



The eSkimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, Inc. Summer Email Issue Vol. I - No. 4 September, 2006

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

Wandering Members

In mid-July, I had the opportunity to return to a place where I worked in my youth (read – early 1970s). I spent most of a day in the Upper Amazon of the Ecuadorian Oriente.

We flew from Quito to Puerto Fransisco de Orellana which has always been shortened to Coca? When I was last there, in 1975, it consisted of a Texaco warehouse, mess hall and guesthouse; a couple of dozen primitive shacks; a small army outpost and a rough dirt airstrip on which we landed our short takeoff and landing aircraft and on which the Ecuadorian Army landed beat up DC-3s. The port was a couple of stakes where canoes and river barges tied up and the one street was a half mile long mud hole at the end of the road back to our base camp, 60 miles to the north and on the other side of two rivers and the equator. When I first arrived in the Oriente, early in 1970, the Napo River at Coca also marked the northern boundary of the Jivaro Indians, who were still head hunters.

This trip, we flew to Coca on one of about 10 daily commercial flights operated by three different airlines. The flight was 40 minutes long. The crosswinds and vertical drafts in the mountain pass buffeted us as badly as I remembered but the snow-capped volcanic peaks of Cotopaxi, Aticamus, Antisana and Cayambe were also as beautiful and majestic as ever. We landed on a 6000 foot paved runway and taxied to a 3 story terminal. The city now boasts a population of about 35,000 people, paved streets, many 4-storey and a few 5-storey structures, an active port with real docks, a bustling downtown and at least one hotel with cold beer, three macaws, two young capybaras and a turtle. The road north is now paved and a one lane bridge crosses the Napo to the south. The only constant is that the equator still lies between Coca and our old base camp location. Graded gravel roads across the river head east and south. I don't know how far east the road runs but the one south is about ½ hour by helicopter or around 75 miles. The Jivaro have been pushed south and have become less aggressive. The northern jungle tribes and new settlers from the coast and the mountains have moved in and replaced them.

Flying down from the mountains in the commercial craft and then south by helicopter, I was actually pleasantly surprised at how much intact jungle there was. From pictures I have seen, some dating back 20 years, the jungle to the north of my flight has not fared as well, having been almost entirely eliminated and replaced with inefficient farming. West of Coca, I saw only three or four cleared areas which were large enough to be called fields.

Cont'd page 3

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	
Treasurer: Richard Domroski	428-0447	r_domroski@bellsouth.net
Newsletter: Gil Miller	423-4124	the.skimmer@yahoo.com
Programs: Patty Moody	427-8559	RichardPatty@webtv.net
Field Trips: Gail Domroski	428-0447	r_domroski@bellsouth.net
Conservation: Lee Bidgood	423-4682	bidgood@ucnsb.net
Hospitality: Edna Balis	423-8414	
Membership: Richard Domroski	428-0447	r_domroski@bellsouth.net
New Member Greeter: Mary Yon	423-5934	
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

A Nuclear Scam

Many scientists warn that we may have about a decade to cut greenhouse gas emission enough to prevent irreversible global heating. Brutal weather and rising sea level could destroy much of human society and make coastal communities, such as New Smyrna, Edgewater and Oak Hill, uninhabitable. There is slightly encouraging news, however. Some citizens, businesses and even a few political leaders are waking up to the growing menace of man-made climate change.



Some bad news is that several unscrupulous businesses are using fear of one environmental catastrophe to gain support for actions that could produce another. Nuclear equipment manufacturers and several public utilities with nuclear power plants have formed a consortium to promote more nuclear plants. They have strong support by the White House and some state governments, including Florida. Members of the NuStart Energy Development consortium include nine public utilities, TVA and two leading nuclear equipment manufacturers.*

NuStart states that its purpose is “To improve the quality of life through new nuclear power.” To do this, the consortium intends to streamline and shorten the permitting and approval process for new nuclear plants, and build them in less time than historically required with simplified, cheaper and supposedly safe new plant designs.

The nuclear consortium apparently has gained political clout rivaling that of OPEC, at least in the US. Our federal government is paying for half of NuStart’s promotional and lobbying costs. That subsidy is on top of \$12 billion provided for the nuclear industry in last year’s federal energy bill.

Thus far, NuStart publicity has tried to sell the illusion that nuclear plants combat global warming by providing cheap electricity without greenhouse gas emissions and also help to achieve energy independence. Even a few environmentalists have swallowed that scam.

By endlessly repeating that nuclear plants emit no greenhouse gases, the industry hopes we will overlook copious greenhouse emissions from energy used in mining uranium ore, concentrating, shipping and converting it into fuel rods. Energy is used to build huge expensive plants. Eventually more energy will be needed to dismantle an aging plant and ship its radioactive scrap somewhere or guard the site almost forever.

This all means that from the day that a new nuclear plant is approved, a minimum of 20 years must elapse before the plant begins to make a net reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions. By then the global heating outcome will have been decided. To gain approval and build a plant takes at least 10 years. Then to pay off its energy debt, the plant must run for at least 10 years before it has produced more energy than has been expended on it. Finally, the unsolved problem nuclear waste disposal is being left to our descendants, a nasty legacy.

My greatest concern is that this push for speedier approval of new plants will jeopardize safety. The nuclear regulatory bureaucracy will be under heavy pressure from industry and from its masters in the administration to cut the lengthy and highly complex approval process written in many thousand pages of safety details.

