



## November 2022

### Inside this issue:

- What's New
- Upcoming Events
- New & Noteworthy
- Audubon Newhall Preserve
- Feathers Through Our Lenses



Members and Friends of Hilton Head Audubon,

We have enjoyed a robust start to our fall season, with several stand-out bird walks planned, an insightful schedule of member meetings booked through next spring, and a continuing influx of new members and volunteers. Coming up next month is our most popular event of the year,

our Christmas Bird Count. Read on to learn how to become engaged in our bird and conservation initiatives. And if you are a new member, welcome!

### **Election Day - Greenspace Tax**

Hilton Head Audubon supports the Beaufort County Greenspace Tax. This bill, known as the “Penny Tax” will, if passed, collect up to \$100 million over two years for the sole purpose of conserving land in Beaufort County – land that our birds and wildlife need. To read more, [click here](#).

### **Spotlight Interview**

In this issue we continue our Spotlight series featuring one of the most respected and effective advocates for conserving South Carolina land, Maria Whitehead of the Open Space Institute. To read it, [click here](#).

### **Speaking Engagement**

In October, President Kay Grinnell and Secretary Patty Kappmeyer gave a presentation to the Plantation Garden Club on *Bird-Friendly Yards: Creating Habitats for Birds to Thrive!*

[Click here to view the presentation.](#)

### **Cornell Online Courses Discount**

In collaboration with the Sun City Bird Club we have partnered with Cornell University Ornithology Lab to offer our members access to 28 online courses at a special 30% discounted price for the remainder of 2022. These 28 courses are truly university level courses, designed and taught by university professors. To view the course catalog, [please click here](#). To purchase a course select and click on the desired class. Click on Enroll on the next screen. At the next screen, enter the coupon code *SunCityBird43* (no spaces) and click on the Apply Code button. This code will reduce the course price by 30%, a substantial savings. Finally, proceed to checkout and complete the purchase by entering your credit card information.

### **November and December Member Meeting Lineup**

On November 8, Field Biologist Amber Kuehn, manager of Sea Turtle Patrol Hilton Head Island, will present an overview of the 2022 Hilton Head sea turtle season. The annual Christmas Bird Count meeting will be held on

the evening of December 8.

Your Hilton Head Audubon Board and Committee Members

### **Volunteering Opportunities**

Volunteering is a vital way to contribute to Audubon, and to participate in an enriching aspect of life here in the Lowcountry.

The **Education Committee** needs volunteers to help with a few school projects:

**Christmas Bird Count and Great Backyard Bird Count:** We are looking for volunteers that are willing to assist classroom teachers in area schools (public or private) to teach their students to use binoculars, learn about birding and then participate in the CBC and GBBC. We will train individuals and provide them with information they can give to the teachers and their students. If you live near a school or maybe you have a relative attending (or working) at the school we can make the arrangements for you to become a volunteer at that school.

**School Bird Feeders:** Wild Birds Unlimited have given us bird feeders to give to area schools. We still need some poles and baffles for the feeders. We need volunteers to help set up the poles and feeders at area schools who wish to participate. We will need volunteers to pay to keep the feeders filled with seed for the individual schools as well.

Please reach out to Karen Penale if you are interested or have any questions at [Karenpenale@gmail.com](mailto:Karenpenale@gmail.com)

We have immediate volunteer positions available to man our booth at the weekly **Hilton Head Farmer's Market**. The Hilton Head Farmers Market gathers every Tuesday from 9:00am-1:00pm at the Costal Discovery Museum's Honey Horn campus. If you are interested, please contact us at the following email address: [hniaudubon@hiltonheadaudubon.org](mailto:hniaudubon@hiltonheadaudubon.org)

[Learn about all of our volunteer opportunities here.](#)

### **Community Science Opportunities**

Thank you to Carol Clemens for sharing two community science projects to participate in this winter.

### **Wintering Baltimore Oriole Survey**

If you have orioles frequenting your feeders during the months of December, January and February, or know someone who does, SCDNR would like for you to participate in the survey. The 2023 count will take place February 17-20 2023 in conjunction with the Great Backyard Bird Count. Simply jot down the dates and number of Baltimore Orioles seen. If you can snap a photo, that is great, but not required. Even if you do not have any Orioles visit your feeders, it is still important to report this. Please contact Lex Glover (GloverL@dnr.sc.gov) so he can add you to the list to receive the survey form or [to learn more, click here.](#)

### **International Osprey Watch**

We have reached the end of another fine year monitoring osprey on Hilton Head and a couple nests in Moss Creek. Over the course of the season (Feb – August) we monitored 64 sites and involved at least 42 monitors... probably a few more since some had help from a spouse or friend that may not have been officially on the list of monitors. We had a great year and sent 54 fledged ospreys into the big wide world. The best thing is that we believe only about 4 chicks were lost that we confirmed had hatched, meaning only about 7% were lost this year. None required us to try any drastic measures to save them. Rescue attempts have not been successful in the past. Last year we lost 11 of 58 chicks which is about 19%, so the % of those chicks making it this year is much better than last year.



