

THE Skimmer

Extra! Sept 2023

SOUTHEAST VOLUSIA AUDUBON SOCIETY (SEVAS) NEWSLETTER | PUBLISHED OCT-APRIL



2022-2023 SEVAS Recap

Plants for Birds, Purple Martin Project, Tuesday Morning Birders, Education, and Outreach

All these were at the center of a very busy year! Here are some of our highlights:
Tuesday Morning Birders (TMB) Our popular series averaged 19 participants. We bird accessible local sites, team leaders provide a naturalist tour, and everyone is welcome. Six additional field trips took us further afield, (an overnight trip to south Florida!), and we are delighted to report a total of 34 events and 170 species!
Purple Martin Project We have occupancy! In 2021 we raised a complex of gourds at the MDC in the hopes of luring a swallow colony, and this is our year!
Plants for Birds (P4B) Our effort now boasts four thriving gardens which are fast becoming places of interest and education. >>> *continued on page 5*

Flamingos Are Back, Thanks to Idalia

A Flamboyance of Flamingos Indeed!

A random flamingo in Florida after a storm is not unusual. However, after Hurricane Idalia blew through on August 30, dozens of the birds were reported throughout Florida and three days after landfall, sightings of the pink-and-gray flyers began filtering in from much further afield: Alabama, The Carolinas, Ohio, Tennessee and Virginia. This many flamingos in so many areas? Unreal!

To date, ornithologists have speculated that as many as 150 birds may have been blown off course, perhaps while traveling from the Yucatan to Cuba. Catching wind of the happenings on social media, I contacted local photographer, Andy Glogower, and Robert Merideth and I made haste to Fort De Soto County Park where we found three spectacular individuals. Andy captured this image below, and here's what he had to say about being in the right place at the right time!

"I noticed friends posting flamingo photos on Facebook. I was in total awe and envious of these magnificents being photographed -- and not by me. I live in Lakeland and on 9/2, my wife and I arrived at Fort De Soto close to 5pm. We felt like we hit the lottery! A single Flamingo in the open water!

I waded into the water moving very slowly to get into the best position with my 500mm lens. The confiding bird stayed almost 2 1/2 hours before taking flight and 5,035 photos later, I think I was flying too. The flock of Avocets is also rare here this time of year, and makes this photo even more special to me."

See more on page 6 and find Andy here: innerglowphoto.com



American Flamingo and American Avocets
photo: andy glogower

First of Season Monthly Meeting

Oct 12, 7pm
Marine Discovery Center

Welcome Back! Our speaker is Christie Miller, from the **Lyonia Environmental Center** in Deltona.

General SEVAS meeting is a celebration this month, as we gather to socialize, regroup and make new friends. We encourage our members to join us for a festive evening as we share our summer travels, and visit the Purple Martin House. Please join us - our meetings are open to all.

"If the question has to do with Florida... my answer is yes!"

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Our mission: Protecting birds and their habitats through Education, Advocacy, and Action.

The Southeast Volusia Audubon Society (SEVAS) was started in the early 1970s as the New Smyrna Beach Audubon Society by a group of neighbors who were interested in protecting the local birds and wildlife around Smyrna Dunes Park. We are now one of three Audubon Florida chapters in Volusia County, each with its own identity and focus.

BOARD MEMBERS

Presidents Bill and Marsha Cox
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Vice-President Vacant

Secretary Jane Talbot

Treasurer Jenifer Russell

Programs Trish Wheeler

Field Trips Don Chalfant

Conservation Robert Chew

Membership Dean Spears

Webmaster Jane Talbot

Plants for Birds Joyce Riddel

Purple Martin Project Richard Fasse

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PRESIDENTS' POST

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much."
 Helen Keller

September is the Sunday of Summer.

As we begin our last year as SEVAS co-presidents, we are heartened. The '22-'23 season was busy and productive with lots to celebrate! We may be a smaller chapter but with the help of dedicated members we are surely able to impact our area for birds and their habitat. Thanks to all of you who have supported our mission. As you read the highlights, I know you'll join me and get a great sense of how SEVAS carried out our mission in the greater community.

