

THE 2024 Skimmer



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

Planting Trees for Peace and Poverty Marsha Cox

This series, Champions of Conservation, highlights environmental heroes to inspire us all. This month features Kenya's Tree Mother.

Wangari Maathai, was a truly dynamic woman who in 1977 founded the Green Belt Movement, an environmental group in her home country of Kenya.

Her plan was to plant trees as a way to alleviate poverty, enhance the environment, and empower women. "Mama Miti" as she was called, was the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004.

She saw the deforestation of her native countryside to plant tea, coffee, tobacco, and other "colonial" crops as an environmental and social justice disaster. A disaster resulting in the inability of Kenyan women to grow food crops to support their families, and thus increasing poverty.

In 2009 she was again recognized for her commitment to the interconnectedness of democracy, peace, and the environment, and Named a UN Messenger of Peace.

continued on page 7



Monthly Meeting Jan 11, 7pm

Birding expert Michael Brothers, former Director of the Marine Science Center at Ponce Inlet, is our speaker this month, and his topic is **"The Shorebirds of Florida -- Wings on the Wind."**

Sandpipers, plovers, stilts, avocets, and oystercatchers. These birds are denizens of our coastlines, grasslands, rocky shores, and even the open ocean.

Come learn about the amazing life histories of these long-distance travelers and delve into how to identify these sometimes confusing birds.

3rd Annual Gourd Raising Event Jan 3

The Purple Martins are Coming!

To boost numbers, foil invasive European Starlings and House Sparrows, and assist with habitat loss, SEVAS participates in [Project MartinWatch](#), a citizen-science effort that encourages management of nesting colonies to improve healthy fledgling rates. Our gourd system is an example of one of the best modern housing systems available, and it's a lot of fun each season to observe and manage.

In fall 2021, SEVAS, with the Marine Discovery Center, was awarded a grant from the [Florida Power & Light](#) and [Audubon Florida](#) for our proposal to install and monitor a Purple Martin colony in New Smyrna Beach. The establishment of a colony here is critical to restoring Purple Martins to this part of Florida.

Three pairs of Purple Martins nested with us last year and we want our gourds to be ready for the the birds this season. We anxiously await their safe return and hope they all make it back, and bring some new tenants with them. We are delighted with last year's results and hope for nearly full residency this year.

We'll start our Wednesday program with a brief presentation, followed by an activity to fill the gourds with nesting materials. This year we will use both pine needles and *continued on page 6*



Purple Martin
photo: snowmanradio

*"Hey Siri-
Activate
Florida Mode!"*

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

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society (SEVAS) was started in the early 1970s as the New Smyrna Beach Audubon Society by a group of neighbors who sought to protect 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

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PRESIDENTS' POST

The Benefits of Nature

As I write this we are in the midst of the very busy holiday season.

Yesterday our family (15 of us) went to the St. Johns River for a boat tour and it was delightful to "step away" for a bit and enjoy the beauty of the river and to experience the sounds, sights and fragrances of nature around us. It was a cool, sunny day, one of Florida winter's best. And nature did not disappoint. There was a Least Bittern by the shore, his head extended above the grass, standing perfectly still, watching us as we went by.

Numerous egrets and herons, Wood Storks and White Ibises were dining at the waters edge. We saw not one but three Black-crowned Night-Herons up close and personal resting on overhung branches. And for the city folk in the party, numerous alligators of various sizes were sunning on the river banks.

There were yellow flowers, red leaves, gray cypress trees, as well as leaves of all the Crayola Crayons colors of green, orange vines, and the amazing blue sky. The sound hits of the day were the hooting of two Barred Owls and the crying sound of a Limpkin. So much to embrace in our time away.

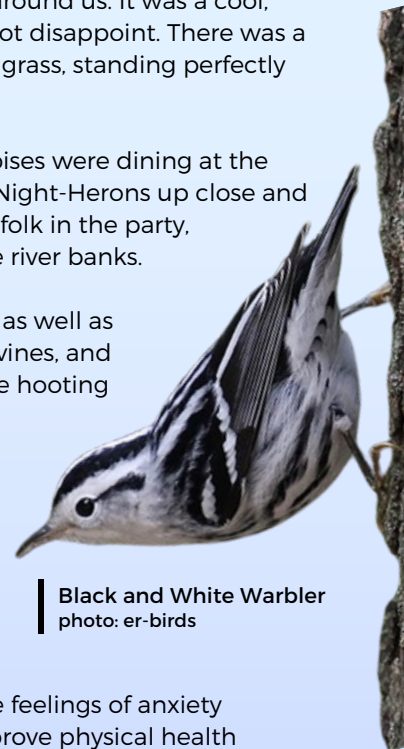
The benefits of being "in nature" to us humans are well documented. Taking time to get out in the woods to listen for bird song, to intentionally take in the sights, sounds, fragrances and even touch of the surroundings can:

