



January 2022

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Looking back at the year 2021, let's celebrate our successes and give thanks to the members of our all-volunteer organization who dedicate their time and passion to HHIAS and its mission.

Strategic Initiatives

The Board, committee members along with membership accomplished the following :

- Updated and revised bylaws, which were approved by board and await member approval in January 2022.
- Designed member survey, compiled results and created board action plan to address member needs.
- Created strategic action plan for each board committee for 2021/2022.
- Advocated for a passive park on the Hilton Head Mid Island Tract.
- Advocated against development on Bay Point.
- Worked with SC Forest Service to update fire plan for Newhall Preserve.
- Updated financial management process.
- Revised membership structure to include more donation levels.
- Held a volunteer fair and created volunteer position descriptions to post on website.

Communications

The Communications team updated the HHIAS website to reflect our mission and provide relevant information and content, including:

- The [Volunteer Opportunities page](#) with links to "job descriptions"
- The [Conservation and Advocacy page](#) to publicize our efforts
- The [Go Birding](#) section to answer the two most frequently asked questions: where to go birding and what species can I expect to see?
- The [Community Science page](#) to highlight our work
- The [Birdability page](#)
- The [Events and Field Trips page](#)
- The refreshed [Newhall section](#)
- The revised [Membership and Donation page](#)

We also relaunched the Ecobon newsletter in an engaging email format that is more interactive and streamlines the field trip registration process.

In addition, we crafted a position statement on the Mid-Island Tract and gained the support of Trudi Gilfillian, South Carolina Opinion Editor for The

State, The Island Packet, The Beaufort Gazette, and The Sun News. She interviewed President Kay Grinnell and expressed support of Hilton Head Island Audubon's view on the Mid-Island Tract.

Conservation

The Conservation Committee hosted Bradley Williams, SC Audubon Campaigns Coordinator, for a Climate Change Advocacy workshop. This is part of an agreement with South Carolina Audubon to promote Climate Advocacy on a local, statewide and national basis. Attendees were treated to a presentation tailored to a current issue on our island, preservation of the Mid-Island Tract property. We received tips on successful letter writing, op-eds, and in-person meetings with local and state leaders, to help protect our birds and environment. We will carry this knowledge forward to advocate for targeted climate related issues and legislation.

At our November HHAS meeting, our Conservation Committee member, Dr. Hilton Klein, VMD MS, presented a very informative presentation on outdoor cats, their effect on the bird population and other wildlife, feral cat colonies, and public health. We are considering the next steps to educate the public about the importance of keeping cats indoors and possibly change local policies related to feral cat colonies.

In an effort to help protect our shorebird population on Hilton Head, the Conservation Committee is developing signage for public beach entrances to educate beach goers on the importance of maintaining a safe distance to feeding and resting shorebirds. The primary issue is related to harassment from dogs-off-leash but also includes interference from human recreational activities. A concept sign design has been developed and shared among the committee, the Board, and SC Audubon for design assistance. We are proposing a QR code on the sign that would link individuals to the HHAS website and posting where owners can share a picture of their dogs who take a pledge to Share Our Shore (SOS).

The Conservation Committee is endorsing Bird-Safe Building Construction, a nationwide movement to help protect birds from collisions with buildings. Such collisions are attributed to the loss of millions of birds each year, preventable in many cases by conscious design features incorporated

during planning for new or renovated buildings. Bird-Safe Construction in larger metropolitan areas of the country will help protect and maintain migratory bird populations at our local level. Several large cities have already enacted codes mandating such features. There is also a pending bill in the U.S. Congress that will require such features to be incorporated into future federal building projects. We can assist this effort by contacting our Congressional Representatives, requesting that they support and co-sponsor this bill.

Education

In January and February of 2021, after months of pandemic-related closures, we managed to advance our mission in spite of limited opportunities. Our members led students and teachers on campus birds walks during The Great Backyard Bird Count at Cross School and HE McCracken Middle. Prior to the walks, the students prepared by watching slide presentations in school and during Zoom classes online. Students recorded their count data online at <https://ebird.org/home>.

Later in the spring, we collaborated with Coastal Discovery Museum and Town of Hilton Head to manufacture and post our third educational beach sign at Islanders Beach Park. The message on the sign was created by a local student reminding beachgoers be considerate of shorebirds while they enjoy the sun and sand.

At Coastal Discovery Museum's Family Fun Day in August, our booth on the saltmarsh gazebo was a big hit with the children. We provided binoculars as well as expert advice on how to spot and identify local birds and other animals that visit our shores and creeks. The kids took home bookmarks and literature to foster their appreciation of the natural world.

Our committee heralded the launch of the Barry Lowes Scholarship in November. The award sponsored an outdoor field trip adventure for Karen Penale's 4th grade students from Cross School to explore Port Royal Sound by boat and on a hike through the maritime forest to the salt marsh. We intend to extend Barry's influence on more children and teachers next year and beyond.

Also in November, Laurie Biggs brought her middle school students from The Heritage Academy to enjoy a guided bird walk at Newhall Preserve. We hope to be able to support her outdoor education program and others throughout the year.

