



## Summer 2022

### Inside this issue:

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



Greetings, Hilton Head Audubon Members, and Welcome to the Summer edition of Ecobon!

Just as our avian friends relentlessly work to feed and survive without a summer hiatus, our work too, to protect and conserve their habitats continues throughout the summer months. In this Ecobon Summer issue,

you'll learn about some of the things we're busy working on and read recaps of some of the events held. Thanks to all our members who keep the momentum going during these slower, and much hotter, months.

First, however, we are excited to pre-announce a fabulous new opportunity coming up this fall: **The Master Birder Program**. The class is open to all levels of birders. The fall session will run from October 11 through November 19, with virtual sessions on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and field trips on Saturday or Sunday each week. [To view the complete course schedule please click here.](#)

Registration and program execution is handled by Georgia Audubon. [Registration will open to the public August 1. HHIAS members will have access to priority registration - stay tuned for details.](#) To view the registration page [click here](#) and scroll to the bottom of the page and select "*Register for Hilton Head/Savannah Cohort*". Note you do not have to be a member of Georgia Audubon to register for this program.

In this issue we debut a new series, **Spotlight**, which shines a spotlight on leaders who are champions of conservation and align with our mission to protect birds and the places they need. Read on for highlights from our inaugural interview with John Tynan, Executive Director of Conservation Voters of South Carolina. Tynan discusses issues that are at the forefront of the CVCS's focus and how our elected officials vote on matters related to conservation and the environment. HHIAS looks forward to welcoming John as a speaker this fall. More to come on this special event in the next issue.

Lastly, **we need you!** We've asked before, and we ask again. Please help us further the excellent work so many Hilton Head Audubon members started. We are a strong organization, but we need your help to fully rebuild and renew our participation levels to their former stature before covid hit. As we all adjust to our changed world, we need you now more than ever to step up and be involved in our mission to promote conservation, educate people about the importance of birds in our natural world, and encourage environmental stewardship. Our voice is only as strong as our volunteers, and we need your passion and diverse expertise and experiences to keep

elevating our voice locally. So, don't delay, volunteer today! [Visit our website's volunteer page and sign up for a committee project or leadership role.](#) And stay tuned for up-coming member events.

We hope you enjoy this Summer edition of Ecobon. Our next issue coming out in September will have a full run-down on our Fall season of events and programs!

Stay cool, get involved, and keep watching the birds,

Your HHA Board and Committee Members

### **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





## Events

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

### **Newhall Work Days**

Saturday August 6 @8:30 - 10:00am

[For details click here](#)

## Field Trips and Walks

Field trips will resume in September.

### **Newhall Preserve Guided Walks**

Free guided tours every Tuesday led by Master Birders Jack Coleman 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.

## Field Trip Reports

### **Global Big Day and Migratory Bird Day - Bear Island**

**May 14 2022**

by Lynn Hodgson

By 8:30 a.m., 8 HHIAS birders gathered at Bear Island Wildlife Management Area, near the entrance at Mary's House Pond. We were

greeted by a large flock of black skimmers actually skimming in the open water, and by about a bazillion dunlin and friends probing the mud flats. In amongst all these were elegant black-necked stilts, least and western sandpipers, a few each of greater and lesser yellowlegs, black-bellied and semi-palmated plovers. Down the lagoon was a gathering of about 20 snowy egrets interspersed with a few great egrets, and a couple of mottled ducks. A busy place!

We felt we could have spent all day right there, but finally headed out for the usual auto tour. In the age of CoVid, 8 people meant 6 cars, so we were quite a parade. Soon, we spotted a yellow bird in the grass, which turned out to be a female orchard oriole, and the male showed up too. After pausing again to look at Mary's House Pond from the other side, we continued out the dike, then stopped to walk a side road, adding the usual woodland and water-edge species: white-breasted and brown-headed nuthatches, common yellowthroat, parula and pine warblers, red-bellied woodpeckers, etc. Proceeding on, we found that the road was blocked just past the large trunk under the road. Nearly a dozen people were fishing for red drum and other lagoon fish, and one friendly fellow showed us nearly a bucket-full of blue crab. We did a U-turn, and headed back to take the road from the other end.

Stopping by the pecan grove to check the barn owl boxes, we were delighted to see movement in one known to have had activity earlier this year. There were at least 2 fluffy heads just barely showing in the hole. Luckily, they periodically shifted around, so we were sure we weren't imagining things!