Collaboration is the path to success, and another measure of our rewarding year is the number of partnerships we've continued to cultivate as we carry out our mission:

**Audubon Florida, Florida Power & Light, Marine Discovery Center
 City of New Smyrna Beach, Halifax Audubon, West Volusia Audubon
 Volusia County, Florida Native Plant Society Paw Paw Chapter**

In addition, we made newer alliances this year too:

**Atlantic Center for the Arts, Chisholm Elementary School
 Lindley's Nursery, The Boys and Girls Club of NSB
 Babe James Center, Marine Science Center**

Thank you all for your roles in the "together" part of our SEVAS year. Those who joined our chapter and contributed financial support, those who have worked events and provided labor for our ventures, those who have taken on leadership positions, those who have added "special projects" to their agendas, those who have written letters to legislators to try to create change, and so many more.

Extra Special thanks go out to:

Don Chalfant and his team of field trip leaders who great job picking birding sites and providing great birding experiences for the community. The Tuesday Morning Birding (TMB) events continue to grow with birding expertise and conviviality.
Richard Fasse and his team of patient volunteers for heading up the Purple Martin Project at the Marine Discovery Center. Such a joy to see tenants and nestlings!
Joyce Riddel, Laura Devlin, Dean and **Meri Ann Spears** who tend both the crew and interpretive gardens. Plants for Birds has developed into a community effort to educate the public about the importance and joys of creating native habitats.
Kim Ramos, Margo & Ken Wenzel and other leaders for our engaging afternoon birding events. Our monthly Birds & Brews get togethers are popular and growing.
Bob Credon and **Dave Baker** for creating the inaugural "Birds and Birdies" at Hidden Lakes Golf Course where we birded the course on golf carts.



We share and celebrate our success with all of you and we look forward to another active and exciting year! See you at our first meeting, October 12!

Bill & Marsha Cox
president.sevas@gmail.com

Purple Martin
 photo: VJAnderson

Save the Dates

2023-24 at a glance

Monthly Meetings

Mark your calendars now!

October - April, SEVAS meets on the second Thursday of each month. Marine Discovery Center, NSB, 7pm. We are always honored to have speakers who touch on myriad topics close to our hearts. More specifics soon!

Oct 12: Christie Miller, Lyonia Environmental Center

Nov 9: Carolyn Kovacs, Florida Sea Grant

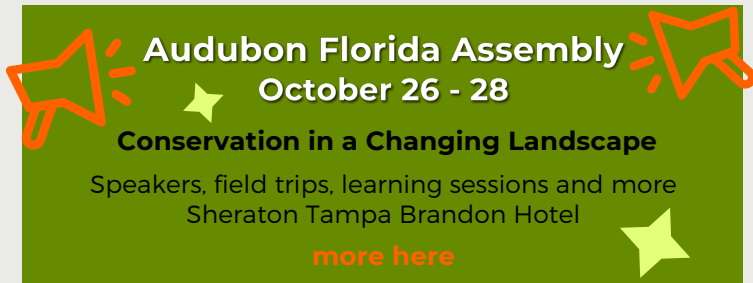
Dec 14: Trey Hannah, Marine Discovery Center

Jan 11: Michael Brothers, Birding expert

Feb 8: Jessy Wayles, Indian River Lagoon Nat'l Estuary

Mar 14: Brittany Piersma, Audubon West Everglades

Apr 11: Donna Althearn, Volusia beekeeper



Audubon Florida Assembly
October 26 - 28
Conservation in a Changing Landscape
 Speakers, field trips, learning sessions and more
 Sheraton Tampa Brandon Hotel
[more here](#)

Annual Events

The birds need our help. Mark your calendars now!

SEVAS members participate in various counts and citizen science projects through the year. Join a team--everyone is welcome and no experience is necessary.

Dec 14 - Jan 5: Audubon Christmas Bird Count, (CBC)

Since 1900, tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas brave snow, wind, rain, or sunshine to collect data used to assess populations, and guide conservation action.

Early February: FL Shorebird Alliance Winter Shorebird Survey, (WSS)

The FSA is a statewide network of local partnerships committed to advancing shorebird and seabird conservation. The Winter survey helps to identify key wintering sites to guide future conservation efforts, and recognize long-term trends in population and distribution.

Feb 16 - 19: Audubon Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)

Since 1998, every February this worldwide event gets birders to count as many birds as they can find in their favorite areas, to help expand our understanding of birds.