Nuclear plants use an extremely hazardous process, ‘controlled’ nuclear fission, just to boil water. As Jon Gertner expressed it in the NY Times, “Nuclear power plants are arguably the most complicated machines in the history of civilization, and the review process for new plants reflects that complexity.”

Because nuclear plants are so complex and hazardous, they can be made “safe” only through overlapping safety devices and systems. If one part or system fails through human error or mechanical breakdown, which can never be entirely eliminated, a backup part or system is expected to take over.

Nuclear power has never been cheap despite exaggerated claims. None would have been built in the US without enormous subsidies that continue today. Essential to every nuclear plant is the Price-Anderson Act which limits financial liability for a catastrophic accident.

As pointed out by David Lochbaum of the Union of Concerned Scientists, nuclear plants have the most accidents when brand new or near the end of their useful life.

If the public quietly allows the industry to build new nuclear plants, including some in Florida, we will have to hope that streamlined approval has not made accidents more likely.

We don’t need any new plants permitted by streamlined procedures to add to the risk from our aging fleet of reactors.

***List of NuStart members:**

Constellation Energy Group, Baltimore, MD -- Wants new reactors at its MD or its upstate NY site. Has merged with FPL Group.

Duke Energy, Charlotte NC -- Planning new reactors at two sites.

EDF International Inc., Washington, DC -- Subsidiary of Electricite de France, world’s largest owner of nuclear power plants, including minor holdings in the US.

Entergy Nuclear, Jackson, MS -- Plans two new nuclear plants in MS and LA.

Exelon Corp., Chicago, IL -- Has filed application for a new nuclear plant.

FPL Group, Juno Beach, FL -- Owns nuclear plants in St. Lucie and Dade counties, FL. Has merged with Constellation Energy Group.

Progress Energy, Raleigh, NC -- Plans four new nuclear reactors, including one in FL.

SCANA Corp., Columbia, SC -- Planning a new nuclear plant.

Southern Co., Atlanta, GA -- Has three nuclear plants providing 20% of electricity for GA and AL, planning one more at its Vogtle, GA site.

GE Energy, Atlanta, GA -- A leading supplier of nuclear power technology, equipment and services.

Westinghouse Electric Co., Pittsburg, PA -- A subsidiary of British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL). About 50% of nuclear plants worldwide use Westinghouse technology, including 60% of US plants. Has developed the new AP1000 plant design, claimed to be simpler, cheaper and safe, but has never been built.

Wandering Members from p.1

Over much of the area between the mountains and Coca the undergrowth has been cleared though and only the very large trees are left. This probably does not affect birdlife too severely but is disastrous for animals and other ground dwellers.

South of Coca, only small hillside plots have been cleared and most of the jungle more than ½ mile from the trunk road is pretty much undisturbed. Unfortunately, numerous communities have sprung up along the road and it is probably only a matter of time before they press back into the virgin jungle.

The Ecuadorian government is making sporadic and generally ineffective efforts to control growth but, as we know in Florida, it is hard to stall “progress”.

—Ken Gunn

Day Trips

Butterfly Festival

The Florida Museum of Natural History, home of the award-winning Butterfly Rainforest exhibit, will be the host of the inaugural Florida Butterfly Festival October 14-15, 2006. Enjoy this destination festival which will feature lectures by world-renowned naturalists, expertly guided field trips, specialty vendors and a photography contest.

For more information visit www.flmnh.ufl.edu/butterflyfest or call (352) 846-2000 x. 200.

Good Birding Websites

Central Florida Bird Watchers has a very informative website (<http://www.cfbw.com/index.html>) which has links to Great Birding Locations in central Florida. The links offer descriptions, tips and directions.

Florida Hotspots is another very complete birding website (<http://www.camacdonald.com/birding/usflorida.htm>) offering links to nearly everything & everyplace of interest to birders.

Lake County's website http://www.lakegovernment.com/bird_watching/?AdID=4664&gclid=CPaIwJuo-4YCFRhsSgodznPCIg offers links to sites in that county.

And our regular list of Audubon-interest sites:

www.audubonofflorida.org

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

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

Please forward this  to friends.

Native & Nice

Wax Myrtle

Found throughout Florida, wax myrtles (*Myrica ceriferae*) are especially common in undisturbed areas near water. Their name comes from the tiny, waxy berries that are borne by female plants and provide the scent for bayberry candles. It may give you a new appreciation for these candles to know that, besides being a messy process, it takes a gallon of berries to make a single cup of wax.

Wax myrtles are ideal bird habitat. The berries are a popular food source, and the densely-branched foliage provides cover for birds and small animals. Larger animals find protection in masses of wax myrtles growing in clumps. Florida's red-banded hairstreak butterfly seeks out wax myrtles as a larval food source.

Anyone who likes to keep gardening simple should appreciate the carefree wax myrtles. They prefer moist, rich soil, but don't require it. They tolerate salt and thrive in all types of sun exposure. Their natural shrubby growth habit makes wax myrtles a good choice for evergreen hedges or screens. However, they can be pruned to form small trees, too.

The roots of wax myrtles contain nitrogen-fixing bacteria, said to improve the fertility of the soil. And at least one source touts using a sprig of wax myrtle in drawers and closets to discourage cockroaches—enough reason to grow wax myrtles in abundance!

—Donnadine Miller



The Bird Rescue Center

THE BIRD RESCUE CENTER, has done an outstanding job of rescuing, rehabilitating and releasing sick, injured and orphaned birds. It is staffed entirely by volunteers.

Needless to say, they can always use your help. They'll train you to the job of your choice and you'll find the experience rewarding.

Call Phyllis Lamborn - 423-1434