

The eSkimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, Inc.

Issue Vol. III- No. 8

December , 2008

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

Prez Sez

It 's over!! After two long years of campaigning and pundits explaining what the candidates really meant to say, how they said it and why, it is finally over. The electoral process resulted in a new administration that will take effect on January 20, 2009. But that can't come soon enough. The Bush administration still has time to push through more assaults on our air, water and forest resources.

President-elect Obama's position on the environment and global warming give us hope that the last eight years may somehow be reversed. But that will mean the as-yet-unnamed members of his cabinet, DOI, EPA, FDA, USDA and others who are supposed to protect us from polluted water, air, food and drugs must have the well-being of the American people in mind rather than that of the special interests.

But Mr. Obama has a lot on his plate, not the least of which is an economy down the drain and high priced executives begging for our tax dollars to bail out their lack of forward thinking. That means he will need constant reminders of our concerns about our quality of life and our future.

President-elect Obama promises a participatory democracy and has opened an office online at <http://www.change.gov> where you can share with him your vision for America. I encourage everyone who reads this message to use the website to make your concerns known to the future president. And don't stop on January 20th. We need to keep the pressure on the new administration to remind them of their promises.

Audubon is joining with nearly a dozen environmental groups to send a message to the new Administration that we can't wait any longer to solve our energy crisis. This is your chance to signal your support for President-elect Obama's strong commitment to confront the challenge of global warming. I got the same notices from the League of Conservation voters, SaveourEnvironment.org, Environmental Defense Fund, and Sierra Club. You can sign the petition at <http://audubonaction.org/campaign/repower>

And while you are at it, don't forget the local and state governments. They have more direct effect on our lives than the feds do. You may have seen me and other members of your executive committee speaking at the city and county meetings. We've also written letters to the editor of various print publications. We need your voices behind us. Numbers count when it comes to effecting change in government policies.

See Prez Sez p. 2

Meetings

Meetings are held the 1st Wednesdays
Oct. thru March at 7 P.M.

Edgewater Library 103 Indian River Blvd. 7: P.M.
Smoke-free environment. Refreshments are served.
Plenty of parking. Public welcome.

Next meeting is Dec. 3, 2008

Speakers: Dr. Roger Reep and Dr. Peter McGuire

U. of Florida ♦ Speaking about Florida Manatees
See Speakers, page 3

Programs & Field trips subject to change.

Field Trips

Field trips begin at 8:00 A.M. unless otherwise noted*.
Meet in the Market Square parking lot Edgewater, Ridgewood Ave. & 442, between Dunkin Donuts & Chik-Fil-A.

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

Fri., Dec. 5 - Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

***Meet at 7 A.M.** See details p.4

Questions? Contact Gail Domroski 428-0447

Audubon members and guests are all welcome.

Our Email Address

the.skimmer@yahoo.com

If you'd like to have The eSkimmer emailed monthly, contact us at the above address. Type Subscribe in the subject line.

Our Website

<http://sevolusiaaudubon.org/>

The superior man seeks what is right; the inferior one, what is profitable.

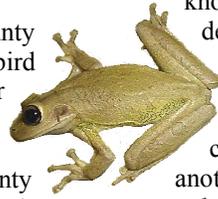
— Confucius

Conservation Notes

All three Audubon chapters in Volusia County and Audubon of Florida together requested a Shorebird Workshop with the County Council to present our position for shorebird protection at Smyrna Dunes Park, however, Councilman Hayman requested a meeting first, which we agreed to, with Volusia County Environmental Management present. The day before the meeting Port Authority Coastal Divisions Director, Joe Nolin, sent a letter to our president, Don Picard, that read as if shorebird protections were assured, therefore the intended meeting was canceled. Instead, we have a response pending to Mr. Nolin to clarify exactly what the County is proposing. It seems that resolution of issues at Smyrna Dunes Park, at least in regards to shorebird protection, is near at hand and that is exciting to contemplate. I have encouraged chapter members who are frequent bird watchers at Smyrna Dunes Park to register our chapter with the Florida Wildlife Commission (FWC) so that the data regularly collected in the Park are considered by the FWC in regards to their enforcement of regulations protecting shorebirds. In the Spring, all interested chapter members have been invited to a training session for shorebird monitoring, held by the Flagler and St. John's chapters. Also they have invited us to join with them in their bi-annual meetings where chapter members, biologists, and local, county, state and federal government persons involved with protection of shorebirds can discuss what is working and not working along the NE Atlantic Coast and how to make changes in conservation plans. As all the above correspondence and meetings were going on, I attended the Audubon Assembly in Crystal River and happily discovered that not only is there a keen awareness of the imperiled condition of shorebirds, but that the FWC intends to have a Habitat Conservation Plan in place state-wide within 6 years in an effort to provide shorebird protection along all the state's coast. This indicates to me that all coastline municipalities are going to have to be much more concerned about the environmental impacts of all beach activities on shorebirds, because these local governments will be under scrutiny on the State level.

