



The eSkimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, Inc.

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November, 2008

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

Prez Sez

Birds in Decline

BirdLife issued a new international report entitled State of the World's Birds that reveals precipitous declines in populations of many of the world's most familiar birds. This comes on the heels of the Audubon's 2007 Common Birds in Decline analysis.

The BirdLife report highlights avian losses worldwide. A staggering 45% of common European birds are declining and more than half of the bird species that breed North America and winter in the Neotropics show declining populations over the past 40 years

Citing the 2007 Audubon report, BirdLife's State of the World's Birds report states that populations of "Twenty North American common birds have more than halved in number in the last four decades." The Northern Bobwhite fell most dramatically, by 82%. As documented in Audubon's first State of the Birds report in 2004 and reinforced in this report, "Some of North America's fastest declining birds are grassland species whose habitat has been damaged by agricultural expansion and intensification."

To read more of the Audubon report, point your browser to <http://web1.audubon.org/news/pressRelease.php?id=920>.

To read the entire BirdLife report, go to http://www.birdlife.org/sowb/pr/SOWB_global.html.

"Direct habitat loss continues to be a leading cause for concern at home and abroad," emphasized Audubon Bird Conservation Director, Dr. Greg Butcher, speaking from Buenos Aires, the site of the BirdLife conference. "As we found in 2007, this report points out the increasing impact of large-scale environmental problems such as global warming, along with the continuing toll from weak conservation policies at home."

I wonder if Dr. Butcher considers over-development in the category of "weak conservation policies"? If so, he should say it because we are certainly going to see and feel it. If you like Restoration and Reflections, you're going to love Farmton.

Farmton Tree Farm is a 58,000 acre property located west of I-95, starting at Restoration and running south into Brevard County. It is owned by Miami Corporation and has been managed mainly as a timber operation for over 80 years. Of note is the fact that Miami Corporation planted the trees on mainly open ground to create the forest that now exists. As timbering is no longer economical in East Central Florida, the company is looking for other income.

See Prez Sez p.3

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 5, 2008

Speaker: Ms Samantha McGee,
Park Environmental Specialist

Subject: **Red Cockaded Woodpecker**

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., Nov. 8 - Deleon Springs

See details p.4

Questions? Contact Gail Domroski 428-0447

Audubon members and guests are all welcome.

Our Email Address

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If you'd like to have The eSkimmer emailed monthly,
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Type subscribe in the subject line.

Our Website

<http://sevolusiaaudubon.org/>

Until man duplicates a blade of grass, nature can laugh at his so called scientific knowledge.

- Thomas Edison

Wandering Members

Ken Gunn inn Canada

October in Alberta

As I was preparing to write this, on October 20th, our two resident fawns wandered into our yard through the back gate. I thought that they had been weaned during the three weeks that I was back in Florida but they are still fat as little hogs. Obviously doing well on their own. Actually, I saw them near their mother later in the day and while she does not appear to still be nursing, she must still be looking after them to some degree. I have seen no sign of the one survivor of the other twins born in our hamlet so fear he must have met an unfortunate end.

My feeders ran out of sunflower seeds during the three weeks I was away. As a result the Juncos all left. I am surprised that they haven't come back since I restocked as they do winter in this area. The chickadees and nuthatches remained. While they appear to prefer oil sunflower seeds, they will also eat the other feed I put out. Blue Jays are in the area all the time and raid any feeders they can set on.

As of today, I have a pair of Red-breasted Nuthatches, who are year around residents; a pair of White-breasted Nuthatches, who appear to want to winter here; two pair of Black-capped and one pair of Mountain Chickadees, all of whom will probably winter here; and two to six Blue Jays.

In the surrounding area the bird population is thinning out for winter. There are many ravens who stay year round but appear to increase in number in the fall. Their nemesis, the crows all seem to have gone south. The eagles appear to have moved on although I did see one second year Bald Eagle in the air yesterday. The coots and many of the ducks have started to leave but the Mallards are still here. Resident Canada Geese are still here but so far I have not seen any of the large northern flocks of either Canadas or Snows.

Based on the late arrival of the geese, the fact that I have not seen any elk in the valleys yet and as the muskrat houses are small, Old Indian Gunn forecasts a late fall and mild winter this year.

—Ken Gunn

Don Picard in North Carolina

Birding over time.

As most of you know, Maureen and I spend our summers in National Parks. Birding is one of my passions and I keep a log of the birds I see in each place. Obviously there is a new life bird or two in each place. This year, for reasons known to my inner circle, we spent the spring from mid-June to mid-July and the month of October in a campground in Sealevel, North Carolina. Sealevel is near



Don Picard



the end of the earth. It is almost at the end of the highway from Morehead City on US Rte 70. The campground is about 15 acres of level (and leveled) sand without trees but surrounded on three sides by sand pines and live oak trees with a few cedars in the mix. There is a 100-foot long beach on the south end that faces Core Sound. Across the Sound about two miles is a barrier island.

