



The eSkimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, Inc.

Summer Email Issue Vol. I - No. 2

June, 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'm just back from spending March 8 to May 5 in Alberta, Western Canada. This coincided with the only five weeks of winter they had this year. Other than that, it was a fun to time to be there as it was changeout time for the birds and wake up time for the animals.

The first weekend I was there, there was a terrific snow-storm. As I was driving down the highway, trying to see the road through the blowing snow, there crouched a gopher, scrounging grain at the edge of the road. I thought, "Boy, is his calendar off!" but within a week there were several along the roads trying to find food, as the snow was too deep to find anything in the fields. They were soon joined by the occasional skunk and a few porcupine. Coyotes were out all winter but they were especially active now that the rodent population was more mobile.

Sighting the first American Robin is always a thrill and for me, this year, it was accompanied by the first Mountain Bluebird the same day. The next new arrivals were the birds of prey: Red-tailed and Swainson's Hawks then Northern Harriers and a pair of Short-eared Owls. Later, and in another area, I saw a pair of Broad-winged Hawks, a Rough-legged Hawk and an American Kestrel. Crows arrived with the hawks and, on my old farm, the annual battle by the incoming (extended) family of crows to evict the year-round resident pair of ravens was well under way. I also saw two Bald Eagles migrating through and had a good look at a Northern Shrike before he too headed (farther) north. Also heading out were most of the Dark-eyed Juncos and the Boreal and Black-capped Chickadees and all of the Snow Buntings. By the time I left, the Brewer's, Red-winged and Yellow-headed Blackbirds had all arrived as had the Tree and Barn Swallows, Western Meadowlarks and several of the Sparrows.

Of the water birds, Canada Geese were the first to arrive, even before there was open water, and set up shop for the summer. Flocks arriving later, from farther south and going on north had a few Greater White-fronted mixed in. Next in, and as soon as there was any open water at all, were the Mallards and Pintails and they too were nesting by the time I left. The Canvasbacks were next, then Common Goldeneye followed a few days later by Redheads and Ring-necked Ducks then Gadwells and Blue-winged Teals and finally Green-winged Teals, American Wigeon. As the lakes began to open, Common Mergansers arrived. I saw my first Bufflehead the day before I left. The Ruddy and the Scaup Ducks had not yet

shown up. The first big flocks of twenty to fifty thousand Snow Geese along with Tundra Swans and White Pelicans began arriving the last ten days of April and were moving through in large numbers. By the time I left, I still hadn't seen or heard any Sandhill Cranes.

The Franklin and Ring-billed Gulls arrived about the same time as the Mallards. The Bonaparte's and the larger gulls had not yet made it that far north. The first Killdeer arrived about April 20 and other shore birds had begun straggling in as I prepared to leave. The day before I left, I saw four beautifully colored American Avocets (in Canada they are a much richer shade of brown than Sibley shows) and a pair of Black-necked Stilts. Both were much farther north than the range shown in Sibley.

The crocuses were out, the grass was getting green and the trees were just starting to green up. It was a great time of the year to be there (except for the multiple snow storms).

—Ken Gunn

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Bird Rescue Center

The Bird Rescue Center will be having our monthly meeting on Thursday June 8th @ 7:00pm at Venetian Villas Clubhouse. Located off N. Causeway. Turn North (left from mainland - right from Beachside) on Quay Assisi (between the two Banks) and then take your first right, the clubhouse will be right in front of you by the pool. You can park on either side of the building.

It is really important to attend these monthly meetings so we can all communicate with each other. The more people we have, the more ideas we can come up with to benefit the Bird Rescue Center. We need all the help we can get. Our Birds depend on us!

Hope to see you all there!

—Mary Newberry, BRC Volunteer

HELP!

BRC has an unusually high number of baby birds to feed. If you can give them an hour or two a week to train for this important job please call Phyllis at the above number. Thanks!

Plover Alert

Wilson Plover Chicks Spotted

While conducting the Spring Migration Count on May 13, at Smyrna Dunes Park Dot Backes and myself spotted two Wilson Plover chicks. They appeared to be only a day or two old. I notified Jennifer Winters, the Volusia County Habitat Conservation coordinator. They roped off the area and put up signs. Without this protection these little guys would not survive. Up to 200 dogs use this area every weekend making this a very dangerous place for our feathered friends.

If you go to see them, they're between access ramp 2 and 3. If you see any other nesting activity please report it to Jennifer at 386-239-6414 ext. 34 or notify the Park Manager

—Nancy White

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

Native & Nice

Viburnum obovatum

The large-leafed, fast growing viburnum favored by developers as a landscape shrub for its fast-growing habit has a daintier "native" cousin, Walter's viburnum (*Viburnum obovatum*). This native is a densely branched, large shrub that grows to 12 feet. It produces profuse white blossoms in early spring and berries in summer. These characteristics provide excellent nesting, cover, and food sources for bees, butterflies, and birds.

Walter's viburnum is equally attractive planted as a specimen shrub or small shade tree or sheared into a screening hedge. It has the added advantage of thriving in unfriendly environments such as parking lots and highway medians. It adapts to widely varying conditions—moist to dry, full to part sun—but has a low salt tolerance.

A dwarf cultivars of *V. obovatum*, Mrs. Schiller's Delight has become a favorite of mine. It has all the traits of its larger variant, but at 24" to 36" tall, it is more versatile. Mrs. Schiller's makes an excellent foundation plant. Once established, it require no maintenance. I replaced sunburned *Philodendron selloum* with Mrs. Schiller's in front of a window wall that takes a direct hit from the brutal west sun. This compact viburnum has flourished, despite poor soil, dry conditions, and direct sun.

—Donnadine Miller

Editor's Note: Lindley's Garden Center, 1232 W. Canal St. NSB 386-428-7298 <http://lindleysgardencenter.com> stocks Walter viburnum

Also Read about it at the UF website:
<http://hort.ufl.edu/woody/planting/Pages/vibobo/vibobo.htm>

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.audubon.org/>

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

Please visit this one. It provides news of interest to those of us in Volusia county (and the planet Earth for that matter):

<http://wetlandalert.com/>

"We forget that the water cycle and the life cycle are one" --Jacques Cousteau