



# The eSkimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, Inc.

Issue Vol. IV- No. 1

January, 2009

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

## Prez Sez

### Happy New Year

On behalf of your executive committee, I hope you all had a great holiday season and that you will have a safe and prosperous 2009. I also hope that you will make a New Year's resolution to participate in our democracy as I enjoined you to do a couple of months ago.

For a whole week now, the News-Journal has been carrying a special series on the water situation in Florida and specifically in Volusia County. After many pages of analysis, the conclusions are pretty bleak. Politics, cash cow, etc are key drivers. It seems that the cities have a vested interest in selling as much water as they can to get the revenues from the sales. Not all the money goes to fund the water utilities departments. Other departments' projects are apparently also funded with the water money.

So as we drain our water as fast as we can, and pay lip service to conservation, the cities still try to increase their populations. And even as the citizens of Edgewater and New Smyrna Beach are told about the situation, they seem to be apathetic to it. Only a few citizens speak out at council meetings. A few vent and rant in anonymity in the Hometown News and in "talk backs" to stories in the News-Journal. Most of these include accusations of graft on the part of elected officials. If these are provable accusations, why are these people not pursuing legal action?

These people do nothing to stimulate honest dialog. What is needed is for people to get on the bandwagon and send emails to the city council, the mayor and city manager and tell them of these concerns. After all, politics is a two-way street. We elect officials to represent us and we must tell them when we think they are doing their job badly. It is not enough to wait for the next election. Do it when the issue is important to you.

Below you will find the email I intend to send to the Edgewater city officials after the New Year. I will put it up on the website so you can use it for yourself. Feel free to copy/paste it to your own email. It goes as follows:

The city of Edgewater's council, mayor and city manager are encouraging the rapid growth of the city and urban sprawl by allowing the Restoration project West of I-95. This development alone will more than double the current population of the city even without considering any other developments that will be allowed more internal to the city. It is hard to imagine that the city fathers want to destroy the small town nature of Edgewater. Don't you live here for its small town charm? If you

See **PREZ** p. 2

## Meetings

**Next meeting is Jan. 7, 2009 • 7p.m.  
New Smyrna Beach Utilities Commission**

**200 W. Canal St., New Smyrna Beach**

Entrance is through the rear door,  
take elevator to the third floor.

Plenty of parking. Public welcome.

(Please note change of venue)

Speaker: **Karyn Hoffman**

West Volusia Audubon

Speaking on water conservation

film: **Gimme Green**

also

Ellen Fisher of the Utilities Commission

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!

**Sat., Jan. 10** - Viera Wetlands

now *Ritch Grissom Memorial Wetlands*

See details p.4

Questions? Contact Gail Domroski 428-0447

Audubon members and guests are all welcome.

### Our Email Address

[the.skimmer@yahoo.com](mailto: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/>

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wanted to live in a city like Daytona, why didn't you move there first instead of moving here, helping it "grow "into a Daytona Beach?

Since most of the citizens of Edgewater are not privy to the consultations that occurred between you and the developers, we ask that you communicate with us on the issues that will affect our lives. For example:

- ♦ Tell us who the person is that decided we will need fifteen hundred more homes in Restoration in fifteen years in addition to the unknown number of homes that will be built in the current city limits. How was that decision made and did the current Edgewater residents get a vote?
- ♦ Show us the plan that assures us that the current Edgewater residents will not have to pay for the infrastructure for the new development.
- ♦ Show us the plan that phases in the building of schools so that the current schools will not be overloaded by new students before new schools are built.
- ♦ Show us how building and maintaining the new schools will not add to our tax burdens.
- ♦ Show us the assessments of water sufficiency for Edgewater's 75,000 residents for the next fifty years.
- ♦ Show us the surveys that assure us that, despite the ravaging of wetlands we will still have sufficient wetlands in fifty years to adequately filter water back into the aquifer.
- ♦ Show us the study that assures us that people can be educated to live in bear country. Even the National Parks cannot keep picnic areas and campgrounds bear-safe because, despite all the education and signage, people still leave food in the open in their sites while they are away.
- ♦ Show us the plan that shows we will all have beach access and river access even as the population triples in the next fifteen or so years.
- ♦ Show us the plans for ensuring that the developers and builders will build a sustainable community to include energy production from solar or other renewable sources.
- ♦ Show us the analysis that indicates the current residents will have better services and lower taxes and an all-around better quality of life when the city is tripled in size.

