

THE Skimmer

April 2023

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



Why We Do What We Do ... psssst it's not "just birds!"

Don't Squish That Caterpillar!

At the invitation of Lisa Mickey of the Marine Discovery Center, SEVAS was part of MDC's first adult education Adventure Program. As hosts of our Plants for Birds (P4B) demonstration garden and the Purple Martin project, Joyce Riddel and Richard Fasse spoke about both endeavors. About 20 people came to learn what plants were chosen and why, and how these gardens impact our local ecosystems. Most were also keen to discover the benefits of Purple Martins, the need for a colony in our area, and the specific "condo" preferences the species requires.

During the garden walk, someone noticed a large caterpillar munching on a plant. There was much discussion and with the help of iNaturalist we determined that it was a tersa sphinx moth caterpillar. The huge "eyes" were quite formidable and it was totally unfazed by the admirers. Lucky for us, this was a prime opportunity to explain first hand exactly why native plantings are crucial to providing refuge for pollinators and birds and sustain a healthy biome.

Purple Martin Updates

Will We Ever Have a PUMA Colony?

On March 23, our Treasurer Jenifer Russell, an expert birder who lives near the Marine Discovery Center, sent an exciting text: *BTW don't know if you have seen them but there were real live Purple Martins over at MDC this week!! Good work!!!!*

Project Manager Richard Fasse, chapter Secretary Jane Talbot, and Christine Kunda (newest PUMA volunteer), have completed the Coastal Naturalist course. We focused on PUMAs for our final team project, and members might be interested. The presentation was wonderful, and they'll be a video clip soon on

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Annual End of Season Potluck Picnic

April 13 5pm
Marine Discovery Center

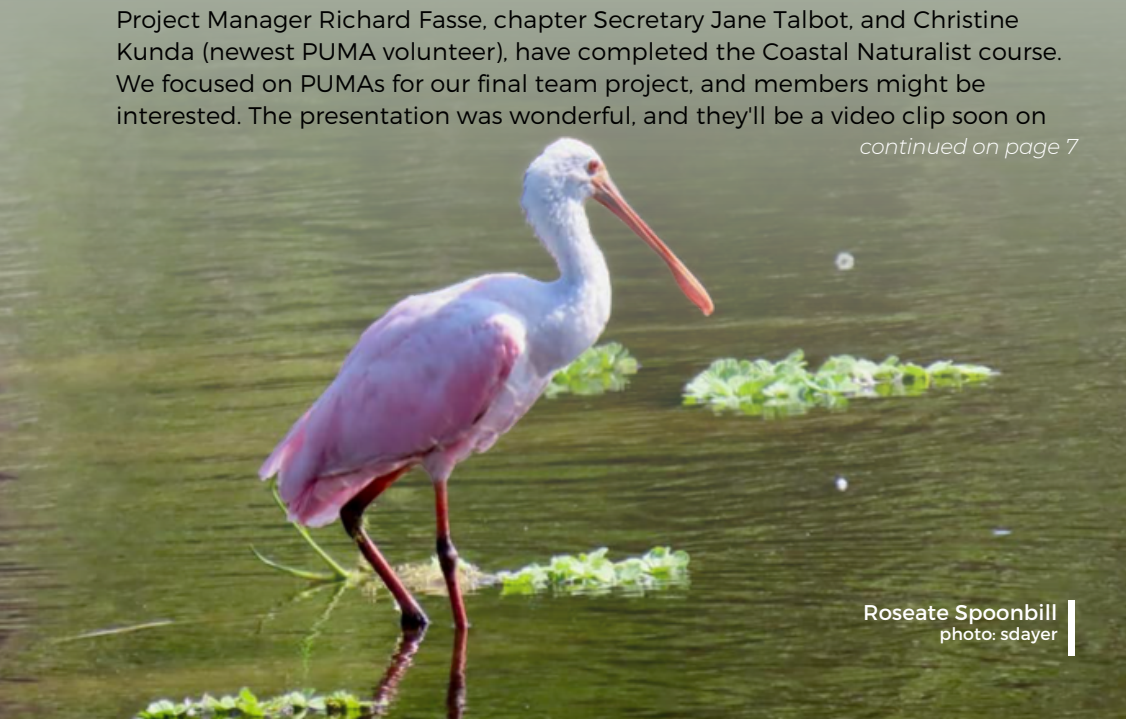
Open to All! Come Socialize and Vote, outside at MDC before we break for the Summer!

