

# South East Volusia Audubon Society

## October 10, 2023 Meeting Minutes

**Attendees: Marsha Cox, Bill Cox, Traci Hershberger, Jane Talbot, Jenifer Russell, Liz Merideth, Robert Merideth, Richard Fasse, Joyce Riddel, John Kendall, Dean Spears, Ed Carlson, Don Chalfont**

### Announcements:

Marsha made the following announcements to start the SEVAS season:

- SEVAS applied for and will receive a CLI (Conservation Leadership Initiative) student. This is a program where Florida Audubon works with colleges and universities to pair students in many different courses of study with local chapters, who become mentors. Rachel, who is now at University of Florida, was our CLF student 2 years ago. We do not know who our CLI student will be.
- The Florida Audubon Assembly is October 26-28, and will be in person after 3-year hiatus. It is at Sheraton Tampa Brandon Hotel with the theme of Conservation in a Changing Landscapes, a good opportunity to network and be present. If anyone wants to participate, let Bill know.
- Today was the kickoff of this season's birding opportunities. Liz and Robert setup a trip to the MDC. 7 people participated in 90 minutes of birding, and tallied 21 species. Liz appreciated the Prairie Warblers, Marsha the Belted Kingfisher, and all enjoyed the Clapper Rails. Robert noted that there is lots of construction still going on, but the gardens all look fantastic!
- Marsha also had some kudos:
  - P4B garden team (special mention of Dean) for a magnificent MDC garden
  - Ed and Dean for representing us with Shorebird initiatives
  - Liz for awesome Newsletter
  - Trish for a year's long Programs agenda
  - Don for year-long field Trip agenda
  - PuMa team and Richard for a successful fledge
  - Robert aka Will Shortz for a crossword puzzle in the newsletter
  - Everyone on the board for showing up ready and eager to get our work done!!

### Marsha asked everyone to share some information about themselves

Liz Merideth (and Robert) came to New Smyrna Beach from Tuscon, they met on the Audubon board there. When they arrived in NSB, their first trip with SEVAS was to Sugar Mill Gardens in January. They had a great time, came back to more trips, and started meeting folks. They love SEVAS! Liz is a graphic designer by trade, so she volunteered to do the newsletter. She would like to see more engagement on Facebook and social media, getting the word about our group and mission out more. As an example, West Volusia has more followers than SEVAS does. Although this is not a competition, it does show that there is room for improvement getting the word out about who we are and our mission. Also, Bill and Marsha want to abdicate the presidency after this year, so it is important to get more young people involved to take the group forward.

Robert Merideth has a background in environmental science, most recently as a research editor at the University of Arizona. He has just started writing crossword puzzles and is creating a book of them. Some folks in SEVAS are beta testing the puzzles. Robert would like to complete a pamphlet for SEVAS telling folks about where to go birding and how to make other related connections in the area. It would be a list of local hot spots within 30 miles of New Smyrna Beach, and could be distributed at the NSB

visitors center and SEVAS tabling events. He has been working with John and Don, and has a tentative list of locations with draft text. He will circulate the draft among board members so folks can contribute ideas or text and locations.

John Kendall is a lifelong birder, having lived and birded in Indiana, Pennsylvania, Texas near High Island, back to Indiana and now to Florida. He is in Florida 8 months per year. As an extrovert, he is willing to speak in front of people. John was a sales manager and chemical engineer in his career. In SEVAS, he enjoys the PuMa project. He mentioned Ed working with shorebirds, and commented that he thinks we will have to start building housing for Least Terns and Plovers much like what is done for Purple Martins. Volusia once had 11% of the nesting Wilson's Plover population, but that number is dropping. He is willing to lead some bird trips, but has a long list of interests so doesn't have time for a lot of unproductive birding. He is on a group text with a few elite birders in the area, and would like to expand that to include more folks to share sightings. Birding in the area can change quickly, and this would allow quick notification of interesting sightings. Folks can show up quickly to see the target bird.

Traci Hershberger is new to SEVAS and to birding. She has been birding for 1 year 8 months, and birds frequently with Jenifer. They have just returned from Peru. Traci is a member at large, and will talk to Richard when he returns about getting more involved with Facebook and the internet. Traci has just retired from working with Adobe software.

Ed Carlson has been birding for 20 years. He is involved with shorebird monitoring and protection at Smyrna Dunes park and Canaveral National Seashore. He would like to partner with folks who are willing to go to those places, observe, and make comments to the folks who take care of the parks. He would also like to be a part of the text group John suggested. John wants Ed to show him what to look for on Disappearing Island. Ed reports there are nesting birds there in the summer. Ed is at Smyrna Dunes park frequently and would specifically like folks to do inspections there. John will be around more in the summer, and may be able to do more surveys. All appreciate that Ed is around in the summer keeping an eye on things!

Dean has been in SEVAS and birding for 4 or 5 years. He appreciates the goals of the group and the social aspect of being around nice folks. He enjoyed the newsletter and puzzles, and loves that the newsletter is on the website. He enjoyed working with Joyce on Plants 4 Birds very much and commented that Richard did an outstanding job of running the Purple Martin project. The project helps to get our message out and will increase results from our other projects.

Jane Talbot joined SEVAS about 5 or 6 years ago. She attended a speaker meeting where Bill asked for someone to take notes as the secretary was out. Jane offered to take notes with notice so she could bring her computer, so Bill recruited her to be the secretary. Jane enjoys the social aspect, meeting such a wonderful group of people, as well as the birding outings.