- ...elevate our mood ...improve our mental health ...reduce feelings of anxiety
- ...lower heart rate and blood pressure ...lower stress ...improve physical health
- ...build community ...improve confidence and self esteem ...improve concentration
- ...and reconnect us with nature.

In his poem "The World is Too Much With Us", William Wordsworth laments, "Little we see in Nature that is ours."

Hmmmmm. Isn't it actually all ours if only we claim it? We have so many opportunities here in Volusia County to be in nature, to reap the benefits she has to offer, and for that I start the year with deep gratitude.

Bill & Marsha Cox
president.sevas@gmail.com



Black and White Warbler
 photo: er-birds



St. Johns River directly south of Sanford
 photo: Moni3

Year at a Glance

SAVE THE DATES!

Monthly Meetings

October-April, SEVAS meets at 7PM on the 2nd Thursday of the month in NSB at the Marine Discovery Center. We are honored to have speakers who touch on myriad topics close to our hearts. Open to all.

Jan 11: Michael Brothers, Birding expert: Shorebirds

Feb 8: Jessy Wayles, Indian River Lagoon National Estuary: Seagrasses and Impacts

Mar 14: Brittany Piersma, Audubon West Everglades: Burrowing Owls

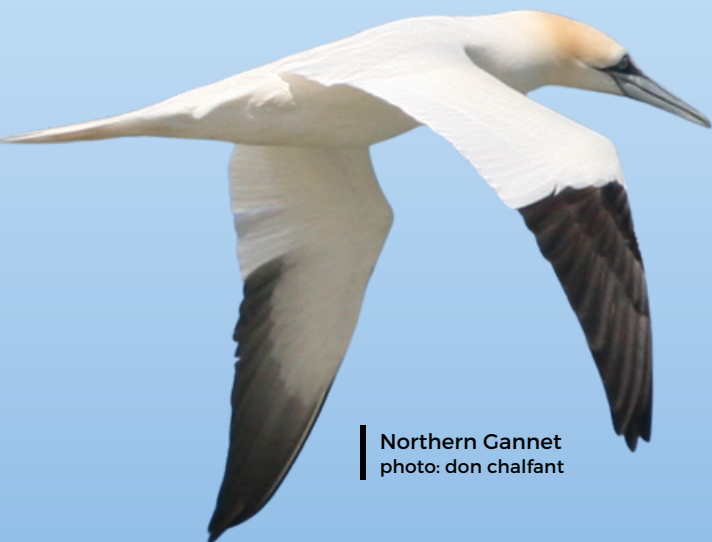
Apr 11: Donna Althearn, Volusia beekeeper: Bees

Annual Events

SEVAS members participate in various counts and citizen science projects through the year. Service is fun together, so join a team--everyone is welcome and no experience is necessary.

February 2 - 8: FL Shorebird Alliance (FSA) 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. Participants are asked to count for at least 15 minutes (or longer) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings online. See page 5 for more.



Northern Gannet
photo: don chalfant

SEVAS in the Field

OUTINGS & TRIPS

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:

January 9: Turtle Mound, Canaveral National Seashore

January 16: Indian River Lagoon Park, NSB

January 23: Marine Discovery Center, NSB

January 30: El Dora Trail, Canaveral National Seashore

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.

January 18 4:30pm: Riverside Park, 299 S. Riverside Drive, NSB. After birding, we'll gather for libations at Jimmy Hula's 151 Canal Street, New Smyrna Beach.

FIELD TRIPS

SEVAS field trips are longer outings to further out areas. Overnights will have additional costs. We usually meet locally to carpool. Stay tuned!

January 13 Lake Apopka: 7am meet in NSB at the Walmart parking lot on SR 44.

