



The eSkimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, Inc.

Issue Vol. II - No. 6

October, 2007

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

Prez Sez

Spring sprang, Summer is gone and Fall is upon us. You may not have noticed it in Florida except for the passing of the equinox, but at Grand Teton National Park the frost on the windshields in the morning and the high temperatures in the 60's gives a feeling of Fall. The cottonwoods and aspens are turning gold and the many species of willows are turning yellow and orange and rust. That means it is time for another season of the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society. But will it be our last? Attendance at meetings has been dwindling and the number of volunteers willing to maintain the club has decreased as well. If you look at the table listing the members of the executive committee, you will notice some key positions vacant; and most the people performing these jobs have been in office for a very long time.

If you got the electronic version of the Skimmer during the summer, you will have noticed that Kathy Booth has been working hard to get the city of Edgewater to clean up a Scrub Jay habitat behind the YMCA. The one Jay that was there for the better part of last year is gone, probably because the habitat is being allowed to grow over. The Fish and Wildlife folks have developed a plan for the restoration of the habitat but the city is not following through on its obligations. We need your help to pressure the city into doing what is right for Florida's state bird.

Dick and Gail Domroski are developing a set of field trips for the coming year and Ken Gunn is working on a schedule of informative and entertaining programs.

In addition, we are still working issues of environmental quality, including resisting the homongous developments to the West of I-95 in both Edgewater and New Smyrna Beach. These developments will negatively affect the quality of life for citizens of both cities. After all, if you wanted to live in Daytona Beach, why would you not have moved there in the first place instead of residing in a small city and waiting for it to grow into a Daytona Beach?

If you have any suggestions for programs or field trips, by all means let us know. If there are other issues you think we show know about, let us know about them as well. Just remember, the executive committee is comprised of a small number of people. We need your help if the club is to make it another year.

—Don Picard

Gil Miller and I have been working on a club website. It is still a work in progress but you can view it at <http://thewanderers.stewart.net/sevas/sevas.htm>

Meetings

Meetings are held the first Wed. of each month

Oct. thru March at 7 P.M.

Next meeting is October 3, 2007

Speaker: Eric West

Extensive information about Eric West can be found on our website in last month's eSkimmer (September 2007 - page 3)

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

A town is saved, not more by the righteous men
in it than the woods and swamps that surround it.

—Henry David Thoreau

Officers & Chairs



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

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

Conservation Notes

Scrub jay Update and more . . .



The "Bring Back the Jays!" project is continuing slowly as we wait for the City of Edgewater to revise the burn cells and have a burn of at least one cell by November. The US Fish and Wildlife has been notified that SEVAS wants to be advised of management plans, as an interested party. The mitigated scrub jay habitat, located behind the Edgewater YMCA, is being monitored regularly by SEVAS. Volunteers are needed and appreciated. Call Kathy @ 409-3091.

Concerns about dogs interfering with birds in Smyrna Dunes Park are being addressed.

The eagles that have their nest in the big field along Hwy 442 in Edgewater, AKA Indian River Blvd, have returned. They are currently renovating their nest. No fireworks have been set off this month. We hope they will raise young this year. Two years ago they fledged twins. In 2007 they were witnessed breeding but no young were seen, probably due to fireworks set off in the neighborhood in September and November. There is no way to ascertain who the persons doing this are and even if we did know, the City and the USFW has made it clear they do not care to be notified. Survey flags were put up next to the south fence of the field, indicating probable development. So if you want to see the eagles while they still exist in Edgewater, please do, but remember, even Audubon members are not permitted to approach the nest and definitely not during nesting season from now through May.

Developments west of I-95:

"REFLECTIONS" is quiet. "RESTORATIONS" is still going through w/DRI approval but the developer has not answered questions raised in March 2007. It is possible the developer might try to sub-divide the land to avoid DRI approval.

Because of such developments, a movement called the Florida Hometown Democracy was begun to have voters approve any revisions to the City's Comprehensive Plan.

<http://www.floridahometowndemocracy.com/>

Upcoming meetings for members interested in conservation of wildlife environment:

The Audubon Regional Conservation Committee meeting will be Saturday, October 6, at the Dixie Crossroads Restaurant in Titusville, thanks to gracious host Laurilee Thompson of Space Coast Audubon. Meeting will start at 10am and finish about 2pm. Having never attended before, I'm hoping there will be discussions of regional issues and strategies and networking.

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—Kathy Booth

Backyard Observer

Hangin' Around Home

Donnadine and I travel some which makes us appreciate what a nice place "home" is.

She gardens and I don't — not exactly anyway. I planted some butterfly-attracting plants and hung a bird feeder from the crepe myrtle to make the view from my studio window active. I only use black oil sunflower seeds which make the neighborhood squirrels very happy. I stuck a bird bath out there too and I'm getting a lot of customers to both stations.