Joyce Riddel joined SEVAS more for conservation than birding, but she does enjoy birding. She does not consider herself an advanced birder. Plants 4 Birds has been her key project. She said the project couldn't have happened without the group, special thanks to Dean, Richard and Ed for their involvement. Any time extra help was needed, folks would show up to help. The purpose is to provide native habitat for birds, giving them a place to eat. For this coming year, the request to Florida Audubon and Florida Power & Light for a grant is in. For the project with Chisolm Elementary, 2 gardens are planted and the kids have taken ownership of them. Our partner is Lindley's Nursery, they have been

great. Joyce is hoping to put in a meadow and maybe a micro forest there depending on funding. At the Myrtle park garden, Laura Devlin has done a great job of making the garden look good. The park is underused, and Joyce would like to change this. She would like to get the historical society and community out to the park for tours or lectures. This would be a great place to bird. The garden at Babe James Community Center has been more difficult to launch. We are not having the participation that was hoped for, but are trying to improve the engagement. Marsha added her many thanks to all who work on Plants 4 Birds, commenting that this is our chapter's signature. Marsha added that Don did an amazing bird list for the MDC, and suggested doing them for the other gardens as well. Public areas can be made into an e-bird hotspot. Joyce will be doing a bird walk at the school, and will be working with the 4<sup>th</sup> grade science and AP teachers. Ed will help Joyce work on an e-bird list for the school.

Richard Fasse is in upstate NY. Richard's pet project is the Purple Martins (PuMa). As soon as he knows when the Christmas Bird Count is, he will schedule an event to raise the gourds. He is looking forward to getting together with the gourd droppers. There is a newly donated PuMa house, which may or may not be setup this year. Richard is also on the Communications Committee. He got involved 5 or 6 years ago. When a survey was done 2 years ago, the preference for communication was via e-mail, folks didn't use Facebook or Meet-up very much. Richard would like someone to take over managing Facebook and Meet-up. Traci volunteered to help, and it is also possible that the CLI student may be able to help. Marsha mentioned that we need to provide a project for the CLI student.

Don Chalfont is in Michigan. He started birding because he liked the ability to keep a list. He first birded at his feeders, then went on a local Audubon field trip and the world of birding outside of his yard opened up to him. He enjoyed the potential for listing, but also liked the quality of people he met. People were friendly, honest, interesting, and interested. Don was a local chapter president for a few years, a trip leader for a few years, and led winter tours in the upper peninsula in Michigan. His listing mushroomed, and now he has a list for all 50 states. His SEVAS involvement began as a Christmas Bird Count volunteer. Richard Domrowski got him interested in the late 90's when he started wintering in Florida. In the early 2000's, Don wanted to start leading birding trips so he volunteered at Merritt Island. He didn't get to lead many trips there. Once evening he discovered Indian River Lagoon Preserve (IRL) and learned about the MDC. He asked the folks at MDC if he could run bird trips for them, and he did that for the next 12 years on Tuesdays. A few years ago, he became the Field Trip Coordinator for SEVAS. At that time, the schedule needed some help. Weekly Tuesday morning birding outings are "leaderless" but every week there are at least a few folks who show up who are capable of leading and who share knowledge and bird sightings. Don's goals are to have 2 trips per week for the season, and to go somewhere new every year, and possibly do a new activity. He wants to expand the list of capable leaders as well. A new activity for this year will be the "Bio Blitz" at IRL in March to see how many species of plants and animals can be ID'd in one morning. The trip to south Florida was successful last year.

Jenifer Russell joined and became treasurer a few years ago. She likes to bird locally and while travelling. She said SEVAS is a great group to hang out with and go birding, and she would like to be on the text group that John mentioned. She gave kudos to the great newsletter. Jenifer is the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) coordinator, with help from Traci.

Bill Cox is the SEVAS recruiter. He likes golfing, but for people he likes the birders. He is in the group for the people and the environment rather than the birds, and is not a lister. He sees his role as supporting Marsha.

Marsha Cox commented that as co-presidents with Bill they each have different gifts and their talents mesh well together. She came to New Smyrna Beach to care for her mom, and wanted an activity to get her out of the house. Her mother suggested she get involved in Audubon. She went to Audubon meetings when they were at the library in Edgewater, loved the speakers, and loved the Domrowski's. They were kind, and welcomed her into the group. She commented how wonderful that the group embraces new people. She is not a lister, although she has seen a lot of birds and loves the birds, her first love is the environment and protecting it. Being a part of the chapter is important to her. She has lots of ideas for the future of SEVAS, bird checklists, collaborations with other organizations such as Friends of Canaveral National Seashore, Florida Master Naturalist, etc., bringing synergy to meet our mission.

**Other Business:**

Thursday October 12 speaker meeting will feature Christie Miller talking about the Lyonia Environmental Center in Deltona.

Bob Chew is the conservation chair. He was unable to make today's meeting as he is in transit from Rhode Island to Florida.

**Action item for all:**

Marsha wanted to ask each board member to send an e-mail to the presidents ([president.sevas@gmail.com](mailto:president.sevas@gmail.com)) with any advice, ideas of things to work on, what would you like Marsha and Bill to do in their final year as presidents? All suggestions are welcome, be creative!

Meeting adjourned at 5:10

Minutes submitted by Jane Talbot