



The eSkimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, Inc.

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December, 2009

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

Prez Sez

Climate is changing and there are a lot of indicators. National Audubon Society's recently released study based on Christmas Bird Counts shows that birds are wintering as much as 300-400 miles north than previously. The plant zone map for the U.S. has been revised, and the zones have shifted northward almost a zone width. The ice caps and glaciers are melting. Locally, the Black mangrove trees are spreading northward from the historic northern limit of Cape Canaveral to St. Augustine. Kudzu is spreading northward since there is not sufficient cold to kill it. The Pine Beetle is decimating our western pine forests because the winters are not harsh enough any more to kill it. In the future, such pests may do the same to our forest on the east coast.

Add the pressures from unbridled development, and it is apparent what will happen to the habitats of birds and other animals which inhabit them now, especially those for whom survival depends on quality habitats for rest and recuperation during their annual migrations. Stretching from the Canadian border to the tip of Florida, the eastern seaboard covers just over ten percent of the U.S.'s land mass, yet houses more than a third of its people and that will continue to grow.

These factors are causing National Audubon to start The Atlantic Flyway Initiative. This will be a *unique multi-state effort that will draw on the grassroots power of its Chapters, local Centers and integrated science, education and advocacy programs to safeguard the forest, coastal and saltmarsh habitats of the Flyway, and the nature of tomorrow.*

They have already initiated programs and partnerships to protect some urban oases and coastal and salt-marsh habitats but needs to further these programs. As for forests, eastern forests shelter 75% of the neo-tropical migrants using the Atlantic Flyway, along with a stunning array of biodiversity. They are critical to controlling climate change through absorption of carbon dioxide emissions, enhance air and water quality and deliver immense economic and recreational benefits. Audubon will identify and protect the most important forested habitats needed to establish an unbroken conservation network comprised of 10-30% of the Flyway's forest area. This program has been launched successfully in the northern reaches of the

Meetings

Meetings are held the 3rd Wednesdays
Sept. 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. 16, 2009

Speaker: Gary Knight

Director, Florida Natural Areas Inventory

See December Speaker page 4

Topic: Florida's Rich Natural Heritage

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., Dec. 18 - Smyrna Dunes Park 8 a.m. (3)

See In The Field p.4

Questions? Contact Gail Domroski 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.

Audubon members and guests are all welcome.

Atlantic Flyway, but they had better start soon in Florida before the local governments allow it all to be developed.

—Don Picard

Please forward this eSkimmer to friends.

Cattle Egrets . . .

*a success story
in their
relationship to
humans.*

The Cattle Egret originated in the Old World and crossed the Atlantic, probably flying from Africa to South

America, where this species was first reported in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was originally native to parts of southern Spain and Portugal, tropical and subtropical Africa and humid tropical and subtropical Asia. The species first arrived in North America in 1941, bred in Florida in 1953, and spread rapidly, breeding for the first time in Canada in 1962. It is now commonly seen as far west as California. The rapid expansion of the Cattle Egret's range is due to its relationship with humans and their domesticated animals. Originally adapted to a relationship with large browsing animals, it was easily able to switch to domesticated cattle and horses. As livestock-keeping spread throughout the world it was able to occupy



27th Ave. Park, NSB Don Picard

Males claim territory before mating begins. They will go through a variety of display behaviors to attract females. Females will gather in their territory and sometimes jump on the backs of the males. Eventually, the male will evict all but one female. Both the male and the female work on building a nest. The male brings the materials, sometimes stealing sticks from the nests of other egrets. The female constructs the nest. The nest is made of sticks and is built in a bush or a tree. The female lays three to five eggs and both parents incubate the eggs. The chicks

hatch in three or four weeks and fledge when they are a month old. Both parents care for the chicks. Cattle Egrets nest in colonies with other species of Egrets.

—Don Picard

References:

http://www.enature.com/flashcard/show_flash_card.asp?recordNumber=BD0109

<http://www.nhptv.org/natureworks/cattleegret.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cattle_Egret



Lake Apopka Don Picard

otherwise empty niches. Many populations of Cattle Egrets are highly and dispersive, and this has helped the species' range expansion.

Cattle Egrets follow large grazing animals to feed on the insects they disturb and can often be seen perched on the backs of livestock. At some airports, especially those near salt marshes, they can be seen waiting at the edge of runways for passing airplanes to blow insects out of the grass. Unlike other egrets, this species rarely takes fish, although it is known to capture an occasional frog or toad.