American Flamingo
 photo: andy glogower

SEVAS in the Field

Stay up to date!

Check our [Facebook](#) and [MeetUp](#) pages for changes, additions, or cancellations.

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDERS

TMB walks are essentially leaderless, but several experienced birders are always available to help. Meet at the site at 8am and plan to spend about two hours:

October 10: Marine Discovery Center, NSB

October 17: TBA

BIRDS & BREWS

Third Thursday of the month. B&B walks provide an end of day birding jaunt and a libation of choice at a local pub or restaurant. We bird different sites, and enjoy time to connect afterwards.

October 19 4pm: Spruce Creek Preserve, NSB

Park and meet at the end of Creek Shore Trail. We'll gather and bird, and afterwards head over to Hidden Lakes Golf Club for a pint and nosh. Note: There is a Volusia County park entrance fee or pass required (unless you're on a bike).

November 16 4pm: Sugar Mill ruins, 600 Old Mission Rd, NSB
 Afterward birding, we'll gather for libations at the Riverdeck on Riverside Dr in NSB.

FIELD TRIPS

SEVAS field trips are longer outings to areas like Merritt Island NWR, Lake Apopka, and Orlando Wetlands. We usually meet locally to carpool. Stay tuned!

SEVAS birding events are free and open to all. Some locations require an entrance fee, but most do not.

Amazon Wish List

We now have an Amazon "wish list" of needed items if you'd like to contribute.

Right now, we need to update and stabilize our table for community outreach events, so items include table cloths, hangers for our posters, and wind weights to secure our tent. We'll add items as we need, so check our Wish List often! We appreciate you!

FYI, we "table" regularly, and invite you to join us. Basically, "tabling" is setting up a SEVAS table at a high traffic community event to raise awareness of our mission, and gain support for our projects and activities. We attract people, raise money, advocate for the birds and their habitat, and make connections. If you'd like be part of the fun, please email president.sevas@gmail.com for more info.

The BirdWord Puzzle

Robert Merideth

"I would feel more optimistic about a bright future for man if he spent less time proving he can outwit nature and more time tasting her sweetness and respecting her seniority."

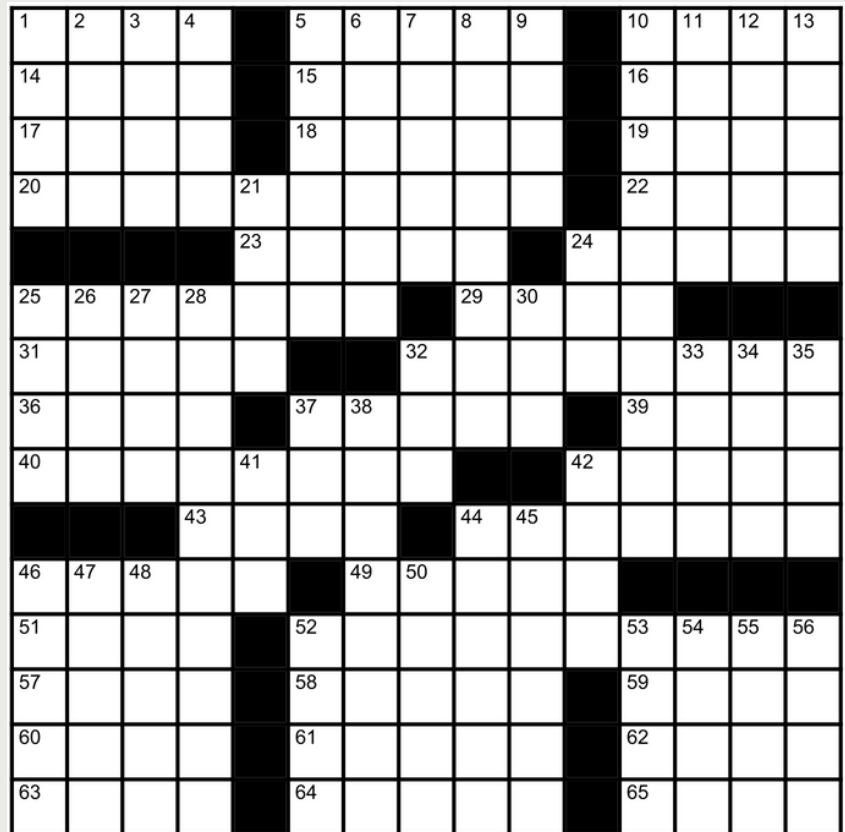
EB White

"Frosty Flyers"

