

# Bird Nooz

*"Today I am sure no one needs to be told that the more birds a yard can support, the fewer insects there will be to trouble the gardener the following year." -- Thalassa Cruso*

A Monthly Newsletter of the Sun City Hilton Head Bird Club (SCHH BC)

2016.03 March Issue

**Gimme Shelter**

How do birds survive a snow storm or other weather event? They are incredibly resourceful.

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**Weather Trials, & More**

Continuation of "Oooh...Ides of March," from page 1; a quick bird quiz; bird migration map; and more.

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**Another Silent Fall?**

CBC Coordinator for our Club, Paula Smith, shares concern about changes in our environment as they affect our birds. Paula explains how our participation in CBC can help.

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**Looking toward Spring**



1. Bird Quiz Answer; 2. Cornell Lab's NestWatch offers bird-house plans and more!

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**Birds' Futures**

1. Audubon: The Climate Report says shrinking and shifting ranges could imperil nearly half of U.S. birds this century. 2. "Good Garden Bugs" is a new book you could really enjoy.

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**March Meeting & Club Information**

March 2 Meeting Info. Club Leaders' Contact Info. Basic Club Activities Bird Nooz Leaders' Info.

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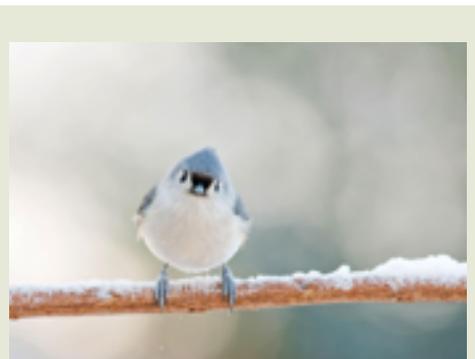
## Oooh...Ides of March

Wind storms, biting cold, rain and hail -- even snow -- what will 2016's Ides of March throw at South Carolina birds?

Birds are incredibly resourceful in the face of severe weather. As humans, we can stock up on groceries and plan a movie marathon to help us survive rough weather. But how do our little feathered friends survive such challenges? The answer is threefold: location, preparation, and adaptation.

**Shelter in Place**

When bad weather hits, birds generally seek shelter in micro-habitats: inside a thick hedge or on



This little fellow has some strategies to survive stormy weather -- and you can help him.

Tufted Titmouse. Photo: Catherine McEntee/ Audubon Photography Awards

the downwind side of a tree. In the bird world, being petite has its advantages! Hunkering down in tight spots can protect them from wind, rain, and cold -- it's warmer closer to the ground. Birds that nest

in cavities, including woodpeckers, bluebirds, and chickadees, can also hide out in their tree holes.

**Birds "Beef" Up in Advance**

Fat birds have a better chance of surviving a storm. When birds sense changes in air pressure (a sign of brewing bad weather), they tend to forage more, or flock to feeders. So keep your feeders full through spring! Birds can survive really cold temperatures as long as they get enough to eat.

**Evolution's Got Their Backs**

Birds have evolved to help them withstand bad weather! Their lanky

(continued on page 2)

(FROM PAGE 1) BIRDS & WEATHER

legs and little feet have what is called counter-current circulation. Birds have cold blood in their feet, which means very little heat is lost when they are standing on cold ground.

The Counter-current circulation explains why you can see a bunch of Herring Gulls standing on the ice. They aren't jumping around and shivering because they are well adapted to the temperature.

Their feathers are the perfect insulation -- they are basically natural down jackets. The down feathers underneath a bird's contour feathers trap air, holding in the warmth from their bodies and preventing cold air from reaching their skin. Birds that winter in cold climates also don a thicker plumage in the winter, which they then molt in the fall and spring.

So, while we humans cozy up with our hot coffee or hot chocolate, we just want to make sure the feeders are filled with assorted, nutritious bird foods, and then suspend worry. Once the birds are fed, they are well-equipped to survive most types of weather that come along.