Of Interest

Florida Hometown Democracy

With the passage of Senate Bill SB 360, Florida has basically done away with the requirement for large developments to go through the process Development of Regional Impact (DRI). The legislature also passed a bill whereby Water Management Districts no longer have to subject new water permits to public hearings. Local and county governments let extraordinarily large developments such as Restoration and Farnton sail through them.

As a result, Florida Hometown Development (FHD), also known as Amendment 4 in the next general election, is the last bastion of citizens to control the growth in their communities. After a unanimous vote at last month's meeting, I have signed us up as a sponsor of Amendment 4.

—D. P.

For more info on FHD, see their website at

www.floridahometowndemocracy.com

www.floridahometowndemocracy.com

Link to our SEVAS website **Of Interest** page

http://sevolusiaaudubon.org/of_interest/of_interest1.htm

Backyard Naturalist

Back in the day, I was an art teacher in Baltimore County, Maryland. Fresh out of college and in my own digs, finally. I was going to have every animal my parents had denied me. I had visions of my apartment looking like a jungle and I, in my Frank Buck outfit, would loll about entertaining guests who would be seated in huge rattan chairs sipping exotic drinks.

In those days one could buy monkeys from pet shops. Now tell me, what man-boy who grew up on Tarzan movies and who now had not only his own place but a paycheck to boot, could resist getting his very own MONKEY! Not this one. I bought a pair of marmosets before I bought furniture. Picture this: I had an empty apartment and in the center of the living room was a dead tree which had many dead branches that reached to the ceiling and was anchored in a rock filled crock.

I sat on the floor with my new found treasure—a box containing my two new monkeys. I had already named them Marty and Mandy. They would be my best friends. We would be inseparable. They would sit on my shoulders and gaze at me affectionately and I would protect them and feed them grapes. "Gosh this is like Christmas," I thought as I opened the box.

They took one look at me and screamed this blood curdling primal scream—the kind you hear in Tarzan movies but these two chappies were a foot from my face and they had thousands of teeth! The look they took at me was in flight. The same erratic flight a balloon takes when the air is suddenly let from it. Bzzz,bzzurp,whhooshh,zzzip they whirled around the room jet fuel in the form of fecal matter trailing after in immense proportions to their size. Whupp, zzipp, finally they lit on the tree. They sat up high and screamed unkind things at me in monkeyese. It was clear they didn't like me. Clearer yet they hated me. It was a standoff.

I sat there in sort of an unblinking stupor. I hadn't really planned on this. I hadn't thought this through past the fantasy stage. What in the world was I going to do now? I decided to go to bed and deal with it in the morning. Whoa, wait a minute.

I had two very wild and very scared animals in my apartment. . . loose! I hadn't bought a cage. After all I was their emancipator. I had just freed them from jail darn it and now the ingrates were glaring at me and still screaming threats and insults at me in their native tongue. Oh well, look at the plus side. Tomorrow is Saturday. I could work on the problem in the clarity of the new day, perhaps even buy a cage—it would be temporary of course, sort of a half-way house, nothing permanent mind you. Actually they would probably like it. It would be a haven for awhile. A summer cottage as it were. And what damage could a couple of wee marmosets do to an empty apartment? They

are so frightened, I doubt they'll come down out of that tree.

I mentioned earlier that I got the monkeys before I got furniture. Well actually, although my apartment was not exactly furnished in a decorator's definition of the word, it did have a few pieces. In keeping with the "natural fibers let's-get-back-to-basics" scheme of interior design that I was affecting, I had drapes made of muslin hung on wooden poles in tiers covering the east wall of windows which were many. And of course, there was the dead tree in a crock which was now the realm of the monkeys. It was this scene I last saw before retiring (retreating would be a better word) to the safety of the bedroom for the night.

The sun came streaming into the bedroom the next morning and gently tapped me on the forehead. I eased my eyes open to look at the new day, slowly flowing into consciousness and then ZAP! I remembered! There were monkeys in the living room!

For awhile I just listened. No primal screams were coming from the other room. In fact no sound at all was coming from the other room. Had I left the window open? Had they caught a chill and died? Had they caught a cab? Now I heard something. I heard birds. Of course I heard birds. It was a beautiful sunny morning and birds were singing outside. Nothing unusual about that. But these birds sounded as if they were in the living room. Had they come in through the open window that I supposed I had left open which had caused a draft and done in the monkeys or allowed them to escape? I was sufficiently awake by now to realize the only way I was going to answer these questions was to look and see.