**theme word clues
answers can be found [online here](#)

Across

1. Snowy and Flammulated, e.g.
5. Walked back and forth, nervously
10. Spot a CAGO at this gas station
14. Rod's companion
15. Desert plant
16. Wedding vows
17. Mexico City house
18. What many bird species are becoming
19. Gray-headed *Vermivora* with white eye-ring, olive uppers, yellow underparts (code)
20. **Sleek offshore "bi-polar" migrator
22. "Fit to be ____"
23. Reddish-brown thrush with cascading flute-like notes
24. Latin American postal type: Correo ____
25. Mortarboard items
29. Christian name
31. *Where the Crawdads Sing* author
32. Step-by-step passages
36. Seahawks QB ____ Smith
37. Yucatan's ____del Carmen
39. Long-winged *Buteo* of the North (code)
40. Instructions on Nuun or Kool-Aid packet
42. Bird tour groups are ____ guides
43. Cellist ____ Ma
44. Organic chemicals used in some drugs and household products
46. Parisian farewell
49. Advil or Aleve
51. Singer k.d. ____
52. **Large, white bird (ie, Whistling or Bewick's)
57. Naval rank, briefly
58. Wind, waves do this to coastal dunes
59. Main Web page
60. Pure Prairie League's 1970s hit
61. Deed
62. Gulf port
63. Like some drinks
64. Pluralizers
65. Frank Herbert novel



©Robert Merideth | September 2023

Down

1. Ocean predator
2. Sport
3. Smaller, peak-crowned, purplish-headed pochard (males) with no bill ring (code)
4. Bed support
5. A lot
6. Colorful, ornamental stones
7. Sympathetic sort
8. Ordinary
9. Actors Laura or Bruce
10. **A wee *Troglodytes*
11. Legendary oil field firefighter Red ____
12. Hearty cheer
13. Barbecue, in Latin America
21. Currier's partner
24. "All systems go"
25. Roman robe
26. Blown away
27. Dispatch
28. **Black-legged, yellow-footed wader
30. Intern. Literacy Assoc.
32. Combat
33. *A Sand County Almanac* author ____ Leopold
34. Black, golden-topped Icterid in Western marshes (code)
35. States
37. Party, briefly
38. Author of *Exodus*
41. Group that merged with Cooper Ornithological Society in 2016, briefly
42. Mother of Helen of Troy, seen with a swan
44. Duck's non-volant movement
45. Employees
46. "Ptarmigan Crossing" signs might be seen on this hwy
47. Actor Jean-Claude Van ____
48. Ornithologist Salim Ali's nation of origin
50. Little brats
52. A head in Martinique
53. Cousin of a herring
54. Perching duck with stunning, colorful pattern on males (code)
55. "You got that right!"
56. Iconic goose of the Aloha State

2022-2023 SEVAS Recap

(from page 1)

Purple Martin (PUMA) Project Funded by a grant from Audubon Florida and Florida Power & Light, our Purple Martin gourd "condo" was installed in 2021 at the Marine Discovery Center. We've been waiting. Waiting patiently for the birds to arrive. Many experienced PUMA landlords told us that we may not see them for the first few years.



Our Project Manager devised a way to play the recorded Dawn Song at the site to help attract the migrating Martins, and volunteer training was held in partnership with Christie Miller from Volusia County. In late April PUMA "scouts" were reported. In early May, nesting material was found in three gourds, and on May 9th there were three eggs in two nests. On May 13th three hatchlings were discovered. The hard work has paid off! Two teams checked the nests weekly. On June 10th, two fledglings were observed out of the nest and begging to get fed! Watch for a full, detailed report in a later Skimmer edition.

Plants for Birds (P4B) This initiative is four years old and began as a single demonstration garden at the Marine Discovery Center, with a grant from Audubon Florida, and Florida Power and Light. The garden is thriving, and this year we added water and electricity capability. Volunteer garden stewards keep it weeded and looking great. Dean Spears designed and created the lovely coquina stone bird bath as a new water source. We offered the first "tour" of the garden to the adult learners at MDC. Our hope is to continue more community education events in all our gardens.