As it is in all of our other trips, birding is one of my passions. And I kept separate lists for each of the two visits. Even though the number of species is close from one visit to the other, it is striking to see the differences in the species and number of birds from spring to fall.

For example in the spring, there were tons of terns. I saw lots of Forster's, Caspians, Royals, Least, Common, and even Gull-billed terns (new life bird for me). Not many terns this time, mostly Royals and a few Forsters. Last time, most of the gulls were Laughing Gulls. This time there were lots of Great and Lesser Blacked Back Gulls, Herring Gulls and Ring-billed gulls in addition to the Laughing Gulls. There were a few Northern Flickers and a Pileated. This time there are tons of Red-headed woodpeckers (lots of juveniles as well), some red-bellied, hairy and even a Pileated. Last time there were Black Skimmers, Tree and Barn swallows, Purple Martins, Clapper Rails, Brown-headed Nuthatches, and Great Crested Flycatchers. None this time. This time there were Little Blue Herons (including white phase), Snowy Egrets, Great Egrets, White Ibis (including lots of juveniles), Canada Geese, Mallards American Widgeon, Sanderlings and Ruddy Turnstones where there were none last time. All this from the same fifteen-acre vantage point.

Just as striking as the difference in time period is the change in weather. When the days were sunny, most of the gulls and shore birds were across the Sound. When the weather was very cloudy and the wind from the South, lots of Gulls gathered on the boat docks on this side of the Sound like those in the picture, and the Sanderlings and Turnstones and Spotted Sandpipers were on our little part of the beach. The Sanderling in the above picture regularly came within five feet of me without any anxiety.



Don Picard

In the early 1990's, when I was in the Air Force in England, a Royal Air Force Squadron Leader (USAF Major equivalent) who worked for me got me interested in birding. At the time it was exciting merely to identify the birds we saw. Since then, my interests have evolved to understanding their habits and habitats and to trying to preserve and protect them and their habitats as an integral part of our personal experience. I encourage you to do the same.

If you are a reader of this newsletter and you have a story you would like to share with fellow readers, I encourage you to email it to the.skimmer@yahoo.com. If there are enough entries, I will start another page in our website www.SEVolusiaAudubon.org. You do not have to be a member of the club to participate in this or any of our meetings or field trips.

—Don Picard

Prez Sez from p. 1

The first of two meetings of the Farmton property “stakeholders” took place Thursday, September 25 at the Brannon Center. Ken attended the meeting along with Karyn from West Volusia Audubon. To read Ken’s report, check it out in our website.

Can you imagine that in 15 to 20 years New Smyrna Beach/Edgewater will lose all the small town charm we take for granted and will swell from 40,000 people to 100,000 people. Enjoy the serenity and the beach while you can. As Ken says in his report, “This is important!!” We are going to have to watch this.

One of the most important things we can do as citizens during these times is to stay informed of the issues and vote your concerns. That includes federal, state and local elections. City and County officials may have more impact on our quality of life than state and federal officials. So get out and vote. This is important!!

See you at our meeting.

—Don Picard

Speakers

November Speaker

Our November speaker will be Ms. Samantha McGee, Park Environmental Specialist at St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park. Sammy is a native Floridian, born and raised in Melbourne Beach. She attended university in North Carolina and earned a BSc in Environmental Science and Religious Studies from St Andrews College in 1998.

Her first job out of college was an administrative position in Yellowstone National Park. Wishing to be outdoors and dedicated to protecting the beauty and diversity that surrounds us, Sammy next joined Americorps National Civilian Community Corps. She served on a team of 15 young adults who travelled throughout the southeast United States for one year, working on environmental restoration, disaster relief, education, and other unmet human needs. She enjoyed the experience so much that she re-upped. This time she went to the Pacific Northwest as team leader of an environmental restoration team. Sammy spent three years in Portland, Oregon with various environmental agencies but the swamps, pine flatwoods and, of course, the ocean and climate of Florida, called her home.

Sammy has been at the St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park in Brevard and Indian River Counties since early 2004. This is an amazing 22,000 acre preserve with 23 different natural community types and 74 protected species. Her many projects there include prescribed fire management, hydrologic restoration, exotic invasive species eradication, public education and outreach, and protected species management and monitoring. Her talk will be about one of those species and is entitled Red Cockaded Woodpecker: Biology, Monitoring and Management.

—Ken Gunn

Native & Nice

Fakahatchee Grass *Tripsacum dactyloides*



A misconception among native plants is that they are somehow all drought tolerant. This simply is not the case. Florida has many microclimates, making it important to consider your individual landscape when choosing native plants. Consider their natural habitat and try to match this with your own. This brings us to the native plant for this month’s article, Fakahatchee Grass.

