



April 2022

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Board of Directors Member Voting

Your HHIAS Board Elections are scheduled in April. Per our new bylaws, the slate of Board of Directors must be put to vote to the entire membership. Please look for an email on Thursday April 7, 2022 with a link to vote online. Names with an asterisk are new members joining the Board

and their bios are included for your information.

Proposed Hilton Head Island Audubon Society Board

Term 5/1/2022 – 4/30/2023

Carlos Chacon

Jack Coleman

Kay Grinnell

Natalie Hefter

Jane Hester

Lynn Hodgson

Patricia Kappmeyer

Susan Murphy

Sarah Gustafson*

Laura Voight*

Shannon Wilkinson*

Sarah Gustafson is a recent Hilton Head Island resident, moving to the island in 2020. Previously Sarah resided in northern Virginia. Sarah is a former CPA, starting her career with PricewaterhouseCoopers, working for the firm in Washington D.C., Moscow and London. She also was VP-Finance for an insurance company in D.C. Sarah served on the Board as a Treasurer for an advocacy group and search and rescue group in Virginia. Sarah is an avid birder, who loves birding in new places and is thoroughly enjoying exploring the low country birding spots.

Laura Voight moved to Hilton Head in the fall of 2019 from Montana, but has visited the island during the last four decades. In Montana, she worked as a Development Officer at the public radio station in Billings. Prior to that she had a career in academia as an Art Historian. In Montana, she shifted her long appreciation of the arts into making her own mixed media works. She also served as the board secretary for a Fair Trade store for six years and now works at Wild Birds Unlimited Hilton Head. Since moving here, she has developed an incredible love of birding and enjoys learning about and photographing birds in the Low Country.

Shannon Wilkinson, a native of Beaufort, S.C., grew up on Hilton Head.

She worked here as a freelance writer for local publications and produced “The Daufuskie Kids Magazine,” subsequently featured on NBC’s “Today” show, before moving to New York City and graduating from the Parsons School of Design. In New York, she worked as Public Affairs Coordinator for the Guggenheim Museum and in the public relations industry before establishing her own PR consultancy. In 2009 she established Reputation Communications, an online reputation management practice focusing on internet communications. She returned to Hilton Head in 2021 to live full-time and operates her NYC-based business virtually.

Hilton Head Audubon Webiste

The Hilton Head Audubon website has a new look! Thank you to member Shannon Wilkinson for her generous donation in jumpstarting this project and securing the technical resources to get this done. The new look is adopted from the template recommended by National Audubon. We are adding new content and engaging technology like QR codes in order to be the trusted source for birding information and conservation in the LowCountry.

Please visit at <https://hiltonheadaudubon.org/>



Ways to Give

Your contributions are crucial to help the Hilton Head Audubon Society better achieve its mission: To be a leading voice for birds and conservation in the LowCountry, where people and nature thrive together. Hilton Head Audubon board members, committee heads, and volunteers work throughout the year on projects that fulfill our goals.

These activities include: advocacy regarding conservation / birding in our region, providing birding education programs to area schools, maintaining and interpreting through signage and tours the Audubon Newhall Preserve, managing the annual Christmas Bird Count, actively participating in regional Citizen Science programs, and increasing awareness about local conservation projects or concerns. Please note that donations may also be made in honor or memory of a loved one.

[To support Hilton Head Audubon, Donate Now.](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

PROTECTING BIRDS AND THE PLACES THEY NEED.

JOIN US



Field Trips and Walks

To register for field trips, please click on the links.

April 2 Pinckney Island NWR

Meet Your HHIAS Officers

Leaders: Kay Grinnell and Lynn Hodgson

[Details and Registration click here.](#)

April 10 Port Royal Cypress Wetlands

Leader: Jill Moore

[Details and Registration click here.](#)

April 16 Solomon Tract of Savannah NWR

Leader: Lynn Hodgson

[Details and Registration click here.](#)

April 30 Kingfisher Pond Recreation Area - Savannah NWR

Leader: Lynn Hodgson

[Details and Registration click here.](#)



May 14 is Global Big Day!

