



# Shorebirds and the People of Seabrook Island

The US Fish and Wildlife Service, SC Department of Natural Resources and SC Audubon all recognize Seabrook Island's North Beach Captain Sam's Inlet as an important safe zone for migrating and nesting seabirds and shorebirds! Faced with the question of how to protect the birds resting and nesting on our island, a group of Seabrook Island Birders including Nancy Brown, Ed & Aija Konrad, Bob Mercer, Mark Andrews and the above agencies implemented a Shorebird Steward Program. The concept of a steward program is very simple—a love of shorebirds, turtles, dolphins is best taught when one sees the enthusiasm one's neighbors have for their subject!

First implemented in March 2020 and cut short by Covid-19, the resurrected Seabrook Island Shorebird Steward Program started on March 4, 2021 and continues into May. Volunteers agree to spend two hour shifts on the beach. A volunteer's role is to wait for people to approach them and ask about the birds. Volunteers do not serve as enforcers of current beach rules, but educate those who express interest about the uniqueness and importance of Seabrook Island from a bird's perspective.

On average in early March, Stewards talked to about 11 people per shift with about a third being full time residents, a third part time residents, and a third visitors. The Stewards raved about people's genuine interest in the birds and the importance of Seabrook Island.

With Covid-19 still coursing through the



Red Knots transitioning to breeding plumage from March to April



Red Knot resting high tide



Piping Plover breeding plumage

country, the volunteers take special precautions. Besides wearing masks and practicing social distancing, volunteers cannot share equipment. In 2020, Stewards were able to set up a spotting scope and/or lend people binoculars so they could get a close look at the birds. Covid-19 ended the use of those wonderful tools. In order to help people understand the birds without being able to see them up close, the Shorebird Steward committee set up a website accessible by a QR code.

The Stewards encourage people to use the QR code posted on their signs to access the file where people can see great photos of our shorebirds and learn about the epic migration Red Knots make. Some Red Knots make a trip from Southern South America to the high Arctic with a critical refueling stop in our area. One can also learn how Federally Endangered Piping Plovers that nest along Lake Michigan, once reduced to only 12 nesting pairs have been brought back to the current 71 nesting pairs in 2020 by guarding those nests and protecting those pipers that come Seabrook Island to winter.

Stop by and visit the Shorebird Stewards you see on North Beach. Consider becoming a SIB Shorebird Steward! Anyone interested can email [sibstewards@gmail.com](mailto:sibstewards@gmail.com). Our team will train those interested. A knowledge of the birds is not as important as a desire to keep the birds safe. Volunteers are needed through May.▲

Article by Bob Mercer,  
Photos by Ed Konrad



Steward in action



Learn about Seabrook Island's Shorebirds and Seabirds

Put iPhone here to access QR code



Steward in action

## Spring Migration – Birds on the Move!

Spring is one of the most exciting times of the year for birdwatching in SC, when many species of songbirds travel through on their journey north to breed. Bird migration is defined as “the regular seasonal movement, often north and south along a flyway, between breeding and wintering grounds.” In this movement birds face amazing threats with habitat destruction of stopover and wintering sites, as well as turbulent weather. Spring migration is a fascinating phenomenon to observe, and in SC it peaks in late April and early May. The eBird app even forecasts migration and has live migration maps.

A wonderful variety of migrant wood warblers come through our area, some which stay, like the Prothonotary and Northern Parula, and others that just pass through, like the Black-throated Blue, Cape May, Black-throated Green and the American Redstart. All are making their way north in their bright spring plumage, filled with breeding birdsong. They have come from far away winter destinations in the Caribbean, Mexico, and South and Central America, crossing vast areas of ocean, flying at night. We're a stopping point for some heading to points north to breed. Others stay here to breed and remain through the summer. While here, warblers passing through will feed and bulk up for the rest of their journey north. It is hard to imagine a tiny warbler crossing the

Gulf of Mexico or the Atlantic from the Caribbean! In the fall they will make this vast migration all over again, back south.

We also look for the arrival of our summer resident birds like the Orchard Oriole, Blue Grosbeak, Eastern Kingbird and Painted Bunting. Where have they been all winter, and where are they making their journey from? Orchard Orioles, Blue Grosbeaks and Painted Buntings come up from their wintering grounds in Central America. But the Eastern Kingbird travels all the way from the Amazon region of South America! And where will all those Yellow-rumped Warblers, that will be leaving us by the hundreds, go to breed??? They are headed to the northernmost points of the US, Canada, and Alaska! A long way from their winter in SC!

How our little feathered friends make these amazingly long flights during migration is hard to comprehend! Our next Seabrook Island Birder Evening Zoom Program on April 21 at 7pm is all about our “Winged Wonders - The Phenomenon of Bird Migration”. Matt Johnson, Center Director at the Audubon Center & Sanctuary, Francis Beidler Forest, is our guest speaker. Matt has advised us that as you join us for his discussion these birds will literally be on the move above our heads as they migrate north!▲

Article by Aija Konrad  
Photos by Ed Konrad



Prothonotary Warbler



American Redstart

**SIB Presents**

**Winged Wonders - the Phenomenon of Migration**

**Matt Johnson, Director, Audubon Center & Sanctuary, Francis Beidler Forest**





**Each year, millions of birds – from songbirds, waterfowl, raptors, and shorebirds – fly to and through the Carolinas on their annual journeys across the globe. These massive migrations represent some of the greatest movements of wildlife on Earth! Matt's presentation will explore the phenomenon of bird migration - why and when do birds migrate, how do birds make these amazing journeys, and which species are on the move from where to where? We'll also discuss some of Audubon's research on a few special species that call the Carolinas home.**





Date: Wednesday, April 21, 2021  
 Program Starts: 7:00 pm  
 Location: Zoom Virtual Video, Fee: Free  
**Please register** on our Website:  
[SeabrookIslandBirders.org](http://SeabrookIslandBirders.org)  
 Questions? Email us at: [SeabrookIslandBirders@gmail.com](mailto:SeabrookIslandBirders@gmail.com)  
**Everyone is Welcome!**