring series of field trips in May. Trips are limited to 10 unless otherwise noted. After this month, field trips will resume in September.

## **May 1— Kingfisher Pond Recreation Area - SOLD OUT**

Kingfisher Pond Recreation Area, Hardeeville, S.C. is part of the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge and is located north of the Visitor Center on U.S. Hwy 17. HHI Audubon Vice President Lynn Hodgson will lead the group on an easy walk of the one-mile trail around the pond. An optional hike will be offered along the Tupelo Trail for up to 2 miles, for those who are interested. There are good chances to see waterfowl as well as forest birds in a wooded setting. Previous field trips in May to the Kingfisher Pond have yielded sights of the elusive Swainson's Warbler.

## **May 8-Solomon Tract at Savannah Wildlife Refuge - SOLD OUT**

The Solomon Tract portion of the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge sits on the Georgia side of the refuge and boasts 887 acres of woodland and other habitats. Past trips to Solomon Tract have produced up to a dozen species of warblers, including Prothonotary and Hooded Warblers, as well as cuckoos, flycatchers, buntings, grosbeaks and more! HH Audubon Vice President and avid birder Lynn Hodgson will lead this field trip.

## **May 15-Spring Island - SOLD OUT**

Spring Island is a great example of how a community can live in harmony with nature. More than 1,100 acres of the island's 3,000 acres are owned in perpetuity and managed for biodiversity by the Spring Island Trust, a conservation nonprofit. The island offers a diversity of habitats and landscapes that include maritime forest, salt marsh, fresh water wetlands, fields, and savannas. This makes the island an ideal bird watching location. This field trip can accommodate 15 participants. Participants will tour the island by wagon and will be led by expert ornithologist and birder Chris Marsh.

## **May 18- Sun City Field Trip - SPACE AVAILABLE**

Join us for a bird watching exploration of Sun City.

The trip will include the following:

- visit to an active Purple Martin condo
- walk in an area favored by Brown-headed Nuthatches and Eastern Blue Birds
- stop at a Great Blue Heron rookery
- Riverbend dock (if time permits)

The highlight of the trip will be viewing the Hidden Cypress Golf Course rookery with nesting Wood Storks, Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Cattle Egrets, Little Blue Herons, Tricolored Herons and Anhingas. Other birds often seen at the rookery are cormorants, White Ibis and Common Gallinule. We might even see the elusive Limpkin, if we are lucky.

Other birds often seen in Sun City are Black and Turkey Vultures, Bald Eagles, Osprey, Black-bellied Whistling Ducks and various songbirds.

This field trip is limited to 10 participants and a maximum of 5 vehicles. Carpools will be arranged accordingly. When carpooling, mask use is required.

Avid birding couple Noah and Mary Rosenstein will lead the group in the exploration of Sun City. Noah is also the current president of the Sun City Bird Club. You will need to sign waivers that they will provide for this visit.

Sun City is a gated community and requires visitors to follow the speed limits, stop signs and not park on the grass. Passes for the field trip participants will be arranged beforehand. Wearing masks and social distancing are required.

## **May 29-Cypress Wetlands**

There are several species of birds that call the Cypress Wetlands home, including herons, hawks, eagles, owls, falcons, ducks and other migratory waterfowl. It is absolutely a bird watchers paradise. In addition to birds, regular visitors among the cypress trees are alligators, turtles and snakes.

The easy half-mile board walk will allow participants to observe an active rookery with different nesting wading birds as well as some of the many songbirds that use the swamp, such as Prothonotary Warbler, Common Yellowthroat and others.

Expert bird watchers Jake Zadik, staff naturalist for Bray's Island, and Juliana Smith, South Coast Manager at the Coastal Conservation League, will lead a group of 12 participants in this exploration of the Cypress Wetland.



# How to Talk Like a Birder

As we all know, birders have their own language. From endearing terms for various species of birds (like butter-butt for Yellow-rumped Warbler), to shorthand names based on the American Birding Association's four-letter abbreviations (MODO for Morning Dove), birders find ways to communicate that are colorful and quick like the birds we chase, but not so easily understood by the casual or novice birder.

Here's a translation of some terms you might have heard but were reluctant to ask about. Thanks to the Texas Ornithological Society for many of the terms on this list.

**Spark bird:** The species that piqued someone's interest in birding.

**Lifer** (or life bird): The first-ever sighting of a bird species by a birder.

**Birding moniker:** A nickname, usually a bird name, given with respect by one birder to another.

**Patch:** A birder's favorite local birding site.

**Dip:** To miss seeing a target bird you were hoping to find.

**Empid:** One of the Empidonax species of flycatchers (such as the Willow, Alder and Least Flycatchers), notoriously difficult to identify without hearing a vocalization – and still hard to identify once hear it.

**GISS:** General impression of size and shape, which can give you the first inklings of identification.

**LBJ:** Little brown job - a small, drab bird (usually a sparrow) that is hard to identify. It does not refer to the former president.

**Nemesis:** A bird that has eluded you despite many attempts.

**Pish:** To make a bird-like noise ("pshh, pshh, pshh") in an attempt to draw birds in. Although there are some birds that will respond favorably, lots of birds are aware of this chicanery so it often has the exact opposite effect.

**Siesta time:** Mid-afternoon when bird activity is often very slow.

**S.O.B.:** Spouse of birder - the non-birding person. Be very, very careful when using this term. Best not to use when S.O.B. is around.

**Spuh** (sp.): A bird that is only identifiable at the family level such as sandpiper sp. or sparrow sp., taken from the eBird abbreviation for species.