See page 5 for details...

*"You may leave
the state of Florida,
but Florida
never leaves you!"*

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Roseate Spoonbill
photo: sdayer



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.

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PRESIDENTS' POST

"Volunteers don't necessarily have the time they just have the heart!"

Elizabeth Andrews, Author, Habitat for Humanity team leader

Do you know how important you are?

Volunteers are especially essential for nonprofit organizations, and April is **National Volunteer Month** - the perfect time to celebrate and thank the many volunteers that impact us in all areas of our lives. Remember that teacher's aid? The hospital candy stripper? That Girl or Boy Scout leader? The docent at that park you visited? A worldwide celebration since 1990, this is a month-long focus on all that our volunteers do.

National Audubon says that their volunteers are its heart, eyes and ears. At SEVAS, you are not only hearts, eyes, and ears, but our hands and feet! Everything we do, all that gets done to promote our mission is done by volunteers. Many of you wear different hats for different jobs, and you should be honored every day, not just for one month. Hopefully you know how important you are to the work we do. Oh, and the fun we have! To try to pay homage here, we'll name them. I realize that the problem with doing this is the possibility of leaving someone out. If I've missed someone, it's not intentional, so please forgive, and let me know!

SEVAS is fortunate to have talented people who always have the heart to give us their best for the birds and their environment! Cheers and thank you, thank you, thank you!

Officers:

Bill and Marsha Cox, Co-Presidents
 Jane Talbot, Secretary
 Jenifer Russell, Treasurer

Committee Chairs:

Communications: Richard Fasse, Bob Creedon
 Conservation: Bob Chew
 Field Trips: Don Chalfant
 Membership: Dean Spears
 Nominating: Richard Fasse, Jenifer Russell, Jane Talbot
 Programs: Marsha Cox
 Plants for Birds: Joyce Riddel
 Purple Martins: Richard Fasse
 Newsletter editors: Mary Schreiber, Liz Payne Merideth, Rachel Smith, Gail Rogers
 Webmaster: Jane Talbot

And more! Folks who have helped with a SEVAS activity, educational event, led a field trip, and more: Dave Baker, Beth Chew, Bob Chew, Ed Carlson, Dorothy Cresswell, Susan Dayer, Kathy Griffen, Kermit Hunnicutt, John Kendall, Diane Kennedy, Cecilia McKinney, Punkie McKinney, Liz Meranchik, Liz Payne Merideth, Robert Merideth, Christie Miller, Elza Phillips, John Pierce, Kim Ramos. Mary Schreiber, Dean Spears, Meriann Spears, Joan Tague, Ken and Margo Wenzel, Trish Wheeler, Roger Wykes

And... the CBC volunteers who counted birds for the day in our SEVAS area:

Jenifer Russell, Traci Hersberger, Ed Carlson, Deborah Green, Don Chalfant, Libby and Rachel Smith, Joan Tague, Roger Wykes, Dawn Holloway, Gail Domroski, Fern Murphy, Richard Fasse, Bobbi Goldman, Ellen Tate, Becky Tate, Liz and Robert Merideth, Joyce and Steve Riddel, Lamont Ingalls, Susan Dayer, Adam Hull, Kim Ramos, Ken and Margo Wenzel,

Bill & Marsha Cox

president.sevas@gmail.com



Bald Eagle
 photo: susan dayer

Signs of Nature

Liz Payne Merideth

"Florida is a golden word ...
The very name Florida carried the message
of warmth and ease and comfort.

It was irresistible."

John Steinbeck
Travels with Charley

A surprising, unfamiliar, lovely Spring

As one with a lifelong love of and concern for nature, I've volunteered for several Audubon chapters over the years. Community service was a fierce tenet of my youth and it's served me in myriad ways (bonus- I met my to-be-husband at Tucson Audubon!). But SEVAS is a special surprise and I'm grateful.

Until recently, all I really knew about Florida was that Sanibel Island sounded like a great place to bird. My first loves were islands, shells, and tropical breezes, but as a west-coaster, Florida was never in the cards. For decades though, Sanibel was tucked away, just in case.

