



## January 2023

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Members and Friends of Hilton Head Audubon,

Happy New Year! 2022 ended on a high note for Hilton Head Audubon as we received two notable recognitions. A heartfelt thank you to the people who volunteered their time and expertise in making this happen.

## **Top Audubon Successes in 2022: Audubon South Carolina and Hilton Head Audubon Help Pass Green Space Measure**

Beaufort County, South Carolina voters passed a Green Space sales tax to be used to purchase land and save it from development. The tax will start in May 2023 and run for two years or until \$100 million has been collected. Audubon South Carolina and Hilton Head Audubon helped educate voters about the proposed sales tax increase and were instrumental in getting the measure passed this November. [Read the full list here.](#)

## **Hilton Head Island Audubon Society has been awarded an Audubon Collaborative Grant for \$1,000**

Our goal is to expand birding to mobility challenged individuals within an Important Birding Area. Springtime at Ibis Pond at Pinckney National Wildlife Refuge is an amazing spectacle with trees and bushes in the pond brimming with nesting White Ibises, Herons, Egrets and Anhingas. Unfortunately, Ibis Pond is a  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile walk from the parking lot – far for people with mobility challenges. We are partnering with Friends of the Savannah National Wildlife Refuges to use their extended golf cart to transport participants from the parking lot to Ibis Pond. This grant will pay for the birding guides – making birding this amazing place inclusive to more people. Tours will take place from March 21 to May 16 - weekly on Tuesday from 8:30 to 10:00am. [Click here to register.](#)

In 2023, Hilton Head Audubon is excited to bring to our members interesting and diverse events and programs. Please read on for what is on the calendar for January.

### **January Meeting**

The January member meeting features Dr. Andy Jones, Executive Director, Spring Island Trust and Lowcountry Institute who will speak on the topic: Migration All Around Us: How Birds Navigate the Americas.



For some five billion individual birds, a trip to Central or South America from North America is an essential and stunning annual accomplishment. This talk will dive into why birds undertake this grueling trip and how they find their way to wintering grounds they have never seen before. Most species of songbirds migrate at night, and lights can disorient them and draw them into collision situations. Citizen science efforts are working to curtail these collisions, as well as to learn more about better ways to minimize collisions in the future.

Tuesday January 10th at the Coastal Discover Museum 2:30-4:00pm

### **Island Ambassador Program**

Please join Hilton Head Audubon and the Womens' Association of Hilton Head Island (WAHHI) Nature Exploration Group for a joint learning experience with Hilton Head's Island Ambassador Program. This three part seminar is presented by three UCSB professors, and focuses on information to help us improve our skills as Hilton Head Island ambassadors. Topics include Island Knowledge, Island Culture and Island Ecology.

The seminar will be followed by a pasta buffet lunch with speaker Bethany McDonald. Ms. McDonald recently founded Finnegan's Sharing Shack on Driessen Beach, a program to recycle and give away "left behind" and unwanted beach toys and other beach items. Price of the event, including

seminar, lunch and speaker, taxes and tips is \$36pp. Tickets must be purchased by Sunday January 15th. Guests are welcome. [Register and purchase tickets here.](#)

Friday January 20th at USCB Hilton Head, 9:30-noon with lunch to follow .

### **Cornell Online Courses Offer Extended Through 2023**

Great news for those hungry to learn more about our birds! Our Cornell Bird Academy 30% course discount has been extended for HHIA members for 2023, and can be used up to 10 times per person during 2022 & 2023. Many thanks to Gene Bigelow of Sun City Bird Club for organizing this ongoing collaborative discount for both organizations.

To peruse 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.

Your Hilton Head Audubon Board and Committee Members.

### **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. 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”.



venmo

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

Our monthly member events are held at 2:30 on the second Tuesday of each Month at The Coastal Discovery Museum's Sea Island Room.

Newhall work days take place on the second Saturday of the month.