Fakahatchee Grass, also called Gamma Grass, is a native to Florida and the Southeast United States. Its native habitats include moist areas around freshwater lakes, but also in bogs and marshes with brackish water. Fakahatchee grass prefers fertile soils, but is tolerant of many types as long as it is moist. In a traditional neighborhood setting, twice a week watering is sufficient to keep Fakahatchee happy.

Fakahatchee adds beauty and function to any landscape. It is a tall bunchgrass with broad, upright leaves and grows from 3 to 5 feet tall. It grows well in full sun to part shade. When Fakahatchee is exposed to frost, the leaves assume shades of red and bronze creating winter interest.

When gamma grass blooms the most noticeable parts are the wine-colored anthers that are held on fine stems. It blooms from late spring through early fall.

The best time to divide this plant for propagation is in spring.

—Debbie Pell

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

Donnadine Tree

Tree Planting This Month

We will be having a tree planting ceremony in honor of our dear friend Donnadine E. Miller in Riverside Park, New Smyrna Beach on **Monday, November 10 at 11 a.m.**

As most of you know by now, Donnadine passed from this plane into the light on April 7, 2008.

She was an Audubon member (SEVAS), a community activist, a lovely friend to those who knew her and a loving wife.

Please join us in this tribute to her.

—Kathy Reinhart

Thanks to the combined efforts of the City of New Smyrna Beach, Liz Yancey in particular, SEVAS, the many friends of Donnadine's who generously contributed to the fund and to Lindley’s Nursery for donating the tree.

Editor's Note

Confessions of a Non-Birder

Okay, I go to the meetings and I go on the field trips but I still can't tell one warbler or sparrow or tern from the other.

It's not that the help isn't there. Our SEVAS group is full of real birders, people who *can* tell the difference between a Piping and a Wilson's Plover. They're available at meetings and on the trips. And I did buy The Sibley Guide to Birds which I use as reference for this newsletter (it's where I found the Plovers). But, truth be told, I don't want to know. I like to see the birds, like to watch them fly and dart and walk about. I like to hear their noises, their songs, their squawks.

But most of all, I like being around the people who totally immerse themselves in the wonderful world of *bird watching*.

I enjoy watching the bird watchers.

When we moved to Florida eleven years ago, my wife, Donnadine who *was* a bird watcher, suggested we join the local Audubon group which is SEVAS. We did, and Donnadine, being the participatory sort, made certain we got to the meetings and went on the field trips.

Apart from the fact that I don't like arising before 9 a.m. and I don't much care for picnics, I got to like the field trips. Once I was up and about—egad! do people really get up while it's still dark?—I found the appeal of early rising. The world is crisp and new at the dawn. Invigorating. People are alert and ready to go and go we did. The field trips each month took us to a wide range of birding sites. The folks in the know had field guides, binoculars, spotting scopes and enthusiasm. I had my cameras.

The folks in the know would stop, set up scopes, consult field guides and have animate discussions right there on the spot. I would meander, looking up sometimes at the bird of topic but more often looking down at bugs or bees or butterflies. I would also look at the people. I loved the intensity of their focus, their dedication to their hobby. My wife was slightly different in the field, had sort of a glow about her. That made me happy.

People-watching has long been a hobby of mine. That and its partner eavesdropping. What fun. And being outdoors in this lovely state of Florida with bird watchers is the perfect place for my hobby.

Our last field trip—the first of this season—to Smyrna Dunes Park was minimally attended but delightful. Perfect weather, no biting bugs and lots of birds. Sorry you missed the fun.

Come along on this next one.

I'll try to catch you in my viewfinder while you're trying to catch a bird in your binoculars.

—Gil Miller

In The Field

Our November field trip will be **Saturday November 8**, to DeLeon Springs State Park.

The four-mile Wild Persimmon Trail meanders through oak hammock, flood plain forest and abandoned agricultural fields. Deer and turkey can often be seen, and Florida black bears have been spotted occasionally.

Native Americans visited and used these springs as long as 6,000 years ago. In the early 1800s, settlers built sugar and cotton plantations that were sacked by Seminole Indians during the Second Seminole War. By the 1880s the springs had become a winter resort, and tourists were promised "a fountain of youth impregnated with a deliciously healthy combination of soda and sulfur." Birding is excellent in and around the spring run

The newly renovated Visitor Center features exhibits on the park's 6,000 year history and DVD presentations on Florida's Springs, the St. Johns River, and the Everglades.

Meet at the Market Square parking lot at 8 A.M., US 1 & 442, Edgewater, between Dunkin Donuts & Chik-Fil-A. Bring a lunch to enjoy in the shade of giant oaks or take advantage of the restaurant available within the park. There is a \$5 per vehicle fee so plan on car-pooling.

Call Gail @ 428-0447 if you have any questions.

—Gail Domroski

See [Of Interest](#) below for a link.

Of Interest

Links to Florida State Parks

<http://www.floridastateparks.org/stsebastian/>

<http://www.floridastateparks.org/deleonsprings/>

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