Après pandemic, my Oklahoma City family sought respite so we all took to the Gulf. Finally at Sanibel, we lolled. We got out on the water. We birded the heck out of Ding Darling NWR. Ahhhh. Soon after, the Atlantic called and said our beach was ready! Three months later we were tagging along on a terrific TMB outing. We met more SEVAS volunteers at the NSB Saturday market, and, fast forward... we are Volusia County residents loving our first Florida Spring. My sense of wonder is giddy as I take in new flora and fauna.

The sunsets linger, my life list expands, a Northern Parula is buzzing outside, and we made it through Bike Week. Canaveral NS is busy- a Falcon 9 launched earlier today, and the first of season leatherback turtle has already nested on the beach.

To volunteer is to connect. As we do with all migrating species, we're going to miss our SEVAS snowbirds and, yes, it's going to be hot and dripping soon, but tomorrow night we're off to Blue Springs to see the fireflies. My heart is full. Thank you SEVAS!

How is nature impacting you? Put your thoughts in the next newsletter.
president.sevas@gmail.com

Northern Parula
photo: sdayer

SEVAS in the Field

Stay up to date!

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

TUESDAY MORNING BIRDERS

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

April 4: Sugarmill Gardens, Port Orange

April 11: El Dora, Canaveral National Seashore

BIRDS & BREWS

B&B walks are our monthly afternoon social gatherings! We bird different sites, and enjoy time afterwards to connect at a local pub or restaurant.

April 26: Smyrna Dunes Park, NSB **LAST OF SEASON**

Meet at 5pm. We'll bird the boardwalk, lamp the fishing pier for possible shore birds, and head over to Flagler for a nosh afterwards. Note: There is a Volusia County park entrance fee or pass required (unless you're on a bike).

FIELD TRIPS

Are complete for the season. SEVAS field trips are longer outings to further areas. We usually meet locally to carpool.

OUTREACH AND TABLING EVENTS

SEVAS participated in 3 tabling events this year, with another scheduled for April 15 at the [Native Plant Society's](#) Spring plant sale. These events were a success in both fundraising and networking. Not all chapters host tables, perhaps because they can be labor intensive, but we find them an effective way to introduce ourselves to the public and raise awareness of our mission. Basically, tabling is setting up a table at a high traffic community event. It is a simple way to educate the public about SEVAS and gain support for our projects and activities. We attract people, raise money, advocate for the birds and their habitat, and make connections.

WISH LIST



At our last board meeting Jane Talbot mentioned that "table" needs updating to make it more attractive, and our tent needs serious wind stabilization. We now have an Amazon "wish list" for table cloths, hanging supplies for our posters, and stabilizers for our tent. Please email Jane at brantrockbirder@yahoo.com. If you have suggestions or want to purchase items. We appreciate you!

In the meantime we will continue to get out in this way and would love to have you be part of the fun! Email president.sevas@gmail.com if you can help on April 15! See you there!

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

Recent Happenings

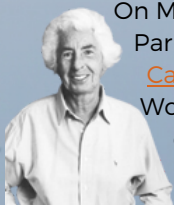
Birds & Brews & Golf Carts at Hidden Lakes GC



SEVAS members assembled at Hidden Lakes Golf Club to bird the course at a recent Birds & Brews; 15 golf carts and 30 birders participated.

The final species count, with Northern Parula, Cooper's Hawk, and a lovely Peregrine Falcon, was 34 species.

Clay Henderson and Women's History Month



On March 26, the National Park Service and [Friends of Canaveral](#) gathered to honor Women's History Month and celebrate Doris "Doc" Leeper's role as the driving force behind the establishment of [Canaveral National Seashore](#).

Author and former SEVAS President, Clay Henderson, presented a talk about Doc and other female "forces of nature" in Florida. The function was at Doc's house in Canaveral - the first public event since its listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Song, Crafts, Smiles: a second "All About Owls" event!



The Babe James Center was full of laughter and crafts at the second "All About Owls" afternoon. Bubba the Great-horned Owl thrilled the kids. More SEVAS programs are planned for Fall.