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

### **Newhall Work Day**

Saturday January 14, 2023

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

**January Member Meeting Featuring Dr. Andy Jones of the Spring  
Island Institute**

Tuesday, January 10, 2023

[To learn more click here.](#)

**February Member Meeting Featuring Larry Carlile, Federal Wildlife  
Biologist Specializing in Red Cockaded Woodpeckers**

Tuesday, February 14, 2023

[To learn more click here.](#)

**March Member Meeting Featuring Dr. Alan Biggs on Shorebirds**

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

[To learn more click here.](#)

**April Member Meeting Featuring Riley Egger of the Coastal  
Conservation League.**

Tuesday, April 11, 2023

[To learn more click here.](#)

**May Member Meeting - Picnic and Birding at Jarvis Creek Park**

Tuesday, May 9, 2023

[To learn more click here.](#)

**Field Trips and Walks**

**Beidler Forest Field Trip - January 6**

**\*\*POSTPONED TO A LATER DATE\*\***

This field trip is postponed, we will send an email with the new date to all members.

**Solomon Tract of Savannah NWR Field Trip - January 7**

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

**Bear Island Field Trip - February 11**

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

## Save the Date as we finalize the following field trips!

Tybee Island, Saturday March 18

Webb WMA, Saturday April 22

Harris Neck NWR, Saturday May 6

### Newhall Preserve Guided Walks

Free guided tours every Tuesday led by Master Birders. Please gather in the parking lot by 8:30 AM.

## NEW & NOTEWORTHY

*PROTECTING BIRDS AND THE PLACES THEY NEED.*

*HILTON HEAD AUDUBON IN THE NEWS*



### 2022 Christmas Bird Count

by Susan Murphy

We kicked off the Christmas Bird Count at an enjoyable evening meeting attended by about 110 birders. Robert Rommel expertly previewed many of the commonly seen birds to help us prepare for count day on Wednesday, December 14th.

Count day was windy and cool with temperatures in the 50s, then light rain later in the day. We counted 27,609 birds and 135 species, close to our numbers from last year. There were 280 field observers on 81 teams and 99 feeder watchers for a record total of 379 participants. We welcomed 32 students to our count: 20 fifth graders from Red Cedar Elementary and 12 science students from Hilton Head High School. There were 86 other



participants who were new to our count this year. Our Pinckney Island team was joined by a reporter from the Post and Courier, whose feature article about the joys of the count was published on Christmas Eve.

Robert Rommel wrote in our report to the CBC Regional Editor that “perhaps due to the mild weather preceding the count, we had a number of lingering migrants as well as higher than normal counts of some birds that tend to move further south around the time of the count. Lingering birds included a pair of Painted Buntings, a female/immature American Redstart and a female Summer Tanager. We had larger than usual numbers of remaining Black Skimmers. Black-bellied Whistling Ducks have been increasing rapidly in our area and Roseate Spoonbills are starting to establish a year-round presence.”

Some of the other rare or unusual birds found included a Lesser Black-backed Gull, two Purple Finches and a female Hairy Woodpecker. A banded Bald Eagle was photographed by Sophia Schade at Colleton River Club. She reported the sighting and learned that the male eagle was too young to fly when banded in 2017 in Georgia.



Banded Bald Eagle, courtesy of Sophia Schade



© Sophia Schade



Lesser Black-backed Gull, courtesy of Fran Baer



Killdeer, courtesy of Chris Klonowski

Once again we had flocks of American White Pelicans seen by several teams. We totaled 71 after reducing for overlaps. Bald Eagles numbered 44 after subtracting a few that were determined to be duplicates. Our sightings of Black-bellied Whistling Ducks rose to 164. According to the South Carolina summary from last year's count, they have been increasing across the state. 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.

