



The Skimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, Inc.

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Prez Sez

THANK YOU to all who participated in the 107th Annual Christmas Bird Count. The weather conditions were not the best, and that may have caused some birds to go unnoticed. However, the overall result was phenomenal. I was in Pittsburgh, otherwise I would have been there. Twenty seven adults and seven teens found a total of 43,447 birds in a record 132 species. Species not seen before in our CBC included the Canada Goose, Surf Scoter, Sora, White-breasted Nuthatch, Sedge Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Gray Kingbird, Hermit Thrush, and Magnolia Warbler. In addition, a Glaucous Gull was sighted in our count area during count week.

The CBC results are a compelling reminder of what a small number of dedicated volunteers can do in a short period of time. Obviously a single sighting of a new species is not a trend, but over time scientists may be able to use these results to determine trends in our environment. During a program called "Denman Forestry Series" on Channel 9404 (Dish) last night, a researcher from the University of Washington showed a chart of the number of bird species found in true forest, fully urbanized areas and several stages of wooded suburban areas near Seattle. Though there were more bird species in the woods than in the urban areas, the number was almost doubled in areas of mixed wooded/suburban areas. The implication was that there is a more diverse habitat in the wooded/suburban ecology than in the pure wooded or urban ecology so a greater diversity of birds. Although not stated in the presentation, there are probably a lot more bird feeders in the mixed wooded suburbs. Also not stated was the plight of the pure forest birds. Some accommodated themselves to the wooded suburbs, but others did not. What happens to those who did not and whose habitat is shrinking?

We all need to be concerned about shrinking habitat since it is the leading cause of species extinction. Whether it is from Global Heating or over-development, we need to be concerned and express our concern to elected officials. Edgewater, New Smyrna Beach, and Florida will all be very different in the next ten years. How different depends on us.

—Don Picard

New Members

We welcome Mary O. Hall, Stephen Howland, M. G. Kleinhans, Gerald L. Raffaele and Fred Staiger

February Speaker

David Griffis

FEBRUARY'S SPEAKER will be David Griffis, Volusia County Extension Director and Natural Resource Agent. He has been Natural Resource Extension Agent for 28 years, dating back to 1978. He will be describing the Florida Master Naturalist Program which he instructs. This program provides an excellent opportunity to learn, in depth, about a particular habitat in Florida and also is a wonderful chance to meet and compare experiences with people, from the area, who share your interests.

David was awarded a BS in Soil Conservation and Land Use Planning by University of Florida and a MA in Education by Stetson University. He is a native Floridian and currently makes his home in Deland. He offices at the Volusia County Fairgrounds just off Highway 44.

David is a Member of Trinity United Methodist Church, is Deland Chamber of Commerce's Beautification Chairman, Chairman of Keep Deland Beautiful Day, and is involved with the Volusia County Fair Association, Volusia County Farm Bureau and the Green Builder Coalition.

—Ken Gunn

Christmas Bird Count

WHEN THE OFFICIAL record of the 107th Christmas Bird Count is reviewed by future birders there will no doubt be an asterix next to the data with the notation "el nino." This CBC was memorable, held on the Saturday December 30th, on a warm 83 degree day at the end of the warmest year on record at a time when the entire Atlantic Seaboard was warmer than normal. The birds were there, but not in the predictable numbers usually seen at the height of the winter season. Nevertheless, the final tally showed 47,630 birds of 132 species, on the historic high side for the Ponce de Leon Circle. This is consistent with other CBC circles in Volusia County which also showed high species counts.

This year 27 adults, six boy scouts, and my daughter participated in the count covering the circle by land, beach, and water and car, boat, and on foot. While on the whole it was a beautiful day, some of the participants endured heavy rains while others saw no rain at all. Once the bright sun came out and the mercury climbed, the birds made themselves scarce. It was such a beautiful day the team which had responsibility for

See Bird Count p.2

Conservation Notes



RECENTLY I WAS PUZZLING over what to write about for the February Skimmer and didn't have any good ideas. Then I awakened during the night and thought of a fine topic in complete detail.

The only trouble was in the morning I couldn't remember that great idea. Was insidious old age mind-loss accelerating? I hoped not and took comfort from a story told by one of the smartest and most competent bosses I ever had. He was practically a marketing genius.

George, my boss, said that often great solutions to difficult marketing problems came to him in the middle of the night when he would awaken briefly, but come morning he had difficulty recalling that brilliant idea. Helpfully, his wife provided a small pad with a tiny night light and a pen which she placed on a table next to his side of the bed saying, "Now you can write down that idea when it's fresh."

"Fine", said George. He related how a night or two later he had another inspiration at maybe 3:00 AM. He quickly got the illuminated pad, wrote down his thoughts and then slipped back into bed for contented sleep.

The next morning he arose and grabbed the notepad to revisit that marvelous problem solution. Alas! The pad was blank. He had dreamed the whole thing.

Fortunately the News-Journal came to my rescue for ideas with a column about young people, ages 18 to 25. We need to recruit young men and women in that age bracket to enjoy the pleasures of Audubon activities and carry on work to preserve the environment that makes those pleasures possible. The problem has been getting in touch with these young adults to recruit them for our chapter. The N-J column provided some clues.