MSC's Raptor Education and Conservation Exhibit Kickoff

March 20 was a shining spring day at Ponce Inlet - perfect for the ground breaking event at the Marine Science Center. MSC featured tours of their "tweement" center, and volunteers were on hand for extensive Q&A. Attendees learned about the vision, the project, and the gratitude for everyone who's helped further this cause.



We make a tangible difference in Volusia County...**We** support our birds and elevate our local habitat...**We** offer free and fun events to the public...**We** use our skills and talents for good...**We** meet and network with like-minded in our community... **We** educate and nurture future generations...

Volunteer with SEVAS!



Action. Connection. Monthly speakers. Weekly outings. Birding field trips. Environmental projects.

Become part of our community.

Here's how you can help!

- LOVE KIDS? Educational activities
- GREEN THUMB? P4B Gardener
- ORGANIZER? Program Planner
- LEADER? Vice President
- TECHIE? Webmaster
- EYES? Purple Martin Nest Observer
- PEOPLE? Tabling events ... and more!



Black-necked Stilts
photo: robert so

Upcoming Events

Halifax Audubon is 100!
Celebration April 20 at 5:30pm



[Halifax River Audubon](#) will celebrate their first 100 years on April 20 at the Cici and Hyatt [Brown Museum of Art](#), amidst the stunning collection of works depicting natural Florida as the European settlers discovered.



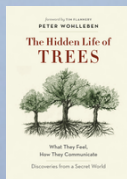
Clay Henderson, well-known for his work on behalf of conservation in our area, will speak on the travels and career of John James Audubon.

Light refreshments will be served and the museum will be open for touring. Get your tickets now and RSVP by April 10! [click here](#) for your formal invitation!

April SEVAS Book Club

Our next meeting is April 18, we will explore ***The Hidden Life of Trees*** by Peter Wohlleben.

"Wohlleben shares his deep love of the woods and forests and explains the amazing processes of life, death and regeneration he has observed in the woodland."



This new, breathtakingly illustrated edition brings those wonders to life like never before. "After a walk through the woods with Wohlleben, you'll never look at trees the same way again".

Contact Beth Chew to join:
bethchew99@gmail.com

WIN A GARDEN! Plant Real Florida for Birds, Butterflies & You Contest



P4B CONTEST DEADLINE 4/30

Enter now for a chance to win \$500 towards Florida Native Plants in your garden.

We've lost more than 3 billion birds in the last 50 years mostly due to habitat loss. Native plants provide seeds, berries, nuts, nectar and yes, habitat! Audubon Chapters' [West Volusia](#) and [Halifax River](#) Plants for Birds programs want to help! [Here is the application.](#)

FNPS Spring Plant Expo & Native Plant Sale April 15 9am-2pm



Workshops, exhibitors, and a wide variety of native plants will be available for purchase! in South Daytona.

SEVAS End of Season Potluck Picnic! April 13 5pm Marine Discovery Center



It seems impossible that our 2023 season it at its end, but...our General SEVAS meeting is a celebration this month, as we gather to socialize and enjoy our accomplishments this year.



We encourage our members to join us for a festive evening as we recall the season's favorite birding exploits, share our summer travel plans, take stock of our gardens, and visit the Purple Martin House. We will also recognize our committees, and elect officers.

Weather permitting, we'll be outside at MDC, and then feast pot luck style!

Please join us - this event is open to all. SEVAS will provide dessert and ice tea to drink.

RSVP: president.sevas@gmail.com

If you can, bring a "pot to share".



Great Blue Heron
 photo: @john581

Birding by Book

Robert Merideth

This column reviews current and classic books—about birds, birders, and birding—that connect to specific states or provinces in the US and Canada.



INDIANA | **Snapper** by Brian Kimberling (Pantheon, 2013)

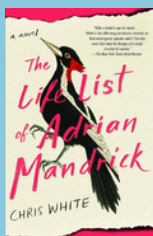
Nathan Lochmueller is a twenty something who takes low-paying, short-term jobs from biology departments, doctoral students, and federal and state agencies to conduct bird-related field studies in southern Indiana.

Nathan pieces together enough of these jobs to get by. He's an autodidactic bird expert—a highly intelligent, critically thinking, slacker naturalist with a romantic and cynical view of the region's people and their lives.

