



The eSkimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, Inc.

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November, 2007

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

Prez Sez

It's about habitat and ...

The Restoration and Reflections developments proposed for the nearly 10,000 acres west of I-95 in Edgewater promise to double the population of Edgewater in the next 15 years even without considering the internal development that will occur inside the city's limits. They also promise urban sprawl, traffic congestion, and decreased beach access. But are these the only problems? What about the carrying capacity of Florida?

One of the most critical elements for our well-being and indeed our survival is water. It is a finite resource. Our supplies are dwindling as the aquifer is being depleted and the wetlands which should be replenishing it are destroyed by developments at an unprecedented rate. The St John's River Water Management District has proposed a plan to inject water from the St John's River into the underground supply. This water is polluted from industrial waste as well as runoff from lawns and farms. Do we want this in our drinking water? Developers are also proposing piping water from the northern parts of Florida to the southern parts where water is already deemed critically low. Can you imagine the water bill if we had to pay for that infrastructure? Of course it will also be paid for by our taxes. Have you seen the latest articles in the News-Journal about the water crisis in our neighbor to the North, Georgia? Georgia officials warn that Lake Lanier, a 38,000-acre reservoir that supplies more than 3 million residents with water, is less than three months from depletion. Smaller reservoirs are dropping even lower. Do you think that cannot happen here in Florida?

Another critical element is in our forests. Forests are a carbon sink. Trees take in carbon dioxide and release oxygen. Losing all of our forests will exacerbate the problems of other carbon dioxide emissions. The replacement of forests by pavements and buildings will also contribute to increased temperatures. Loss of these forests will also result in loss of habitat for Black Bears and many species of birds and other animals. As we encroach further into their habitats, they will encroach further into our backyards. They are also important areas for those of us who like to hike and fish and hunt in them. Do we need to pave all of Florida at the expense of our forests?

We need to make our elected officials know about our feelings. If you believe as I do, then attend city council meetings and tell your elected officials how you feel.

—Don Picard

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 November 7, 2007

Speaker: **Adam Kent**

Florida Fish & Wildlife

Adam Kent bio on 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!

Nov. 10 - North Peninsula State Park

See details

Questions? Contact Gail Domroski 428-0447

Audubon members and guests are all welcome.

Field Trips

2007 - 2008 Schedule

Dec. 8 - TBA

Dec. 29 - Christmas Bird Count

Jan. 5 - Merritt Island

Feb. 9 - Vierra Wetlands

Mar. 8 - Blue Heron/ Bio Lab Road

April 5 - TBA

May 10 - Spring Migration Count

I really wonder what gives us the right to wreck this poor planet of ours.

—Kurt Vonnegut

Backyard Observer

Ever thought about a Rain Garden?



We have. After hearing Eric West speak to our chapter, Donnadine (the gardener) and I decided it made a whole lot of sense. Donnadine has been using native plants exclusively since we "saw the light" some years ago and ripped out (literally) our sprinkling system which we were lead to believe, when we moved here ten years ago, was "essential" if anything were to survive. Balderdash! Not only are things surviving, thank you, they're flourishing!

What an unholy waste of space and water are sprinkled, pampered, manicured lawns. Lawns, those silly manifestations of serfdom overcome. The whole idiotic system dates way back to the wealthy merchant class of England. They were so wealthy they didn't need to devote their property to grazing livestock or the growing of crops. When the Industrial Revolution allowed a working class to have homes, they too wanted to show their new found status. They too wanted lawns! Of course the new lawns of the lower classes were postage stamp size but no matter. They had lawns! This quaint custom came across the pond and is still with us. Now it's not only traditional but it has spawned an Industrial Revolution all its own—lawn care! Now lawns are everywhere. They're watered, fertilized, manicured, cut, trimmed, edged, weed-whacked, sprayed, chemicalized and watered some more...and some more. And this is done expertly(?) by an army of *Lawn Care Specialists!* An amazing thing to us is in our own neighborhood. We live on Turnbull Bay. People live in this neighborhood for lots of reasons. Reason number one, of course, is the bay itself, which offers a beautiful view, a place to boat, to fish or just to sit on one's deck and watch the birds fish. The amazing thing is: many (repeat many) home owners in our neighborhood on the bay, use companies to chemically treat their lawns! Of course, 90% these treatments run-off into the bay they so dearly treasure. Go figure. Oh, and . . . sprinkling systems abound in the neighborhood.