After repeated stops and starts, we finally arrived back at the Bear entrance around 11:30, having seen 48 species. Three of our folks had other commitments and peeled off, while the rest headed for Donnelley WMA. We stopped for lunch under the live oaks at the check station, then lost one more to prior commitments. But 4 of us spent several more hours poking our way along, seeing cool birds, ending up at Fishburne Pond by the lodge for the obligatory white pelicans and roseate spoonbills. While there, another birder clued us in to a purple gallinule at a backwater we had just left! So, we turned back and got a quick peek of him before he headed into

the reeds. We made a few other listening stops, then walked the dike closest to the Donnelley entry, which led to hearing but not seeing wood ducks. Despite having somehow missed the red-headed woodpeckers, kingfishers, and little blue herons, and thanks to Stephen Dickson keeping the eBird lists, we had a whopping 89 species to celebrate Global Big Day. That gives a target to try to beat next year!

## NEW & NOTEWORTHY

PROTECTING BIRDS AND THE PLACES THEY NEED.

HILTON HEAD AUDUBON IN THE NEWS



### Spotlight Interview

#### John Tynan, Executive Director Conservation Voters of South Carolina

by Shannon Wilkinson

At Hilton Head Audubon we know that to survive and flourish, migrating and resident birds are dependent on the continued protection of our coastal marshes, beaches, maritime forests and other habitats.

To learn more about CVSC's work and discuss how their efforts support and complement Audubon's mission, we interviewed their Executive Director, John Tynan.

Conservation Voters of South Carolina (CVSC) is the political voice of the Palmetto State's conservation community, fighting for S.C.'s air, land, and water through bipartisan, pragmatic political action. Their mission is to make conservation and environmental issues a top priority among South Carolina's elected leaders, political candidates, and voters.

[To read the full interview click here.](#)

Q: What issues are at the forefront of CVSC's focus?

*As a leader in environmental advocacy, Conservation Voters of South Carolina is in a unique position to build bipartisan support in the General Assembly and advance pro-conservation policies that advance clean energy and protect the air, land, and water we love in South Carolina. In short, we fight to pass good conservation policies and to stop harmful environmental rollbacks.*

*CVSC believes that the most durable and effective way to protect South Carolina's environment is to build bipartisan coalitions in the General Assembly, allowing conservation as an issue to survive the pendulum swings of partisan politics. We know that South Carolinians, regardless of party affiliation, care deeply about our environment and the impact environmental policies have on the Palmetto State. We often say that protecting the environment is not a value of just Democrats or Republicans – it is a value shared by all South Carolinians.*

*To this end, our work in the 2022 legislative session has focused on the following topics:*

*The creation and resourcing of an emerging contaminants remediation fund that will keep communities from drinking water contaminated with PFAS – a class of toxic forever chemicals.*

*Efforts to protect an additional 3 million acres of land and water across South Carolina, with an initial focus of increasing agency funding for this work and providing counties the ability to generate local funds for greenspace protection.*

*Advancing clean energy policies that close dirty and expensive coal plants, that hold energy regulators accountable for the impacts of their decisions on ratepayers and the environment, and that push the state to identify the benefits of investing in wind, solar, and other clean energy sources in South Carolina.*

Q: CVSC has an impressive track record with bipartisan policy work. How

do you measure CVSC's success?

*We fight to protect the environment in order to make it cleaner and healthier for people. Our ultimate measure of success is driving change that makes peoples' lives better – even if this is small and incremental over time. But measuring the direct impact on the lives of South Carolinians can be hard – so we often look at the bills we pass, the elections we win, and the performance of lawmakers as other success metrics.*

*As I mentioned, we believe that the most effective and durable way to protect our environment is through bipartisan efforts to change policy. We have advanced numerous bills in the General Assembly – from the founding and funding of the Conservation Bank for land protection, to the Surface Water Withdrawal and Permitting Act for management of water resources, to the Energy Freedom Act for clean energy growth, to the Shoreline Management Act for protection of our coastal resources.*

*But in order to continue to succeed in passing policy with bipartisan support, we must continue to support and elect leaders who value our environment. Since 2016, CVSC has invested over \$500,000 in electoral programs and made over 3.1m voter contacts. We have endorsed 142 candidates for office, with this number split nearly 50-50 between Republicans and Democrats. Of our 142 endorsements, we have seen an 86% success rate in these elections.*

