Prez Sez

We won!

After the tremendous response by readers of our eSkimmer Alert of Feb 10th and the thousands of other people who wrote and called their representatives in Tallahassee, Gov Rick Scott decided not to close over fifty state parks, recognizing that they have an economic impact on their localities. The same types of response to the alert of Mar 10th on golf course complexes in state parks resulted in the decisions by Sen. John Thrasher of St. Augustine and Rep. Pat Rooney of West Palm Beach to remove their bill from consideration. Sen. Thrasher was quoted as saying: “The people have spoken loud and clear.”

These events are clear indications that the people have power when they choose to use it. But make no mistake; the events in the Midwest are strong indications that politicians are acting against the majority will. That means we must band together with like-minded people and spread the word, and really get the message out. There are two ways we can do this. One of our readers owns a small business. When she got the alert on golf courses in the state parks, she made copies, posted them in her shop and distributed them to her customers. Not only do we need to take action on these issues but we must forward them to our friends and other organizations to which we belong.

Another way of banding together is to join and support email lists from other like-minded organizations. They often have tens of thousands of followers and can send lots of emails to lots of lawmakers at one time, demonstrating a broad base of support for a cause.

For your information, I have compiled a "list of organizations whose action alerts I receive and I encourage you to look at these organizations and consider subscribing to their mailings. I certainly don’t expect you to join all of them, and there are probably others that also deserve mention, but an inbox can get pretty full pretty fast if you subscribe to all of them. Nor do I take action on every cause just because I get an action alert. Some of them are contrary to my belief, and some are repetitive. Unsubscribing from these lists is just as easy as subscribing. If you decide you don’t want to continue receiving alerts from a particular organization, just click the unsubscribe link at the bottom of the email.

To be active and effective citizens of the U.S. and Florida requires we be educated about the issues affecting us, our families, and our children. These lists are one way of getting that education.

—Don Picard

Field Trips

Meet in the Market Square parking lot Edgewater, Ridgewood Ave. & 442 between Dunkin Donuts & Chik-Fil-A.

(2) easy or no walking. (2) walking less than one mile. (3) One plus mile walking and/or uneven terrain.

Field Trips are free.

Audubon members and guests are all welcome.

Meetings

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

Edgewater Library 103 Indian River Blvd.

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

Next meeting is April 20, 2011

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.

Programs & Field trips subject to change.

Questions? Contact Gail Domroski 386-428-0447

A complete list of field trips is available on the SEVAS website.

http://www.sevolusiaudubon.org/field_trips.htm

http://www.sevolusiaudubon.org/of_interest/of_interest1.htm#Active
Conservation Notes

SCIENCE VS. DOGMA

In the late summer of 1941, I had completed requirements for a chemistry degree at the University of Alabama and found a job in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Working for a ceramics firm, The American Lava Corp. (later bought out by 3M), I roomed with three other bachelors in a Chattanooga house we rented. One of my housemates, a TVA employee, invited me to attend a Sunday morning discussion meeting at his local church. I gladly attended.

At the church I was surprised and dismayed that the discussion was about how to suppress false evolution science.

I shouldn’t have been surprised. After all, this was Tennessee, where in 1925, a teacher named John Scopes was on trial for violating Tennessee law by teaching evolution science to children. I dimly remembered the infamous “Scopes Monkey Trial” as the news media designated it, but assumed that by 1941 science and reason had prevailed over dogma. Actually the reverse happened.

For many years after the 1925 Scopes trial, states and school boards nationwide had passed all sorts of resolutions and laws blocking the teaching of evolution.

Science denial exists today in a different and far more dangerous manifestation. Too many politicians today are denying irrefutable science that humans are over-heating the earth and disrupting global climate stability with greenhouse gas emissions.

A recent report by AlterNet noted that 74 percent of Republicans in the US senate have denied the validity of global warming science. Some 52 percent of Republicans in the House echoed that claim of false climate science. I suspect that figures for the Florida Legislature are far worse, joining our new governor in his scorn for science.

Are many Republicans and some Democrats so uneducated that they cannot understand science? My guess is many of them privately agree that manmade greenhouse gas emissions are heating the earth and destabilizing the climate, but don’t admit it for other reasons. Many politicians are heavily funded by fossil fuel and related industries that fear actions intended to restrain global climate change would reduce their profits. Those politicians talk and vote as directed by supporters with swarms of lobbyists in government halls, all denying climate science validity.