The city staff can't wait for five or ten years to start planning for this development. You need to start now to change the zoning and define what the city will look like in fifteen years. You had a free visioning process provided by the developer. There is no point in waiting for five or ten years to start thinking about how the city will look. Why not start by requiring the next development to meet the standards you think will be in Restoration?

If you have seen the rants in the Hometown News and the talk-backs in the on-line edition of the News-Journal, you know it is time to start an honest dialog with the citizens of Edgewater. I look forward to hearing from you.

—Don Picard

## Of Interest

### Two Books

I'm a reader. I love being around books. I collect books and I visit our Volusia county library frequently.

So I was thrilled to be asked by the author, to review her new book for *The eSkimmer* readers.

#### **Birdwatcher** - The Life of Roger Tory Peterson

I'd say this is an almost must-read for any Audubon member seeing as how important this man was to the Society in its formative years and beyond. The author, Elizabeth J. Rosenthal is a journalist and her anecdotal style is very readable. She talks to RTP's friends and acquaintances and brings him to us as a very intense, dedicated caring man, a man you'd like to go birding with or talk with at the refreshment table at an Audubon meeting.

We're allowed glimpses of his personal as well as his public life, revealing the iconic Peterson (he was known to most as "the great man") as a real human being not just the amorphous artist-writer-creator of the now extremely popular Peterson Field Guides.

I'm afraid this is more of a promotion than a review since I'm only midway through the book. I will say that it's worth promoting to birders and those interested in environmental matters and, it's a good read.

As with most biographies, it has pictures, a must in my mind. Everyone wants to take a peek at how so and so looked way back when and recently.

Here's a link: <http://www.petersonbird.com/index.htm>

This must be my lucky year. I was asked to review this beautiful book as well

#### **Birds in Flight** by Carroll L. Henderson

This is a beautiful book not only to read but to display. Mine sits atop my bookcase and friends can't wait to look inside.

The subtitle, *The Art and Science of How Birds Fly* leads the reader into a book chock full of large high quality color photos accompanied by concise and understandable text.

This is another *must-have* book for birders.

It's not a big thick coffee-table book (160 pages) but it is a

See **BOOKS** p.3

## Native & Nice

### Southern Live Oak Tree *Quercus virginiana*

In Florida, the oak tree is predominant, from small towns like Palatka to Bunnell throughout the Ocala National Forest, in central, northwest and northeast, to the southern tip of Florida. The live oak tree is considered an “American Native” growing along the west coast across the southwest coast through both Florida coasts and up into Georgia, the Carolinas and Virginia.

People often visualize palm trees and beach scenes in Florida when it is the mighty oak that truly graces us most with its presence. The Spanish moss hanging from its outstretched, almost architectural limbs are definitely reminiscent of the Old South.

A four hundred year old oak tree is located in the town of Bunnell, Florida. It is one of Florida’s oldest documented oak trees. The location of the centuries-old tree is Bulow Creek State Park. Since the 1600’s the tree has continued to grow gracefully even surviving the 1836 burning of neighboring Bulow Plantation during the Second Seminole War.

Live Oak is one of the largest spreading of the oaks, growing 40 to 60 ft tall and as much as 60 to 100 ft wide. Once established the live oak tree is considered drought tolerant. It also tolerates salt and is very resistant to strong winds. It grows in full sun, but can also grow in shade provided by older larger oaks, creating an oak hammock often found in undisturbed parts of Florida. It prefers well drained soils and be sure to allow ample room for growth of it’s root system as well as its canopy.