*Finally, one additional tool that we use to measure our legislative success - and to hold elected officials accountable - is CVSC's Legislative Scorecard. Each two-year legislative session, we look at who voted for (and against) South Carolina conservation issues. The Scorecard is an incredibly valuable tool for voters researching candidates and constituents learning how their Representative or Senator works for (or against) our environment – but it also allows us to track progress over time. [Link to scorecard.](#)*



## Meet HHIA's Summer Intern

by Laura Voight, Conservation Chair

HHIA welcomed its first-ever intern, Faith Sulak, at the beginning of the summer. Faith, a student at Furman College, is working on various HHIA conservation and outreach projects. Among them, she's worked at our new Farmer's Market booth with the Buzzards (if you haven't stopped by yet, please do!), delved into learning about Motus and Hilton Head's antenna at the Marriott with Bob Speare, attended a Bluffton Town Hall meeting with Jane Hester to submit HHIA's opposition to Palmetto Bluff's marina expansion (...seeing conservation in action at the grass-roots level!), and spent time greeting and surveying visitors at Newhall Preserve under a delightful blue tent provided by Bob Clemens. Faith has also been helping us with HHIA's on-line presence and ideas to better reach a younger demographic. In a nutshell, she's a real help to us in our mission to engage the public with the importance of conserving the land, birds and other wildlife. Stay tuned for her final report in our next Ecobon Newsletter!



## Good News on Beaufort County's Green Space Referendum

by Laura Voight, Conservation Chair

On July 11, Beaufort County voted in favor of advancing the Green Space Tax referendum. According to Beaufort County's website, the Council voted 8-2 in favor of advancing the referendum to a third reading – which is one step closer to placing it on this Fall's ballot! The Green Space Tax referendum is designed to fund more "green space" to be spared from development.

Hilton Head Audubon stands with South Carolina Audubon in strongly supporting this conservation move. If the Green Space Tax makes it to the ballot this fall, Hilton Head Audubon will be reaching out to all our members to vote in favor of it. As SC Audubon's Policy Director, Julia Dietz, has said, "There is an urgent need to do more to protect our natural environment from rapid development throughout the state and Beaufort County is no exception... This new law allows a county to impose an up to one percent sales tax for the sole purpose of funding land acquisition for conservation and protection from burgeoning development. Efforts like this will help protect our birds, wildlife and the overall quality of life."

Please help keep this referendum alive by writing your Beaufort County Council member today.

## **Second Barry Lowes Scholarship Field Trip**

by Lois Lewis

On a beautiful day in April, science teacher Emily Rietveld lead eighth grade students from H.E. McCracken Middle School on a field trip of nature study at the Port Royal Sound Foundation Maritime Center. This was the second group to receive funds from Hilton Head Audubon's Barry Lowes Scholarship. Many of us "old-timers" remember Barry with fondness and awe for his work as President of HH Audubon and long-time Christmas Bird Count Chairman. He had a strong commitment to educating everyone, especially the children, about being good stewards of the natural world. He and his wife, Phil, established Camp Timberlane in Ontario "to create a

community where kids could spend their summers, connect with nature, learn new skills, become part of a family and express their individuality.”

To honor him, our Audubon group created a scholarship to start something similar in the Lowcountry. Ms Reitveld’s students enjoyed a full day of outdoor lessons at The Maritime Center. HH Audubon members Jane Hester and Lois Lewis were on hand to start the program with some personal recollections of Barry and his legacy here in the Lowcountry. The students loved the discovery cruise on Amber Kuehn’s vessel, The Spartina, as well as a nature hike, and micro-plastics lab. Thanks to our purchase of new binoculars, each student wore his/her own pair to spot birds during the walk through the maritime forest to the salt marsh and a freshwater pond. Maritime Center Educator, Chris Kehrer, was able to point out a variety of bird species including Painted Buntings, Black-crowned Night Herons, and Whimbrels. After lunch, the students used microscopes to investigate water samples from the Chechessee River. To their dismay, plastics from bits of fishing line to micro-plastics that get absorbed into marine life were found throughout the water column. Despite the focus on learning, the students asked their teacher if they could “...do this every week?”

Barry Lowes once said, “As an educator, you drop a pebble into the pond never knowing how far the ripples will spread.” The ripples he initiated are still spreading, we hope towards a better future.