Save the date for special field trips and the chance to participate in global citizen science! Be a part of birding's biggest team! Global Big Day is an annual celebration of the birds around you. No matter where you are, join us virtually on 14 May, help celebrate World Migratory Bird Day, and share the birds you find with eBird. Participating is easy—you can even be part of Global Big Day from home. If you can spare 5 or 10 minutes, report your bird observations to eBird online or with our free eBird Mobile app. If you have more time, submit several checklists of birds throughout the day. You never know what you might spot. Your observations help us better understand global bird populations through products like these animated abundance maps brought to you by eBird Science.

Newhall Weekly Bird Walk

Tuesdays @8:30am with Lynn Hodgson

No registration required

Note: Lynn's last walk is May 17. Walks will resume in October.

[For details click here](#)

Newhall Weekly Nature Walk

Fridays @9:30am with Debby Boots

No registration required

These walks will end in May and resume in the fall.

[For details click here](#)

Events

Please click on the links for more details. To view all upcoming events in a calendar format, [click here](#).

April

April 9 -Newhall Work Day

Saturday April 9 @9:00 - 10:30am

[For details click here](#)

April 5 - Dr. Chris Marsh Presentation:

Identifying Confusing Winter Birds of the LowCountry

This presentation was originally planned as the February online meeting but is rescheduled in person at the Hilton Head Library from 3:00 -4:30pm.

[For details click here](#)



May 12 - Coastal Discovery Museum

Guided Gallery Tour and Reception

The Image Hunter: On the Trail of John James Audubon

Italian Artist Hitnes' Retracing of the Travels of Audubon in the South.

4:30pm Guided Gallery tour, followed by 5:00-6:30pm Reception on the Terrace

Registration is required for this event. \$10 per person. Follow link below to register.

Please RSVP by May 8, 2022

[For details click here](#)

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

PROTECTING BIRDS AND THE PLACES THEY NEED.

HILTON HEAD AUDUBON IN THE NEWS



HHIAS Board Members in the News

Congratulations to President Kay Grinnell and Education Chair Lois Lewis for their respective features in local news.

Kay is among four Island residents featured in the April issue of LOCAL Life Now Faces of Sustainability - *"Decades from now, when you're standing on a spit of Hilton Head Island beach or kayaking through crystalline lagoon waters, you can thank these locals for keeping nature beautiful."* [Read the full article here](#) including Kay's list of best places to bird.

Hear Lois Lewis Roar! She is the featured woman in the March issue of Pink Magazine and she has plenty to say about connecting learning to the protection of our national environment in the LowCountry - *"I am roaring about and concerned about the rampant and accelerating rate of development here in our county. If we don't figure out how to put the brakes on and leave much more land alone, we may forever lose all the qualities we love about living here."* [Read the full interview here.](#)

Second Barry Lowes Scholarship

From Lois Lewis: Our second Barry Lowes Scholarship field trip has been set for Wednesday, April 27. Emily Rietveld and her 8th graders from H.E.McCracken Middle School will spend a day of nature study at Port Royal Sound Foundation's Maritime Center. They have scheduled a nature hike, micro-plastics lab, and Discovery Charter Cruise with Captain Amber Kuhen.

AUDUBON NEWHALL PRESERVE

PROTECTING BIRDS AND THE PLACES THEY NEED.

NEWHALL NOTES



Newhall Work Day

Save the Date! Saturday April 9:00 - 10:30am for the next Newhall work day. RSVP Bob Clemens by email or text to better plan our work crews: rclemens318@gmail.com or text (317) 989-5777

We will play lumberjack and paint our new handicapped parking area. As always, we'll have crews working in the pollinator gardens and trimming vegetation. Bring water, gloves, and eye protection. Donuts will be provided.

Newhall Birdability Update

Newhall is becoming more ADA compliant. Lynn Hodgson reported that she completed filling out the Birdability Site Review for Newhall. The website birdability.org has a lot of excellent related information, too. If you go there, click on the map, expand it to see Hilton Head, and Newhall is there. This is a crowdsourced site; but is now managed by National Audubon.

Thanks to all the Newhall volunteers who have worked on various projects related to improving our ADA compliance - especially Matt Mattoon and Steve Fishman. Among the improvements are making the ramp to the observation deck ADA assessable and a handicap parking space. The research to decide what we needed to make Newhall more ADA compliant was done by Aliceon Stillman.