We need your help! Ospreys will start to return/repair nests by mid-February. If you spot an osprey nest please email the exact location to [cclemens318@gmail.com](mailto:cclemens318@gmail.com). You can also [check the Lowcountry site](#) to see if the nest is already monitored. If the nest is not being monitored, Carol will add the site to the database, set up a monitor, and record the data for the monitor. We sometimes need more monitors, especially in gated communities, and some willing to co-monitor a nest when someone is away. If you are interested in this, please email the address above.

Here is a summary of just the past three years of this project on Hilton Head.

Year	Sites	Pairs returned	Pairs didn't return	Nest with incubation	Nests hatched	Confirmed chicks	Fledged
2020	61	?	?	52	42	72	63
2021	65	52	13	40	36	58	47
2022	64	48	13	38	33	58	54

Additional info on lost nests and chicks

2020 – for some sites, tree gone, nest not viable, chicks lost because of fall, predator, unaccounted for

2021 – for some sites, nest abandoned, tree down, 11 chicks lost due to storms, fall, failure to thrive

2022 - for some sites nest/tree gone, owls took over, nest abandoned, 4 lost due to fall or failure to thrive

## Join/Renew

Joining HHIAS or renewing your membership is easy, [click here to complete the online forms](#). Please consider a contribution beyond the basic annual membership level to support our mission. As the holidays are approaching a reminder that Gift memberships are available for purchase, [click here](#).

Members receive the first notification of and the ability to register for Hilton Head Audubon sponsored field trips, educational events and social gatherings, a subscription to Ecobon our digital newsletter and a chance to actively participate in citizen science (Christmas Bird Count) and conservation efforts. But more importantly your membership allows us to continue conservation and educational efforts throughout Hilton Head Island and Beaufort County, South Carolina.



\$10 Fledgling  
Basic Membership  
Student



\$25 Carolina wren  
Basic Membership  
Individual



\$35 Cardinal  
Basic Membership  
Family



\$100 Great Egret  
Membership Plus  
Additional Contribution



\$250 Ruddy Turnstone  
Membership Plus  
Additional Contribution



\$500 Painted Bunting  
Membership Plus  
Additional Contribution



\$1,000 Bald Eagle  
Membership Plus  
Additional Contribution

## Donations

Hilton Head Audubon accepts donations online, using Venmo, or by mailing a check. Donations can also be made in honor or memory of someone by following the instruction on the form.

[Donate online.](#)

[Donate by mail.](#)

Donate by Venmo. **If you have Venmo, scan the Venmo QR code** or go onto the [Venmo app](#) and find us by typing “HHI Audubon Society” or

“@HHIAudubon”.



We use our donations to support: advocacy regarding conservation/birding in our region, providing birding education programs to area schools, maintaining and interpreting through signage and tours of 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.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

*PROTECTING BIRDS AND THE PLACES THEY NEED.*

*JOIN US*



### Events

Mark your calendars: Our regularly scheduled monthly member events will be held at 2:30 on the second Tuesday of each Month at The Coastal Discovery Museum's Sea Island Room. Please note the exception is the December meeting which take place in the evening at a different location.

To view all upcoming events in a calendar format, [click here](#).

### **Newhall Work Day**

Saturday November 12

[To learn more, click here.](#)

### **November Member Meeting**

#### **Featuring Amber Kuehn**

[To learn more, click here.](#)

On November 8, from 2:30 - 4:00 PM, Field Biologist Amber Kuehn, manager of Sea Turtle Patrol Hilton Head Island, and owner/operator of Spartina Marine Education Charters, will present an overview of the 2022 Hilton Head sea turtle season.

### **December Member Meeting Christmas Bird Count Featuring Robert Rommel**

[To learn more, click here.](#)

The meeting will take place on Thursday, December 8, 2022 from 7:00pm to 8:30pm at the First Presbyterian Church on Hilton Head Island.