Ignoring climate science is far, far more dangerous than denying evolution. The earth is clearly warming rapidly in response to greenhouse gas emissions. Climate stability which fostered our human rise to global dominance has evidently been shattered. Many leading climate scientists warn that we may have only about a decade to cut greenhouse gas emissions enough to prevent some aspects of climate change from reaching "tipping points" and becoming unstoppable.

For Florida, the potentially irreversible and most menacing aspect of climate change is polar melting.

Greenland’s ice cap alone contains enough water to raise sea level around 23 feet if it melts completely. Antarctica’s ice caps contain enough water to completely submerge the Florida peninsula. Melting is accelerating in both polar regions. With irreversible polar melting, Florida’s ecology and economy would be dealt crippling blows long before complete submersion. Sea level rises of a few feet this century or the next, coupled with our usual and possibly stronger storms would render our coastal counties largely uninhabitable.

Florida ought to set an example by leading in the fight to restrain global heating before it could become irreversible. We should not gamble that unstoppable polar melting will be many decades away.

There is an even larger question:

Will the self-designated species Homo sapiens, the wise ones, gain enough foresight and wisdom to survive?

Otherwise we may become a relatively short-lived species among the many millions that have evolved and become extinct on this planet.

—Lee Bidgood, Jr.

Opinions expressed in this essay are those of the author and not necessarily those of SEVAS.

Lee Bidgood is Conservation chair, emeritus. He lives Gainesville, FL with his wife Catherine.

Books for Schools

SEVAS continues project

This year Chisholm Elementary School in New Smyrna Beach and Indian River Elementary School in Edgewater were selected to receive $350.00 each to purchase books for their media centers.

Media directors Debbie Sobien and Marty Gough wanted me to extend their sincere thanks to all the Audubon members whose yearly membership dues and donations help fund this project.

—Nancy White

When I was a boy on the Mississippi River there was a proposition in a township there to discontinue public schools because they were too expensive. An old farmer spoke up and said if they stopped building the schools they would not save anything, because every time a school was closed a jail had to be built.

—Mark Twain
The effects of climate change are far-reaching and affect us, and the environment around us, more every month.

Again this year, I foolishly went to Western Canada in late February. Temperature was minus thirty-six degrees Fahrenheit when I arrived and, with wind chill, stayed below the minus thirty mark all but the last couple of days I was there. This has been one of the coldest winters on the Canadian prairies for some time and the amount of snow has likewise been exceptional.

Apparently a general increase in air temperature associated with global warming, in this case over the Pacific, allows air to carry more water. Normally most moisture is dropped as the air climbs the Rocky Mountains. This year, however, more water than usual must have still been retained when the air reached the summit. As the air dropped over the mountains onto the colder prairies, it lost this water in the form of (a lot of) snow. Severe flooding is forecast for many communities in the spring.

Another issue is that wetter, hence heavier, air falls off the summit faster, pushing up the light, drier air on the prairie ahead of it. This probably accounts for the stronger than normal winds which, coupled with more snow, result in more severe blizzards. I experienced a couple of these blizzards during my three-week stay. Once, while driving, white-out conditions were so severe over a forty mile stretch, that I could only continue by keeping the top of a semi in sight ahead of me. Farther south, where conditions were less severe, the road was closed shortly after I passed through.

Climate change also seems to be affecting migrating birds’ calendar instincts and is causing many to arrive at their nesting grounds too early. Trees have not yet leaved out to provide shelter, normal food sources are not available and there is no open water for waterfowl. As I was driving through the white-out, I encountered a brief clear section. Looking up to thank God for small favors, I was surprised to see, right above me, a flock of some seventy-five Mallards. They were flying directly into the wind and, with their feathers fluffed to reduce the bite of the cold, must have been burning energy at a tremendous rate. They were obviously looking for a place to set down but chances of finding one, and thereby surviving, weren’t good.

I was also told that fifty caribou starved to death because they couldn’t make their way through the snow to find feed. In our area, the elk have not come down from the hills as is usual in winter. I assume that is because of difficult foraging in the valleys and easier, though sparser, grazing in the high country where wind has blown patches of snow away, creating areas where grass could be found. Unfortunately, this is using up spring grazing.