Author Brian Kimberling narrates, through a series of interconnected short stories, Nathan's exploits in the field and his engagements with childhood friends, family members, and an aloof girlfriend, Lola. Kimberling's writing is insightful, his characters and settings, richly and unexpectedly portrayed. I felt both wonder and discomfort reading about Nathan's trappings through the woods—observing birds, collecting data, and dealing with ticks, poison ivy, heat and humidity, harsh terrain, and weird and threatening people.

COLORADO | **The Life List of Adrian Mandrick** by Chris White (Touchstone, 2018)

In this novel, Adrian Mandrick is a successful anesthesiologist in Boulder, CO, with a wife and two children. And he's one of the top birders in North America.



Adrian's also addicted to prescription pain killers and mood-altering drugs. This, and an obsessive drive to increase his life list, plus a casual affair and gnawing estrangement from his parents, send him into a tailspin as he loses connection to his family and job.

He journeys to the Florida panhandle, lured by an online conversation about a possible Ivory-billed Woodpecker, and finds redemption, self-forgiveness, communication, and a possible path back to a normal life.

Am I a Birder?

Traci Hershberger

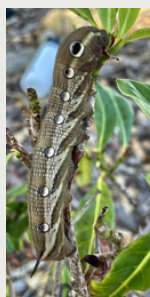
Do we only define birders as those who keep meticulous notes about the winged visitors they see? Certainly, there are many splendid citizen scientists who do their part submitting eBird checklists and those who know the field marks and voices of nearby visitors. There are also people who invest heavily in equipment to better see, hear, record, and photograph birds. I'm quickly becoming many of these things, but is this too high a bar to set and too restrictive a definition?

A birder is the family who picnics each spring to watch the Snow Geese arrive as they migrate north. A birder is my mother's friend who keeps the hummingbird feeders clean and refreshed every summer, and reports the creatures' comings and goings when she and Mom talk. My in-laws are birders who keep binoculars on their back window ledge so they don't miss seeing who is in the field behind them. My husband, a fisherman, who loves watching the Pileated Woodpecker on our street, is a birder. The man I saw in Walmart's parking lot watching a loud plague of Boat-tailed Grackles, and pondered aloud what "those darned birds were" is a birder.

I believe that anyone who takes the time to seek out, stop and admire, or learn more about our avian counterparts is a birder. Given the camaraderie and support I have experienced over the past year from Audubon society members and birding enthusiasts I can say that I have met some of the best people – and they are birders!

Caterpillar

from page 1



Florida has more than 3,000 kinds of moths, from tiny leaf miners to giant silk moths. The tersa sphinx moth is mid-sized with a wing span of 2 3/8"-3 1/8". At sunset these nocturnal moths can be seen drinking nectar from flowers like our common milkweed, honeysuckle, and four o'clocks. They eat pentas, wild coffee, buttonweed, firebush, and buttonplant. Most sphinx moths do not cause significant injury to plants they visit, and they collect and spread pollen when they feed. Caterpillars might be annoying for some, but really, the benefits of an adult sphinx are worth it.



This visitor was munching on a myrsine (colicwood) shrub. (Myrsine is adaptable and can be used as an accent plant in a shaded or partially sunny landscape.) You see why it looked "formidable" with the pair of eyespots on his abdomen and horn at the rear. These caterpillars grow to 3" long; some are brown, some green. When they mature, they burrow into the ground in plant debris and become a pupa. When they emerge as moths they are quite streamlined and actually fly rapidly. As they dodge and hover over flowers to feed, they can be mistaken for hummingbirds!

Hopefully our visitor can avoid predators (wasps and birds), find a good "nesting" place to pupate, and emerge soon as a handsome tersa sphinx moth.

Conservation Corner

Bob Chew

Bird of the Month

from page 8



Peregrines specialize in eating birds (near 400 different species have been documented in the US and over 2000 species worldwide).

Aerodynamically superior, they've been clocked at 186mph in a stoop - that steep drop from the sky, and can zip across a low marsh at 60mph.

Peregrines take birds out of the sky, sometimes flying through the prey.

I've seen this with ducks- upon impact, a duck virtually explodes and wafts to the ground, giving this adept raptor time to circle around after the strike to pluck it out of the air.

