

THE Skimmer



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

Buffalo Soldier, Peanut Man, Tree Lady of Brooklyn

Our Champions of Conservation series highlights environmental heroes to inspire us all. Marsha Cox

Not bound by size, shape, color, gender, or age, champions of conservation are as diverse as Nature itself. In celebration of Black History Month we highlight three African Americans who are important members of our community of conservation champions.

In 1886 the first all black regiment of the U.S. Army, "Buffalo Soldiers," was formed, and tasked to patrol Native Americans of the Plains, control cattle rustlers and railroad thieves, as well as protect stage coaches and wagon trains. They were known for their tenacity and fierce fighting ability. The most famous Buffalo Soldier was Colonel Charles Young.



Colonel Charles Young
photo: public domain

Born into slavery, Charles Young was a graduate of West Point and the first African American to achieve the rank of Colonel. While assigned to the Presidio, he was put in command of the newly established areas now known as Sequoia and King's Canyon *continued on page 6*

Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) Feb 16 - 19

Flock Together and Connect to Birds, to Nature, and with Each Other.

Did you know that North American birds have suffered a 29% net decline (that's three billion birds!) since 1970? Many of the hardest-hit species have been songbirds.

You can help. [Watch this video.](#) Birders all over the world participate in this important community science event, the Great Backyard Bird Count. The GBBC is simple and critical for scientists monitoring bird populations and responding to environmental changes. Last year over a half-million participants around the world observed and counted over 7,500 bird species. This is a lovely activity to share with children and elders, too. In a nutshell, here's all it takes:

Step 1. Choose a location. A familiar one, or a new hot spot you want to try. Do a beach count one day, a hammock count another day—the choice is yours.

Step 2. Watch for at least 15 minutes. Do a small amount of time or spend the day. Start with an owl prowl, or a sunset rookery return flight, or an afternoon beach shorebird count.

Step 3. Enter your data. For more information go to the [GBBC website](#) or eBird.

Step 4. Have fun! Invite a friend, go solo, head out with a group, become a citizen scientist for the day. Send us a GBBC story with photos to sevasnewsletter@gmail.com.



Brown Pelican
photo: s dayer

OPEN TO ALL!

Monthly Meeting Feb 8, 7pm

Jessy Wayles, a Community Engagement Coordinator for the [Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program](#) will speak on "What's Ailing The Indian River Lagoon." Discover aspects of lagoon life and the vital citizen science, habitat restoration, and conservation projects that need our help. One Lagoon – we're all in this together!

Our meetings are open to all, not just SEVAS members.

"Florida often winters in name only: Winter Garden, Winter Park, Winter Haven ... so we tend to salt margaritas, not sidewalks."

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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

Presidents Bill and Marsha Cox
president.sevas@gmail.com

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Secretary Jane Talbot

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Programs Trish Wheeler

Field Trips Don Chalfant

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Conservation Robert Chew

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Plants for Birds Susan Dayer

Purple Martin Project Richard Fasse

Communications Robert Merideth

Newsletter Editor Liz Payne Merideth

Tabling Events Gail Rogers

Members at Large

Ed Carlson, Traci Hershberger,

John Kendall, Rachel Smith



PRESIDENTS' POST

Favorite Birds and Small Chapters

What was your "bird of the day"? We like to pose this question to the participants at the end of our birding outings, either at a local Tuesday Morning Birders jaunt, or on our farther away Field Trips.

Sometimes it's a unanimous answer, like the Magnificent Frigatebird that suddenly appeared over the Indian River Lagoon one Tuesday morning. Or the Prairie Warbler that sang on a close branch at Spruce Creek while showing its magnificent yellow in the morning sun. Sometimes there are many answers like at the end of this last Birds and Brews: for some it was the Common Eider (a lifer), or the Yellow-throated Warbler, or the Forster's Tern that flew so close then landed to seek its dinner. That evening we saw a Black Skimmer and a Great Black-backed Gull, too—always something special to see during one of our trips.

Being a member or friend of SEVAS provides an opportunity to see amazing birds, meet cool people, and have fun. Hosting birding opportunities is an important part of what we do. But that's not all there is! Equally important is our conservation work.