Due to helpful information from some other sessions I attended on your behalf at the Audubon Assembly, I am in contact with the Nature Conservancy and others to continue to push for a prescribed burn in the scrub habitat by the Edgewater YMCA. To the City's credit, the interim City Manager Tracy Barlowe, said a fire attempt was done in August with Forestry present, but wouldn't start. Fall scrub education was postponed when we were told by the City that a fire was postponed until December, but that did not occur. The best educational experience would be a pre- and post-burn field study of the scrub habitat, and I hope we can make that a reality. If you would be interested in such a field study, please contact me @ 409-3091 or mprademacher@msn.com.

The huge Restoration development is slowly proceeding through the governmental pipeline for permitting, since approved by the City of Edgewater. Our input was noted and acted upon, as I had informed you in December. Other than continuing to say, "It's a bad idea!!!" because of all the reasons everyone knows that are discussed in the DRI notebooks I



review on behalf of our chapter (potable water availability and pollution of that same water being the most serious), I don't know of anything more to say to those in authority about this development. And if you agree with me that Restoration is a bad idea, the Farnton development is an even worse idea. It's much bigger and badder. (Is that a word? Whatever, it applies.) Of course the same environmental concerns apply, only on a much larger scale. Myself or another representative of our chapter plan to attend a meeting at the invitation of Farnton Tree Farm on December 2nd. Thanks to Kenn Gunn for attending the first meeting last month.

On a personal note, while on the way to the Assembly, we visited the Steinweider Organic Farm in Lake Helen. It is a beautiful property on a hill—a small hill—but a hill nonetheless! and we saw a herd of deer run through the property. This small farm is run by a mother-daughter team with a couple of young grandchildren running around. They take produce and eggs to the Deland market, where there is apparently more interest in organics than the Ag market. I told Ms. Steinweider that I would let the membership know about their farm so we could hopefully support these ladies and their farm as they give us the most fresh and healthy food one can buy. Localharvest.org is a helpful site if you have an interest in fresh organic products.

—Kathy Booth

Sightings: Field Trip-Spruce Creek Park-Nov. 21, 2008

Hooded Merganser	Clapper Rail (heard)
Brown Pelican	Laughing Gull
Double-crested Cormorant	Ring-billed Gull
Anhinga	Belted Kingfisher
Great Blue Heron	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Great Egret	Pileated Woodpecker
Snowy Egret	Fish Crow
Tricolored Heron	Tufted Titmouse
Cattle Egret (at airport)	Carolina Wren
White Ibis	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Wood Stork	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Turkey Vulture	Pine Warbler
Osprey	Palm Warbler
Red-shouldered Hawk	Northern Cardinal
Red-tailed Hawk	

Prez Sez from page 1

For example, you can contact the Florida Public Services Commission and let them know you support a 20% or greater Renewable Portfolio Standard by 2020, as recommended by Governor Charlie Crist in Executive Order 07-127.

You can also participate by joining the Audubon Climate Action Network, which entitles you to become a member of the Alliance For Climate Protection's We Can Solve the Climate Crisis Campaign. Sign up today by visiting www.audubonofflorida.org

You can also join us at meetings involving Restoration and Smyrna Dunes Park and other issues in which we are involved. Remember, this is your club. The executive serves at your pleasure. We need your support.

—Don Picard

Speakers

Florida Manatees Discussed

Our December speakers will be Dr. Roger Reep and Dr. Peter McGuire of the University of Florida in Gainesville. They will discuss the Florida manatee and help us understand what makes them such special animals.

Dr. Reep will start the evening by introducing some of the issues and research going on in the Marine Mammal Health Program at the UF College of Veterinary Medicine. Then Dr. McGuire will talk about manatee genetics and other uses for DNA extraction, including some specific health diagnostic tests being developed. Both speakers will answer questions at the end of their presentation.

