



The eSkimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, Inc.

Vol. III - Issue No. 1

January, 2008

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

Prez Sez

An editorial published in the St. Petersburg Times on November 11th indicates that Florida's visionary plan to keep some of its natural treasures out of the hands of developers is running out of money and is set to expire in 2010. Florida Forever and Florida 2000 managed to save 2.3 million acres over the last 17 years. The effort has even expanded to 28 counties, which approved taxes by referenda and are buying lands to keep in the public domain.

This year, Governor Crist requested \$100 million to infuse Florida Forever and take advantage of the lower land prices resulting from the depressed real estate market. But the current legislature, led by Senate President Ken Pruitt and House Speaker Marco Rubio, rejected the request. The project has only \$25 million left in the budget.

It is true that it costs tax dollars to buy these lands and they do not contribute to the tax base of the state or the localities in which they fall, but they are important to the many animal and plant species we hold dear to our hearts. They are also important to preserve some forests, wetlands and special habitats for the future.

I urge you to contact the governor and your representatives to urge them to appropriate money to refresh the Florida Forever program, especially since land prices will only go up in the near future.

Email addresses:

The governor can be reached at Jeff.Kottkamp@MyFlorida.com.

Our senator, Evelyn Lynn can be reached at lynn.evelyn.web@flsenate.gov.

Dorothy Hukill and other Representatives can be found at <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/default.aspx>

With rampant development in our future, we need these lands in public trust now.

—Don Picard

There's so much pollution in the air now that if it weren't for our lungs there'd be no place to put it all.

—Robert Orben

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 January 2, 2008

Speaker: **Gil Miller, SEVAS**
Slide show - Galapagos Islands

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!

Jan. 5 - Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

Questions? Contact Gail Domroski 428-0447

Audubon members and guests are all welcome.

If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water.

—Loren Eisley

Field Trips

2008 Schedule

Jan. 5 - Merritt Island
Feb. 9 - Vierra Wetlands
Mar. 8 - Blue Heron/ Bio Lab Road
April 5 - TBA
May 10 - Spring Migration Count

Conservation Notes

Sorry. . .

I owe those who went on the field trip to the Hawks Preserve Scrub Jay Habitat by the Edgewater YMCA a Bigggggg apology for being in the wrong parking lot. It's amazing how both groups of us were wandering around in the habitat without ever running into one another. Thankfully, the group I *wasn't* with, had with it members knowledgeable about the habitat. I'm sure it was obvious that the habitat has been neglected on the one hand and over-mown on the other. There are so many trails in the habitat, that were not in the original plans for the habitat, that's it's easy to get lost in the maze, isn't it?

The point of the field trip was to highlight the educational opportunities there, and that was accomplished. The Volusia County School System has tentatively approved the Habitat as a site for elementary field studies, pending a final step of presentation to the principals. Those of you who volunteered to help host field studies will be getting a call in January to schedule training. If you have not volunteered yet but are interested in educating our youngsters about the environment and specifically about birds and scrub jays, please call me @ 409-3091.

Meanwhile, the USFW overseer for the scrub jay habitat hopes to meet with the Mr. Corder, who is the Edgewater Parks and Leisure Services Director, and the City Manager in January to discuss the City's negligence and plan for correction.

Three SEVAS members attended a meeting at Smyrna Dunes Park between dog walkers and County Councilman, Jack Hayman; County Parks and Leisure Services Director, Tim Bailey; and the Mayor of NSB. Dog walkers demanded a rescinding of the recently approved County Council regulation to restrict dogs off the boardwalk due to numerous incidents of dog bites. SEVAS was present to represent birds and the dune environment, which is also impacted by irresponsible dog owners, who against all regulation, permit dogs to roam without restraint in the Park.

We thought we might get a chance at this meeting to tell the County Council that we want the nesting bird areas off limits to dogs as well. Nancy White, who has been advocating this very thing for many years, did have the opportunity to comment to Mr. Hayman, Mr. Bailey, and reporters from the local newspapers. As she pointed out, dogs in the area violate the federal Endangered Species Act.

Based on 1 ½ hrs of discussion in the meeting, the County Council will make a decision about dogs on the boardwalk this week, with the probable outcome of adding more enforcement officers. It is doubtful that expensive measure will help protect people or birds from dogs, but time will tell. If interested, please volunteer to photo or video document incidents of dogs and humans, or their prints, in the "protected" bird nesting area and then inform me that you have evidence for pickup @ 409-3091.