Our Mission, *protecting birds and their habitat, through education, advocacy and action* commissions us to be involved in community conservation activities, and working together to carry out this mission is key. As you know, we were awarded the **Small Chapter of the Year** at the recent Audubon Florida Assembly. This because of our amazing volunteers and the programs and events we nurture within our community. Our current programs promote this conservation work:

- **Four bird-friendly garden sites**
- **A Purple Martin housing system**
- **Education events in a local school and community center**
- **Regular beach cleanups at Canaveral National Seashore**
- **Plans for planting a mini forest and meadow at a local school**
- **Tabling events at the NSB farmers market and other venues**

Come out and join some of our talented birdwalk hosts to see your "bird of the day," then sign up and volunteer for one of our awesome projects. You'll be happy you did. While you are at it, become a SEVAS member by signing up [here on the website](#). We look forward to seeing you soon!

Bill & Marsha Cox

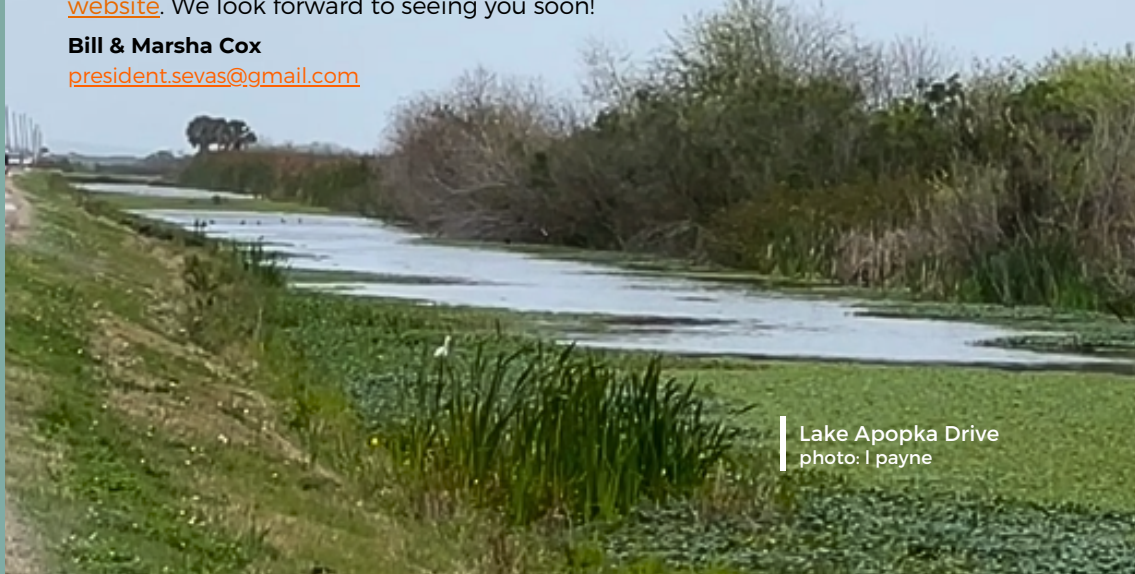
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Lake Apopka Drive
 photo: I payne

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.

Feb 8: Jessy Wayles, Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program: Seagrasses and Impacts - What's Ailing The Indian River Lagoon

Mar 14: Brittany Piersma, Audubon West Everglades: Burrowing Owls << in person and on ZOOM

Apr 11: Donna Althearn, Volusia beekeeper: Bees

Annual Events

SEVAS members participate in various bird census counts and citizen science projects throughout 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. Watch, learn about, count and celebrate birds!

See page 1 for more, and [watch this video](#).

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:

February 6: Indian River Lagoon Park, NSB

February 13: Lighthouse Point Park, Ponce Inlet

February 20: Marine Discovery Center, NSB

February 27: Smyrna Dunes Park, NSB

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 relax and connect afterwards.

February 15 4:30pm: Reed Canal Park, 919 Reed Canal Road, South Daytona. After birding, we'll gather for libations at Lost Lagoon Wings and Grill, 2004 N Dixie Freeway, NSB.

FIELD TRIPS

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

February 18: SUNDAY Merritt Island NWR, Black Point Drive

March 3: Orlando Wetlands

March 16: Lake Apopka

April 4-6: South Florida Overnight

CANAVERAL WALKS

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

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 a "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

The Shorebirds of Florida: Wings on the Wind with Michael Brothers



Michael Brothers was delighted to share his passion and expertise to a full house at our January meeting! Over 50 guests learned about the amazing long-distance travels and life histories of sandpipers, plovers, oystercatchers, stilts, avocets, and others.

January Board Meeting: Visioning with Jacqui Sulek

The SEVAS Board enjoyed an amazing day with Jacqui, exploring our part in the legacy of conservation that is Audubon, and envisioning the future of our growing SEVAS.

We listed goals for going forward, defined challenges, considered new partnerships, and learned more about each other! Thank you Jacqui!