Dr. Roger L. Reep was raised in Jacksonville, Florida. He graduated from Michigan State University with a B.S. in Physics in 1973 and earned a PhD in Neuroscience/Zoology from MSU in 1978. In 1984 he became a faculty member in the Department of Physiological Sciences, University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine, and is currently a University of Florida Research Foundation Professor. In addition to teaching classes, Dr. Reep serves as Graduate Coordinator for the Department of Physiological Sciences and the Marine Mammal Program. He is co-author, with Dr. Robert Bonde, of the recent book, *The Florida Manatee: Biology and Conservation* published by the University Press of Florida.

Dr. Peter McGuire grew up in New York City and received his B.S. at King's College. He earned a PhD at the University of North Carolina, working on viral population structure and did post-doctoral training at Yale University. In 1975 he joined the faculty in the Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology in the College of Medicine at the University of Florida. In addition to teaching, he is currently supervising three doctoral students and an undergraduate, examining the genetic structure of the Florida, Belize and Puerto Rico manatee populations and developing tools to monitor their health. In addition, he has worked on the genetics of the red tide organism and the development of biomarkers for its detection.

In spite of their very impressive resumes, Dr. Reep says, "This talk is designed to appeal to the general public. It's not going to be a bunch of egghead jargon." We look forward to an educational and interesting evening.

—Ken Gunn

Of Interest

- ♦ Author Elizabeth Rosenthal has written *Birdwatcher: The Life Of Roger Tory Peterson*.
Find out more here: <http://www.petersonbird.com/>
- ♦ David Bonter, Project leader, Cornell Lab of Ornithology is calling for "All Florida Birdwatchers" to help.
Find out more here: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/>
- ♦ Teesmouth Bird Club <http://www.teesmouthbc.com/Main.aspx>
Twitchers <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Birdwatching>
- ♦ Geo. Sibley's film, *Smyrnea: Lost & Found* is available from Museum of History, 120 Sams Ave, NSB

Native & Nice

American holly (*Ilex opaca*).

Appropriate to the season, this column takes a look at the familiar American holly (*Ilex opaca*). It is as well-known for its stately height and bright red berries as it is for its prickly but attractive evergreen leaves. American hollies range from Massachusetts to central Florida and west to Texas.



The American holly in our front yard came to us by accident nearly 10 years ago. Having discovered early on that everything I knew about Maryland gardening was useless in Florida, I was anxious to learn what would thrive at our new home. Gil and I attended one of the water-wise workshops sponsored by Volusia County Extension Service and won the door prize—a sweet bay magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*). In the same pot, but dwarfed by the magnolia, was a spindly American holly. Today, it stands over 7 feet tall, taking its place in the same acid soil of nearby pine trees and azaleas.

In the north, the holly is a food source for birds and other wild animals, where the repeated freezing and thawing of the berries makes them palatable. Locally, the American holly creates habitat for song birds such as bluebirds and thrushes.

While the berries can be mildly toxic, Native Americans used them to brew their "black drink," a caffeine-rich purgative and ceremonial stimulant. They also boiled the twigs with pine tops as a cure for coughs.

In 1997, the American holly was recognized on the 32-cent postage stamp.

—Donnadine Miller

Donnadine Miller, who passed into the light April 7, 2008, wrote (originated and named) the *Native & Nice* column for several years. This is a reprint of last December's column.

In The Field

This field trip will be a slight departure from our normal routine. We'll be going to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge **Friday** December 5th. We will drive Black Point Wildlife Drive, tour the Visitor Center and adjoining boardwalk and, if we have time and interested participants, visit the beach

Meet at the Market Square parking lot at 7 A.M., US 1 & 442, Edgewater, between Dunkin Donuts & Chik-Fil-A. Bring water, mosquito repellent, and lunch if you want to stay and visit awhile. Call Gail @ 428-0447 if you have any questions.

—Gail Domroski

For a complete Field trip schedule visit our website

http://sevolusiaaudubon.org/field_trips.htm

Wandering Members

Alberta Winter

Late in October, right after I wrote for the last Skimmer, I had to make a trip to the east side of Alberta. Over there the Canada Geese had been arriving for a couple of weeks and I saw several large flocks going and coming from feeding. Also saw a few Snows but still not big numbers of them. Swans, probably Tundra, had been down for about a month but were too far from the roads for me to really see well with only binoculars and I am not good at swan ID anyway.

When I returned to the edge of the foothills about the end of the month, there were several swans here too and also more geese than earlier. Again, I couldn't identify all of the swans but those which I could get close enough to were definitely Tundra. There was a marked decrease in number both of swans and of locations early in November so it may be that there were some Trumpeters here and they moved out at that time.