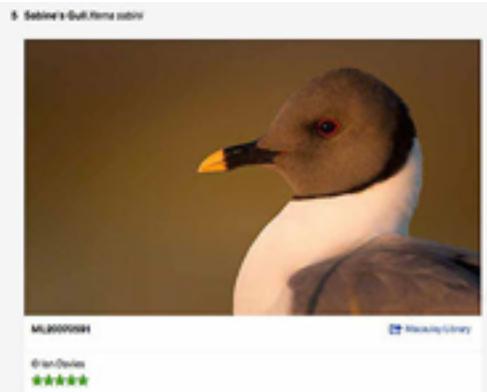
## Bird Quiz

Data from the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) have helped track this bird species as it has expanded its North American range. Can you identify the species shown below? If you need some help, try using GBBC's "Guide to Identify Doves" to hone in on the right species before they show up in your neighborhood. Then check your answer. (Answer appears on page 4.)



Photo by Gary Botello

## Add Photos to Your Checklists!



The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) has an exciting new feature to tell you about. Now you can drag and drop photos and audio files to attach them to your checklists! This is a great way to provide regional reviewers with more information about any rare or unusual sightings that may be flagged in your checklist. It's also a way to share what you've seen with other birders when they explore GBBC and eBird data. GBBC's website. Visit [gbbc.birdcount.org](http://gbbc.birdcount.org) for more information.

## Amazing! Mesmerizing! Watch 118 Bird Species' Migrations...by Month, by Year, and Back Again!



Search in your Internet browser for "The Great Backyard Bird Count eNewsletter for February 9, 2016," and click on the link that comes up in red. Then, when the [online map](#) appears on a new page, click on it to watch the [animation](#) of bird species' migrations month by month, over one year's time, and back again! It's amazing!

Scientists at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology have published a paper describing the migratory patterns of 118 species across the Western Hemisphere. The study shows that many species take different routes during their spring and fall migrations, taking advantage of seasonal weather conditions that make their long journeys easier. This study is just one example of how citizen-science observations are used to discover more about birds.

So let's keep counting birds each year. And read more about migrations after watching the mesmerizing map.



**Loggerhead Shrike -- Photo by Patty Marshall**

## Another Silent Fall?

There was a hush over the land -- no whirr of wings when walking too close to the thick shrubs, no *purdy-purdy* at first light, no flash of red wings at my feeder. What was I doing wrong? I had hardly needed to fill my feeder. Did my birds move to someone else's yard? I began to hear others murmuring similar questions -- what were they doing wrong?

Turns out, nothing. Many of our summer birds had moved on; our winter birds were enjoying abundant food, warmth, and open waters further north. As colder temperatures arrived, many birds returned, but not before we had that moment to wonder what it would be like without them.

How do we know what changes are happening? How can we measure how well our birds are doing with all the crazy changes in weather? The year 2015 was the hottest year on record. 2016 is predicted to be just as hot, with the strong El Nino in the Pacific changing weather patterns.

Sun City and other Lowcountry residents can play a huge role in tracking changes in bird populations by participating in the Audubon's Annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). It is the largest and longest-running citizen science project in the world. In the early 1900's the CBC began as a response to the annual "side hunt" traditionally held on Christmas day and responsible for the deaths of thousands of birds by shotgun. Dr. Frank Chapman conceived the idea of replacing shooting



**Woodstork at Breakfast -- Mary Helen**

parties with counting parties to spare the birds. Now, under the auspices of the National Audubon Society, volunteers gather data on bird numbers over a specific three-week period around the turning of each year, submitting the data to a nationally-based science staff. Since its beginning, the CBC has grown to include more than 63,000 counters in 2200-plus locations around the world. Scientists are able to use this information to analyze how changes in environment impact the lives of birds.