We've been xeriscaping (look it up) for years. We have bugs, snakes, frogs, toads, lizards, armadillos, birds galore and butterflies by the skyful. The unwanted (there are a few) weeds get pulled out and thrown (gently) on the compost heap. We actually plant to attract caterpillars. Well, we plant to attract the butterflies that lay the eggs that become caterpillars and we're rewarded year 'round with a colorful symphony of nature. There is nothing, my friends, as relaxing as a yard full of lovely quiet beautiful butterflies.

And, not to forget, lording above us all, oxygenating, cooling, providing beauty, color and haven are the flora—the plants: shrubs, flowers, trees and grasses that make life on this sphere—racing through space—habitable.

—Gil Miller

From the Field

Nice day at Lake Ashby

You stay-at-homers missed a nice 'n' easy field trip Saturday, Oct. 10 (hint: our field trips are almost always on the Saturday following our monthly meeting). Okay, there were some mosquitoes but. . . we had the whole park to ourselves, the weather was perfect and it was nice to be out of doors in the woods with a good group. An even dozen made the trip which was close to home—Lake Ashby park is just off of SR-415 minutes west of New Smyrna Beach proper. It's nestled in the pine woods away from noise, traffic and the things most people like to get away from every now and again. We're lucky to have some of these spots (still) in our area.

A trail takes you from the facilities—restrooms, parking, picnic area, playground—to the to the boardwalk which leads to the lake. <http://volusia.org/parks/ashbypark.htm>

The pesky mosquitoes hurried us from the trail and let up on the boardwalk where we spotted a number of birds and our spot-of-the-day a Barred owl who sat nicely for us while we oohed and ahed. Satisfied, we strolled to the lake and enjoyed the view, the breeze and each other's company, not too concerned whether we spotted any more birds. It was a lazy morning.



After a bit we repaired to the picnic area which was being watched over by a hawk atop a volley ball net post who was imperturbed by our presence. He was camera wary though and took off before I could snap a pic of him.

Richard found the tiniest turtle I have ever seen, a baby slider who must have hatched recently. After taking our looks, we moved it away from the bad spot it was in (edge of the parking area) to a safer spot off the beaten path.

We had a picnic under the roofed pavilion—the whole place was still ours—enjoying the breeze and shootin' some too (breeze, that is). Come join us next time.

—Gil Miller

The **Saturday, November 10** field trip will be to **North Peninsula State Park** on AIA about 6 miles South of Flagler Beach.

Good site for observing terns, gulls and shorebirds. Also, the property west of AIA is home to several scrub-jay families. Park has restrooms, picnic tables & a 2 1/4 mile trail.

—Gail Domroski

Wandering Members

Alberta



After a few short days at home, I returned to our cabin in Alberta, Canada. I went from 80 degree temperatures in New Smyrna Beach to a foothills valley where it freezes every night.

Alberta, as everywhere, is wrestling with energy and environmental issues. They have a new premier (equivalent to governor) but the same governing party. The current premier succeeds a man who firmly believed that governments should not govern. As a result, development of the vast tar sand resource has been allowed to proceed at ridiculous speed, degrading the environment and drastically over-heating the economy. Mundane things like road maintenance, school construction and home repair are too expensive to be undertaken. Young people are shunning university as they can make more working in the oilfield than medical doctors garner in their hometowns. MacDonald's pay \$15 per hour and can't keep help.

As part of his platform, the new premier said that he would appoint a commission to ensure that Albertans were receiving their "fair share" of the income from oil and gas sales. To his chagrin, the press suggested that he keep his word after taking office. He neatly neutralized the problem by appointing a "safe" commission led by a former mining company executive and including a couple of former oilfield executives, an entrepreneur, and an economist. Then a funny thing happened. These guys took their mandate seriously! They held hearings, talked to industry executives, government members and bureaucrats, members of the public and international experts.

They presented their report while I was in New Smyrna and were immediately disbanded. But the report was released to the press and the public. It was an extremely thorough study and recommended higher royalty rates in almost all sectors.

The oil industry was aghast. The chairman of Exxon came to Calgary and darkly hinted that he might take his marbles and go home (or maybe return to Venezuela?), the CEO of one of the largest Canadian companies is threatening to take his next year's \$3 billion budget and spend it in Texas. (Side note – Texas does not have enough reserves left to spend \$3 billion on, short of having a huge bonfire.) Dire predictions of 10,000 lost jobs and 20 billion in lost investment are floated.

The Premier's response is expected next week. Meanwhile, his spokesperson has advised the press that the status quo is not an option and the editorial pages make interesting reading

On another front, residents – seasonal and permanent – living around one of Alberta's northern lakes were able to exert enough pressure on the government to have them cancel an existing oil concession because the leaseholder was going to shoot a seismic survey on the lake and possibly later drill directionally or mine under the lake.