Almost everyone has seen blanket flowers (Gaillardia pulchella). They are a common native wildflower that thrives along roadsides and in gardens alike. Gaillardia are easily identified by their bright red and yellow daisy-like petals. Curiously, the petals can vary in pattern—mostly red with yellow tips or the other way around. Gaillardia enjoy a long blooming season from spring into fall.

As you might expect, Gaillardia are very easy to grow. Nursery plants are available, but new plants will also spring up from scattered seed. Each plant can grow to a 3-foot spread. Gaillardia thrive in full sun and well-drained, sandy soil. Once established they tolerate dry conditions.

—Donnadine Miller

Donnadine Miller was an active member of SEVAS and wrote this column for years for The Skimmer. She passed away April 7, 2008.

This archived article is from The Skimmer, April 2005

Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you.

~Frank Lloyd Wright
From the Field

ORLANDO WETLANDS PARK - 03/05/11

Eight members enjoyed a beautiful morning at Orlando Wetlands Park. Volunteers were providing tram tours so we all took advantage of riding to distant areas we would not normally walk to. The guides were knowledgeable and took us to areas where birds were being seen. We saw most of the usual wetlands species and had good views of Crested Caracara. After much looking and discussion we identified American Pipits which are listed as accidental species on the Orlando Wetlands Birdlist.

MERRITT ISLAND 03/19/11

Our second field in March was to Merritt Island. We made stops at the Sender Education Outpost and the Hammock Trail to look for migrants. At the education area we found Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Yellow-rumped, Palm, and Prairie Warblers and 1 lone Robin. There were birds along the hammock trail but no new species. Considering the dry conditions, mosquitoes were a nuisance.

Along the east entrance road to Peacock Pocket, we saw more Yellow Rumps and Palm Warblers, Titmice and heard and saw White-eyed Vireo. In the marsh area we had good views of both Long & Short-billed Dowitcher, also Black-necked Stilts, Roseate-Spoonbills and Northern Shoveler. It took only seven dedicated birders to list 71 species on this trip.

—Dick & Gail Domroski

Backyard Naturalist

Last Issue

This will be the last regularly scheduled issue of The eSkimmer for this SEVAS season (Oct. - April).

Time sure do fly!
We will be publishing bimonthly (June & August) and if necessary e Skimmer Alerts when needed.

The web site - www.sevolusiaaudubon.org - will be active so be sure to visit us there frequently.

Have a good summer and take care. We hope to see you all in the Fall.

Caws,
Gil Miller

Interesting Seminar- April 23, 2011 - $40

Creating a Garden, The Natural Way
8:30 until 4:30 - Stetson University
Rinker Environmental Education Center
email Lyonia.Letter@gmail.com
Type Seminar Flyer in the subject line and we'll send you a flyer with full details.

Bird list - Orlando Wetlands March 5, 2011

Blue-winged Teal
Northern Shoveler
Pied-billed Grebe
Double-crested Cormorant
Anhinga
American Bittern
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Little Blue Heron
Tricolored Heron
Cattle Egret
Green Heron
Black-crowned Night Heron
White Ibis
Glossy Ibis
Roseate-Spoonbill
Wood Stork

Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Red-shouldered Hawk
Crested Caracara
Sora
Common Moorhen
American Coot
Limpkin
Sandhill Crane
Kildeer
Lesser Yellowlegs
Western Sandpiper
Wilson's Snipe
Mourning Dove
Belted Kingfisher
Red-bellied Woodpecker

Woodpecker
Pied-billed Woodpecker
Eastern Phoebe
White-eyed Vireo
American Crow
Tree Swallow
Barn Swallow
Carolina Wren
Gray Catbird
Northern Mockingbird
European Starling
American Pipit
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Palm Warbler
Savannah Sparrow
Northern Cardinal
Red-winged Blackbird
Common Grackle
Boat-tailed Grackle
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

