

The eSkimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, Inc.

Issue Vol. V- No. 4

April, 2010

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

Prez Sez

Welcome to the last meeting of the season. I certainly hope you enjoyed the great programs Ken arranged for us, and the super field trips organized and led by Dick and Gail.

Again, we are looking for volunteers to help us next year. Marsha asked to be replaced as Publicity chair. We thank her for her service over the last two years. Nancy volunteered to take on the job. It would still be nice to have a vice-president and a conservation chair. Remember, the more volunteers who work, the less work each of us has to do. So volunteer and let's spread the work around. The next meeting will be at the Menard-May park in Edgewater and will include the election of officers for next year. It is a pot-luck dinner and there will be no formal program.

Speaking of outdoor meals, we have been invited to a picnic with our sister Audubon clubs from Volusia County. It is being organized by Ann Moore, a new member of the Audubon of Florida Board. It will take place on Earth Day at Spruce Creek Park on Ridgewood Ave (US Rt. - 1) in Port Orange. The entire club membership is invited.

See page 2. and please RSVP to ayinsm@msn.com April 19th.

As we all imagined, the Volusia County Growth Management Commission recommended approval of the Farmton development. The County got the Transportation and Schools folks to capitulate and then worked over the city of Deltona. The new application now goes back to the Florida Department of Community Affairs. We will be sending them an email shortly.

Until we meet again, enjoy your summer, wherever that may take you. If you have birding stories, please send them to me for inclusion in the blog.

—Don Picard

When you defile the pleasant streams
And the wild bird's abiding place,
You massacre a million dreams
And cast your spittle in God's face.

~John Drinkwater

Meetings

Meetings are held the 3rd Wednesdays
Sept. thru April at 7 P.M.

Edgewater Library 103 Indian River Blvd.

Except April Meeting (see below)

*Smoke-free environment. Refreshments are served.
Plenty of parking. Public welcome.*

Next meeting is April 21, 2010

Annual Elections and Potluck Picnic

5:30 p.m. at **Menard - May Park**

Edgewater

Come- Bring a dish (or not), bring a friend and enjoy.

http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/682339/menardmay_park_in_edgewater_new_smyrna.html?cat=16

Programs & Field trips subject to change.

Field Trips

Meet in the Market Square parking lot Edgewater,
Ridgewood Ave. & 442 between Dunkin Donuts & Chik-Fil-A.
(Meeting time listed with trip)

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

Fri, Apr. 9 - Tiger Bay State Forest. 7 a.m. (1)

Fri, Apr. 16 - Washington Oaks State Park 7 a.m. (2)

Sat, May 8 - International Migratory Bird Count. (2)

Call Gail @ (386)424-0447 to volunteer for this count.

See Field trips p. 2

Questions? Contact Gail Domroski 386-428-0447

Numbers in parentheses indicate degree of difficulty.

(1) easy or no walking. (2) walking less than one mile.

(3) One plus mile walking and/or uneven terrain.

Field Trips are free.

Please forward this **eSkimmer** to friends.

FAREWELL TO FLOWERS AND BIRDS

The Land of Flowers is withering away
 And sinking beneath the churning sea
 But we cannot linger to watch it go
 Just keep sweet memories as we flee
 A Passenger Pigeon above us flies
 To warn us of so many lies
 It warns us of so many lies

Birds must leave the lands destroyed
 Where children romped upon the sand
 Water mammals will come to play
 Where ancient bones in coffins lay
 And soon would be washed away
 Indeed would be washed away

Fishes will swim and crabs will hide
 Inside wrecks of high rise towers
 Foul breath of progress kills the flowers
 Once spreading bliss on every side
 Farewell to songs and trees and butterflies
 Melting ice is feeding seas
 Feeding swelling rising seas

Forgive us flowers, birds and trees
 We paid no mind to nature's pleas
 But turned her heat gauge far too high
 To keep land dry where foxes played
 Clear warnings called for changing ways
 But we delayed
 Yes we delayed

—Lee Bidgood

*Lee Bidgood is Conservation Chair, Emeritus.
 He and his wife Catherine, long-time SEVAS
 members, now live in Gainesville, FL.*



It's a celebration...

Of the 40th Anniversary of Earth Day!

Bring the Family For a BBQ

At Spruce Creek Park

Sunday 25th, April 2010 from 3pm until 7pm

6250 Ridgewood Ave. (US 1) Port Orange

For Directions: <http://www.volusia.org/parks/spruce>

The Park is part of the Doris Leeper Preserve

Guided Bird Walks Music & Fun

Special Recognitions

Meet members of the Southeast Volusia, Halifax & West Volusia Audubon Chapters and representatives of other environmental groups and the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs and Native Plant Society.