### **Annual Christmas Bird Count**

Wednesday, December 14, 2022

[To learn more and how to participate, click here.](#)

### **2023 Master Birder Class**

Join the waitlist to receive priority notification about the next session, [please click here.](#)

## **Field Trips and Walks**

### **Pinckney Island NWR Field Trip - November 12**

[To learn more and register click here.](#)

### **Palmetto Bluff Field Trip- November 19**

[To learn more and register, click here](#)

### **Spring Island Field Trip - December 10**

[To learn more and register, click here.](#)



## Kingfisher Pond Field Trip - December 18

[To learn more and register, click here.](#)

### Newhall Preserve Guided Walks

Free guided tours every Tuesday led by Master Birders Lynn Hodgson or Rosemary Staples. Please gather in the parking lot by 8:30 AM. Groups are welcome by appointment

Nature Interpretive walks with Lowcountry Master Naturalist Rita Kernan are also available by appointment. Contact Rita at [rakhhi@aol.com](mailto:rakhhi@aol.com) for details.

## NEW & NOTEWORTHY

*PROTECTING BIRDS AND THE PLACES THEY NEED.*

*HILTON HEAD AUDUBON IN THE NEWS*



### MOTUS Detections

Bob Speare is excited to report that the MOTUS wildlife tracker receiver on Hilton Head Island registered its first detection of not one, but three species - a Virginia rail, a red knot (detected 8 times) and a short-billed dowitcher! Bob will share a full report in the December Ecobon.

### 2022 Christmas Bird Count

by Susan Murphy

This is the 123rd year for the Audubon Christmas Bird Count! We are one of over 2,600 count circles in the Western Hemisphere. Our count area is a

15-mile diameter circle covering Hilton Head, Daufuskie and Pinckney Islands, parts of Bluffton and our waterways. On our one-day count, we identify species and count each bird we see or hear. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this long-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations, and to help guide conservation action.

**Count Day:** The Hilton Head area count is on Wednesday, December 14th. Area Captains are putting their teams together. We always welcome more birders, so if you are interested in being a part of this international effort, please e-mail Susan Murphy at [HHICBC@gmail.com](mailto:HHICBC@gmail.com) and she will have an Area Captain contact you. Field teams include birders of various levels. You can also participate from the comfort of home by being one of our Feeder Watchers.

**December Meeting:** Our annual Christmas Bird Count meeting is on Thursday, December 8th. It will be at First Presbyterian Church, Fellowship Hall, 540 William Hilton Parkway. Our social begins at 7:00 pm. The presentation, by Robert Rommel, begins at 7:30 pm. Robert is a past president of Hilton Head Audubon and is our science advisor for the CBC. He will review many of the birds we will see on count day and share important ID tips!

You are welcome to bring cookies and other goodies for the snack table, as always.

We hope to see you there!

### **Spotlight Interview**

**Maria Whitehead, Senior Project Manager Open Space Institute**

by Shannon Wilkinson

As one of the most respected and effective advocates for conserving South Carolina land, Maria Whitehead is one of the leading conservationists in the

country.

A native of Back Swamp, South Carolina, Maria graduated from Davidson College, then interned for the School for Field Studies in Australia. Afterward, she received a master's degree in wildlife ecology and management from the University of Georgia. Working under Dr. Drew Lanham, she received a doctorate in the Department of Forestry and Environmental Conservation from Clemson in 2003, focusing on avian ecology.

During the last decade, Maria has been instrumental in preserving over 50,000 acres of land across South Carolina and Georgia, first as a program manager with The Nature Conservancy and, since October 2016, as a senior project manager for the Open Space Institute (OSI), a national conservation organization based in New York State.

Since 2012 and in partnership with over 30 land conservation groups, OSI has conserved more than 35,000 acres in South Carolina. Over 99% of the land it protects will be publicly accessible, forever.

**Q: What initiatives at OSI are you most involved in, and how do you select what conservation areas to focus on?**

One of the things that I love about my job is how diverse the day-to-day work is. Over the course of a workday, my focus may shift from varied

conservation projects and initiatives like the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative, to community engagement strategies for a rural S.C. town, to complex conservation finance strategies. I get to touch much of the work that OSI does across the Southeast while working with a small but incredibly talented staff of six.

OSI's mission is to protect scenic, natural, and historic landscapes to provide public enjoyment, conserve habitat and working lands, and sustain communities. That's broad! OSI's recipe for project selection combines a keen grounding in science and knowledge of conservation threats and values, with an entrepreneurial spirit and a deep commitment to supporting the conservation priorities of our local, state, and federal agency partners.