So I did. I opened the bedroom door just a crack and peeked in. I could see the tree from this angle but not the monkeys. I could also hear that there were definitely birds in the room although I could not yet see them. I opened the door a bit and now I could see the monkeys. They were perched on the uppermost branch of the tree. Marty, the male and the larger of the pair had his arm around Mandy. They were facing the window and singing to each other in words that were identical to the sounds of canaries. Really! Beautiful trilling melodious birdlike sounds were coming from them. They were greeting the day. What a sight. They were bathed in the same sunlight that had gently awakened me just minutes before. Two marvelous creatures from the jungle were right in front of me—were mine as a matter of fact—and were perfectly at home in their new surroundings.

This was going to be okay. Everything was going along as I had fantasized. Today I would try and get some of those big rattan chairs and maybe a potted palm and some candles. Good. Now that I felt secure in my role as Dr. Doolittle I was about to stride into the room and take charge of my new wards. I would be firm but fair, a good leader, kind and understanding but unquestionably the head man.

Continued next month.

—Gil Miller

December Speaker

Gary Knight

Our December speaker will be Gary Knight, Director of the Florida Natural Areas Inventory, a position he has held since 1995. FNAI is a state-based research program that collects, interprets, and disseminates ecological information critical to the conservation of Florida's biodiversity. Its database and expertise facilitate environmentally sound planning and natural resource management to protect the plants, animals, and communities that represent Florida's natural heritage. The Florida Natural Areas Inventory is affiliated with Florida State University and has a staff of thirty-six. Gary also serves on the Board of Directors of NatureServe, an international non-profit organization providing the scientific basis for effective conservation action. He is a member of the Center for Plant Conservation's Science Advisory Board and has been professionally involved with conservation in Florida since 1985. He holds a graduate degree in Botany from Florida State University.

The title of Gary's talk will be Florida's Rich Natural Heritage: An Overview and Status Update.

Life is not evenly distributed over the landscape. For a variety of reasons—geological history, evolution, climate, habitat loss—some places harbor more species than others. Florida is one of the most biologically diverse states in the country. Gary will talk about some of the many rare and imperiled species of Florida, their habitats, and the status of conservation efforts in the state and in the region. He will also discuss the information necessary for effective conservation planning and action, and will offer those attending the talk information on some useful web tools and sources of information for conservation planning.

—Ken Gunn

In The Field

FIELD TRIP REPORT
LAKE WOODRUFF NWR
NOVEMBER 21, 2009

Seventeen people enjoyed a beautiful morning at Lake Woodruff NWR. We walked the wooded trail first and were rewarded with lots of little birds: Yellow-rumps, Palm Warblers, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and a couple of Black & White's working the tree trunks. There were lots of Common Yellow Throat warblers and Swamp Sparrows in the low bushes. The impoundment had the usual wading birds but fewer than in years past. At the Visitor Center, the Friends Group have established a very nice native plant area with feeders and bird baths. There were lots of birds there including several Chipping sparrows and one gorgeous Blue-headed Vireo. We saw 47 species in all.

Upcoming Trips:

December 18th Field Trip

Friday, December 18th, 8 a.m. Smyrna Dunes Park
We will walk the ocean and inlet beaches looking for all birds. Hope to see Wilson's, Semi-palmated, Piping and Black-bellied Plovers. We will also try to identify all the Gulls, Terns and Sandpipers.

Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, January 2nd is the 110th Ponce Inlet Christmas Bird Count. Participants will meet at 7 a.m. at the Brannon Center for area assignments. Please call Gail Domroski @ 428-0447 if you plan to help with this very important count.

Early January Field Trips

Friday Jan 8th 7 a.m.- Merritt Island NWR. Black Point Wildlife Drive.

Saturday Jan 9th 8 a.m.- Merritt Island NWR. Biolab road.

—Gail Domroski

A complete listing of all field trips for this season 2009-2010 — may be found on our website:
http://sevolusiaaudubon.org/field_trips.htm
Information is there including links to the destinations.
Take a look. It's very thorough.

Please check out our website at
<http://sevolusiaaudubon.org>

If you'd like to have The eSkimmer emailed monthly, contact us at the.skimmer@yahoo.com
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