

The Skimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society

Protecting Birds and their Habitat



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Next General Meeting

7pm Thurs., February 9th

Topic: Florida Wildlife Celebrates Valentine's Day - Guest Speaker: Don Chalfant

Message from the Presidents' Desk

- Bill and Marsha Cox -

February is the month that the Shorebird Alliance does its winter shorebird count so it seems fitting that we focus this month on those denizens of our beaches. Who doesn't love to watch the Sanderlings run out into the tide in search of food and then scurry back in before the waves hit them? Or watch the terns who congregate in large groups at the shore edge for conversation? Or, if you are lucky, see a group of Black Skimmers skimming the waves for lunch? We are privileged to have so much shoreline as part of our "backyard". But along with that privilege, comes some responsibility.

The 2 recent hurricanes, Ian and then Nicole, caused a great deal of damage to our shoreline, along both Florida coasts. This damage will have an impact on our birds, as well as other wildlife. I'm sure you have noticed, when you walk the beach, that the dune erosion is significant and there is less beach due to shifting sand. This is critical bird habitat, for resting during migration, for feeding and for nesting. Florida Audubon's coastal team is monitoring this closely and will no doubt have more information in the future as far as "action plans" for local chapters. In the meantime there are some things we can do as beach goers and shorebird advocates to protect our beaches and dunes from further damage.

- Become a Bird Steward by signing up with Florida Audubon on their website
- Join Project Colony Watch to become advocates for nesting birds, also through Audubon Florida
- Keep dogs on a leash, on or off the beach. Dogs and dunes don't mix



Upcoming Events (Our official event list is on [MeetUp](#))

February Tuesday Morning Birders

7 - Indian River Lagoon
14 - North Jetty Park
21 - Spruce Creek Park
28 - Smyrna Dunes

Feb. 9, 7PM - February
Program: Florida
Wildlife Celebrates
Valentine's Day, MDC

Feb. 15, 9AM - Winter
Birding Tour, MDC

Feb. 18, 9AM-3PM, The
Orlando Wetlands Fest.
Orlando Wetlands Park
Christmas, FL

Feb. 21, 3PM - Book Club,
Braided Sweetgrass,
Riverside Conservancy

Feb. 23 - Birds and Brew

TBD - Field Trip, Merritt
Island National Refuge

Reminder: This is a
static list and is not
updated once
published. Our official
source for Event
information is always
[MeetUp](#).

President's Message (Continued)

- Walk on the beach, not the dunes. And, gently remind others of the importance of this
- Dispose of trash properly to discourage predators
- Give birds their space. If birds fly when you approach them, you are too close
- Get to know our shorebirds and spread the word about the importance of sharing the beach with them
- When dune "restoration" activities begin, get involved when possible

I'm sure there are many other things that you the readers can think of to do as well. Feel free to share those ideas with us at president.sevas@gmail.com.

Thanks for all you do for the birds!

Newsletter Editor

- **Bob Creedon**-

I wanted to take a quick moment to recognize the contributions of Mary Schreiber, our past Newsletter Editor. Mary did a fantastic job putting together an attractive and informative newsletter every month. It's a tough job that requires herding cats (*catbirds*), editing and formatting under a tight deadline. Mary did a fine job, and will be missed, as she has recently decided to step out of the role. Thank you Mary!

If any of our readers are interested in stepping into the newsletter editor role moving forward, please reach out to us.

February Conservation Corner

- **Bob Chew** -

Smyrna Dunes Park: Ed Carlson has brought to the Conservation Committee concerns about the Smyrna Dunes Park. He has taken Bill Cox, Bob & Beth Chew on a walk through the park to address his concerns. Bill and Ed will be meeting with Jennifer Winters, the Protected Species Activity Manager at the Environmental Management Division for Volusia County.

Hidden Lakes Golf Course: Bob Chew will meet with the owners of Hidden Lakes Golf Course to see if they would be interested in having a Purple Martin Project similar to the one SEVAS did at MDC. This would require funding and ongoing maintenance which is a long-shot.

Florida's Right to Clean Water: Florida Audubon has concerns about SEVAS supporting this due to possible concerns about the wording. For a great introduction, click [Florida's Right to Clean Water](#), or follow them on Facebook at Florida's Right to Clean Water.

The next meeting of the Conservation Commission will be held in March at Riverside Conservancy. To learn more about Riverside Conservancy and their mission to "Conserve and protect shorelines through educational outreach, restoration and research" visit them at riversideconservancy.org or follow them on Facebook.