In coastal South Carolina, we are fortunate to be part of the broader conservation community that has decades of experience in collaborative conservation. OSI's coastal S.C. projects include working to fill in federal proclamation boundaries for National Forests and Wildlife Refuges, and brand-new initiatives like protecting the upper Port Royal Sound watershed where OSI, TNC, and local partners including Beaufort County's Open Land Trust hope to create a bridge between two conservation strongholds - the ACE Basin and the Savannah River.

Generally, OSI's conservation work encourages a new regard for conservation in the Southeast. In addition to habitat and cultural resource protection, OSI focuses on improving access to nature-based recreation, especially in underserved communities, as well as land-based solutions to mitigate the impacts of climate change, and sustaining and improving rural economic opportunity.

**Q: You have identified South Carolina as one of the fastest-growing states in the Southeast. What impact of development here most concerns you?**

Residential and commercial development of natural landscapes and family-owned farm and timberlands is one of the most pressing and consequential threats to conservation. This type of land use change qualifies as outright habitat destruction and can result in immediate impacts to water quality, habitat connectivity, air quality, sound and light pollution... the list goes on.

Development also has impacts for tomorrow including loss of migration space and corridors needed for habitats and organisms to shift and move with rising sea levels and climate change.

There is a growing understanding that about half of our lands and waters should be conserved so that humans and habitats can better adapt to climate change. Meeting this goal would mean protecting more than 10 million acres of S.C.'s diverse habitats and landscapes. Over the past several decades, S.C. has been a leader in landscape-scale conservation, protecting more than 3 million acres--roughly 15% of the state's land--and helping to offset the 2.5 million acres that have been developed.

"How?" you may ask, "will we keep pace with the threat of unchecked development?" There are three reasons to have hope: (1) S.C. is home to incredible, yet-to-be-protected natural habitats; (2) Many S.C. residents have a stewardship ethic and affinity for the natural world, what conservationist and author Aldo Leopold called a "land ethic;" and (3) S.C. has a connected and collaborative network of talented land protection professionals working on proposed conservation legislation and attracting political support. Add to this list an unprecedented level of federal, state and local funding to advance these ambitious goals, and we've got an unstoppable platform!

**Q: What are your concerns about the Lowcountry area that Hilton Head and the Beaufort County area impact?**

S.C. is the 10th fastest growing state in the U.S. and Beaufort County is the 8th fastest growing County in S.C. Pressure from this high growth has been sustained for over a decade. The Town of Bluffton has grown from a 1 square mile footprint twenty years ago to a 54 square mile footprint today.

Unlike many of our estuaries, the Port Royal Sound receives a trickle of freshwater and sediment from rivers like the Coosawatchie paired with the highest tidal amplitude in the state. This combination allows salt-water habitats to reach much further inland, making Beaufort County home to over 50% of the salt marsh in S.C., almost one million acres. This expanse of high-quality marsh is considered some of the most diverse and intact, yet threatened, in the eastern US. Everything that happens in Beaufort County

should be viewed through the lens of protecting and sustaining this invaluable coastal habitat. Stormwater can act as a pollutant to the fragile marsh system and can have an amplified impact because of the lack of freshwater flushing. Development along the marsh edge will prevent future upslope migration of marsh habitat with sea level rise.

Where unchecked growth meets a natural gem, like the Port Royal Sound marshlands, we often find a populace that is ready to advance a conservation agenda. Beaufort County has demonstrated this in the past with overwhelming support for the Rural and Critical Lands Program managed by the Open Land Trust and Beaufort County.

**Q: How can we at Audubon Hilton Head advocate most effectively for the conservation of our threatened resources?**

HHI Audubon already does essential work in engaging and connecting its members to protected land and to conservation issues. As renowned Senegalese forestry engineer Baba Dioum reminded us more than 50 years ago, "In the end, we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we are taught." HHI Audubon's commitment to providing experiences in the natural world, engaging the community with impassioned speakers, and encouraging a stewardship ethic is an essential role in S.C.'s conservation community!

Of course, it is important to support the ecosystem of conservation NGOs and agency partners that protect, advocate for, steward, and engage the broader community in conservation. Many of S.C.'s successes are a direct result of our collaborative approach to conservation. Audubon, Open Space Institute, Open Land Trust, Coastal Conservation League, Center for Heirs Property and Preservation, The Nature Conservancy, and the list goes on, are all part of a team that are integral to accomplishing this important work!