National Audubon issued their report on the 2021 count on December 9th and it is interesting reading available on their website. Thanks to all of your hard work, our Hilton Head CBC had third highest number of participants of all the 2,621 count circles in the Western Hemisphere! (Our total last year was 324: 231 field observers and 93 feeder watchers.) Overall, there were 76,880 observers across the Western Hemisphere, who counted over 42 million birds. This is similar to the past several seasons but, according to the national summary, far more birds were tallied decades ago when the average was 60 to 100 million.

We could not have such a successful count without the enthusiasm and hard work of our participants and leaders. Thanks to all who contributed! We usually have four boats on the waterways, piloted by generous

volunteer boat captains. This year we had trouble finding a fourth boat and are very appreciative of a last minute sponsorship by The Outside Foundation. Many thanks go to our 21 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 Sarah Gustafson) who reviewed all of the results on a marathon Zoom call.

We will be planning for the next count soon!

Mark your calendars!

The next Hilton Head CBC will be Friday December 15, 2023

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

### **Field Trip Report: Kingfisher Pond Recreation Area of the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, December 18, 2022**

by Lynn Hodgson

This was a rare Sunday field trip, scheduled to avoid various Christmas Bird Counts in the Lowcountry. 7 hardy souls joined Lynn Hodgson in the breezy 38 degrees at Kingfisher Pond. We spent about 15 minutes on the dock with a spotting scope for views of approximately 50 black-bellied whistling ducks and a few killdeer and Wilson's snipes on the mudflats. The snipes were new to several participants, so we made sure everyone saw the very long probing bill, and the three distinctive prominent stripes on the back ("snipe stripes"). We might have spent longer on the dock, but it was downright cold in the wind. So, we packed up the scope and headed around the pond.

Out of the wind, we were more comfortable and spent time locating smaller birds among the trees and along the edges – red-bellied, pileated, and downy woodpeckers, yellow-bellied sapsuckers, ruby-crowned kinglet, eastern phoebes, American crows, tufted titmouse, etc. as well as a few

snowy egrets and little blue herons. As expected, yellow-rumped warblers were calling all around us. Back of the pond, we headed out along the Tupelo trail to the tupelo swamp boardwalk, where we unintentionally flushed a couple of wood ducks. Continuing around the pond, we spotted some female ducks and one ring-necked duck. The former were initially identified as green-winged teal, based on a green speculum, visible in a close-up camera shot. However, one of them cooperatively extended its wings, showing us the bright blue of a blue-winged teal. This is an easy mistake to make, since the blue-wing teal does have a green speculum. Luckily, we spent the time to get it right.

Birds were not particularly abundant, but we ended up with 25 species – very respectable for mid-winter. Thanks to all who braved the temperature – and I am also thankful we did not schedule this for Christmas weekend, when 20 was predicted!



### **Newhall Work Days**

Eight hardy volunteers pitched in at the December 10th Newhall Work Day. Shown in the first photo below (from left to right) are Vice-Chair Lynn Hodgson, VMI lineman Jim Reynolds, Miho Kinnas, Karen Lucey, “Doc” Hilton Klein, and “Brooklyn” Sal Gioia. Not shown are photographer and Fearless Leader, Bob Clemens, and “Boat Captain” Jay Rawl, who arrived 30 seconds later.



Jim Reynolds honchoed a crew that relined the Branch Wood Trail with logs and cleared debris from the northeast corner of the parking area. Bob Clemens and his crew cleared an area near the aeration pumps that had been cluttered with discarded lumber and trash. Bob and Sal hauled the debris to the recycle center (thus avoiding more hauling of logs) and returned to find the work almost done! (Good timing!) In the third photo, Jim shows Lynn and Bob his crew's accomplishments! Many thanks to all who participated.





Our next work day is planned for Saturday January 14th from 8:30 to 10 AM. We will spread milled asphalt and gather brush to be hauled away by SeaPines CSA. RSVPs are helpful, but not required, to Bob Clemens at [rclemens318@gmail.com](mailto:rclemens318@gmail.com) or text (317) 989-5777.