February 17: Merritt Island NWR, Black Point Drive

March 3: Orlando Wetlands

March 16: Lake Apopka

April 4-6: South Florida Overnight

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

Canaveral National Seashore Walks

CNS Walks are led by SEVAS a member on the 2nd and 4th Fridays of each month, through April 12. Meet at the Visitor Center at 8am. Walks are free, though CNS park entry fees are required unless you have a pass. See p 6 for more details.

Amazon Wish List

We now have an "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 we need 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!

Recent Happenings

December Meeting with Volusia County's Tommy Nordmann



Tommy Nordmann, with Volusia County Environmental Department spoke about the exciting programs we are lucky to have in our county. Explore Volusia, Conservation lands, and the Volusia Forever program.

Tommy was excited to share what the county is doing to conserve our natural resources, and where you can explore the outdoors close to home. See upcoming events for more.

Tuesday Morning Birders Meet Locally Each Week



It was hats and gloves for several at the recent TMB walk in Canaveral to El Dora. 5 folks attended, 22 species were observed, and it was CHILLY!

Likewise, the December Birds & Brew was canceled due to rain.

SEVAS Christmas Bird Count, (CBC) Held December 30



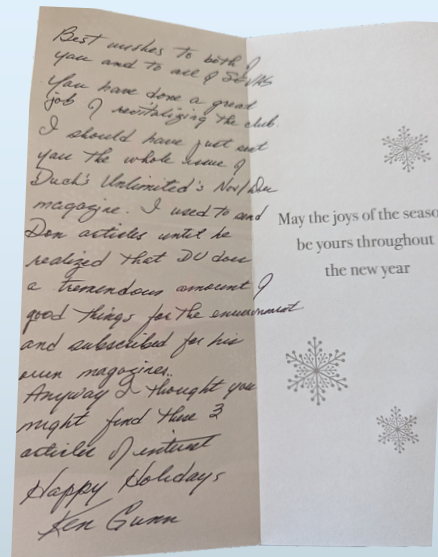
Kudos to the 15 SEVAS teams who surveyed 10 areas in Volusia County. We enjoyed a great day out- a lot of birds, a wonderful after party, and wow-This year Don Chalfant celebrated his 20th count of the same area! That's dedication!

Stay tuned, we'll have actual results in next month's *Skimmer*.

Merritt Island Field Trip: Good Birds Despite Weather

Four intrepid souls braved the winds along Black Point Drive, found 51 species, and still made it home for lunch! A terrific flyover from a cooperative Magnificent Frigate Bird was a highlight.

It Is Always Good To Hear From Old Friends



Ken Gunn sent greetings! He was very involved with SEVAS a while back and is now living in Texas.

Thank you Ken for your kind words and for your generous donation to our chapter's work. Keep on birding!

SEVAS is on Instagram!

Are you? Follow us at @sevas.nsb. Say hello and tell a friend.



Willet
photo: wildreturn

Happy New Year

FROM SOUTHEAST VOLUSIA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Upcoming Events

SAVE THE DATE for the February Great Backyard Bird Count

It seems we have just put down our binoculars after the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count and there is another opportunity to be a "community scientist" for the good of the birds. Mark your calendar for Friday February 16th through Monday February 19th for the [Great Backyard Bird Count](#) (GBBC). This is an international event where information is collected to check on bird populations around the world.

Anyone can participate by taking at least 15 minutes on any or all of the days of the event, and counting the birds you see or hear during that time. It is fun to do in your own back yard OR at any other favorite place to find the birds. During the tally period, submit your findings on your phone on eBird or Merlin or on a laptop at the eBird web site. For more instructions on the process for collecting and submitting data and go to the [Great Backyard Bird Count](#) website.

Invite a family member or friend to join you. Go to different places around the neighborhood and get to know your local birds. We at SEVAS encourage all who enjoy nature and birds AND want to be part of this most important global bird census to grab their bins and head out, and get counting!

Red-shouldered Hawk
photo: cephas

PUMA Gourd Raising Jan 3rd *(from page 1)*

cedar shavings. All supplies will be provided.

The first Purple Martins to return from Brazil are called "Scouts," and usually arrive in south Florida mid-January. Last year Scouts were reported in December, and some were seen here last week.

After the gourds are prepared, we'll walk out to the gourd rack and fly them high, ready for occupancy! Next step is monitoring the colony, and you can sign up to volunteer- more friends are needed.

Landlords all over the US provide habitat, and create a generational legacy of protecting Purple Martins. Come see what this is about- it's fascinating. Share this with your friends and family to encourage their involvement in this important cause!