The live oak tree has many attributes from feeding the birds and squirrels to shading our homes. Oak leaves make a very good mulch for landscape beds taking a long time to decompose and improving the soil structure. In Florida, it has very few pests and is considered mostly disease resistant.

—Debbie Pell

*Quercus virginiana* is available at Lindley’s Nursery & Garden Center, W. Canal St. & Old Mission Rd., in New Smyrna Beach.

## In The Field

### January Field Trip - Viera Wetlands

Our January 10<sup>th</sup> field trip will be to the Viera Wetlands now named Ritch Grissom Memorial Wetlands, at the West end of Wickham road in Viera. The wetlands are a series of connected ponds created to treat wastewater from the central Brevard area. This is a great site for many different species of birds and we can drive the main dike roads making this an easy Birding trip.

Meet at the Market Square parking lot at 8 A.M., US 1 & 442, Edgewater, between Dunkin Donuts & Chik-Fil-A. Bring lunch, snacks, water etc. Call Gail @ 428-0447 if you have any questions.

—Gail Domroski

## BOOKS from p.2

book you'll want to display and encourage visitors to your home to thumb through. The pictures—many of them full page—are reasons enough to own the book but the information contained in the text is the perfect compliment.

This book *works* well.

Here's a link:

[http://www.voyageurpress.com/Store/ProductDetails\\_40631.ncm](http://www.voyageurpress.com/Store/ProductDetails_40631.ncm)

I'll have both of these books for your inspection at the next two meetings and I'll talk about them from the floor at the February meeting.

—Gil Miller

## Speakers

### January Speaker

The January 7th meeting will be held at the New Smyrna Beach Utilities Commission offices at 200 Canal Street in New Smyrna Beach. Entrance is through the rear door and via elevator to the third floor. Date and time are January 7 at 7:00 PM.

Our feature speaker will be Karyn Hoffman, a fellow Audubon member. She will discuss water conservation and show a film entitled “Gimme Green,” an amusing and thought-provoking documentary that examines the American obsession with our residential lawn. Ellen Fisher of the Utilities Commission will also discuss how the utility handles our water treatment and irrigation needs.

Karyn is a native Floridian who grew up fishing and snorkeling on the reefs off Key West and Miami. She spent many years camping and hiking in the Everglades, Fisheating Creek, and the Ocala Forest.

She spent three summers as an outdoor activities instructor at the Game Commission Youth Camp in Palm Beach, where she also taught survival skills and canoeing to children of all ages.

Karyn graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology degree with High Honor from Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne. She then worked for three years as an agroforester with the Peace Corps in Benin, West Africa. On her return, she worked as a Counselor with Eckerd Family Youth Alternatives, living with at-risk youth in the Ocala Forest and leading hiking, camping, canoeing and ropes course trips.

Karyn has now been in the financial services industry for thirteen years and is with Morgan Stanley in Deland, where she works with high net worth clients to provide financial solutions.

Because Karyn believes that sustainable development is not just for the third world, she became involved with the West Volusia Audubon Society. She currently serves as Conservation Chair and Co-President.

Everyone is welcome. Remember admission is free and you get cookies afterward.

—Ken Gunn

## Farmton Update

On December 2, Don Picard and Ken Gunn attended the second meeting of the Farmton stakeholders. We have been waiting for the minutes ever since. There will be one more stakeholders' meeting, this one in Brevard County, in January. Miami Corp will then finalize their submissions for rezoning, project approval, etc.

Some of the information presented was a rehash of the first meeting but some of the other information was very interesting. It seems that Miami Corporation and their legal representatives have been working with Audubon of Florida for some time, completely bypassing the local chapters. Indeed the West Volusia chapter was not even advised of this meeting and neither Don nor Ken was designated to sit with the environmental group in the breakout session.

The proceedings and conclusions from the last meeting were presented. Comparing this presentation with Ken's notes on the meeting, it is hard not to conclude that Miami Corp and their representatives have made up their minds as to what they are going to do and the stakeholders are only there for window dressing not input.

