



# The eSkimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, Inc.

Summer Email Issue Vol. I - No. 3

July, 2006

The Southeast Volusia Audubon Society promotes the protection of birds, other wildlife and their habitat through education and activism.

## Wandering Members

### Ken Gunn Reports

I had occasion to be in East Texas on the fourteenth of June. It was 96 degrees and sunny, sock-soaking hot as East Texas can be. Interestingly, there was a fair amount of bird life out even in the heat of the afternoon.

On the way up from Houston, in the morning, it was already stifling and bird activity was low. The exceptions were vultures and swallows. I saw both species of vulture usually alone, and always circling high above the ground. Every underpass was a beehive of activity though, as several dozen swallows per underpass darted back and forth hunting insects, usually in the shade but sometimes just outside the shadow in the bright sunlight. They obviously had nests attached to the cement structure as there was a lot of traffic back and forth into the cement beams. I surmised that they were catching insects and returning with them to feed their nestlings. Most were barn swallows, although there were also several tree swallows and probably some other swallow species as well.

Unbelievably, to me at least, as the heat became worse, the bird population increased; also we got further into the piney woods. There were a few robins, several red-winged blackbirds, a few common grackles, a lot of boat-tailed grackles, several northern flickers and numerous mockingbirds. I also saw a few raptors but did not slow down to identify them.

The most interesting species I saw was the scissor-tailed flycatcher and I saw at least thirty of them. Some were on wires or treetops, awaiting prey, while others were already in hot pursuit. They hunt like most other flycatchers, sitting waiting for an insect to come near, then darting after it, making the kill and returning to the same perch. They look like a long-tailed, tan kingbird when they are sitting still. They look only slightly more impressive when flying in a straight line with the tail feathers neatly trailing out some six inches behind them. It is when they are maneuvering after an insect that the tail is shown off. It can be spread into a near-perfect, upside down "V". They seem to use this spread tail as a pivot or anchor to turn around and as a sort of underside parachute to help hold them steady when they take aim at their prey. It would be interesting to be able to see well enough to determine their hunting success ratio.

—Ken

## 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.

**Next meeting is October 4, 2006**

## Officers & Chairs



President: Don Picard	321-206-4658	sevas@cfl.rr.com
VP: Lee Bidgood	423-4682	bidgood@ucnsb.net
Secretary: Helga Carlson	423-5700	
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Publicity: Catherine Bidgood	423-4682	CBidgood@ucnsb.net
BRC Liason: Phyllis Lamborn	423-1434	plamborn@cfl.rr.com
Ways & Means: Vacant		
Education/Outreach: Vacant		

# Conservation Notes



## *The Hammock Creek Proposed Project*

Row after row of slash pines are aligned with military precision on 6,251 acres just west of I-95 and north of county Road 442. But major changes are planned.

Instead of pines, this huge tract is expected to sprout single and multifamily homes, condos, office buildings, retail stores, government offices and of course, 18 holes of golf. By 2018, if all goes as the owner plans, the community of Hammock Creek will house over 20,000 residents, rivaling the current population of Edgewater or New Smyrna Beach.

The project land is almost entirely flat with scattered dimples called cypress ‘domes’, and occasional slightly elevated logging trails or tracks that break the flat monotony. It includes wetlands around the headwaters of Spruce Creek.

Roughly half the tract is wetlands, the developer stated, although not officially surveyed. St. Johns recharge maps show that major portions of the site have outstanding recharge functions that replenish our drinking water. The water table, according to soil maps, is generally within 10 inches below or above the surface in the wet season. All of the land is probably within the 100-year floodplain, but there are no official maps. Flooding is quite likely as severe downpours are becoming more frequent and pine flatwoods typically flood in heavy rains.

Most of the Hammock Creek project, some 5,180 acres is within the City of Edgewater, with the balance of 1,070 acres, in New Smyrna Beach. The only access, at present, is via CR 442, which is a two-lane dirt road west of I-95.