The Pew Center, a non-profit foundation had polled young folks to learn their behavior and views on a variety of subjects. Here are key findings on how this 18 to 25 age group gets information: 23% read a newspaper yesterday, 22% got news on line yesterday, 48% watched TV news yesterday, 51% sent or received a text message yesterday

The numbers indicate that the new generation spends a lot of time on the internet, but 77% of them don't read newspapers regularly. That suggests that having a SEVAS web site could strengthen our chapter, while continuing to mail many copies of the beautifully designed and printed "Skimmer" just wastes money. Those were the conclusions reached January 9 by our chapter's Board of Directors.

Being old fashioned, I was skeptical initially about cutting the number of printed and mailed Skimmers while increasing internet communications, but maybe it will work. We have to make it work.

I spend a lot of time on the internet reading and often printing stories from leading newspapers such as the NY Times, LA Times, Washington Post, several international papers and scientific journals. Also I scan environmental sites such as the Daily Grist, Planet Ark, Climate Crisis Coalition and Renewable Energy Access. At my age I try to focus on major issues that will most affect our descendants.

The internet allows me to communicate swiftly with family, friends, colleagues, agencies and politicians. (Although I frequently mail the written word which is reportedly more effective with agencies and elected officials.) Catherine says I spend too much time in front of the computer screen, but she has adjusted to it fairly well.

Despite an addiction to the internet, I don't spend time scanning the many websites of local or regional environmental groups. We get hard copies of two or three other chapter's newsletters as well as state and national Audubon e-mails which update Audubon matters. News moves so fast these days that stuff on smaller web sites is generally stale. Perhaps we can do better and create a really attention-getting site. I would hate to have to print our copy of the Skimmer from the internet – it takes too long.

The Pew center reported another interesting statistic about the 18 to 25 age group; 36% of them have tattoos. If we really want to recruit the most modern young people, we could all get tattoos of different interesting birds and display them proudly on our new web site. I would request a Turkey vulture for my skinny backside. Perhaps the tattoo artist getting extra business could be solicited to contribute to our chapter. Actually I'm sorry, but Catherine and I won't join you in that venture. On second thought maybe it would be nice if we contributed money to SEVAS instead of getting rather painful tattoos.

Some good news: According to ENS (Environmental News Service), Ted Turner has launched a solar energy business venture. He has the experience and motivation to make it successful.

—Lee Bidgood

Bird Count from p. 1

the beach noted how difficult it was with so many cars and people enjoying such an unusually nice year end beach day.

The bird of the day was the American Robin as the count was done at the height of their migration. All through the city and out to the west of town, robins were in large flocks of hundreds at a time. Robins could only be matched in numbers by Yellow Rumped Warblers flitting around all through the circle in usual numbers. The usual suspects of gulls, terns, and long legged waders were found in expected places and numbers. And while ducks were scarce probably due to the warm winter, we were surprised to see five Canada Geese which haven't been recorded on the count in many years. Other unusual birds for this count included Baltimore Oriole, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Roseate Spoonbill, Sora, Common Merganser, and White-winged Scoter.

So while our birders celebrated the unusually high number of species, there are the usual misgivings. With each successive bird count, there are favorite birding spots which are no longer viable because they have been cleared, paved over, or otherwise developed. More and more places on both sides of I-95 have been converted to development and habitat loss means fewer birds. For several years, we've been down to single numbers of scrub jays and this year showed single digits for American Oystercatchers as well. Each year the CBC provides an ongoing record of the effects of habitat loss.

—Clay Henderson

Jan 6, Field Trip Bird List

Pied-billed Grebe
 Osprey
 Rock Dove
 American White Pelican
 Bald Eagle
 Eurasian Collared Dove
 Brown Pelican
 Northern Harrier
 Mourning Dove
 Double-crested Cormorant
 Red-shouldered Hawk
 Common Ground Dove
 Anhinga
 Red-tailed Hawk
 Belted Kingfisher
 Great Blue Heron
 American Kestrel
 Red-bellied Woodpecker
 Great Egret
 Common Moorhen
 Eastern Phoebe
 Snowy Egret
 American Coot
 Loggerhead Shrike
 Little Blue Heron
 Sandhill Crane
 American Crow
 Tricolored Heron
 Black-bellied Plover
 Fish Crow
 Reddish Egret
 Killdeer
 Carolina Wren
 Cattle Egret
 American Avocet
 American Robin
 Green Heron
 Willet
 Northern Mockingbird
 White Ibis
 Marbled Godwit
 Yellow-rumped Warbler
 Glossy Ibis
 Ruddy Turnstone
 Palm Warbler
 Roseate Spoonbill
 Sanderling
 Common Yellowthroat
 Wood Stork
 Dunlin
 Savannah Sparrow
 Black Vulture
 Short-billed Dowitcher
 Swamp Sparrow
 Turkey Vulture
 Common Snipe
 Red-winged Blackbird
 American Wigeon
 Laughing Gull
 Boat-tailed Grackle
 Mottled Duck
 Ring-billed Gull
 Blue-winged Teal
 Great Black-backed Gull
 Northern Shoveler
 Caspian Tern
 Northern Pintail
 Royal Tern
 Ring-necked Duck
 Forster's Tern
 Hooded Merganser
 Black Skimmer

From The Field

January Field Trip



AHH WHAT a lovely day! A larger group than usual (19 people) gathered at the Market Square parking lot, got sorted into car-pool groups by Gail & Dick Domroski—each car got its own walkie-talkie (very hi-tech are we)—and followed the leaders to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, a short 22 mile drive.