The recent Sun City CBC was held on December 19, 2015 -- one of the coldest days of this winter! More than 50 volunteers in 10 teams spread out over Sun City, including Argent and Riverbend, for 2-3 hours. A reception with refreshments followed, allowing participants to share their findings. Each team consisted of an experienced birder, a photographer, a recorder, and spotters. On the same day, the entire community was invited to participate in the Backyard Count, allowing folks to take just 30 - 60 minutes to count and report their backyard birds using just their binoculars, bird books, and a hot cup of coffee.

The results of the Sun City count proved that our earlier perceptions were wrong. Teams counted 67 species and 2390 individual birds (compared to last year's 70 species and 2130 birds). So, three fewer species, but overall, more birds! 2015 was the last year for our experienced data compilers, Jane Deakin and Diane McKinnery. We thank them so much for their years of service. Thankfully, two new volunteers, Bob and Anita Bagley,



**Egret in Flight -- Photo by Peter Lauer**

stepped forward to learn the process and continue the effort in 2016. We also thank our terrific team captains -- and give a special thanks to Stan Lituchy and John Burrack, who covered at the last minute for two captains who were ill.

Sun City is only one area community of many that participate. Others include Belfair, Calawassie, Hampton Hall, Hampton Lake, Hickory Hill, Oldfield, Rose Hill, Spring Island and Widgeon Point (143 total volunteers). Total birds counted by these teams, including Sun City, was 11,953 (compared with 8124 last year). Great to see so many birds!

The CBC has been an ongoing project of our Sun City Bird Club since the club was founded in the late 1990s. Last year, the project was opened to members of the Photography Club for the first time, and this year any interested community member was invited to participate --- expertise is not necessary. In fact, the CBC is a great way to become more familiar with the birds that spend their winters here in the Lowcountry.

In September we will begin planning for the 2016 CBC. Think about volunteering: it's a great way to learn more about your favorite birds while making new friends! Learn more about the CBC at [www.christmasbirdcount.org](http://www.christmasbirdcount.org).

Could another "Silent Fall" happen? Get the real picture of local bird life by participating in our Club's 2016 citizen science project -- the 2016 CBC!

-- by CBC Coordinator Paula Smith



### Eurasian Collared Dove (answer to Bird Quiz)



With a flash of white tail feathers and a flurry of dark-tipped wings, the Eurasian Collared-Dove settles onto phone wires and fence posts to give its rhythmic three-part coo. This chunky relative of the Mourning Dove gets its name from the black half-collar at the nape of the neck. A few Eurasian Collared-Doves were introduced to the Bahamas in the 1970s. They made their way to Florida by the 1980s and then rapidly colonized most of North America.



### The Cornell Lab Offers You

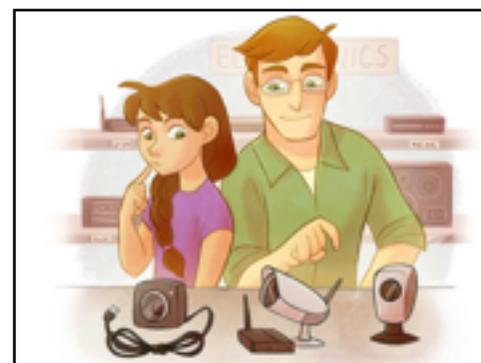
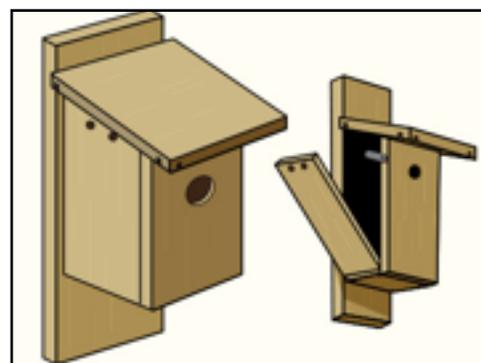


The Cornell Lab of Ornithology conducts **NestWatch**: Where Birds Come to Life. The **NestWatch** website features "ALL ABOUT BIRDHOUSES:" Check out ways to make safe, successful homes for your favorite feathered friends.