All Of Us Working Together To Green The Environment!

Hosted by John Hankinson, Audubon of Florida
 Board Chairman
 and Ann Moore, Board Member at Large

Please RSVP to Ann at ayinm@msn.com or 386-937-0251
 by Monday, April 19th.

Chapters, please bring a side dish to share! Thanks.

Backyard Naturalist

When we have room and time, we fill this space with stories, some old, some new by a confessed non-birder. Me.

Not so much room this issue, thanks to good contributions, so there isn't room for one of my long-winded tales.

We do have room for a picture. I have my Canon DSLR w/500mm lens set up in the studio (where *The eSkimmer* is cranked out monthly) focused on the bird bath visible through the big window.

Lots of backyard visitors come by, mostly birds: Blue Jays, Yellow-rumped warblers, Crested titmice, Mockingbirds and this past winter a lot of Robins. Once in a while the little, always present, female squirrel will take a drink, thirsty after consuming the full measure of sunflower seeds in the feeder.

Along with f/stops, ISO settings and shutter speed I've learned that luck (coupled with *Patience*) is the biggest factor in grabbing *that* shot. With birds, he who hesitates is lost.

I happened to look up at just the right moment to grab this one of a Robin enjoying a drink.

See **Backyard** p. 4

Wandering Members

Tiritiri Island

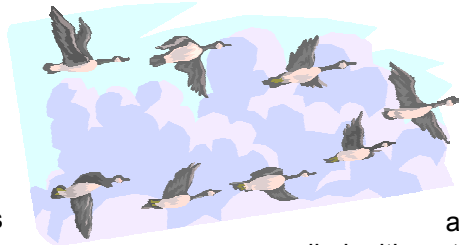
We stopped for a few days in Auckland, New Zealand, to visit nieces and nephews, on our way to see our grandkids in Australia.

As an isolated ecosystem, species have evolved in New Zealand almost independent of outside influences. It was essentially free of mammalian predators, so flight was not a necessary protective measure and several species lost their ability to fly. This worked well until the Maori arrived. The Maori eradicated several species and greatly reduced many of the rest. Then the Europeans arrived and they were even more efficient than the Maori. Many more species disappeared.

The New Zealand Department of Conservation has been doing yeoman service for a number of years now, to protect their remaining threatened endemics. They have completely cleared several islands of introduced animal species and are working on weeds, grasses and trees. On these islands they have reintroduced the remaining populations of threatened species. They pay particular attention to population density, range requirements, inbreeding and disease immunity or lack thereof. All birds are banded, with the bands used to identify, among other things, their home island or, for the rarer species, their family groups.

One such island is Tiritiri, 485 acres of former farm and bush land just 15 miles from Auckland. Access is tightly controlled with one ferry and only 150 persons per day, for about 4 hours total, allowed on the island. Reservations need to be made a week or two in advance. As we were only there a few days I was out of luck. Our niece's husband, Toko, however, said there must be some way. He determined that the ferry made two stops; one in Auckland and one much nearer the island. He said, "Let's drive up to Gulf Harbour (the second stop) and 'go standby' just as one might for an airplane." Accordingly, Saturday morning we got up early and made the one hour drive to Gulf Harbour. We talked to the agent there and he agreed to put me on the boat if there was a cancellation. Sure enough, a few minutes after the ferry left Auckland, he called to us - there had been one cancellation. I got to go to Tiritiri Island!!!

Once at the island, we were given our choice of going off on our own or going with a volunteer guide up one of the tracks. We were then sub-divided into groups of about six each. I immediately regretted not being more discerning about which guide I drifted toward. As it turned out, my choice was brilliant. The lady had not only been guiding for five years, she was a scientist who assisted with many of the projects on the island and supervised



staff doing several of the others. A walking knowledge machine.

A short distance up the trail, we came upon a water trough. Since northern New Zealand is experiencing a severe drought, all the water holes on the island have dried up. Birds rely on the many troughs around the island for water. They are supplied with water from a local well through a pipeline system. They have found from sad experience that importing water introduces a new set of germs to the system and can result in catastrophe. A few years ago, a group came upon some bees that were gathered around an almost dry water puddle. The tourists, trying to be helpful, emptied their water bottles on the ground. The bees drank some of the water and interacted with other bees on the island, apparently introducing a new bacteria into the system. Stitchbirds, a species with low resistance to most germs, and a bird that feeds on bees, was wiped out. They had to wait some four years for the bees to return to their original condition and the germs to be eliminated. New Stitchbirds were introduced from another island and are now making a comeback on Tiritiri, but the lesson has been well learned.