The owners, a limited liability corporation, Hammock Creek Green LLC, a subsidiary of GS Florida LLC, paid over \$96 million for the property and are preparing a Development of Regional Impact (DRI) for submission to the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council. The ECFRPC will eventually recommend approval or denial.

The owners invited government officials and various agency representatives to a site visit on June 8 and a “Charette” meeting on June 9 to discuss the project. I learned of the events from Charles Lee of Audubon of Florida and notified our chapter board and representatives of Sierra and the Native Plant Society.

About 20 four-wheel drive vehicles assembled around 9:30 AM Thursday for the site visit led by an owner. I rode with the Domroskis. We passed acreage along CR-442 that had burned off recently. Fire had evidently been contained by fire breaks bulldozed through trees and undergrowth. This was no surprise as we were in the most severe drought since 1998. (Alberto may break it.) Our convoy traveled about nine miles on logging tracks and we walked another couple of miles, exploring the site.

Early on we saw three beautiful Swallow-tail kites. The next day in the Charette, the developers’ agent claimed these kites were migrating through, an observation vigorously denied by West Volusia Audubon representatives who stated that kites nested on site. Bear scratching was noted on one tree and we saw several active Gopher tortoise burrows in slightly elevated shoulders of logging roads.

The most interesting find was several Rugel’s paw paw

plants, some in full bloom. That discovery was not on Hammock Creek property, but to the north of it. Our trek leader had evidently missed a turn and we wound up on the Landmar project site, a large proposed development in New Smyrna Beach west of I-95 and south of SR-44.

Rugel’s paw paw, for which the local Paw paw chapter is named, is an endangered plant found only in Volusia County. The soil type favored by this paw-paw, Immokalee Fine Sand, is well represented on the Hammock Creek site. Native Plant Society members anticipate that Rugel’s will be found there.

The LLC expects that Airport Road and Williamson Blvd. will be extended to the tract and through it down to CR 442. Drawings of Hammock Creek show tentative routes of both roads through the project. Without major road extensions, the project is unlikely to be feasible.

### 🕒 **First Baptist Church Project Update**

As most of you are aware, the Corps of Engineers has approved a dredge and fill permit for this massive church complex to be built astride headwaters of the Tomoka River. However it may still be possible to protect those important headwaters by forcing the church to build elsewhere.

Wetlands Alert, Inc. plans to file a challenge to the Corps permit in federal court. Lesley Blackner will be their pro bono lawyer. Even with a pro bono attorney there will be significant expenses in bringing the case to court. Those who would like to contribute should send checks made out to Wetlands Alert, Inc. and mail to: Wetlands Alert, Inc.

465 Wildwood Drive  
New Smyrna Beach, FL 32168

### 🕒 **Renewable Energy Bill**

The omnibus energy bill, SB 888 has passed both houses of the Florida Legislature and awaits the governor’s signature. It contains several bad features, most notably, streamlining coal and nuclear power plant permitting.

The good news is that the bill provides subsidies for solar power installations and other renewables, and it requires state agencies to develop a climate action plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

—Lee Bidgood

## Links

### *News on the internet*

A big advantage of the eSkimmer is that we can link you up instantly to sites of interest.

We’ll try to include those we feel are pertinent to our members and readers. Feel free to send us your suggestions.

[www.audubonofflorida.org](http://www.audubonofflorida.org)

<http://www.audubon.org/>

<http://www.planetark.com/>

Our email address is [the.skimmer@yahoo.com](mailto:the.skimmer@yahoo.com)

## Worth Reading

### *Lee Bidgood in the N-J*

Lee Bidgood, a SEVAS member known to all who read the Skimmer has another excellent article in the Daytona Beach News-Journal.

This very readable piece appeared in the Wednesday, June 28, 2006 edition on the op-ed page.

I encourage all of you who haven't read it to do so.