—Kathy Booth

January Speaker

Slide show - Galapagos Islands

Our January meeting will feature a presentation by our own Gil Miller. As all our membership is aware, Gil is a dedicated and excellent photographer.

Gil and Donnadine Miller travelled to Ecuador this past summer to visit the Galapagos Islands. These are the islands where Charles Darwin, in the 1830s, developed the concepts and undertook the studies which led to his publishing of his theory of evolution by natural selection thirty years later. The islands are nearly 600 miles off the coast of South America so species have developed there independent of their common ancestors on the mainland. The often harsh environment, the cooling effect of the Humboldt current and the variable currents caused by El Niño, La Niña and mainland storms have caused many species to evolve in very different ways from their mainland cousins. Gil's photographs show much of the terrain, flora and fauna of the islands and document some of the joys of international travel.

Gil's slide shows are available online for viewing at

<http://www.photodex.com/sharing/viewalbum.html?alb=133759>

but hearing his commentary on the adventure will add a special dimension to the experience.

—Ken Gunn

The packaging for a microwavable "microwave" dinner is programmed for a shelf life of maybe six months, a cook time of two minutes and a landfill dead-time of centuries.

—David Wann, *Buzzworm*, November 1990

Yard Sale Fund Raiser

SEVAS will be in Oak Hill January 12

A fund raising yard sale will be held Saturday January 12th at the Oak Hill Flea Market. Lee and Catherine Bidgood donated a number of items when they moved to Gainesville and other SEVAS members have been collecting items for several months.

If you have any items to donate or can spare a couple of hours that Saturday, please call Dick Domroski @ 428-0447 to arrange pick-up of items and scheduling of workers. Five members have already volunteered to help but we could use a couple more — NO CLOTHING OR LARGE FURNITURE ITEMS PLEASE.

Also, please tag/price your donated items with a suggested selling price. We can always adjust at time of sale but pre-tagging will reduce volunteer preparation times.

—Dick Domroski

Of Interest

Bidgoods Honored

Long-time SEVAS members, Lee & Catherine Bidgood, who moved from NSB to Gainesville this summer were honored by the chapter Dec. 6, 2007.

In a ceremony at Riverside Park, attended by, among others, NSB Mayor Sally Mackay, City Commissioner Jim Hathaway and Halifax chapter president David Hartgrove, a live oak was planted in the park accompanied by a plaque identifying the Bidgoods as honorees for their dedicated environmental activism.

A reception was held at the Night Swan B&B following the ceremony.

It felt good having the Bidgoods back, if only for a day.



Donnadine Miller, event coordinator, flanked by Catherine & Lee Bidgood.

Good News from Linda Young

The eSkimmer received this email letter from Linda Young this week:

Dear friends of Florida's waters - as you all know, Clean Water Network of Florida has been working with our members in Bay County for the past six years to protect St. Andrew Bay from the unnecessary building of a new international airport in the headwaters of West Bay (the most pristine estuary in the entire Gulf of Mexico). We have hired attorneys to fight the FAA's Record of Decision (ROD) and to challenge the Army Corps of Engineers' wetlands destruction permit. This week we had two major victories for our efforts. First the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals granted us an indefinite stay of the FAA ROD and then, also on Monday our attorneys received a letter from the Corps telling us that they were suspending the wetlands destruction permit for the airport project!!! The St. Pete Times did a great job of explaining the case and what happened (see below). Please share our excitement over this very unusual outcome of our attorneys hard work. There are thousands of acres of wetlands, wildlife habitat, cypress swamps, streams and estuaries at stake here and these decisions moved us a little closer to having permanent protection for this special place.

Happy holidays to everyone,

Linda Young, Director,
Clean Water Network of Florida
<http://www.cleanwaternetwerk-fl.org/>

Craig Pittman's article, Wetlands get reprieve can be found here:

http://www.sptimes.com/2007/12/19/State/Wetlands_get_reprieve.shtml

—Skeezix

World Wide

Plastic bag update

The move is on! Finally! Many stores, companies, corporations, towns cities, states and countries are doing something about the disposable plastic bag problem. The ubiquitous bags have clogged enough sewer systems, strangled enough wildlife and choked enough waterways to have sensible people wake up to the fact that these things are not only an ugly nuisance (whatever happened to *style?*), they're dangerous!

The link below will take you to the latest news on the subject.

http://news.google.com/news?q=Ban+plastic+bags&rls=com.microsoft:en-us:IE-SearchBox&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&sourceid=ie7&rlz=117SNYI&um=1&hl=en&sa=X&oi=news_result&esnum=4&ct=title

Remember, we sell a very good environmentally sensible bag (see p.4) at SEVAS meetings.