Working with Audubon of Florida, Miami Corp has now developed an inventory of the property. There are said to be 25,000 acres of wetlands and 25,000 acres of uplands out of the 59,000 total. They have also developed a "Map A" which shows 10,000 acres of "must save" property. Clay Henderson, representing Miami Corp, advised that they are talking 30,000 to 35,000 acres of conservation areas / corridors.

Other points which came forward during and after the formal meeting:

- This is a 50 year project. Nothing may happen for a number of years.
- After the formal meeting, Don asked why there was such a rush to get into the approval process if nothing was going to happen for years. We were told that they felt pressed to obtain approval before the Hometown Democracy Bill is passed. That amendment would freeze the property with 5 – acre lots and the Miami Corp board would never spend the money to go through the subsequent rezoning process. The property would end up being sold off, probably piecemeal. (This no doubt means the property would be worth a lot less.)
- The Central Florida Regional Planning Commission (CFRPC) is charged with developing an inventory of Natural Resources of Conservation Significance (NROCS)
- Florida Wildlife Commission (FWC) is partnering with the CFRPC in the Critical Lands and Water Identification Project (CLIP). FWC's interest is in connectivity of conservation lands to form viable corridors. They are very conscious of dead end corridors which are clear for a distance then come to an abrupt end at a development which they call cul-de-sacs. They fear these would cause a marked increase in human/animal encounters.
- Brevard County makes a serious effort to undertake field reconnaissance of their lands. While Volusia and much of the rest of the state is working on north-south corridors, their push is more east-west to provide connectivity between the St. Johns River and Merritt Island. They have acquired a fair amount of land toward this objective and the south end of Farmton would help complete the task.
- Don brought up the issue, which was never satisfactorily answered, as to who would ensure that the developers of the several building/community pods actually follow the restrictions and regulations approved by the county and state at the outset.

Don and Ken joined the environmental group for the breakout session. Items coming out of it were:

### Species which should be protected:

- |  |             |                               |
|--|-------------|-------------------------------|
| ▪ Gopher turtles                             | ▪ Scrub Jay | ▪ Bald Eagle (during nesting) |
| ▪ Bears (estimated about 50 on the property) | ▪ Woodcock  | ▪ Indigo Snakes               |
| ▪ Panthers (some pass through this property) |             |                               |

If protected property is designed for bears, there will likely be lots of space for the other species.

The necessary width of corridors is still being researched by the FWC. It is also important to have a buffer zone, for example pasture, between a treed corridor and development to ensure bears and other animals have to cross open ground before encroaching into human living areas.

- Development pod design and location needs to be cognizant of controlled burning in conservation areas.
- Several ideas on developing electrical generation on both the developed and undeveloped sections of the property were introduced.
- Ideas for enviro-tourism were brought up but no great progress was made in this direction.

**THIS PROJECT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO ALL OF US.**

**IT WILL AFFECT THE QUALITY OF OUR LIVES AS LONG AS WE LIVE IN FLORIDA.**



## Field Notes

### Merritt Island trip - December 5

A very successful field trip to Merritt Island was made on December 5. Richard and Gail Domroski had set the trip up but were unable to participate. Don Picard, Fern Murphy and Ken Gunn co-led the trip.

Ten people met at Dunkin Donuts at 7:00 AM and left about 7:15. We drove out Highway 1 to Highway 3, then up 406 past Black Point Drive to the causeway. The first of many treats was at the corner of 3 and 406. A couple of Scrub-Jays have set up shop there.

We continued on to the parking area at the bridge and from there saw a pair of Pacific Loons. Returning back to Black Point Drive, we encountered a large mix of shorebirds which included a Marbled Godwit and both Long and Short-billed Dowitchers. The main entertainment here though was a raccoon a few hundred yards out who, we decided, was probably moving house. She travelled north, passing through a small chain of islands, only to return over the same route in a couple of minutes with something in her mouth which we think was a baby raccoon.