I tried to link to this but I kept getting dead-ended.

Drop me a line at the.skimmer@yahoo.com and I'll email you a copy.

Or you can go to <http://www.news-journalonline.com/> and search for Lee Bidgood.. His article is the first on the list.

—Gil Miller, editor

### **The University of Central Florida and the Walter and Betty Boardman Foundation sponsored Summer Workshop**

#### **Toward a Solar Powered Community: What Solar Energy Means to Volusia County**

**Wed., July 12, 2006 from 10AM to 3PM (Lunch Provided)  
DBCC Campus, Building 150, Room 101**

Supporting renewable energy resources in Volusia County is one of the most important ways to create and maintain an environmentally and economically sustainable community!

Expanding the use of solar energy as a part of the larger effort to increase the use of renewable energy will be a big step for Volusia residents and business owners. An expanded local solar energy market in offers solutions to environmental troubles specific to Volusia County. Not only does solar energy reduce energy usage, but its expanded use will also aid in cutting down pollution, and making Volusia County more hurricane resistant and self-sufficient.

Recently, a major step was taken toward the creation of such a market when the 2006 Florida Renewable Energy Technologies & Energy Efficiency Act was passed by the Florida legislature, which in part, will provide incentives for citizens and businesses to convert to solar power. This act is only the first step in stimulating growth and the creation of further incentives at both the county and state levels. A variety of vendors from the solar energy industry in Central Florida will be present with displays for perusal throughout the workshop.

This workshop aims to demonstrate to the public, elected officials, developers, builders, and realtors the need for, as well as the advantages and challenges of an expanded solar energy market in Volusia.

Our speakers will include authorities from various areas of the solar energy industry.

[www.boardmanfoundation.org](http://www.boardmanfoundation.org)

Please RSVP to [boardmansolar@yahoo.com](mailto:boardmansolar@yahoo.com)

For details: Jeremy Frantz [frantz\\_jeremy@yahoo.com](mailto:frantz_jeremy@yahoo.com)  
Stephanie [foolfarseer@aim.com](mailto:foolfarseer@aim.com)

## Native & Nice

When I first moved to Florida, in my pre-native days, I planted a long row of podocarpus along our property line. This was not the best choice. While podocarpus is not objectionable, it is a slow grower, so it has taken years to obscure the neighbor's chain link fence. Furthermore, it refused to grow at the end of the yard closest to the brackish bay.

In mid-May I bought about eight Florida privets (*Forestiera segregata*) to replace the reluctant podocarpus. Already they are doing what native plants do best: flourishing in poor soil and unrelenting sunshine. It's too early to know how they'll react to wet conditions, but they are reputed to adapt just fine.

Florida privets are large, densely-leaved shrubs much like the non-native privets that are pruned into formal hedges. They should hide the chain link quickly with a thick, evergreen screen. Native privets can be pruned, too, but I'll opt for the more natural look.

After planting these hardy natives, I learned of an unexpected bonus: they are an excellent food source for song birds. Clusters of yellowish flowers give way to olive-like fruit along the branches of female privets. I just hope that I brought home a couple of females.

Florida privets are stocked by Full Moon Native Nursery in Port Orange: [www.FullMoonNatives.com](http://www.FullMoonNatives.com).

—Donnadine Miller

## Bird Rescue Center

At the last meeting, we set a Bird Rescue Center Work Day date for June 24th 10am 'til ? That date has been postponed...the new work day date will be **Saturday, July 8th 10am 'til ?** For those of you that haven't been to a work day the 10am 'til ? doesn't mean you have to stay all day :).

Any time you could give would be appreciated.  
Thank you all for all you do...

—Paige Garret-Corhern

The Bird Rescue Center is comprised wholly of volunteers. They meet on the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at Venetian Villas (off of North Causeway at Quay Assisi)

Please call **Phyllis—386-423-1434**—to confirm & for details.