Bird list - Merritt Island - March 19, 2011

Wood Duck
American Black Duck
Mottled Duck
Blue-winged Teal
Northern Shoveler
Northern Bobwhite
Pied-billed Grebe
Brown Pelican
Double-crested Cormorant
Anhinga
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Little Blue Heron
Tricolored Heron
Reddish Egret
White Ibis
Glossy Ibis
Roseate-Spoonbill
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Red-shouldered Hawk
American Kestrel
American Coot
Sandhill Crane
Black-bellied Plover
Kildeer
Black-necked Stilt
Greater Yellowlegs
Willet
Lesser Yellowlegs
Western Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
Dunlin
Short-billed Dowitcher
Long-billed Dowitcher
Ring-billed Gull
Forster's Tern
Royal Tern
Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Common Ground Dove
Belted Kingfisher
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker

Woodpecker
White-eyed Vireo
Florida Scrub Jay
Fish Crow
Tree Swallow
Tuffed Titmouse
Carolina Wren
Winter Wren
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Northern Mockingbird
European Starling
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Prairie Warbler
Palm Warbler
Savannah Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
Northern Cardinal
Red-winged Blackbird
Common Grackle
Boat-tailed Grackle
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

I once had a sparrow alight upon my shoulder for a moment, while I was hoeing in a village garden, and I felt that I was more distinguished by that circumstance that I should have been by any epaulet I could have worn.

~Henry David Thoreau

Recommended Reading

The Creation - E.O. Wilson
The Lives of a Cell - Lewis Thomas

If you’d like to have The eSkimmer emailed monthly, contact us at sevas.skimmer@gmail.com
Type Subscribe in the subject line.
Ed Garland Talks on Water

Springtime irrigation should be water efficient

With springtime planting under way, and rainfall 5 to 20 inches below normal for the year across northeast and east-central Florida, the St. Johns River Water Management District is working to heighten awareness about the importance of year-round conservation and the role homeowners play in water resource protection.

The District's Governing Board recently approved a proclamation designating April as Water Conservation Month to encourage awareness about the importance of water conservation.

April has been formally recognized as Water Conservation Month in Florida for the past 13 years. Gov. Rick Scott and the Cabinet will be asked to sign a resolution next month naming April as Water Conservation Month in Florida, a designation also supported by the Florida Section of the American Water Works Association.

Conservation is among the most important strategies to help meet Florida's water supply needs for today and the future, and the efficient use of water outside and inside the home can save thousands of gallons of water per month. Saving water can be easy and often delivers money savings as well.

With more than half of commercial and residential water use occurring outdoors, mandatory watering restrictions are in place throughout the year within the District's region to ensure the efficient use of water for lawn and landscape irrigation. Watering wisely promotes healthier lawns and landscapes and conserves Florida's water resources.

Coinciding with the return to daylight saving time on March 13, landscape irrigation is allowed up to two days a week before 10 a.m. or after 4 p.m. Landscape irrigation is limited to the following days:

• Wednesday and Saturday for residential landscape irrigation at addresses that end in an odd number or have no address
• Thursday and Sunday for residential landscape irrigation at addresses that end in an even number
• Tuesday and Friday for nonresidential landscape irrigation

In addition, irrigation is limited to three-quarters of an inch of water per irrigation zone and to no more than one hour per irrigation zone on each day that irrigation occurs.

Landscape irrigation is limited to one day a week during Eastern Standard Time, which resumes Nov. 6, 2011.

The District has had some form of water-conserving irrigation restrictions in place for 20 years, with the mandatory day limitation and designation since 2009.

To further assist homeowners save water, our agency in February launched an updated and dynamic online plant database that provides a comprehensive and searchable listing of plants most suitable for a variety of growing conditions.

Inside the home, fixing leaks and replacing older high-water-use plumbing fixtures with newer water-saving ones can save significant amounts of water.

The District also focuses year-round on conservation by requiring all permit holders to use water efficiently, encouraging the use of reclaimed water and storm water to conserve potable water, and by teaching the importance of efficient water use to adults and children through such programs as *The Great Water OdysseySM and *Florida Water StarSM

Visit [www.floridaswater.com](http://www.floridaswater.com) for more information or contact me at egarland@sjrwmd.com

---Ed Garland

* Links — * The Great Water OdysseySM
  [http://floridaswater.com/odyssey/](http://floridaswater.com/odyssey/)
  * Florida Water StarSM

Ed Garland is a Communications Specialist with the Office of Communications and Govt. Affairs - SJRWMD

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• 100% unbleached cotton
• Made in the U.S.A.
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Thanks to Fern Murphy for proofing this issue (in fact, every issue).