Cardinals, doves and blue jays are back and forth all day long. A Carolina wren stopped by yesterday and hummingbirds frequent the firebush under the feeder.

My garden looks a wreck but it's amazing how little that bothers the residents and visitors. That jumbled mass of shrubs & weeds is abuzz with critters. Besides *my* garden is tucked away out of sight of most visitors. Luckily, Donnadine's gardening skills are the main attraction. The Butterfly Garden, as we call it, is usually only seen by the guys who come to fix the mechanical things on that, *off the path*, side of the house.

This time of year, I'm seeing lots of Zebra longwings—Florida's state butterfly that are liking the passiflora covering the arbor. I planted the spectacularly vining plant two years ago to shield my window from the blazing afternoon sun knowing that another benefit would be the butterflies. Gulf fritillaries use it as a host plant as well.

I do, contrary to the belief of many, like to wander about the yard on occasion. Truth be told I wasn't wandering but heading to the house for dinner one evening last week when I spotted a mass of something up in the slash pine in the backyard. I look up there every time I'm out hoping to spot the Bald eagles or Osprey that use the tree to fish from (we're on the bay). This lucky night, however, our visitor turned out to be a Great Horned owl. He waited while I got my gear set up and posed for me. I thought at first he had an injured wing but after posing for what he determined was enough time, he flew off. . . silently.



Great Horned Owl Gil Miller

—Gil Miller

For those of you following my Galapagos slide show(s), Pt. 3 is up.

Adventure in Ecuador- Pt.s 1, 2 & 3 can be seen by following the link below.
Part 4 coming soon

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

- 1) Turn on your sound.
- 2) Click on the show icon and as it starts to load right click and choose "Full Screen" from the drop-down menu. That's it.

Let's Bring the Jays Back to Edgewater!

Wandering Members

Canada and points south



As I write this we are slowly wending our way home from Western Canada.

On our first day out from our cabin, a Sunday, we passed through the string of salt lakes in southern Saskatchewan, which are nesting grounds for Piping Plover and American Avocet. We decided to make a run down a road that crosses the westernmost lake, in hopes there were still some Piping Plover there.

Less than 100 feet from the highway, we encountered an immature Peregrine Falcon standing right on the edge of the road. I inched the car forward until we were only a few feet from him. He moved only slightly and, although he seemed completely alert and had no obvious injury, made no effort to fly. We watched him for several minutes and took a few pictures, then went on a few yards and turned around. Again, he let us get right up to him without moving off.

As soon as we got clear of him, I phoned 911 who put me through to Environment Canada. The lady who answered the call took the information and promised to have someone look into it. To my surprise, within minutes I got a call back from a Fish and Game officer in Moose Jaw, some 40 miles away. After confirming the facts, he said, "Well, I had better get dressed and go out to look at it."



Peregrine Ken Gunn

We continued on our way, which meant passing through Moose Jaw. About the time we were 10 minutes past Moose Jaw my phone rang again. "I can't find him!" Dave, the officer, said that he could see where we had turned around so he was sure that he had the right location but had looked all up and down the road, in the ditch and around the rocks at the fence line with no success.

Dave explained that it was not uncommon for hawks, though usually Swainson's, to gorge themselves on grasshoppers to the point where they could not fly. They would end up standing on the edge of the road on the low ridge left by the grader, exactly as this guy had been. Often enough grasshoppers would come within range that they would continue to feast, replenishing weight as fast as they eliminated it through their digestive system, sometimes not breaking the cycle for several days. He had answered calls farther south on this same road with as many as 30 to 40 hawks down.

We concluded that was probably what had happened to the young Peregrine we saw and that in the time between our visit and Dave's he had gotten airborne.

Dave said that he would continue to search a while longer and would let us know if he found anything. As we never heard from him we assume our young bird is continuing his journey south.

—Ken Gunn

Gainesville

Environmentalists mistakenly refer to complex natural systems as "Mother Nature". I've often repeated that error.

Natural systems exhibit no nurturing or motherly qualities on this Planet or in this solar system. Nature is completely indifferent to the survival or extinction of any species on earth. For example, 65 million years ago the impact of a giant asteroid wiped out the dinosaurs, clearing the earth for the advent of mammals and the evolution of two-legged hominids beginning around 6 million years ago.

Early in our planet's life, some two billion years ago, living organisms began altering the atmosphere. Cyanobacteria or blue-green algae began releasing oxygen via photosynthesis into an atmosphere that contained no oxygen. Over the course of several hundred million years, atmospheric oxygen built up to 21 percent and modern land dwelling species have evolved and adapted to breathing that level.