If you live in a city you may find falcons nesting on tall buildings or high bridges, the modern equivalent of a cliff. In Pittsburgh, there has been a pair (many different individuals) for years on the University of Pittsburgh Tower. In spring and summer, folks gather to watch the adult comings and goings, and the eventual emergence of chicks. Check out the blog and watch the [live cam here](#).

The effect of DDT on the population was catastrophic but the falcons' success in returning from the brink of extinction is a testament to ambitious federal and state management programs.

Today careful attention to avoid disturbances during crucial nesting times, building modifications to accommodate nests and careful monitoring are strategies that continue to help the species. So enjoy this ace predator whenever you can - but look quickly.... ZOOOOWWWW!

Logo Wear

Our Skimmer logo is on file with [Beach Embroidery & Screen!](#) You can take in a favorite hat (or any piece of apparel) and get it added 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**

One Morning Challenge

I took the One Morning Challenge on March 6th and had a lot of fun finding the birds on my doorstep. Yes, conservation truly does begin at home.

At 1:30am, I took a walk on our dock and saw a Black-crowned Night-Heron perched on a piling. This got me excited to see what other birds I could find before noon, and here are the birds that I identified:

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Gray Catbird | Blue Jay |
| Common Yellowthroat | Laughing Gull |
| White Ibis | Green Heron |
| Great Blue Heron | Boat-tailed Grackle |
| Mourning Dove | American Crow |
| Northern Cardinal | House Sparrow |
| Northern Mockingbird | Double-Crested Cormorant |
| Belted Kingfisher | Little Blue Heron |
| Tufted Titmouse | Ring-billed Gull |
| Carolina Wren | Snowy Egret |
| Yellow-rumped Warbler | Black Vulture |
| Fish Crow | Great Egret |
| Eurasian Collared-Dove | |

Do you have a house list? Consider starting one! I was surprised and delighted with the number of different species I found and have decided to keep adding to this list to see how many birds visit our property.

Purple Martin

from page 1

Facebook. The battery operated Songbird Magnet we were using has been replaced. Capt Guy helped us get electricity and water down to the Plants for Birds garden just last week. I am still working out some kinks for the PUMA Dawnsong. Next step is to install the speakers so we can drive sound without distortion. Right now I plan on mounting the speaker on top of the 4x4 in the Plants for Birds Garden.



Who will be the first to get a picture of Purple Martin on one of our gourd porches? Which gourd will attract the first tenant? Inquiring minds want to know.

Sign up for Our Monthly Skimmer!

News cycle making you dizzy? Keep calm and subscribe to The Skimmer, 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!



Bird of the Month

Joan Tague

It was a usual outing to Orlando Wetlands Park. We were enjoying a leisurely walk when someone called attention to the American White Pelicans circling overhead. Good, I thought. We don't often see these over this property. One more species for the day. I raised my binoculars to enjoy the pleasing sight.

Then, something smaller and darker caught my eye. Often other birds, like Anhingas, may be seen among the floating behemoths, but this was different. "Watch the little bird! This could really be something!" The "smaller" bird moved deftly and easily through the pelicans. It never left the group, but

instead used the birds as a disguise, a decoy, a distraction. Like a lion on the Serengeti, the small bird cloaked its movements behind those gigantic wings and scanned the impoundments. Then it peeled off to the left, like an F-16, and maneuvered itself in the sky so that the sun was behind it, blinding the targets below to its position. I lost the bird in the sun, too, but I looked in that direction for what I hoped I would see and the Gallinules below dreaded.

From out of the sun came a streak. I could hardly call it a bird as it went into a powered dive. Each stroke of the wing increased its speed - doubled? tripled? Who knows? It was fast. It crossed the wetlands in mere seconds. Its target was behind the trees, so we never saw the strike. Some birders were disappointed, but I was okay. I've seen it before and it's shocking, brutal and quick.

I could only be describing the behavior of a Peregrine Falcon. We know it as a handsome bird, with a strong black "hood" and long swept-back, pointed wings. We can all rattle off the common facts: Formerly known as the Duck Hawk, a favorite of Falconers, once only permitted to be flown from the glove by the highest of royalty, almost wiped out due to DDT and other pesticides. The list goes on.

continued on page 7

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