**Peep:** A small shorebird that is tough to identify.

**Warbler neck:** What birders get at this time of year, watching migrating songbirds high in the treetops. Serous warbler neck can be a real annoyance, but is worth it if you find a lifer, or maybe your nemesis bird!



- 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

# Of Birds and Spider Webs

By Carlos Chacon  
Field Trip Coordinator

For the last couple of years, I have been looking for a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher nest. I got into the habit of describing this unique nest and showing a photo of it to participants in my weekly bird watching outings with the Coastal Discovery Museum. I was fascinated by this bird's ability to make a marvelous cup decorated with lichens, perfectly camouflaged against the background.

I figured it should not be too hard to find, since gnatcatchers are readily abundant in the Lowcountry and mated pairs are easily seen in the same nesting territory every spring. I thought that with enough attention and detailed observation I would find a nest sooner or later.

A few weeks ago, while talking with fellow naturalist Jake Zadik, he mentioned to my surprise that gnatcatchers build their nests with spider web. This particular fact triggered my curiosity and intensified my desire to find a nest.

On April 3, while leading a Hilton Head Audubon field trip to the Mid-Island Tract (the former Planter's Row golf course), I was lucky enough to find a White-eyed Vireo nest. I spotted it when I saw the bird getting into the nest.

Wanting to know more, I looked up information about the nest and found that White-eyed Vireo, like the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, also uses a frame of spider web to build its nest. A spider web shell is made and then decorated with plant fibers and other materials.

Other birds also use spider webs on their nests. Green Hermit hummingbirds from Costa Rica employ spider web from *Nephila* spiders (called in Banana Spiders in



*Blue-gray Gnatcatcher nest courtesy of Macaulay Library*

the Lowcountry) to attach their nest underneath heliconia leaves in the rain forest. The spider web also allows the nest to stretch out to twice its original size as the chicks grow.

I was surprised to learn how common this behavior is. Apparently, it evolved independently in different groups



*Green Hermit hummingbird courtesy of Macaulay Library*

of birds and in different regions of the world.

In terms of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, my moment of glory finally came while at an Audubon field trip to Beidler Forest on April 6. Right before our group started walking, I was talking to trip leader Matt Johnson about my desire to find the elusive nest. I briefly turned around and suddenly saw a Gnatcatcher nest high up in a branch. I was filled with joy and pride of my accomplishment.

During this same week, my co-worker Dawn Brut and Lowcountry institute naturalist Kristen Mattson found a Gnatcatcher nest on a birdwatching morning.

A Gnatcatcher nest was also found by fellow birder Bill Jirousek at Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge; I found a second nest on Pinckney Island while leading a birding outing on April 28.

I can now share this beautiful nest on my outings at Pinckney, and also present a bit of natural history. A pair of Gnatcatchers can build up to seven nests in a nesting season, often recycling the material from the previous nest to speed up the process of building a new one. It may take two weeks to finish the nest, which measures about a cup — 1.5-3" in diameter. The nest is built with plant fibrous material held together with spider web, a web that is also used to attach the nest to a branch. The final product is carefully decorated with lichens and pieces of bark to blend into the background.

Amazingly, after many years of searching without success, I can now boast that I have found two gnatcatcher nests in a single season and have heard reports of two other nests found by fellow naturalists.

The great thing about being a naturalist is that nature never ceases to deliver surprises and there are always new and exciting things to find and learn.

# Audubon Offers Spanish Version of Field Guide to Birds

Every year millions of birds migrate across states, nations, and continents. These remarkable journeys are full of peril and, to help these birds, we must work with partners across the Americas to ensure safe migration at every stop along the way. For this reason, National Audubon is now bilingual, speaking the same language as millions of Spanish voices calling for conservation throughout the hemisphere.

Audubon.org now offers the entire [Field Guide to North American Birds](#) in Spanish, making it the first online, free Spanish-language bird guide of its kind. Not only is the bird guide translated, they also have Spanish content from the award-winning Audubon magazine, news from communities across the Audubon network and throughout the bird world, and more.

Across the Audubon network, Spanish speakers are already meeting and sharing an appreciation for birds, engaging and advocating on their behalf, and now Audubon.org can better support and grow these efforts. Together, as a larger and more inclusive community, we can educate and foster the next generations, advocate for birds and our environment, and work together to stop crises like climate change.

Cada año millones de aves migran a través de los estados, naciones y continentes. Estos viajes notables están llenos de peligros y, para ayudar a estas aves, debemos trabajar con nuestros socios en todo el continente americano para garantizar una migración segura en cada parada del camino. Por esta razón, Audubon.org ahora es bilingüe, hablando el mismo idioma que millones de voces hispanas que reclaman la conservación en todo el hemisferio.

Audubon.org ahora ofrece toda [la Guía de Campo de Aves de América del Norte en Español](#), convirtiéndose en la primera guía de aves de este tipo, en línea, gratuita y en Español. No solo se tradujo la guía de aves, también tenemos contenido en español de la galardonada revista Audubon, noticias de las comunidades a través de la red de Audubon y de todo el mundo de las aves, y más.

En toda la red de Audubon, los hispanohablantes ya se están reuniendo y compartiendo un aprecio por las aves, participando y abogando por ellas, y ahora Audubon.org puede brindar un mejor apoyo y hacer crecer estos esfuerzos. Juntos, como una comunidad más grande e inclusiva, podemos educar e impulsar a las próximas generaciones, defender a las aves y el medio ambiente y trabajar juntos para detener diversas crisis tales como el cambio climático.

## May 2021 Calendar

### May 2021

**Thursday, May 13      CANCELED**

**Meetings will resume in September**

*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.*