Since this trough was empty, the guide filled it and we stood back to watch. Within a minute, several Bellbirds arrived and started drinking. Soon a North Island Kokako arrived and took over the trough for a few minutes. When it left a Red-crowned Parakeet and a Pied Fantail settled on the edge of the trough and drank. Before they were finished, the trees, trough and posts were suddenly inundated with more than a dozen Tui. These are crow-sized birds which, in the shade of the forest, looked black except for a white-cotton throat tuft which reminded me of St. Bernard dogs in the Alps with an emergency soup barrel around their neck. I saw some later in the sunlight and they are actually, black, grey and brown but the tuft still looked like a white soup barrel. The walk took about 1 ½ hours, after which we were on our own. Fortunately, I ran into the guide a couple of times during the day so had most of my questions answered before I left the island.

The most interesting bird I saw was the Takahe, a very heavy-weight version of a rail. There are only 240 of the species alive but they should make a comeback because of the effort being exerted by the conservation staff and volunteers. Each male requires quite a large range so only eight are kept on Tiritiri. This past year, four chicks were raised. They were collected and taken to another island to mature and, after a few years, breed with the residents there, thus reducing inbreeding.

Before leaving, I visited one of the nest boxes constructed for the small Blue Penguin. I was in luck! Right after the young fledged, the adults moult. For a short time after moulting, the new feathers do not shed water so the

Tiritiri from p.3

bird is land bound. They stay in their nest boxes or under rock piles until they can again go to sea. In this case they were in a nest box which was constructed so that the top could be removed and only thick glass separated me from the two birds inside. There was enough light, that I could see the little guys quite plainly, and they in turn took a good look at me. What a neat experience.

My species count for the day was not great but I got over ten lifers and learned a lot about conservation and restoration.

—Ken Gunn

In The Field

Fri., March 5 - Ravine State Gardens

On a very chilly morning, 14 people traveled to Ravine Gardens at Palatka. We walked a few of the trails around the ravine and along the spring fed stream. Most everyone got to see the very camouflaged Barred Owl. Had good looks at 2 Red Shouldered Hawks that were pairing up. Also, Hermit Thrush, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker & Black-and-white Warbler but just a glimpse of an Oven Bird. When leaving, just outside the park gate, a Red-headed Woodpecker was seen. And on the return trip through Ocala, we added Eastern Bluebird, Chipping Sparrow, Florida Scrub Jay and a Short-tailed Hawk. Listed 45 species total.

Sat., March 20 - Peacock Pocket Rd. Merritt Island

Fifteen people enjoyed a beautiful day at Merritt Island. Starting at the Visitor Center we had good views of Vireos, Black-and-white Warbler, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and lots of Yellow-rumps. Even though water levels were high, the nine mile drive around Peacock Pocket was very productive. Great views of very colorful Roseate Spoonbills, White Pelicans feeding in the shallows and soaring overhead, Black-necked Stilts and Black Skimmers cruising the calm waters. A few other species noted were Sora, Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitcher, and Western & Least Sandpiper. A very good day with a total of 78 species.

—Gail Domroski

Upcoming Dates:

Fri, Apr. 9 (1) Tiger Bay State Forest. 7 a.m.

http://www.fl-dof.com/state_forests/Tiger_Bay.html

Hope to see Bachman's Sparrow, Brown-headed Nuthatch and Blue Birds.

Fri, Apr. 16 Washington Oaks State Park 7 a.m. (2)

Sat, May 8 International Migratory Bird Count. (2)
Call Gail @ (386)424-0447 to volunteer for this count.

Backyard from p. 2

Robin - Backyard

Gil Miller

And since my studio is named CrowMoon, I have to include a picture of a new friend of mine who flew overhead while I was wandering around in the backyard with my camera recently. He gave a friendly "Caw" hello. I looked up. Lucky me.

This is the last issue of the season.

Have a good summer, we'll see you in the Fall.

Our website staff *will be* working through the summer.

Visit us at <http://sevolusiaaudubon.org>

Caws.

—Gil Miller



The March full moon is known as the Crow Moon, the cawing of the crows heralds the coming Spring.

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