In the field of wind power, Alberta was the only jurisdiction in the world that limited the amount of wind power which could be connected to the provincial grid. This was ostensibly

to ensure continuous power, even on calm days. This restriction was lifted last spring and as a result 500 megawatts of wind power are being added to the grid this fall. With the 900 odd already connected, just over 4% of Alberta's electricity will be generated by the wind with more planned for next year.

It's amazing the positive effect that the people can have on government, even when the same party has governed for thirty years.

—Ken Gunn

Another flaw in the human character is that everybody wants to build and nobody wants to do maintenance.

—Kurt Vonnegut

Recycling Update

Take a trip to the dump

Some time back we thought it would be a good idea to have chapter members bring used flashlight batteries and dead small electronics items to meetings for disposal at the landfill. The idea being that forming a pool, of sorts, would encourage folks to think about what they were throwing away.

This stuff, along with paints, solvents and a few other things is called Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) and Volusia County has a system for disposing of it.



The Hills of Volusia . . . Tomoka Landfill

Group collecting is DISCOURAGED. We were told, and it makes sense. When groups collect, too much stuff is brought in at one time which places an unnecessary burden on the staff.

Individuals are encouraged to bring their own HHW to the landfill.

Incidentally, the landfill is a terrific birding site. Make sure to take your binoculars along with your HHW.

So...please don't bring the junk to the meetings. Instead, take it to the Tomoka Landfill.

<http://volusia.org/recycle/tomoka.htm>

Informative brochures (downloadable):
<http://volusia.org/recycle/brochures.htm#pdf>

November Speaker

Adam Kent, Florida Fish & Wildlife

If you have trouble telling one sparrow from another, come to the November meeting. Our speaker will be Adam Kent of Florida Fish and Wildlife.

Adam grew up in Gainesville, Florida where his interest in nature started as a small child. A love of sharing his passion about the natural world has led him to travel and lead nature tours across the hemisphere from Alaska to southern South America. Closer to home, he participates as a guide at the Space Coast Birding Festival and has given a Sparrow Identification seminar there using a slightly longer format.

He has written a guide to the shorebirds of Baja California, co-authored a paper about birds of the Lake Titicaca region of Bolivia, and made recordings in southern Mexico that led to the description of a new species of bird, the Nava's Wren.

While with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), Adam developed Bird Detective, a bird-identification activity guide for Florida that was later adopted by Seattle Audubon. Also with the FWC, Adam worked on the Great Florida Birding Trail and made bird lists for many of the state's Wildlife Management Areas. He is currently employed as the FWC's Scrub-Jay Conservation Coordinator.

Adam holds a Master's degree in Natural Resource Conservation from University of Florida.

Links:

- Bird Detective booklet:
http://www.floridaconservation.org/educator/JrBirder/jr_booklet_sig.pdf
- Seattle Audubon's "For the Birds":
http://seattleaudubon.org/uploadedFiles/Education/Educator_Resources/ForTheBirdsBook.pdf

Laughter and tears are both responses to frustration and exhaustion. I myself prefer to laugh, since there is less cleaning up to do afterward.

—Kurt Vonnegut

Our Email Address

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

Our Website

<http://thewanderers.stewart.net/sevas/sevas.htm>

Please forward this  to friends.

Native & Nice

Prunus caroliniana.

One of the first trees I planted when we moved to Florida 10 years ago was a cherry laurel (*Prunus caroliniana*). I didn't know anything about native plants at that time. I was looking for a tree that would grow into a shade-provider fairly quickly to screen our den from the late morning sun.



The cherry laurel did that and more. It has grown from barely 5 feet tall to about 20 feet. The glossy evergreen leaves form a dense, attractive foliage that sports tiny white flowers in showy clusters each spring. In the fall, half inch black "cherries" form, to the delight of birds.

Some folks recommend the cherry laurel as a hedge plant, making pruning necessary. I prefer the natural upright look of a single specimen tree, which requires much less maintenance. Cherry laurels are easy to please: moist to dry conditions and full to part sun. They're even somewhat salt tolerant.

An interesting footnote is the almond fragrance that emanates from the crushed leaves of a cherry laurel. Don't be tempted to use them as a food flavoring, however. The fragrance is due to cyanide-producing compounds!

—Donnadine Miller

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Ways & Means, Education/Outreach, Hospitality
are also VACANT!

We need **YOU** to fill one of these vacant spaces!