Visit [nestwatch.org](http://nestwatch.org) for infographics, interactive coaching on building *for the birds you want to attract*, and a slideshow as well. Features include:

- Features of a Good Birdhouse
- Right Bird, Right House -- download plans for our area
- Installing a Nest Box Camera
- You'll also Get Tips on:
  - Nest Box Placement
  - Managing Invasive Species, Predators and Competitors

### Trouble Shooting Guide





# 314 U.S. Bird Species Threatened

*Shrinking and shifting ranges could imperil nearly half of U.S. birds within this century! Audubon's **Birds and Climate Change Report** shows 314 species are on the brink, and offers a **Field Guide to the future** of North American birds...*

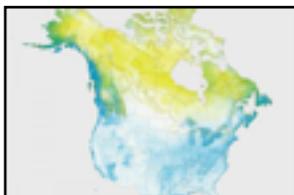
## Storm Gathers for U.S. Birds



Audubon's new study reveals the devastation global warming will likely bring down on birds.

At Audubon's climate report website [climate.audubon.org](http://climate.audubon.org), check out Michelle Nijhuis' article "A Storm Gathers for North American Birds."

## Audubon Report at a Glance



Find out everything you need to know about Audubon's findings, their implications, and how to interpret the data for the birds you care about.

It's the broadest and most detailed study of its kind, and it's the closest thing we have to a field guide to the future of North American birds.

## 314 Severely Threatened



In South Carolina, the exciting Osprey is threatened by climate change -- 79 percent of their summer range could be lost, as well as 33 percent of their winter range.

The Osprey is only one of 50 birds listed by Audubon. Visit [sc.audubon.org](http://sc.audubon.org) to find out Audubon's efforts to save our birds, and join them.

## Protect the Atlantic Flyway



From the forests of New England, where birds like the Wood Thrush nest and breed, to the beaches and marshlands that stretch down the coast and provide habitat for Piping Plovers and Saltmarsh Sparrows, Audubon is employing tactics as diverse as this flyway's eco-systems to protect the millions of birds that depend on this flyway.

## Cultivate Good Garden Bugs



A new book called *Good Garden Bugs: Everything you Need to Know About Beneficial Predatory Insects* is by Dr. Mary Gardiner, an entomologist at Ohio State University, offers gardeners an easy-to-follow reference on beneficial insects that provide pest control by eating the harmful bugs in the garden. A pesticide-free alternative!

**[climate.audubon.org](http://climate.audubon.org) is your online resource**

*The Audubon Report at a Glance is a comprehensive, first-of-its kind study that predicts how climate change could affect the ranges of 588 North American birds. Audubon scientists utilize three decades of citizen-scientist observations from CBC and other reports in its findings.*

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Check out the Club's website for more news!

*suncitybirdclub.org*



## March 2 Bird Club Meeting

Noah Rosenstein and Jim Cubie will demonstrate birding applications that can be accessed through a smart phone or tablet. Noah will talk about the following apps: iBird, iBird Journal, Merlin Bird ID, Sibley Lite, Backyard Birds, Audubon, and HHI. Birders use these apps to identify birds, learn about their range and view them in various plumages - breeding, non-breeding, or juvenile. Jim will demonstrate how to use the eBird program to find birds which you want to see. He will use examples from a trip to California as well as local examples.

## Varied Club Activities Appeal to Bird Lovers

- Monitoring our more than 100 Bluebird Trail nesting boxes
- Monitoring our 15 Purple Martin Condos
- Participating in Okatie-Sun City Christmas Bird Count
- Leading and/or Participating in Birding Trips, local and overnight, using our Club Birding Scope and walkie-talkies
- Participating in Seasonal "Birdfests"
- Conducting or participating in periodic Backyard Birding events

*Bird Nooz* is produced by SCHH Bird Club officers, volunteers, and other contributors, and is published online from September through June as an educational and informational newsletter. Your subscription to **Bird Nooz** is a benefit of your Club membership. It contains original Club articles, photos and information, as well as open-source material from other birding publications and sources.

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