## FEATHERS IN OUR LENSES

*PROTECTING BIRDS AND THE PLACES THEY NEED.*

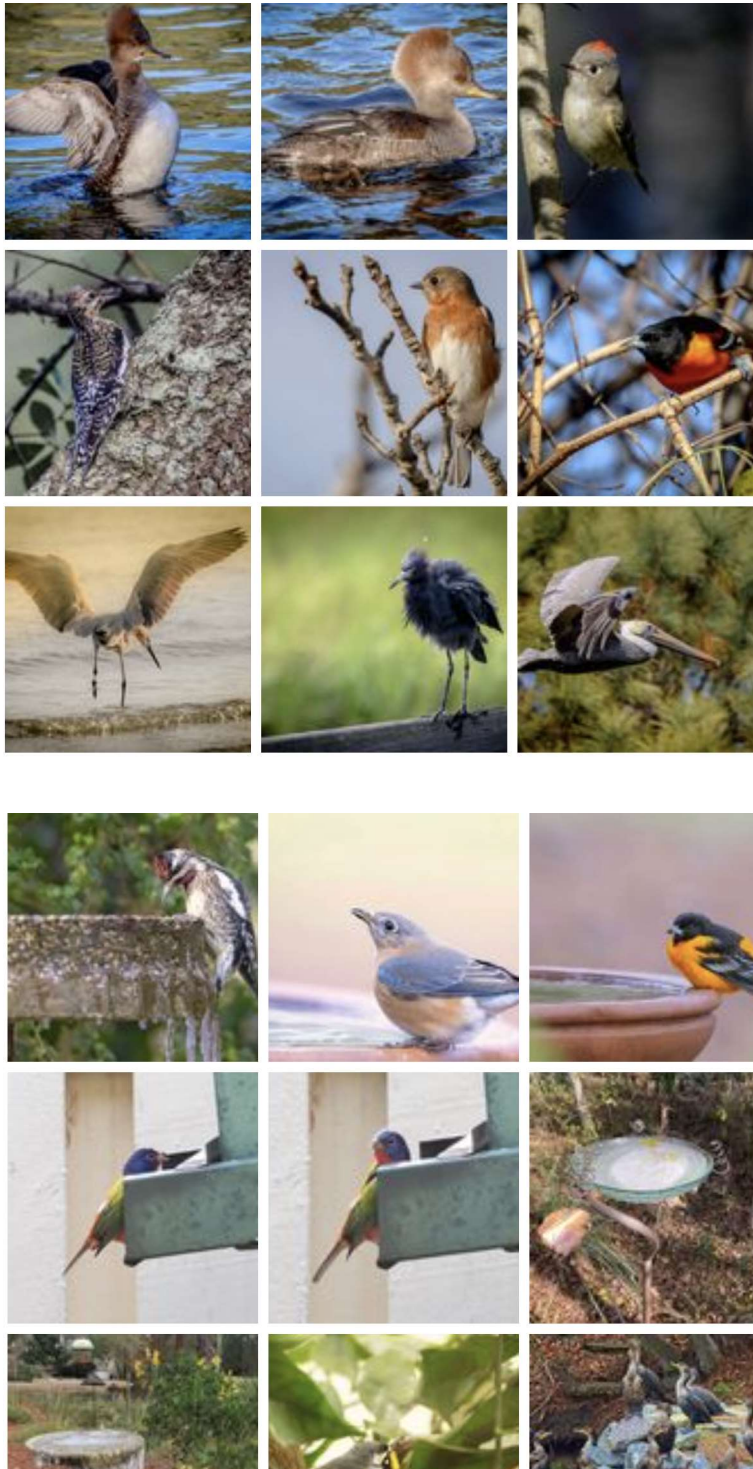
*COMMUNITY SIGHTINGS AND STORIES*





## December Sightings

Please enjoy these collages of bird activity photographed during the past month by our Facebook group members.



There are several ways to report bird sightings : use eBird, join the HHIAS Facebook group or [Birding-Friends@google.com](mailto: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).