In December, the 3rd and 4th graders from Cross School identified birds around their campus garden and lagoons for the Christmas Bird Count. Education Committee co-chairs visited the classes during the week of our local count thanks to an invitation from teacher/member Karen Penale.

We'll move into 2022 with the Great Backyard Bird Count, February 18 – 21, at the top of our agenda.

Newhall Preserve

The Audubon Newhall Preserve had a banner year in 2021. Our many volunteers repaired and repainted the frames for our interpretive panels, installed two new bike racks and pads, installed new “double-wide” bulletin boards at the welcome kiosk, rebuilt and repainted the deck at the Audubon Pond, created a (hidden) “maintenance yard” with our tool shed, deck box, and compost heap; collected various memorials in a “Memorial garden,” installed a new memorial birdbath and dripper at the Pond Pollinator gardens, and extended the milled asphalt surface from the parking lot to the welcome kiosk.

During our many work days we culled invasive vegetation, removed loblolly pines competing with our long leaf pines, and “tubed” scores of trees and shrubs to protect them from the deer. We also elevated portions of the Branch Wood trail which tend to flood after heavy rains and fought the never-ending battle with encroaching vegetation and fallen trees on the trails. Blessed with a talented engineering Vice-Chair, we overcame “supply chain issues” to replace the pump for the pond aeration system. Finally, after months of hard work on the part of Lynn Hodgson and the Newhall Committee, we created a Management Plan which was approved by the Audubon Board in the Fall.

Since our fiscal year began on May 1st, we have collected more than \$3,200 in donations, and by mid-December in calendar year 2021 over

2,000 visitors recorded their visits on our trail guide clipboard. (We know that only a fraction of our visitors makes clipboard entries, given the frequency with which we have to refill the trail guides.) We partnered with the local Rotary on work days and with the Coastal Discovery Museum in marketing.

UPCOMING EVENTS

PROTECTING BIRDS AND THE PLACES THEY NEED.

JOIN US



Field Trips

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

January 8 Kayak & Birding Ebenezer Creek

Leader: Lynn Hodgson

Meet at the Tommy Long Boat Ramp, Rincon, GA, about an hour and fifteen minutes' drive from Hilton Head. Our outfitter will be Beaufort Kayak Tours and additional fees required. Register as usual with Hilton Head Audubon.

[Details and Registration click here.](#)

January 9 Pinckney Island NWR

Leader: Stephen Dickson

[Details and Registration click here.](#)

January 25 Nemours Plantation

Leader: Beau Bauer

[Details and Registration click here.](#)

January 29 Jarvis Creek Park

Leader: Robert Rommel

[Details and Registration click here.](#)

February 5 Bear Island

Leaders: Lynn Hodgson and Steven Guy

[Details and Registration click here](#)

March 30 - April 7 2022 Costa Rica Birding Trip

We are thrilled to announce this international birding trip to tropical Costa Rica. With more than 900 species, the tiny Central American country is one of the world's top birding destinations. A group of 10 Lowcountry birders will accompany professional naturalist and expert bird watcher Carlos Chacon through 8 days of exploration at 3 different birding destinations within Costa Rica. Carlos is a native Costa Rican biologist who has lived in the Lowcountry for the last 20 years, where he is the manager of Natural History at the Coastal Discovery Museum and volunteers as field trip coordinator for Hilton Head Audubon. The trip starts in northern Costa Rica in the foothills of the Rincon de la Vieja Volcano, followed by 2 days in the cloud forest at the famous Monteverde Mountains and 2 days exploring the tropical rain forest near the Arenal Volcano. This is an area of high biodiversity that is home to rare species including over 35 species of hummingbirds and 4 species of toucans. Accommodations are in comfortable eco-lodges and transportation is in a private, air-conditioned microbus. For more information and a detailed itinerary email Carlos at eco1adventures@gmail.com

Events Calendar

Please click on the links for more details

JANUARY

Newhall Weekly Bird Walk

Tuesdays @8:30am. No registration required

[For details click here](#)

Monthly Member Meeting

Thursday, January 13 @3:00pm at the Island Recreation Center, HHI
General meeting to vote on proposed bylaws. To view a summary of the purpose, process and proposed key revisions to the bylaws, [click here](#). Or to receive the full set of proposed bylaws, [click here](#). Following the general meeting procedures, our guest speaker, Bob Speare, will discuss the MOTUS project.

[For details click here.](#)

Birds of Costa Rica by Carlos Chacon

Thursday, January 27 @3:00pm tentatively at the Hilton Head Island Library or via Zoom (we will send an email to confirm the venue).

Chacon Carlos is a native Costa Rican biologist who has lived in the Lowcountry for the last 20 years, where he is the manager of Natural History at the Coastal Discovery Museum and volunteers as field trip coordinator for Hilton Head Audubon. You will have the opportunity to sign up for the next Costa Rican birding adventure scheduled for March 30 to April 7, 2022.

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

PROTECTING BIRDS AND THE PLACES THEY NEED.