—Skeezix

Native & Nice

Baccharis halimifolia

The closest we may ever get to snowfall comes from the native salt bush (*Baccharis halimifolia*), which also answers to the names of groundsel tree and sea myrtle. At this time of year, the salt bush is in full bloom, profusely covered with fluffy white flowers that create a minor "snow" flurry in the gentlest breeze.

The salt bushes in our backyard arrived on their own and established themselves along the edge of the bay. They create a nice contrast to the mangroves. True to their name, they are salt tolerant and thrive in moist areas. A little pruning will encourage the bush to develop into a small tree.

In the wild, salt bushes can be seen clustered along coastal areas and waterways. They usually stand from 3 to 12 feet and they may be as wide as they are tall.

Native plant references suggest that the salt bush lifespan can reach 50 years. However, ours seem to die after a few years, but there are always many younger generations to take their places.

The salt bush can be found as far north as Massachusetts, where they become deciduous.



—Donnadine Miller

From the Field

Scrub jay Habitat visited . . . by two groups

Thirteen of us—one group of ten, another of three—toured the Scrub jay habitat on December 8.

Spotted

American Kestrel
Mockingbird
Great Blue Heron
Anhinga
Cormorant
Carolina Wren
Fish Crow
Laughing Gull
Loggerhead Shrike
Morning Dove

The group of three gathered at the YMCA parking lot instead of the spot listed in The eSkimmer and so missed the main group. No big deal but the funny part is how these two groups missed seeing each other for two hours on this one acre (maybe) scrub.

Since I was with the main group (I call it that because we were with the field trip leader), I can only report on what we saw which will make for a very short report. We did not see Scrub jays but we did see the birds listed on the sidebar.

We also saw the potential for an outdoor environmental learning center which would be mighty handy to the elementary school just a parking lot away and for groups, school and otherwise who can see the value of a small functioning, ecological center at the edge of baseball fields, a swimming pool and the YMCA. This little parcel of wilderness is teeming with the elements of an ecological microcosm: gopher tortoise holes, which are ecocenters in themselves, are there as are insects—butterflies abound—and of course the plants that shelter and attract them.

With knowledgeable people as guides, kids (and adults!) would find this place fascinating and would learn a whole lot about the world in which they live and on which they depend. Yes indeed folks, this is a real opportunity to save and keep a gem of a spot, if the powers-that-be will wake up and smell (literally) the flowers.

—Skeezix

And Man created the plastic bag and the tin and aluminum can and the cellophane wrapper and the paper plate, and this was good because Man could then take his automobile and buy all his food in one place and He could save that which was good to eat in the refrigerator and throw away that which had no further use. And soon the earth was covered with plastic bags and aluminum cans and paper plates and disposable bottles and there was nowhere to sit down or walk, and Man shook his head and cried: "Look at this Godawful mess."

—Art Buchwald, 1970

Our Email Address
the.skimmer@yahoo.com

If you'd like to have The Skimmer emailed to you monthly, contact us at the above address. Type **Subscribe** in the subject line and your name in the message.

Our Website
<http://sevolusiaaudubon.org/>

Eco-Spun™ Bags

Our popular bags are back!

Two years ago, we introduced these bags as an environmentally sensible way of toting goods home from the store. We sold out two orders and figured that was that, we had reached everyone we were going to reach. Wrong. A chapter member, Marita Buchy, called and encouraged us to order some more. We did. The bags should be here the second week of January (I just got off the phone with the manufacturer who affirmed that), in time for our fund raiser in Oak Hill (see article p.2).

Our chapter's logo looks great in black on these off-white bags. Eco-Spun™ is fabric made from recycled plastic bottles. It's bright, soft and very durable. Leave them in your car so they'll be handy whenever you go shopping. We use ours for a weekly shopping trip to the supermarket.

We'll have them at every meeting.

We think they're a good deal at \$10 ea.



Please forward this  to friends.

Officers & Chairs



President: Don Picard	386-957-1886	sevas@cfl.rr.com
VP: Vacant		
Secretary: Jean McNeil	386-423-2508	
Treasurer: Richard Domroski	386-428-0447	
Newsletter: Gil Miller	386-423-4124	the.skimmer@yahoo.com
Newletter Staff Writer: Skeezix		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
Membership: Richard Domroski	386-428-0447	
Publicity: Bill Cox		billnmarsha@pshift.com

Ways & Means, Education/Outreach, Hospitality: VACANT!