Our Board meets monthly, Oct- April. Contact Marsha for more: president.sevas@gmail.com

Stetson Aquatic Center Tour: Rowing, Research, and History

On January 22 a dozen folks met and toured the [Sandra Stetson Aquatic Center](#) and [Bartram Gardens & Trail](#) in DeLand. Casey Ramey and Dr Jason Evans described the projects stewarded by the [Institute of Water and Environmental Resilience](#). We also walked the Bartram Trail - complete with William Bartram's own sketches, made along the St. Johns River in 1765.



The area features a floating wetlands system using BEEMAT technology which filters nutrients and is very effective at removing nitrogen and phosphorus. The native plants around the perimeter are thriving, as is the rain garden, and there were lots of birds too. Lovely and well worth the trip!

Dr. Evans is seeking a \$600K [ECHO grant](#) to add a Living Shoreline exhibit with a boardwalk, public education, and enhanced shoreline stabilization. SEVAS supports this project and encourages members to write the council or attend the [Volusia County Council meeting](#), March 5 at 9am.

Purple Martin Project Update: Go for Gourds!



On Jan 3rd the gourds went up at the Marine Discovery Center!

We hope to have our first Martins by Valentine's Day, but your guess is as good as any. In the mean, Kim Ramos, Mary Mclendon, Ken and Margo Wenzel, and Team RWB have been working weekly, lowering the tower, inspecting each gourd, and raising them all up again. It's good practice for dealing with the snake netting, sticky locks, etc. Stop by MDC at 5pm Tuesdays to watch.

As soon as the team reports nesting behavior, we will start twice-weekly nest checks to insure we get accurate dates for when each egg is laid. This data is used for the annual NestWatch report we send to the [Purple Martin Conservation Association](#). The second team will meet on Fridays or Saturdays to complement the data from the Tuesday Team once egg laying starts. Stay tuned...

Lake Apopka Field Trip: Grey-headed Swampphens aplenty!

Twenty souls joined us for the drive about Lake Apopka on January 13, and we saw more than 50 species!



Lake Apopka Field Trip
photo: I payne

Upcoming Events

NSB Market Day Sat February 3 8am - 1230pm



Come say hello and consider supporting SEVAS by gifting your Valentine with an annual membership. We'll have bird seed cakes and other trinkets too. Thanks in advance to all who contribute fundraising items.

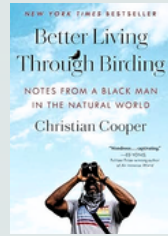
"Explore the Cosmos" Feb 15 at MDC's February Lecture Series



Astronomy is the topic for February's presentation at the [Marine Discovery Center](#).

Derek Demeter, director of the [Emil Buehler Planetarium](#) at Seminole State College, will discuss the wonders of the night sky with an indoor chat before leading guests outdoors to telescope various visible objects. Contact the MDC at 386 428 4828 for more info.

SEVAS Book Club Starts February 22



The SEVAS book club will meet on the 4th Thursday of each month from 2:30-4pm, starting this month, with the book, "*Better Living through Birding: Notes From a Black Man in the Natural World*" by Christian Cooper.

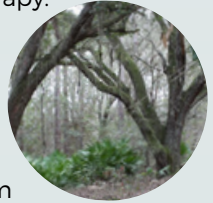
Cooper hosts the [National Geographic's "Extraordinary Birder"](#) program, and is also a science and comics writer. Join us for conversation about the book on February 22.

Contact Beth Chew for details:
bethchew99@gmail.com

NEW ACTIVITY February 17 Forest Bathing and Slow Birding

Forest bathing is here! Experience the deep nature connection of Shinrin-Yoku, Japanese forest therapy.

Eve Payor, certified forest bathing practitioner, will lead our group in this unique encounter from 9am-12pm at [Deep Creek Preserve](#) on SR 415.



Come get away, slow down, connect with your senses and celebrate the awe and wonder of time in nature on a deeper level. Self care for all!

SEVAS is excited to offer this new activity. There is a fee and reservations are required. Make yours here on the [Eventbrite link](#).

We will immerse our senses, enjoy the outdoors, and revel in a slow birding experience. See you on Feb 17.

Find SEVAS on Instagram!

Follow us at [@sevas.nsb](#). Say hello, tag us, share, share, share, and tell a friend.