## AUDUBON NEWHALL PRESERVE

PROTECTING BIRDS AND THE PLACES THEY NEED.

NEWHALL NOTES



### **A Year in Review**

by Lynn Hodgson

Audubon Newhall Preserve Tuesday morning bird walks: Oct 12, 2021 to May 17, 2022

Newhall has seen an uptick in visitation this year, including larger numbers of people taking part in our fall-winter-spring Tuesday morning bird walks. It may be that the previous season was still suffering from the overall slow-down in visitation on the island, due to covid 19. Or maybe the word is just getting around.

Specifically, in the 2020-21 season, on the bird walks we had an average of 6 participants (high of 17, low of 0), and an average of 16 species (high of 22 and low of 3). In the current season, 2021-22, we had an average of 10 participants (high of 25, low of 3), and saw an average of 18 species.

Notable birds this year were a great horned owl being harassed by American crows very high in a pine tree, a cooperative barred owl on a branch at eye level over the pond, a great blue heron who played “lawn ornament” at the pond for excellent photo ops, and an adorable hooded warbler sounding off in the horse sugar. (I should also mention than some of our visitors were more interested in being a little too close for comfort to Big Al, and later Little Al, the alligators.) More reliable were our beautiful Northern Cardinals, Eastern Bluebirds, Eastern Towhees, Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmouses (or is it titmice?), Brown-headed Nuthatches, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Yellow-rumped Warblers and Eastern Phoebes

in the winter, noisy White-eyed Vireos and Great Crested Flycatchers in the spring. Most of the birds are flitting about in the shrubbery or high up in the pine trees, so the bird walks are more about listening than watching, as we learn to think about the patterns, pitches, and “feel” for the bird songs and calls. Thanks to all who participated. We nearly always see more birds when there are more eyes watching and ears listening.

### **Newhall Work Days**

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



### **Trail Volunteers Needed**

We once again need volunteers to walk the trails in the Preserve each month for August through December. (Thanks to those who volunteered

for January through June, and Carrie Jones has already claimed July!)

Trail monitors should walk trails once a week but need not walk every trail every week. Please do walk each trail at least twice during the month, reporting any fallen trees or encroaching vegetation to Bob Clemens.

Please reply to Bob Clemens at [rclemens318@gmail.com](mailto:rclemens318@gmail.com) with the month or months that you could serve!

## FEATHERS IN OUR LENSES

PROTECTING BIRDS AND THE PLACES THEY NEED

COMMUNITY SIGHTINGS & STORIES



This time of year, we relish the chance to watch so many species' nestlings become fledglings! From their often striped and spotted dull feathers, unique "hair" do's spiking off their heads, and wide-eyes and wide-mouths waiting for their next meal from dutiful parents, these young additions to nature are fascinating to watch. And here in the Hilton Head area, we're lucky to have so many incredible photographers who share their photos on Hilton Head Island Audubon's Facebook page for us all to admire.

This new column – **The Feathers in Our Lenses** – will highlight some of the most entertaining and beautiful shots posted each month on [HHIA's Facebook page](#). With more than 2,200 followers and growing, people are catching on that our Lowcountry birds are incredible. And thanks to so many dedicated birders now carrying their camera lenses instead of binoculars, we're all able to enjoy via their photos! From our backyard birders to the more intrepid, patient ones capturing that perfect shot in the wild, our Facebook page shares everything from professional-quality to the quick cell-phone photo catching the unexpected splash of feathers in sight.

All are welcome to post their exciting siting, and let's face it, capturing the osprey tearing up a fresh catch for its nestling, the colorful male painted bunting feeding his recently fledged young, or the long-legged wood stork nestlings wobblily standing up trying to figure out what the world outside its nest holds..., these are the moments too good not to share!

During June and July our group captured images of 58 species! [Click here to see the full list.](#)

Having so many admirers of our incredible bird life in the Lowcountry on Facebook than just HHIA members, our Facebook page also gives us a prime opportunity to educate people about the importance of conserving the natural world that gives us such joy and entertainment. If you know someone who isn't a member following our column, encourage them to join HHI Audubon.

Migrating from binocular to camera lenses is only part of the story that this column will share. In keeping with the Ecobon's original and long-running column "Through our Binoculars", we'll keep reporting the out-of-season, unusual or rare sightings from our members, including those noted on eBird, the most important world-wide database on bird populations.





As are reminder, 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](mailto:ecobon@hiltonheadaudubon.org).