THROUGH OUR BINOCULARS

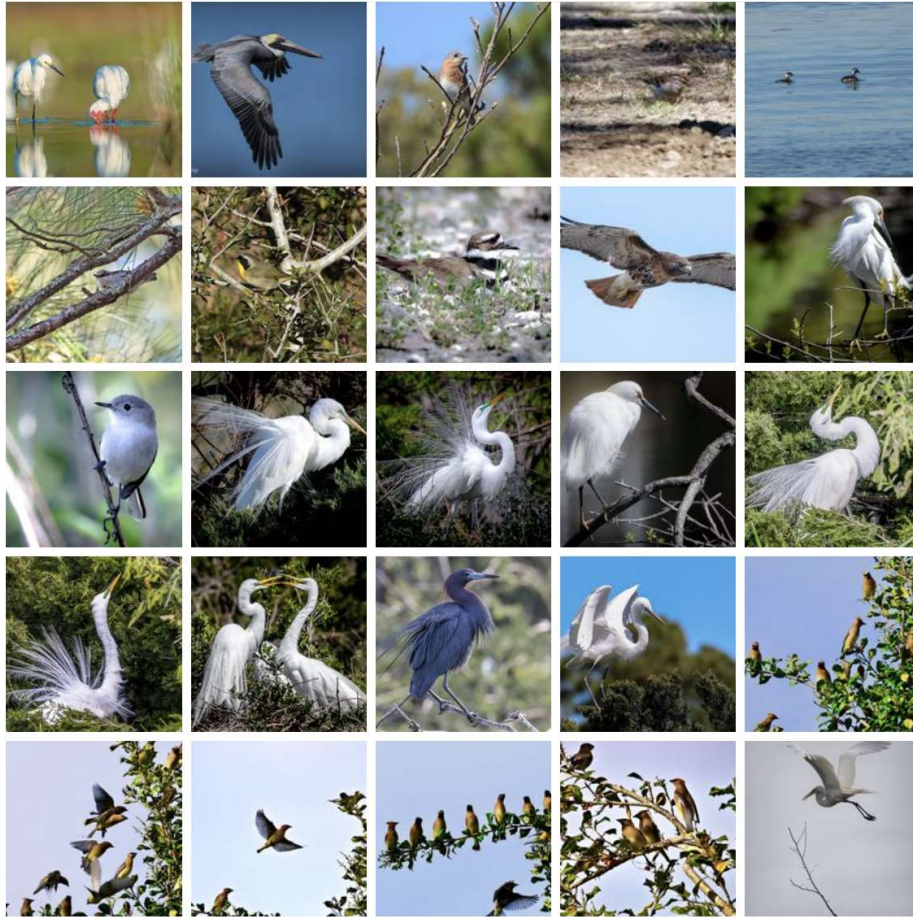
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COMMUNITY SIGHTINGS & STORIES



There are several ways to report sightings and general birding activity: use eBird or join the HHIAS Facebook group or Birding-Friends@google.com. If you would like to join the Birding-Friends google group please send an email requesting access to ecobon@hiltonheadaudubon.org.

Here is the media collage of March birding activity from the [HHIAS Facebook group page](#) . which now has over **1,600 members!**



A Bird Photographer's Dream: Tips for Capturing the Best Images at a Rookery

by Patty Kappmeyer

Nesting season is here and with that brings eager local and visiting photographers to the LowCountry to capture this amazing spectacle. I have been documenting birding activity for almost 20 years with my camera and nature journal. I can predict that by the first week of March a few Great Egrets will gather at the Ibis Pond rookery on Pinckney Island and multiply exponentially with each passing day. The Great Egrets will be followed shortly by the Snowy Egrets, Little Blue and Tri-color herons. And boat-tailed grackles dart around these waterbirds building their nests too. By June the activity is winding down and the White Ibis will take over the rookery.



Colonial Waterbirds is a broad designation given to birds that gather in large groups called rookeries during nesting season. The communal nesting ground gives nesting birds and chicks better chances of survival against predators because there is safety in numbers. Colonial nesters are generally split into two groups, ground or shrub nesters. Ground nesters like terns, black-skimmers and American oystercatchers lay eggs in low-elevations like sand dunes and are generally well camouflaged. Shrub nesters are found in vegetation at higher elevations well off the ground. This group consists of wading birds: great egrets, snowy egrets, wood storks, ibis, roseate spoonbills, cattle egrets, little blue herons, the night herons, tricolored herons and great blue herons. The colonial wading birds of South Carolina are a diverse and fascinating group of birds and are a bird photographer's dream when nesting season comes around.