Volusia County Sustainability Programs (Explore Volusia, Green Volusia)

Eco-buggies, paddling, biking, trash clean ups. Volusia County has some super events coming up- here's a link to their [January line up!](#)



Shinrin-yoku Forest Bathing

[Shinrin-yoku](#) is a Japanese phrase that means "making contact with and taking in the atmosphere of the forest."

Eve Payor has recently become a certified Forest Bathing leader and will offer this experience to SEVAS friends in February at a Slow Birding and Forest Bathing Day.



"Forest Bathing" is a sensory immersion in the ambience of nature. We take an opportunity to get away, slow down, connect with our senses, and enjoy our surroundings. More info is [here](#), and more details will be in the February *Skimmer*.



Canaveral Walks

Chip Franke

My wife and I began spending the winter in New Smyrna Beach a couple of years ago. Having been involved with a number of Audubon Clubs in Michigan, it was natural that I'd seek out the local Audubon chapter, as I wanted to learn about local birding hotspots as well as meet local birders.

These goals were readily accomplished by joining SEVAS and participating in their walks, field trips, and programs. It's a great group, and I'm very impressed with all the things that SEVAS is involved in.

My birding started in 1976 when I was hired as a naturalist for a small nature center in Saginaw, Michigan. I continued my naturalist career there until retiring in 2012. My efforts focused on birding and I always enjoyed leading field trips and programs. It's still a thrill for me to show someone a bird they've never seen before!

The Canaveral National Seashore is an expansive and diverse natural area, and last February I approached the CNS staff about leading bird walks twice a month. These walks include various sites and offer a diversity of birds including waterfowl, herons and egrets, raptors, songbirds, shorebirds, gulls, terns and more, depending on conditions. We generally bird the lagoon, some wooded hammock trails, and the Atlantic shoreline.

We meet on the 2nd and 4th Fridays of each month at 8am, through April 12. Walks are free, though CNS park entry fees are required unless you have a pass. Join us! SEVAS has agreed to help publicize these walks and details are up on the Facebook and MeetUp pages.



Snowy Egret
photo: chip franke

Travels with Richard

Richard Fasse

In December my wife and I enjoyed a trip to the Everglades National Park, and stayed at the much anticipated "new" [Flamingo Lodge](#).

Our favorite stop on the way is the enchanting Dwarf Cypress Forest. Highly recommend. Then, after a beautiful 38-mile ride from the park entrance we arrived at Flamingo where there is a new Visitor Center, restaurant, and four lodges. The facilities are near each other and linked by a short walk over the Guy Bradley Trail. A set of roads also connects them, but that got confusing.



photo: r fasse

We splurged for our 50th wedding anniversary and stayed in a one bedroom apartment (\$300/nt), nice for couples when one is a Night Owl and the other an Early Bird. Each building has six units including two-bedroom, one-bedroom, and studios. 36 years earlier we had spent a memorable Christmas there on our little sailboat, and it was a nostalgic return to where we had a memorable adventure.

The new units are actually made of steel shipping containers welded and bolted together into substantial structures smartly designed to handle 200mph winds. They are built on heavy cement columns to provide protected parking underneath.



photo: r fasse

The new units are stylish and clean, finished and furnished very nicely and you'd never know they are recycled shipping containers without close inspection. Each has a small balcony -- perfect for a spotting scope to scan nearby mud flats at low tide. It rained almost our entire visit, so we did frequent the covered viewing area at the Visitor Center.

Kitchen was adequate with a coffee maker, microwave, small fridge, and small dishwasher. Everything is provided, but be sure to bring your own salt and pepper. The Marina Store has basic supplies, and the new restaurant was not yet finished. The roomy bathroom included a large full tub and shower, but the fan and the light were on the same switch. A large and airy bedroom had a Queen bed and a window on the bay. There was a pull out couch in the living area, but that would be tight. Available wifi was only about 1.5 to 2 Mbps but there is good 5G mobile from AT&T and the speeds were 25 to 50 Mbps so I streamed some shows (did I mention it rained the whole time?). We use Cricket (AT&T) so we were all set. If you don't have AT&T you might be able to do email by wifi but not much more.



photo: r fasse

If we go in the winter again we would consider the [Winter Glamping](#) option. Tents!