The last of the migrant birds left between the tenth and the fifteenth. The sloughs froze over behind them and in my part of the province the snow covered it all over within a few days. We are now left with those Canada Geese who spend the winter here, plus ravens, magpies and the occasional Rough-legged Hawk. I haven't seen an eagle for a couple of weeks although I did see an unhappy Northern Harrier the other day. In the shelter of our river valley we still have jays, chickadees and nuthatches but they seem to be making fewer trips to the feeder in the cold weather.

Yesterday morning was spectacular. When I drove out of our little valley, everything was white. There was hoar frost on every branch of every tree, right to the tops of the hills; the ground is all snow-covered and the mountains to the west are all white. What a wonderland!

We have about 6" of snow in our little valley and nearly as much in the open country. We have days when it melts but before all the snow disappears, it turns cold again and we get more of the white stuff. There is no ice along the edges of the river yet but the snow on the sandbars has worked down to about a foot from the water's edge.

—Ken Gunn

Field Notes

Ramblings Of A Binocular-laden Non-birdwatcher

We wandered afield more than we usually due this time of year. SEVAS had two field trips—the regular first-Saturday outing and a new Friday outing.

The SEVAS Saturday outing, a last minute switch from Deleon Springs—too many people, too few birds said the scouting report—to Lake Woodruff was a good decision. We had a vigorous group of eighteen members and guests and we saw a fair amount of birds (47 species-see list below left). The weather was absolutely perfect, not hot, just cool enough to keep the pesky bugs away.

The Friday, November 21, outing to Spruce Creek wasn't as well attended (13 folks) but we had perfect weather and the park all to ourselves. This is a delightful secret just north (maybe a mile) of the New Smyrna Beach line on Rt. 1. The park offers woodland and marsh with a boardwalk well out into Spruce Creek which was teeming with birds that day, twenty-nine were spotted—actually twenty-seven since one was only heard and another was spotted at the NSB airport—which makes for a successful outing in my mind. Really spotting one or more makes for a successful outing to me. I just like being out there with birders who know what they're doing. I even took my binoculars on these trips along with my cameras and recording gear.

George Sibley (the *filmmaker, not the bird-book guy) and I took a mid-week trek down to Merritt Island NWR I was hunting for my annual holiday card photo and he needed a break from post-production chores of his latest film.

It was a casual chatty day and we ran into a couple of birders, Angela & Brian, from across the pond (Hartlepool, UK) on holiday in Florida.

We picked up a new English expression for obsessive-compulsive birders (they weren't)—"twitchers"—and exchanged email & website addresses (see Teesmouth Birdclub in [Of Interest](#)).

—Gil Miller

* See George Sibley, [Of Interest](#) p.3



Sightings - Lake Woodruff - Nov. 8, 2008

Pied-billed Grebe	American Kestrel	Tufted Titmouse
Anhinga	Wild Turkey	Carolina Wren
Great Blue Heron	Common Moorhen	House Wren
Great Egret	American Coot	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Snowy Egret	Sandhill Crane	Gray Catbird
Tricolored Heron	Killdeer	Northern Parula
Little Blue Heron	Common Snipe	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Cattle Egret	Belted Kingfisher	Pine Warbler
White Ibis	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Common Yellowthroat
Glossy Ibis	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Northern Cardinal
Black Vulture	Downy Woodpecker	Savannah Sparrow
Northern Harrier	Pileated Woodpecker	Song Sparrow
Red-shouldered Hawk	Eastern Phoebe	Swamp Sparrow
Southern Bald Eagle	American Crow	Red-winged Blackbird
Osprey	Barn Swallow	Common Grackle
		Double-crested Cormorant

Officers & Chairs

President: Don Picard	386-957-1886	president@sevolusiaaudubon.org
Secretary: Jean McNeil	386-423-2508	
Treasurer: Bill Cox		billmarsha@pshift.com
Newsletter: Gil Miller	386-423-4124	the.skimmer@yahoo.com
Programs: Ken Gunn	386-423-2334	gunnsatbeach@cfl.rr.com
Field Trips: Gail Domroski	386-428-0447	
Conservation: Kathy Booth	386-409-3091	mprademacher@msn.com
Publicity: Marsha Cox		billmarsha@pshift.com
Membership: Richard Domroski	386-428-0447	

Please forward this  to friends.