The lifecycle of a rookery offers so many photo opportunities depending on your time of visit. While breeding seasons vary by species, nesting season in the South for wading birds generally begins in early March and runs through June. Behavior that may be observed includes the courtship dance with their partners showing off their brilliant breeding plumage and nest building, as the birds bring sticks back to their mates. Then follows the spectacle of hatchling and nestlings, as parents spend their time feeding

and tending to the young. This article offers some tips for capturing great photographs if you are planning on visiting a wading bird rookery.

Yellow-crowned Night Herons



When to go. Keep a journal of local nesting activity for future reference. You will be amazed at the accuracy of your observations. If you are visiting a location out of your area, check out the local Audubon society, e-bird or visit that state's department of natural resources website.

Tri-Color Heron in Breeding Plumage



What to photograph. Observe in order to anticipate behavior and find a subject to focus on. Find a "sit spot" and observe for 15 minutes. Repeat! Want to capture the courtship dance, the nest building "stick" exchange, birds in flight, the regurgitation method that adults use to feed their young, be patient and observe, it takes luck out of the equation. Nesting colonies are noisy and the pace of activity can be overwhelming so it helps to find a subject to focus on - a mated pair or a group of nestlings or fledglings. Try to find birds that are near the top or more visible. Once you have isolated your subject, move around to find the best angle, lighting and to add variety to your shots.

Little Blue Herons Nest Building



How to photograph. Use a long focal length of 300mm or higher to capture frame-filling intimate images of courtships, breeding plumage or interactions between parents and chicks or siblings. Using a telephoto lens protects the birds from invasive human behavior and allows them to behave naturally. Or use a wide angle lens to capture an environmental shot that depicts birds in their natural habitat. Shoot in continuous mode to capture interesting activity. The nesting colony is usually a tangle of vegetation, protruding limbs and reed grasses. This is where the Back-Button AF is desired (learn more). You can set focus and it will stay set until you decide to change it. Also, the back-button focusing technique is advantageous in situations where you need to quickly transition from shooting a stationary subject to one that is moving. Rookeries are good locations for flight shots as the birds are constantly coming and going to fetch sticks for nests or food for their young.

Great Egrets in Display Plumage



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When to photograph. Dawn and dusk. The magical moments are before sunrise when the birds are still roosting. Watching them awake and pause and strike a pose towards the sun are amazing photo opportunities. Know the angle of the sun in relation to the colony to find the best illumination. And dusk, when the birds return to roost and mates settle in together and the chorus dies down.

Great Egret with Nesting Material Pre-Sunrise



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Practice Ethics. Per the National Audubon Society, "Respect for birds and their habitats must come before getting that perfect shot or footage." Avoid causing unnecessary disturbance or stress to the birds - and nesting birds are particularly vulnerable. [Read the Audubon guidelines on how to be a responsible bird photographer.](#)

Anhinga Nest



Field Trip Reports

by Lynn Hodgson

Roxbury Park, Meggett SC

March 26, 2022

HHIAS goes to Roxbury Park! For our first-ever field trip to Roxbury Park, Meggett SC, leaders Teri & Herve Cerisoles and Lynn Hodgson led 8 eager HHIAS members exploring the many habitats to be found on this 174 acre property, on Toogoodoo Creek. Teri & Herve have been involved in protecting the property from planned development for many years. It is now owned and protected by the town of Meggett.

We had 14 species of birds right in the parking lot, including good looks at Red-headed Woodpeckers, and we heard Northern Parulas and White-eyed Vireos, and of course very loud Tufted Titmouses. We headed out on an old road/path along tidal Toogoodoo Creek. Along the way, we saw an Osprey on his platform, Great Blue and Tricolored Herons. There is a house on the point, which can be rented, and a large screened-in pavilion. We all thought we should have a HHIAS retreat there sometime and spend a couple of nights. The dock was a good vantage for seeing Willets, Greater Yellowlegs, Little Blue herons, and Snowy Egrets. Some folks got their first really good look at a Yellow-throated Warbler in the trees. We were also treated to a cameo by a small sting ray hunting in the shallows.

The rest of the hike followed trails through woods, past a couple of large fields, and near cypress/tupelo swamp. We saw 43 species of birds and one very enchanting little green snake in a tree. (We do look at things besides birds sometimes!)