There are other exciting opportunities at hand: This November, Beaufort County voters have an opportunity to raise additional funds for open space and land protection. The "Greenspace Penny" is question 1A and B on your ballot and if approved, would levy a sales tax for two years to raise \$100 million for land conservation in the region. This money, 40% of which

will be funded by tourism revenues, builds on existing conservation successes and will raise new money to protect the land we love, while creating spaces for young people, our future stewards, to connect with coastal habitats for the first time.



### **Newhall Work Days**

Seven of our Newhall Volunteers enjoyed great weather for our October Work Day! Shown from left to right, before they got grubby and sweaty, are Ava Elizabeth, Nathanael, and Thaddaeus Rios; Julia and David Buzzard; and John Grobe. The invisible photographer was your Fearless Leader, Bob Clemens. The Rios brothers moved the Memorial Garden sign to a less conspicuous location because we have had too many people walking down that dead end path and then wandering the irrigation trails. Julia, David and Ava Elizabeth tackled grooming the cathedral-like Pine Flatwoods, leaving only pine straw on the forest floor. John and Bob resumed the time-consuming task of pressure-washing the Pocasin boardwalk. (We think we'll be done by the end of 2023!). The balance of our time was spent trimming trails and greeting visitors.



Future projects include erecting a new welcome kiosk for the bulletin boards, rebuilding the trail guide box, improving wheelchair access to the pond, and re-lining the road to the parking lot with larger logs. We also hope to have a Spring Semester Intern from USCB to greet visitors during peak tourist season. Our next work day is Saturday, November 12.

To read about the work days and the fabulous work accomplished by our dedicated Newhall volunteers, please visit the [Newhall Notes section](#) of the website.



## FEATHERS IN OUR LENSES

*PROTECTING BIRDS AND THE PLACES THEY NEED.*

*COMMUNITY SIGHTINGS AND STORIES*

**Common Ground**  
by Patty Kappmeyer

The return of shorebirds to their overwintering grounds on Hilton Head



Island is the the season I look forward to most. It is like greeting old friends you have not seen for months and overjoyed that they are going to rest from their long journey and sit with you awhile. This joy, however, is tempered by news from the [2022 State of Birds Report](#) that identified 70 tipping point species at risk. I am saddened to see least tern, lesser yellowlegs, ruddy turnstone, seaside and saltmarsh sparrows, semipalmated sandpiper, short-billed dowitcher and whimbrels on the list. In addition, black skimmers, long-billed dowitcher and wilson's plovers have lost half of their population in the last 20 years! These are species most associated with our mudflats and marshes.

This past weekend I attended the 11th Annual Mitchelville Forum that explored the themes of existence, resistance and persistence in black culture that began in the Sea Islands of South Carolina. In 1862 Mitchelville became the first self-governing town of the formerly enslaved people. Those of you who know me, know that my photography and birding are very connected to time and place - especially the land we bird on around Mitchelville. What a privilege to hear oral histories from native Islanders, from archeologists who have discovered fascinating relics by using advanced sonar technology, and historians who delve into archives to piece together the history of this land.

After the forum I went to Mitchelville to reflect. I walked the path to the beach and before me the outgoing tide exposed the mudflats where hundreds of dunlin, sanderling, semi-palmated plovers and a few red knots fed frantically. Fresh in my mind were the stories recounted of fishing and farming by inhabitants of Mitchelville and their descendants through

persistance, and of the importance of the bounty these waters provided to sustain them. Like the native American Cusabo/Catawba tribes whose artifacts were found beneath the Mitchelville settlement, the native Gullah were and are naturalists and environmentalists.

In the 1970's BASF wanted to build a chemical plant on Victoria Bluff on the Colleton River and with it came the spectre of industrial pollution. The politics and dynamics behind the opposition to BASF were complex but It was the role of the native-lead Hilton Head Fishing Cooperative that is memorable.

*"The crown of the cooperative's fishing fleet, a forty-one-foot trawler named Captain Dave, sailed up from Hilton Head to the Chesapeake Bay and through the mouth of the Potomac River, where the crew presented officials from the Department of the Interior with a petition bearing forty thousand signatures of people opposed to the plant." (from [SouthernCultures](#))*

And so in my education of this place, I find common ground. To persist in preserving and honoring the land, the culture and people who came before and to continue to resist in order to save these beautiful open spaces, keep our waters clean and ensure equal access for all.

**November Sightings: 125 species!**

[Click here to view the list.](#) Please enjoy these collages of bird activity photographed during the past month.