Skimmer Embroidery

Did you know our Skimmer logo is on file with the local embroidery shop?

You can take in a favorite hat (or any piece of apparel for that matter) and get it done for just \$10! I saw this one on Jane Talbot at a recent walk and it looks great.



Bonus for us - free advertising for our chapter here and when you take it on trips out of town.

If you want to show your colors in time for Bike Week then visit Kylene and bring a hat.

Plants for Bird Gardens



Hello from our gardens!

This month we will be working with Chisholm Elementary to plan for the installation of their teaching garden. In addition, we are working on binocular donations and materials about birds and conservation in support of birds to include in the backpacks we will be providing to Chisholm Elementary, the Marine Discovery Center and the Boys and Girls Club.

More to come in future months about these activities. You are always invited to join us. Volunteers are welcomed to help plan, plant and maintain.

To get involved contact Joyce Riddel, jpearce.riddel@hmail.com

Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)

It's time for the GBBC, an annual fun-filled and easy world-wide citizen science event that is family friendly. From February 17th-20th anyone, no matter your bird watching skills, can participate. Spend as much time as you want in your favorite birding spot, count the birds you hear or see and send your information to birdcount.org. It's as easy as 1-2-3 to participate in the GBBC.

1. Decide where you will watch
2. Watch for 15 or more minutes at least once over the 4 days
3. Make note of the birds you see and hear (use a checklist, Merlin ID, ebird) and share those sightings by entering your data

Hope you can join the fun!

P.S. Halifax River Audubon is having a "Bird Fair" Sat. Feb 18th to celebrate the GBBC. Check it out on Meetup.

Orlando Wetlands Festival

Since 2001, the Orlando Wetlands Festival has promoted community awareness of the Orlando Wetlands Park and the importance of Florida's ecological and water resources. This year's festival will be on Saturday, February 18th, 2023 from 9 am - 3 pm at the Orlando Wetlands Park 25155 Wheeler Road, Christmas, FL 32709.

Admission is free and all ages are welcome, but please leave your pets at home - there are wild animals at the Park. For more information, registration and event reminders visit: Orlando.gov/WetlandsFestival

Keep in Touch with SEVAS

Our website is our communication hub:
seVolusiaAudubon.org

Latest Info on Events:
[Meetup.com/sevaudubon](https://www.meetup.com/sevaudubon)

Our Facebook activity feed:
[Facebook.com/SEV.Audubon](https://www.facebook.com/SEV.Audubon)

Contact Our President:
president.sevas@gmail.com

Join the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society Chapter
seVolusiaAudubon.org/take-action

View our Mission Efforts
[Board of Directors Minutes](#)

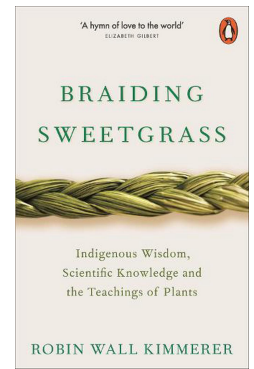
Email newsletter submissions:
newsletter.sevas@gmail.com

Newsletter Archive:
[...the-skimmer-newsletter](#)

SEVAS Book Group

The SEVAS Book Group met for the first time in January to discuss *Late Migrations*, an essay collection by New York Times opinion writer Margaret Renkl.

The next book selection is *Braiding Sweetgrass*, an award winning collection of essays by botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer, exploring indigenous wisdom, science and plant knowledge. Meeting date: 3pm Feb 21st @ Riverside Conservancy.



Contact Beth Chew if interested in joining: ethchew99@gmail.com

Christmas Bird Count

- Jenifer Russell -

The National Audubon Society held the 123rd annual world-wide Christmas Bird Count between December 14 and January 5. Each participating Chapter covered a unique circle of land, and counted as many birds as the members could find in 24 hours. ([link for more info](#)).

SEVAS covered our assigned circle on December 30 which extended from the Atlantic beaches, west to Samsula, north to South Daytona, and south to Edgewater. Thirty one members and volunteers counted on foot, by car, by boat, and by golf cart. It was an enjoyable day with very mild weather for counting birds, and a post-count recap at Half Wall in New Smyrna, a tradition reinstated this year. I will send details of species seen next month

Become a Southeast Volusia Audubon Society Member

Thank you to Richard Fasse for all of his hard work on these forms!