Now a new species, Homo sapiens, the self-styled "wise ones" is beginning to make an equally drastic change in earth's atmosphere, but in an incredibly brief fraction of time on the geologic timescale. We are altering trace amounts of gases in the atmosphere that control global climate. Major atmospheric components, nitrogen and oxygen have essentially no effect on climate.

For the last 10 or 12 thousand years, humans enjoyed a relatively stable temperate climate that allowed people to develop agriculture and then industry. But industrial development, rampant consumption and a Burgeoning population have rapidly boosted greenhouse gas emissions, such as carbon dioxide. In only two centuries, atmospheric carbon dioxide has been pushed up from 280 parts per million to 380 ppm, and it's rising faster.

Average global temperatures have risen in link with atmospheric greenhouse gases, while destructive extreme weather events have struck more frequently. Arctic sea ice melted to a record low area this month.

Scientists have recently concluded that warming seas and melting ice will force sea level to rise at least three feet as early as 2050 or no later than 2150 – no matter what we do. Greenhouse gases already in the atmosphere will cause that much sea level rise. If we fail to cut greenhouse emissions severely and promptly, melting of the gigantic polar ice caps could become irreversible, and cause an inevitable sea level rise of 160 feet or more in the distant future. Our descendants would have to bid farewell to Florida.

We have the know-how and technology to make drastic improvements in energy efficiency and make the 80 percent cut in greenhouse gas emissions needed by 2050 to stabilize climate and prevent a catastrophe. All it takes is willpower, leadership and money.

Our nation is the worst greenhouse gas emitter, but so far has done almost nothing to make the critical cuts needed, while offering the lame excuse that it would cost too much. Meanwhile we continue to lavish about \$5 billion per week on our tragic and futile occupation of Iraq. A portion of that money

would enable us to lead the world in reducing the menace of

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Gainesville from page 3

global heating.

We have the money. Do we have the leadership and will-power?

—Lee Bidgood

Opinions expressed here are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of SEVAS or NAS. —L.B.

Lee is Conservation Chair, emeritus. He and his wife Catherine, charter members of SEVAS, are now living in Gainesville, FL.

Indiana

While down on the farm in Indiana this summer, there were lots of critters to see.

I am a novice birder. I had not yet tried observing birds when I went home to help my mother harvest the garden the past several summers, but this summer I remembered to take my binoculars and a couple of bird books. In between picking and canning/freezing corn, green beans and tomatoes, I went out in the heat and looked for birds.

The area around the barns was populated by what else—*barn* swallows. It only took me several days to identify them. Thankfully, the house sparrows were pretty occupied with mating so I was able to identify them after only twenty minutes!

In the back forty were Eastern blue birds. Apparently a flock of Canada geese have stayed in the area for a year now.

One thing that has surprised me about birding is how it leads to an interest in other animals. In the evenings on the farm you can see bats.

This summer was different from previous because there were a lot of butterflies in the fields of alfalfa. I identified Eastern tiger swallowtails, including the black variety, and monarchs and both great southern white and southern dogface sulphur butterflies.

I love going to the farm in Indiana because the air is so fresh and the rural quiet is filled with bird song. A place I would recommend folks visit in southern Indiana is the Hoosier National Forest that borders the Ohio and Blue Rivers. There's a very nice natural history museum with a butterfly garden and a replica of an early settler village. The only working hay press in the world is located there and a presentation of how it operates is given periodically.

While at the Hoosier National Forest, I identified the five lined skink with a neon blue tail, white striped long tailed skipper, and the widow skimmer dragonfly that has a white wax on its wings. The white wing pattern is very eye catching.

I can hardly wait til we go back to see Fall foliage in a few weeks.

—Kathy Booth

From the Field**Fall Migration**

Thanks to Arja Applegren, Dot Backes, Kathy Booth, Charles & Maritta Buchy, & Roger Cutler for helping with the Fall Migration Count.

We counted 80 species and 1239 individual birds and saw more Warblers this year than in past fall counts.

Along with the usual sightings, we also saw Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, Baltimore Oriole, Caroline Chickadee and Brown-headed Nuthatch.

October Field Trip

Our first trip of this season will be **Saturday Oct. 6 to Lake Ashby County Park** off Hwy 415.

Wide trails and an elevated boardwalk through the hammock and along the edge of the lake (aprox 1 1/2 mi) allows for easy walking and leisure birding. Bring a lunch if you want to stay & visit after birding. Full facilities available.

—Gail Domroski

Links**Birds as Barometers/Indicators**

<http://www.birdlife.org/action/science/sowb/6.html>

Planet Ark

<http://www.planetark.com/>

Your Florida Backyard

<http://www.nsis.org/index.html>

Florida Native Plants

<http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/guide/invplant.html>

Central Florida Bird Watchers

<http://www.cfbw.com/index.html>

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>

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