Purple Martin Gourd Raising
photo: b cox

Canaveral News

Events at our National Seashore

Bird Walks with Chip Franke Fri Feb 9, Fri Feb 23 8-10am

We have enjoyed four CNS walks so far. Our groups have been small, and each outing has had a surprise or two including:

- * a Magnificent Frigatebird soaring overhead
- * Surf Scoters and Common Loons in the lagoon seen at close range



* American Oystercatchers on the oyster beds

* a line of Northern Gannets flying low and close to shore for great views of both immature and adult birds

* a verry close look at a chatty Pileated Woodpecker

Join us at Canaveral! We meet on the 2nd and 4th Fridays of each month at 8am at the Apollo Visitor Center, through April 12. Walks are free, though CNS park entry fees are required unless you have a pass.

SEVAS has agreed to help publicize these walks and details are up on [Facebook](#) and [MeetUp](#).

Beach Clean Up Sat February 17 10am - 12pm

Meet at the Apollo Beach Visitor Center for sign-up, a brief welcome, and to collect trash bags.

Bring gloves, water, a snack, sun protection, and enthusiasm! Thank you in advance for helping to keep our beaches clean. The animals appreciate it too! Beach clean ups are suitable for all ages.



THANK YOU!



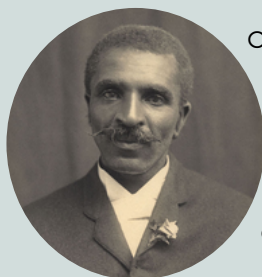
Wilson's Plover
photo: p wallack

*"Uniformity is not Nature's way;
Diversity is Nature's way."*

Vandana Shiva, scholar and environmental activist

Champions of Conservation (from page 1)

National Parks. He and his Buffalo Soldiers were to protect the parks from farmers and lumber poachers. They accomplished building an infrastructure that opened the parks to necessary improvement and later to tourists. In his reports to the President, Young stated that his work was "preserving these mountains just as they are, with their clothing of trees, shrubs, rocks and vines" for their continued existence. The work of Colonel Young and the Buffalo Soldiers paved the way for the conservation and preservation of these magnificent national parks.



George Washington Carver
photo: public domain

Our second champion is most known, perhaps, for discovering 300+ uses for peanuts, including peanut butter. Hence George Washington Carver earned his nickname "Peanut Man." But Carver actually spent most of his life working on ways to revitalize the southern soil, and is considered one of the founders of the organic farming movement.

Southern soils had become depleted and were almost infertile from the overproduction of cotton. He taught and

worked with former slaves, pioneering the benefits of crop rotation and planting nitrogen-fixing crops like peanuts to enhance the soil. He stated that he believed that man was not above nature but part of it and that promoting environmentalism through sustainable gardening was a key to conservation.



Hattie Carthan
photo: Courtesy Hattie Carthan Community Garden

Our third champion is Hattie Carthan, AKA "The Tree Lady of Brooklyn." Born in Virginia in 1900, Hattie moved to Brooklyn's Bed-Stuy area at age 28. She soon noticed that there were very few trees in this poor area, and that while trees lined the streets in more affluent neighborhoods, her streets had none.

Recognizing the benefits of trees and green spaces, she began her work as a community activist and started a re-greening movement. Hattie worked with neighborhood groups to plant more than 1,500 trees in less than ten years, and provided education for all to "green up" the area. Hattie's commitment to community-based conservation continues to inspire the Bedford-Stuyvesant community as her legacy lives on in the [Magnolia Tree Earth Center](#) and in Brooklyn's now tree-lined streets.

Whether it was preservation of natural resources like forests and wild places, introducing sustainable agriculture practices, or recognizing the need to nurture green spaces in urban communities, the work of this month's champions continues as an important part of our conservation legacy. Let's all celebrate them together.

Membership Appeal

Liz Payne Merideth

What Does SEVAS Mean to You?

SEVAS! What a wonderful group we are—active, inclusive, determined. Nearly every SEVAS presentation, outing, garden, and education program is free and open to the public. All courtesy our active volunteers.

To me, SEVAS means connection, conservation, warm hearts, and fun. I'm presently visiting family in Oklahoma, smiling as I write — my gratitude for our long-time members and the newer folks I've met recently is huge. There is so much going on, and this week I'm missing the Farmer's Market, and a TMB outing. And next week, Forest Bathing! Darn. More to come, though, Next month an Eco-buggy tour of Lyonia preserve is in the works.

Do I support SEVAS? Heck yeah. Since moving to Florida, I've discovered estuaries and lagoons, new seasons, birds and habitat, available education programs, who helps with rescues, and plenty more. I may not know a lot yet, but I'm learning which SEVAS volunteer to quiz and find answers.