On Black Point Drive we were treated to the usual array of Egrets and Herons – probably a higher count than normal of Reddish Egrets – and a lot of ducks, gulls and terns. The treat was two adult and two immature Ross’s Geese and Roseate Spoonbills are always special.

We ate lunch on the lookout platform at the rest stop, then continued on to Biolab Road. At the turnoff we encountered a fellow birdwatcher who pointed out a couple of Western Kingbirds and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. He had seen an Ash-throated Flycatcher earlier but it was not visible while we were there.

We drove along the canal into Canaveral and there some of the group saw a Golden Plover and we all saw a Semipalmated Plover. We also saw several Warblers and Sparrows but, as always, getting them to hold still for identification was difficult.

At the end of the canal we split up and found our separate ways back. Total sighted species for the day was 86 with two more definitely identified by sound.

—Ken Gunn

### Hickory Bluff - December 19

This was a mini-field trip, close to home (Osteen) but an early-riser (met at 7 a.m.).

The reward was in the birding. See our list and share what the seven of us saw in a couple of hours.

The wooded trail was easy walking and it wound, bug-free, I might add, down to the river.

The day was cool, the weather perfect and the company pleasant. Not only did I see a Ruby-crowned Kinglet but I added some good pix to my lichen collection.

—Gil

### Merritt Island Sightings -- December 5, 2008

Pacific Loon	Bald Eagle	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Pied-billed Grebe	American Kestrel	Red-bellied Woodpecker
American White Pelican	Common Moorhen	Downy Woodpecker
Brown Pelican	American Coot	Northern Flicker
Anhinga	Black-bellied Plover	Pileated Woodpecker
Double-crested Cormorant	American Golden-Plover	Eastern Phoebe
Great Blue Heron	Killdeer	Western Kingbird
Great Egret	Semipalmated Plover	Northern Shrike
Snowy Egret	Greater Yellowlegs	Blue Jay
Reddish Egret	Lesser Yellowlegs	Florida Scrub-Jay
Little Blue Heron	Willet Marbled Godwit	American Crow
Tricolored Heron	Ruddy Turnstone	Fish Crow
Green Heron	Sanderling	Tree Swallow
Glossy Ibis	Dunlin	Semipalmated Sandpiper
White Ibis	Semipalmated Sandpiper	Western Sandpiper
Roseate Spoonbill	Least Sandpiper	Long-billed Dowitcher
Wood Stork	Mottled Duck	Short-Billed Dowitcher
Ross's Goose	Gadwell	Laughing Gull
Northern Pintail	Northern Pintail	Ring-billed Gull
American Wigeon	Eurasian Wigeon	Great Black-backed Gull
Northern Shoveler	Northern Shoveler	Caspian Tern
Blue-winged Teal	Blue-winged Teal	Royal Tern
Hooded Merganser	Hooded Merganser	Forster's Tern
Black Vulture	Black Vulture	Rock Dove
Turkey Vulture	Turkey Vulture	Mourning Dove
Osprey	Osprey	Common Ground-Dove
Northern Harrier	Northern Harrier	Barred Owl (heard)
Red-shouldered Hawk	Red-shouldered Hawk	Belted Kingfisher
Red-tailed Hawk	Red-tailed Hawk	

### Hickory Bluff Sightings -- December 19, 2008

Cattle Egret	Downy Woodpecker	Gray Catbird
Wood Stork	Pileated Woodpecker	Northern Mockingbird
Black Vulture	Eastern Phoebe	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Turkey Vulture	White-eyed Vireo	Pine Warbler
Red-shouldered Hawk	Blue-headed Vireo	Prairie Warbler
Sandhill Crane	American Crow	Black-and-white Warbler
Ring-billed Gull	Fish Crow	Northern Cardinal
Mourning Dove	Tufted Titmouse	Red-winged Blackbird
Belted Kingfisher	Carolina Wren	Eastern Meadowlark
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	
	American Robin	

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