HILTON HEAD AUDUBON IN THE NEWS



New Membership Levels

HHIAS is pleased to announce that the revised membership structure to include more donation levels is in place effective January 1. We took the opportunity to streamline the process so please visit the [website membership section for details](#).

Members and their donation levels will be acknowledged beginning in 2022 in the Hilton Head Audubon annual report (or you may remain anonymous). The expanded membership levels allow for a contribution beyond the basic

annual membership level to support our mission.

\$10 Fledgling (students)

\$25 Carolina Wren (individual)

\$35 Cardinal (family)

\$100 Great Egret

\$250 Ruddy Turnstone \$250

\$500 Painted Bunting \$500

\$1,000 Bald Eagle

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.](#)

2021 Christmas Bird Count

Our Christmas Bird Count on December 15, 2021, was preceded by an enjoyable evening on December 9th with an informative and entertaining presentation by Robert Rommel. He inspired a large gathering of 85 birders to prepare for the count!

Count day was pleasant, with light wind and temperatures up to the low 70's. We counted 26,681 birds and 135 species, very close to our numbers from last year. There were 231 field observers on 76 teams and 93 feeder watchers for a total of 324 participants. Sixty-nine of the participants were new to our count. Some of the rare or unusual birds found included two Roseate Spoonbills, a Sora, a Western Kingbird, two Sedge Wrens, a Purple Finch, a Reddish Egret, an American Redstart and a Peregrine Falcon.

Once again we had flocks of American White Pelicans seen by several teams. We totaled 73 after reducing for overlaps. Bald Eagles numbered 46 after subtracting about 10 that were determined to be duplicates from nearby territories. There were 11 hummingbird sightings, down from a high last year of 29. You can see more data and trends in the draft 10-Year History, now on the website with this year's numbers by species. Our results will be submitted to the Regional Editor in early January and will be final once approved.

It takes National Audubon almost a year to compile and analyze the results from the annual count. The results are now available for our December 2020 Christmas Bird Count. Thanks to all of your hard work, our Hilton Head CBC had second highest number of participants of all the 2,459 count circles in the Western Hemisphere! The highest participant count was in Edmonton, Alberta. (Our total was 349: 230 field observers and 119 feeder watchers.) Overall, there were 72,815 observers across the hemisphere, 10,000 fewer than the year before due to the pandemic. However, about two million more birds were counted for a total of over 44 million! A long way from the first Christmas Bird Count organized by Frank Chapman in 1900. He organized 25 area counts from Toronto to Pacific Grove, California. Twenty-seven participants tallied 89 species.

We could not have such a successful count without the enthusiasm and hard work of our participants and leaders. Thanks to all who participated!

Special thanks go to our 20 Area Captains who do a fantastic job of recruiting, organizing and reporting. Special thanks also go to our expert

panel (Robert Rommel, Bob Speare and Carlos Chacon) who reviewed all of the results. We will be gearing up for the next count before you know it!

Mark your calendars! The next Hilton Head CBC will be Wednesday, December 14, 2022.

[Click here to view the draft 10-Year History.](#)

CBC Images from the Mid-Island Tract

(courtesy of Paul Parrisk)



Black and White Warbler



Pileated Woodpecker



Wood Ducks

AUDUBON NEWHALL PRESERVE

PROTECTING BIRDS AND THE PLACES THEY NEED.

NEWHALL NOTES



Attention Volunteers Needed For January 22 Work Day!

Our next work day will be on Saturday January 22nd at 9 AM. Fueled by cocoa and donuts we will extend our current water line from the parking lot to the Audubon Pond. RSVP's helpful but not required. If you would like to join, please contact Bob Clemens at rclemens318@gmail.com or text (317) 989-5777 to let him know you'll be there. Thank you!

December Workday

Our Audubon Newhall Preserve December Work Day was a complete success with Vice-Chair Matt Mattoon leading Julia and David Buzzard, Kristin and Logan Cambron, Stephen Streeter, Carrie Jones, Amy Nelson, Jim Reynolds and Kathy Byrd in moving a truckload of milled asphalt to raise the Branch Wood Trail and extend the parking lot surface to the bulletin boards. Meanwhile, Master Gardeners Mary Ellen Blankenship, Linda Maslowski and Elaine Scott weeded and cleared our pollinator

gardens. Importantly, Cocoa and Donco fueled the workers, and “Big Al” supervised from the pond shoreline. Just a reminder to be alligator aware especially on warm weather days this winter. Photo of "Big Al" below courtesy of Carrie Jones.



THROUGH OUR BINOCULARS

PROTECTING BIRDS AND THE PLACES THEY NEED.

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 a media collage of December birding activity from the [HHIAS Facebook group page](#).



Through our Binoclulars has been a beloved section of Ecobon since its inception by Jack Colcolough. Jack relied on his expert network of birders and reports from birding-friends@google to compile the monthly column of birding activity and sightings. Without Jack's personal touch, the concept is now covered by eBird lists, birding-friends@google and the HHIAS

Facebook group page.

To keep this column alive, we are seeking a volunteer or volunteers to compile and report for Through Your Binoculars. This would be a great learning opportunity!

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.