Conservation Corner

Bob Chew

LOVE OUR LAGOON and Let's Get Rewilding Our Suburban Yards

There are many reasons to rewild our yards in addition to providing more habitat for birds, bees, butterflies and other wildlife. And, they include increasing our property values and expanding our enjoyment of our properties.

For those who want to learn more about why we need to rewild our yards, read [Nature's Best Hope](#) by Douglas W. Tallamy or visit the [National Wildlife Federation](#) and download their Tip Sheets and Guides. You can also watch their videos.

Next, get busy and apply to get your [Wildlife-Friendly Habitat Garden certified](#) by the National Wildlife Federation.

By reducing the amount of manicured grass in our yards, we minimize the need to apply fertilizer that can impact the ground water or runoff into our waterways triggering algal blooms. Ongoing algal blooms that have severely impacted the Mosquito Lagoon over the last decade has resulted in the loss of most of the seagrass that is a keystone species that so many species rely on.

Manatees have been severely impacted by the loss of seagrass that is their main food source resulting in a record of 1,100 manatee deaths in Florida in 2021 with more than half of the deaths occurring in the Indian River Lagoon.

Two simple steps you can take to reduce your impact on our local waters are to install Rain Barrels and to stop using weed killers such as Roundup! Instead using a mixture of 30% Vinegar, Epson Salt and a small amount of Dawn dish soap can be sprayed on weeds.

For those who want to help us maintain our existing Gardens for Birds or plant new ones, contact Bob Chew at bobchew99@gmail.com.

Champions of Conservation (from page 1)

A true champion of conservation, Professor Maathai received her college education in the U.S. as part of the Kennedy Program and then her PhD from the University of Nairobi. Through her community involvement she recognized the unique relationship that the women of Africa had to the environment. Throughout Africa, 70% of the farmers are women. The [Green Belt Movement](#) encouraged the farmers to plant trees, provided by the GBM, to help stop soil erosion, provide shade, food, and firewood, as well as increase autonomy by starting nurseries.



Her story is rich and worthy of a read: how she pushed through issues of gender, politics, education bias, and much more is inspirational. Since the Green Belt Movement was founded in 1977 over 51 million trees have been planted in African countries as well as in others such as the U.S. and Haiti. Today, the GBM continues to empower communities, particularly women, to conserve the environment and improve livelihoods.

Planting a tree is a simple act. Our sister Florida chapter, [Pelican Island Audubon](#) has tree planting as one of their focused community conservation activities. We at SEVAS plan on including a "micro forest" at Chisholm Elementary School in this coming year's Plants for Birds projects. As Mama Miti did, we can help our environment by planting one tree at a time.

New Logo Wear

Our New Skimmer logo is on file with [Beach Embroidery & Screen](#). Bring in a favorite hat, or any piece of apparel, and they'll add our logo for just \$10. **They look great, so start sporting yours!** Bonus for us - free advertising for our SEVAS chapter here, and when you wear them on trips out of town. Call Kylene at 386 478 3931.



Manatee surfacing for air
photo: emerson gomes d.

Bird of the Month

Richard Fasse



Purple Martin
photo: cajay

The Purple Martin is a species of bird native to the Americas. A migratory swallow species, martins winter in South America, then return to breed in the United States in the spring.

An important bird for humans, martins help control insect populations, which reduces the need for chemical pesticides. Despite this, their population numbers are in decline due to habitat loss and competition from other bird species. That's where we come in.

Martins are cavity-nesting birds, meaning they need a suitable nest hole to nest in. They are also very social birds that live in large colonies, and will often return to the same house year after year. Eastern Purple Martins are one of three North American bird species that depend solely on humans for nesting infrastructure. The other two are the Chimney Swift and the Barn Swallow. In fact, Native Americans began hanging natural gourds for them two thousand years ago! Aerial acrobatics, daytime chatter and the social aspect of the colony are fun to watch and listen to. The birds are quite tolerant of humans, and even curious.

They are the largest species of swallow in the world, growing up to 8 inches in length. They have glossy, dark purple feathers with a black-purple head, back and tail. Males have a metallic blue sheen on their wings. Female and juvenile birds are a dull gray color. They have a long, forked tail and long wings that help them maneuver in flight to snap up flying insects. Come to the Gourd Raising on Jan 3 and learn more about these beautiful purple birds, and how you can help them. Check our [MeetUp](#) page for more.



A Year with the Birds (1916)
author: alice eliza ball

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