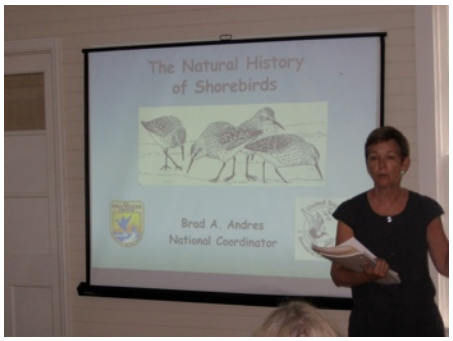

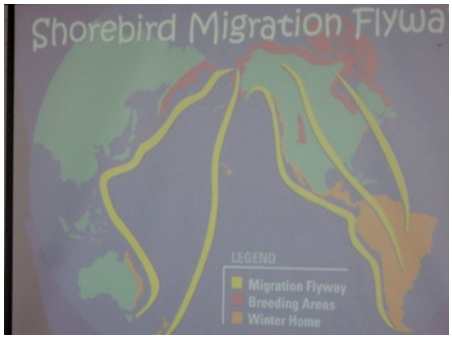

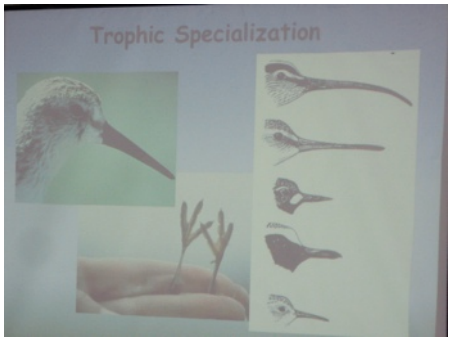

DAUFUSKIE ISLAND CONSERVANCY
LOVE IT SAVE IT SHARE IT

"Leaping Across Continents"
May 9, 2012

Speaker: Dr. Brad Andres- National Coordinator, US Shorebird Conservation Plan, US Fish and Wildlife

Shorebirds are a group of birds whose habitat is open landscapes such as the tundra, the beach, salt marshes and grasslands. This family of birds includes avocets, sandpipers, oystercatchers and plovers. This species is small in quantity compared to other bird species. One reason is their low productivity rate. Plovers lay 2 eggs per clutch, oystercatchers 3 eggs and sandpipers 4 eggs. Their eggs are relatively large because when hatched, the birds are fully feathered and can feed themselves. Because the eggs are large, the number of eggs in the clutch is the maximum number that the male can incubate. Due to predators such as foxes and ravens, only about 20% of the eggs survive to hatch.

The breeding grounds of shorebirds are in Canada and Alaska. Migration is defined as the seasonal movement across latitudes. Why migrate? Mainly to search for food. In the northern reaches, food isn't available during long winter months. In order to navigate to winter homes where they lay their eggs, birds have internal clocks guided by light changes and hormone balance. Cues such as wind, weather and the bird's own fatness establish timing. Birds use stars and the sun for orienting themselves. There are four flyways around North America – the Eastern Pacific, the Central American, the Western Atlantic and the Eastern Atlantic.

SC is a wintering location and migration site especially for oyster catchers, plovers, sandpipers and marbled godwits. Four and a half million shorebirds pass through the southeast during migration.

Direct threats to habitat are contamination due to oil spills, natural phenomena like red tide, collisions among birds, over hunting of the birds and their food source (horseshoe crabs, for example) and weather. Indirect threats to habitat are loss of habitat, disturbance of habitat and degradation of food quality.

Members of the audience had some question and comments. One person asked about how those studying birds felt about wind turbines. Dr. Andres said that alternative energy sources are a plus. In areas where bird migration patterns were taken into account for the placement of wind turbines, collisions were almost zero. Another person asked if the use of the natural gas extraction technology called "fracking" and if horizontal drilling are plusses for the bird population. Dr. Andres said they are to the extent that they reduce the amount of equipment that might otherwise be operating and therefore creating obstacles for birds.

Those in attendance agreed that Dr. Andres was a very good speaker and we were all more informed after hearing and watching his presentation.