Over the past year, many of you may have met me on birding trips and at monthly meetings. I'm a lifelong volunteer, and also the editor of *The Skimmer*. I love what I do for SEVAS, because I love what SEVAS does for birds and conservation.

Having said all that, let me encourage our *Skimmer* readers to join SEVAS and help fund our ongoing activities. Already a member? Please renew that membership. Visit our website and use your card or PayPal. Or mail your check (payable to SEVAS) to: Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, PO Box 46, New Smyrna Beach, FL 32170.

If you'd like to submit an article or photo for a future issue of *The Skimmer*, email me at sevasnewsletter@gmail.com. I'm delighted to help, and look forward to meeting you.

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.



Conservation Corner

Bob Chew

My Parents Were Greener Than I Ever Realized!

Although I have always strived to minimize my environmental footprint, I got thinking how things were different when I was a child growing up in Rhode Island. In many areas, my parents had a much smaller environmental footprints that I have. For instance:

- Milk was delivered to our house in glass bottles! When empty, the bottles were collected, cleaned and refilled.
- The local bakery delivered bread and treats to our home in their truck.
- We stowed our kitchen scraps in an inground garbage pail, then fed them to the pigs.
- Almost all our shopping was done without leaving town.
- We grew our own vegetables, and bought others from a nearby stand during the season. We collected apples from trees on our property.
- My father shaved using a double edge razor and a shaving mug. Used blades were disposed of in a slot at the back of the medicine cabinet!
- Most clothes were made of natural cotton.
- Our rugs and carpets were made of wool.
- Needed items were typically manufactured in the United States and probably locally.

As impressive as the above list is, many issues back then were harmful to the environment, including:

- Large, heavy cars that used leaded gasoline and engines that did not have catalytic converters.
- Living in energy inefficient homes.
- Harmful insecticides like DDT that caused widespread damage to wildlife including insects, birds, marine animals, and humans.
- An unhealthy diet heavily reliant on meat and dairy products that also caused environmental damage.
- Wastewater treatment plants that treated waste improperly. During heavy rains, raw sewage entered Narragansett Bay closing it to shell fishing.

Though I have no desire to go back and live in the 1950s, it is sad to see how much harder it can be to have a smaller environmental footprint today.

Want to learn more? Come help us maintain our Gardens for Birds, or join the Purple Martin Project. Contact me at bobchew99@gmail.com.



Bird of the Month

Jane Talbot

Painted Buntings are a spectacular bird, and here in Florida you can attract them to your feeders! The male has stunning blue, red, green, and yellow plumage, while the female is more of a lime green. Juvenile males are the same color as females until the fall of their second year. Painted Buntings are small and, despite their vibrant colors, may be difficult to see in the wild because of their preference for thick vegetation or grasses.

Painted Buntings breed in the coastal southeast and south-central US from late April through August. The eastern population breeds mainly in South Carolina and Georgia, then winters in south Florida and in parts of the Caribbean. The western population breeds mainly in Oklahoma and Texas, then winters in Mexico and Central America. During the breeding season, they eat insects including grasshoppers, beetles, caterpillars, wasps, and flies. The rest of the year, they eat seeds and can be coaxed to bird feeders.

Males establish a small territory, then the female will build a nest which is typically low, and hidden in vegetation. The female cares for the young alone, and hatchlings fledge around 14 days. They are a short-to-medium-distance migrant.

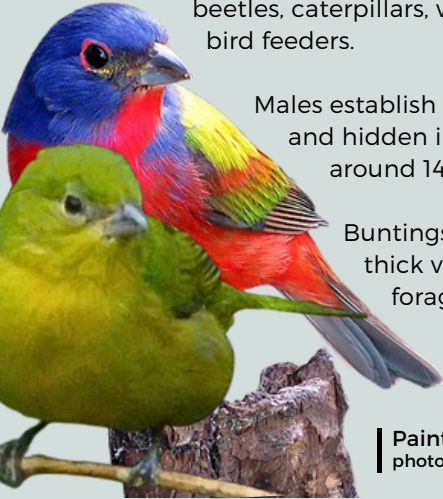
Buntings can be shy, and are more likely to come to a feeder in an area with thick vegetation. Tube feeders with millet are preferred. In the wild, they forage for seeds on the ground among grasses and in dense cover.

Male Painted Buntings were once a popular caged bird. Trapping is illicit, but according to Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Painted Buntings are still illegally trapped and sold as caged birds. The narrow geographic range of the eastern population also makes them vulnerable to habitat loss and fragmentation.

Painted Buntings
photos: d faulkner, mike's birds



Painted Bunting at home
photo: j talbot



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