The Myrtle Park garden is also doing well despite big flooding from Hurricane Ian last fall. It has been renewed and revitalized and our new Garden Steward here is Laura Devlin. This is a City of New Smyrna Beach historical site, and could also be a focus for educational events.

The garden at the Babe James Community Center also fares well after Ian. As part of the education initiative, we held two fun events with the children where Bubba the Great Horned Owl and his friend Laura from the Marine Science Center joined SEVAS volunteers to talk about owls in the neighborhood.

Our newest garden at Chisholm Elementary School, was recently installed in partnership with the 4th grade science teacher, the AP teacher, and Lindley's Nursery who helped design and plant the garden. The kids and adults are excited and invested and we look forward to many opportunities for combined educational events here. Thank you P4B team!

TMB, Field Trips, Birds & Brews Birding trips were increasingly successful this year with terrific sightings in our central Florida region. TMB met on 18 Tuesdays and participants enjoyed diverse opportunities at nearby parks and trails. Some mornings were so well attended we had to split into groups! It always works out and the TMB team leaders offer a naturalist tour of each area. Six field trips took us further afield to Orlando Wetlands, Merritt Island NWR, and Lake Apopka, and an overnight trip to south Florida in April netted 89 species including a Red-legged Honeycreeper!

Afternoon B&Bs were also well attended, with 74 avian species observed. We added a sold out "Birds and Birdies" function at Hidden Lakes Golf Course where we birded the course on golf carts, and saw a stately Peregrine falcon to end the day.

Monthly Skimmer Sign Up!

News cycle making you dizzy? Keep calm and subscribe to our SEVAS digital newsletter!

Published Oct-Apr, you'll discover actions you can take to stand up for birds and the wild places they need. Visit sevolusiaaudubon.org to sign up, and please share this copy with a friend!

Logo Wear

Our Skimmer logo is on file with **Beach Embroidery & Screen**, beachside, next to Mikey's Pizza. You can take in a favorite hat (or any piece of apparel) and they'll add it for just \$10!

They look great, so start sporting yours.

Bonus for us - free advertising for our SEVAS chapter here and when you take it on trips out of town. call 386 478 3931.



Bird of the Month

Liz Payne Merideth

American Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus ruber*), are some of the most iconic and captivating birds in the bird world. They average up to 5 feet tall and weigh between 4-8 pounds. Their vibrant pink color comes from their food, primarily consisting of crustaceans rich in carotenoid pigments, and algae. As they consume these pigments, their feathers and skin gradually turn from downy grey to hues of pink and coral.

Often seen in large flocks, their behavior is fascinating. Intensely social, they engage in synchronized movements and intricate courtship rituals, which include vocalizations and dancing. This interaction helps maintain the cohesion of their colonies and contributes to their survival.



American Flamingo
photo: andy glogower



American Flamingo and Black Skimmer
photo: andy glogower

Their normal range extends from the southernmost parts of the Gulf Coast of the US through the Caribbean islands, Central America, down to northern South America. Once native to Florida, flamingos disappeared from the state around the turn of the 20th century. A captive breeding colony formed at Hialeah Park Race Track in the '30s, which remains. Now, outside of Hialeah, more than 95% of observations occur within the Everglades, Biscayne Bay and the Florida Keys.

Expert filter-feeding helps control populations of small aquatic creatures and maintains the health of the wetlands they inhabit. Flamingo breeding and nesting habits are also closely connected to the availability of suitable wetland habitats, making them excellent indicators of wetland health.

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY

Yes!

I would like to protect and conserve habitat and wildlife in Volusia County!

Annual Memberships benefit you, the birds and our shared environments.

Join here, or securely **ONLINE** at sevolusiaaudubon.org.

Single \$20 **Family \$25**

Complete this form, make your check out to **SEVAS**, and mail to:

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society
PO Box 46 New Smyrna Beach, FL 32170

Scan this code!



Your membership includes our digital newsletter, The Skimmer, October to April, as well as member emails with announcements and event reminders.

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Year-round resident Snowbird Volunteer I'd like to add an additional contribution \$ _____

Got Skimmers?
Merritt Island NWR