Our little caravan pulled onto the seven mile Black Point Wildlife Drive at about 8:40 a.m. and slowly meandered along being apprised of sightings, via walkie-squalkie from the cars ahead. When something interesting was going on, we all piled out of the cars, spotting scopes were assembeled and adjusted, binoculars were hoisted and our oohs & ahhs punctuated the ambient bird noises.

We weren't disappointed. The birds were there and the weather couldn't have been better. This was Florida winter at its best—not too hot, plenty of birds and NO bugs, well, almost none.

Sometime after the noon hour, we capped the day with a picnic along the causeway which crosses the Indian River. It was there we met our first insects of the day. Millions of friendly little flying critters, at first mistaken for mosquitos, flew down to greet us as we laid our tablecloths. They didn't hiss, buzz or bite so we had no quarrel with them, in fact, it was kinda fun eating lunch with the little guys.

We saw 72 species of birds, including 7 species of ducks, on this trip. Not too shabby, I'd say.

—Gil Miller

February Field Trip

Oak Hill

OUR FEBRUARY FIELD TRIP will be to the Oak Hill area where we will walk the trail at Seminole Rest, check the lagoon for White Pelicans, Loons and Red-breasted Mergansers and the nearby marshes for ducks and wading birds. Then, on to Riverbreeze Park for whatever we might find there. This is a close to home trip but bring a picnic lunch if you would like to just sit around and visit some and enjoy the outdoors.

—Gail Domroski

Native & Nice

Sophora tomentosa

OVER THE LAST few years, I've heard native plant lovers tout the yellow necklace pod (*Sophora tomentosa*).

I've even admired it in others' gardens.

But until recently, I've neglected adding it to my own yard. Now I have one. After a month in the ground, it's showing no new growth. However, it's holding its own, which is about all you can expect when you plant in a drought.

A tall evergreen shrub growing to about 6 feet, necklace pod is best known for its striking, bright yellow flowers borne year-round on long spikes. It also has unusual seed pods. The round seeds are clearly outlined by the tightly-stretched pod, creating a resemblance to a necklace.

Necklace pods are as tolerant as they are attractive. They are best suited to full sun and thrive in dry, windy, salty sites. Necklace pods are one of the few plants that tolerate high lime content, making them ideal for highways planting. Virtually maintenance free, they can be pruned or left to their natural rounded growth habit.

Hummingbirds, warblers, bees and butterflies are attracted to necklace pod flowers.

With all of these assets, why I didn't get a necklace pod sooner? Well, motivation finally came at the annual Native Plant Society's Christmas plant auction. I was the successful bidder on a necklace pod donated by Full Moon Natives nursery. Now it's just a matter of time till my necklace pod looks like the mature specimen growing in the planter on the Riverside Drive side of Old Fort Park in New Smyrna Beach.

—Donnadine Miller

Bird Rescue Center

THE Bird Rescue Center meets EVERY THIRD THURSDAY each month - at 7:00 in the evening - The Southeast Volusia Humane Society, 1200 South Glencoe Road, New Smyrna Beach.

If you wish to become a BRC volunteer, please send me an email at plamborn@cfl.rr.com or phone 386-423-1434.

—Phyllis Lamborn

SOUTHEAST VOLUSIA AUDUBON SOCIETY
P.O. Box 46
New Smyrna Beach, FL. 32170



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MISSION STATEMENT: THE SOUTHEAST VOLUSIA AUDUBON SOCIETY PROMOTES THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS, OTHER WILDLIFE AND THEIR HABITAT THROUGH EDUCATION AND ACTIVISM.



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Ways & Means: Vacant		
Hospitality: Vacant		

Meetings

Meetings are held the 1st Wednesdays
Oct. thru March

Edgewater Library 103 Indian River Blvd. 7: P.M.
Smoke-free environment. Refreshments are served.
Plenty of parking. Public welcome.

Wed., February 7 - 7 P.M.

Speaker: **David Griffis**

"Florida Master Naturalist Program"

Programs & Field trips subject to change.

Field Trips

Field trips begin at 8:00 A.M. unless otherwise noted. Meet in the Market Square parking lot Edgewater, Ridgewood Ave. & 442, between Dunkin Donuts & Chik-Fil-A.

Bring lunch & drinks. Don't forget bug-spray!

Sat. Feb. 10 - Oak Hill area

Questions? Contact Gail Domroski 428-0447

Audubon members and guests are all welcome.