Photographs courtesy of Kathy Byrd





After the walk, 8 of us drove 1/2 mile down the road to The Mercantile, a wonderful little restaurant with outdoor seating. Delicious!

Lynn commented that she was going to stop off at Combahee unit of the ACE Basin NWR on the way home for a short 1/2 hour looksee— and 4 others decided to follow her. It was extremely windy on the impoundment dikes, but we persevered because King Rail, Virginia rail, and Sora had recently been reported there. No luck with the rails, except for one call by a Sora. However, we saw literally clouds of hundreds of swirling common ibis and glossy ibis. It was fascinating to watch the distant clouds rise and fall and change shape. Once they looked like a white elephant on the horizon! Then they finally came closer so we could be sure what we were seeing. We ended up spending an hour and a half with our mouths wide open in awe.



Here are comments from the participants, in case you need motivation to watch for this trip next year. And, yes, there really were 3 Karens on the trip.

Karen #1 says: *Thrilling day on amazing property in the ACE saved by our wonderful co- leaders for future generations. Magical walk around a beautiful variety of habitat locations.*

Karen #2 says: *'best walk ever' with a wonderful group of friends. Amazing wildlife: butterflies 🦋, dragonflies, a cute green snake 🐍, gators 🐊, turtles 🐢, the birds and the bees and the ray..... 🐡 🌸 🌈 and the added delight of gathering around the lunch table to share our joy of our morning escapades*

Karen #3 says: *Thank you everyone. This one will be remembered for ever! I talked about it all night long telling my husband what a great group you all were!*

Co-leader Teri sends the following link, for more information about Roxbury

Park. It is a 2013 interview with Ken Carmen, the caretaker/naturalist there for several years. Teri says, “Interesting that he mentions the sting rays too!”

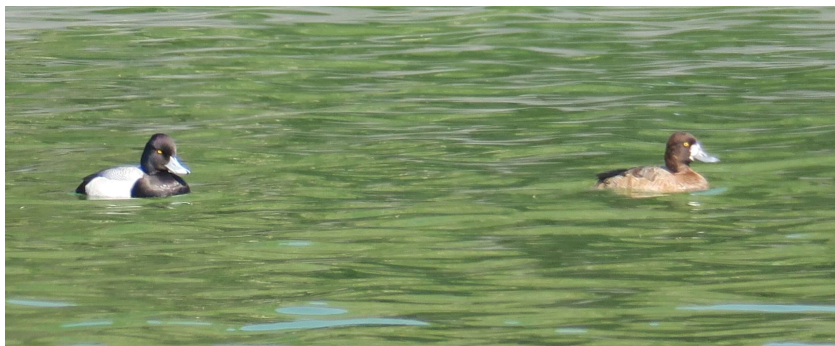
[Read interview with Ken Carmen here.](#)

Water Treatment Plant, Hilton Head Island, SC

March 2022

6 HHIAS Birders joined Lynn Hodgson on a last-minute short-notice field trip to the Public Service Department’s Hilton Head wastewater treatment plant to see the wintering ducks which use their ponds. Connie Whitehead cheerfully led our group around the plant up to the ponds, where we encountered Buffleheads, Lesser Scaups, Hooded Mergansers and Bonaparte’s gulls. The main draw at PSD is that we could get much closer to the birds than is usual with ducks – no spotting scope required. All members of the group could see all the field marks for both male and female ducks. We discussed and compared pictures of the Lesser Scaup, Greater Scaup, and Ring-necked Ducks, which are often confusing to birders. As a bonus, strutting around the parking lot and lawns were 9 Canada geese! In addition to accommodating birders, Connie and her colleagues also offer tours of the treatment plant as a whole to school and other groups by appointment.

Lesser Scaup (male and female)




VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

PROTECTING BIRDS AND THE PLACES THEY NEED.

GET INVOLVED





Volunteer with us! Hilton Head Audubon is an all volunteer organization and relies on the contributions of many passionate and dedicated individuals who help make our mission of promoting the understanding, and conservation of native birds and their habitats possible. People with a range of skills and interests are needed to support our educational programs, activities, and conservation efforts.

If you are interested in volunteering, [explore our website for current opportunities](#) that fit your interest, skills and schedule.