All our presentations, bird walks, and gardens are free and open to the public. If you enjoy what we do then please consider joining our local Chapter and helping fund our ongoing activities including the "Purple Martin Housing Project" and our "Plants for Birds" garden at MDC. Your membership includes our monthly (October to April) email newsletter *The Skimmer* as well as member emails with announcements and event reminders.

After you complete the form linked below, you will be given a link for online payment.

[Become a Member here!](#)

As a member of the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, you agree to practice birding ethics, respect wildlife, the environment and the rights of others. You also understand that field activities may include encounters with wildlife, walking on rough terrain, and driving and release Southeast Volusia Audubon Society from all liability. Your photograph may be taken by photographers during activities like bird walks and posted to our Chapter website or social media. As a member you hereby give consent for the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society to use any photograph with you in its publications, on its website, and in our social media accounts.

Bird of the Month: Wilson's Plover

Words of Wisdom:

Birds are indicators of the environment. If they are in trouble, we know we'll soon be in trouble.

- Roger Tory Peterson



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Wilson's plovers are small shorebirds with heavy black bills. They're coastal, solitary nesters. Plover populations are in decline due to human-caused disturbance and habitat loss. Wilson's Plovers nest locally in three places in Canaveral National Seashore, Smyrna Dunes Park and on Disappearing Island.

Wilson's Plovers lay their eggs directly on the sand above the wrack line and in vegetated areas in a small depression excavated by the male called a scrape. Males and females share in incubation and other parenting duties, switching off periodically to forage for food. The well-camouflaged chicks can walk within hours of hatching.

Within the first day of hatching, chicks are led by parents to areas to forage for small insects and aquatic invertebrates using their own ability. Chicks can move 1 mile or more in any direction soon after hatching. The parents will act as sentinels by giving "wheep" and "whip" alarm calls warning chicks of approaching danger.

Often one adult will remain concealed in close proximity to the young, while the other adult defends the territory. Adult Wilson's Plovers use the broken wing display to lead predators away from the area. Chicks will lie flat and motionless when a perceived threat is near, relying on their camouflaged plumage for protection.

After Wilson's Plover young fledge, one or both adults will usually remain with juveniles and join other pairs of its species that also have newly fledged young. These small, loose flocks of 20 or more birds will gather in areas of good foraging habitat. By this time in the breeding season, adult plumages have become very faded and worn, and the adult females become difficult to distinguish from juveniles over 50 days of age.

Source: "Conservation Plan for the Wilson's Plover (*Chardarius Wilsonia*)"
Version 1.0 October 2013 Margo G. Zdravkovic

A Bittern Adventure

A few weeks back SEVAS was contacted by post-doctoral researcher Sam Merker from UConn. He was looking for help locating a bird tracking device that had stopped moving. It was attached to an American Bittern, which had migrated to an area east of DeLeon Springs. It was believed to now be deceased.

Susan Dayer decided to go scope out the area after receiving GPS coordinates and maps from Sam. She found the area off of Lafayette Landing Road. The area was on private property in a mixed brush and swampy area. Susan was able to contact the closest landowner, who agreed to let us hike in and search for the tracker.

On Tuesday, Jan. 17th, Susan, with Marsha and Bill Cox, heads out on an adventure to search for the bird and the tracker. Dressed in long sleeves, long pants, and water boots we hiked out the logging trail until we turned in the brush and swamp. It was wet, had lots of vines, and soon, deeper water. Susan led the way wielding her machete. We marked our path with orange tape so we could find our way back.



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Following the GPS point, we headed deeper into the swamp. Marsha waited halfway as the water was over her boots. She also kept contact with us so we didn't disappear. Susan and Bill continued on until we found dry land near the GPS point. We searched for over an hour with no success. There was so much brushy area that the bird and tracker could've been well hidden. We finally admitted we were not able to find the tracker, much to our disappointment. We had even called Sam while we were deep in the swamp to let him know we couldn't locate it.

We retraced our steps back to the logging trail with the help of Marsha and the orange flags. We found even deeper water on the way back and all had very wet feet. Though we were unsuccessful, it was a great adventure. We were glad we had tried to help Sam with his research despite our wet socks and boots. Sam has promised us a presentation about his research for SEVAS!

Our Mission:

Protecting birds and their habitats through Education, Advocacy, and Action
Bird populations have plummeted as their habitats have been decimated by the encroachment of development and the stress on their food sources by air and water pollution. We all need to work together to protect them.

We are a fun, inclusive group. Working together on common goals leads to many fun and educational events! Learn about our mission, actions and the results of our decades of working with the public to protect our birds' stake in our fragile, local environment.

[Become a Member](#)