



Volume 45, No. 11

August 2005

CALENDAR

August 2nd—General Meeting

Member photos and Ice Cream Social

August 13th and 20th—Duda Farms field trip

For details see page 3

September 6th—General Meeting

Program to be announced

September 17th—Migration Count

Contact Cynthia Plockelman

October 29th–November 2nd—Panama Trip

Call Carol Shields for reservations

PROGRAM for TUESDAY, August 2nd Members' Photos / Ice Cream Social

It is **MEMBERS' PHOTO NIGHT** again and your time to shine! Bring your best nature photos and tell us your stories. Please choose only nature or travel photos (no pix of Aunt Tillie, please!). Photographs are limited to 12 prints or slides per member. We will have a carousel projector, but no digital projector. Please show your digital photos with your laptop. The event will be followed by an **ICE CREAM SOCIAL**, so please join us on August 2 at 7:30 PM at the Howard Park Community Center.

Last Chance for Panama!!

A Trip to Panama October 29-November 2, 2005

Our adventure to beautiful, lush Panama is scheduled for October 29–November 2, 2005 and we still have a couple of openings. The trip includes airfare and transportation to/from Miami Airport. You arrive in Panama that afternoon for 5 days and 4 nights in the rainforests of Central America. All meals and tips are included so that you can relax and enjoy birding with experienced guides. Over 280 listed bird species are found in the rainforests of Panama.

—Experience the rainforests of Central America as we trek with experienced local guides.

—Visit Summit Botanical Gardens where the world's largest eagle species, the Harpy Eagle, is making a strong presence.

—Enjoy a side trip to Panama City for lunch, shop at a local market, and in the afternoon stop for a view of the famous Panama Canal.

Accommodations are at the Canopy Tower Ecolodge. Located in the Soberania National Park, Canopy Tower is a converted radar tower that reaches over the rainforest for a bird's eye view from the 360-degree observation deck. Double-occupancy sleeping quarters are at treetop level, no more than 40 feet from the birds perched right outside your window. The tower was highlighted in *Audubon* magazine as one of Central America's premier birding locations.

If you're interested in joining this adventure, Audubon's special rate is only \$1800. Participation is limited to only 10 people in order to provide a more personal and enjoyable experience for everyone. Because we are close to the deadline, the full amount of the trip is required to hold your reservation. Detailed trip information is available. For further information call Carol Shields, First VP, at 561-964-1522 or e-mail at clsaudubon@yahoo.com.

President's Comment

Claudine Laabs

In the good ol' summertime, we can look forward to searching for Swallow-tailed Kites near Fisheating Creek and carpooling to Duda Farms for shore birds and wading birds. Sea turtle nesting is happening on all our beaches and young mammals are learning how to survive. Yet none of these things will survive without our help and protection. Please get involved! Create backyard habitat, join clean-up crews and contact your elected officials!

And please help set up and take down chairs at our meetings! Thank you!

American Oystercatcher Nesting in Lake Worth Lagoon

June 17, 2005 David Carson, an environmental analyst with Palm Beach County ERM, sent a picture of a nest on the mangrove area protection riprap to Ginny Powell of ERM. It was three spotted eggs of one of the pairs of American Oystercatcher, which has returned to the Lake Worth Lagoon. Under Ginny Powell, ERM staff and cooperating birders have been doing a baseline survey of birds using the Lagoon, and monitoring activities at the Snook Island Restoration Project, just east of the Lake Worth Golf Course. Keeping up with the Oystercatchers has been the focus since they were noted on the Christmas Bird Count in 2002. That was a great day for the Lake Worth Lagoon, which had been undergoing cleanup and restoration for several years. Hooray!!

--Cynthia Plockelman

Duda Farms Field Trips

August brings our annual visit to the flooded fields of Duda Farms in Belle Glade to look for the shorebirds and wading birds that concentrate on these fields. To reduce the number of visitors at any one time, Duda Farms is kindly allowing two trips again this year. The dates will be Saturday August 13, and Saturday August 20. The fewer the number of cars involved in these trips, the more enjoyable they are for everyone, so please plan to carpool and to limit your participation to one trip only!

We meet at the Kmart store at the northwest corner of the intersection of Southern Blvd. (State Road 80) and 441/State Road 7. Park next to the garden center. Carpooling is required and **we leave Kmart at 7:00 a.m.** Return to the coast will be around noon.

Come with a full tank of gas; bring binoculars and spotting scopes, fluids, snacks, sunscreen, and hats. There will be very little walking but expect intense heat and glare. We will see myriad migrating shorebirds and spectacular gatherings of our local wading birds. Please note that we are responsible for everyone arriving and departing as a group. The farms are private and not open to the public and we have special permission from the Duda Farms management to bird on their property for these two annual field trips. For questions, please call me at 561-585-7714. Please **DO NOT** Call Duda!

--Gloria Hunter



Greater Yellowlegs by Steven D'Amato

Editor's Note

The *Kite* has a new editor this month, and plans for a new look are in the works—more on this in upcoming issues. In the meantime, I hope that you enjoy the articles in this issue—and that you'll continue to contribute ideas and articles in the future.

We had a busy spring, as Cynthia Plockelman reports in her article about the Spring Migration Count, and the Oystercatchers noted on the NAMC are nesting on the Lake Worth Lagoon.

The summer months are filled with long, hot days, and many of our members head out of town. If you're still in town, come to Duda Farms with Gloria Hunter (see article at left). If you're up North, check out Hank McCall's article describing a day on a whalewatching boat out of Cape Cod—easy summer pelagic birding and whalewatching on the same trip!

Spring Migration Count

May 14, 2005, dawned fairly cool for the 2005 Palm Beach County portion of the North American Migration Count. Birders lucked out with a decent day, considering the prevailing wet weather pattern. There was a breeze, reaching 10 mph at mid-day and high of 86 degrees F. We had 39 observers in 20 parties trying to cover the largest county east of the Mississippi. It's very difficult to find adequate numbers of experienced birders for this huge task. Our biggest gaps this year were Corbett and some rookeries missed.

Considering the vagaries of the weather patterns this winter and spring migration, we did quite well, tallying 132 species and 10,794 individuals. This, compared to spring 2004's 131 species and 8861 individuals, indicates populations have been fairly steady, with some ups and downs noted. True migration was already over for South Florida, due to the date set as a median for the whole USA.

Numbers down: Pied-billed Grebe, Purple Gallinule, Common Moorhen and Black-bellied Plover.

We missed: American Bittern, Northern Bobwhite, King Rail, Ani sp., Great Horned Owl.

We added: Northern Gannet (Kolstad party), Black-whiskered Vireo (Hope), Wild Turkey (Kawecki), Wilson's Plover (Plockelman), Red-headed Woodpecker (Lieberman/Kujanpaa), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (nesting) (Greenberg), Brown-headed Cowbirds (Beach).

Other notable sightings: Two parties had Swallow-tailed Kites. Snail Kites were up, with 20 tallied. The oystercatchers at Snook Island were recorded again. Out-of-season sightings included Great Black-backed Gull and Herring Gull.

Thank you to all the birders who participated in making this a successful spring count.

--Cynthia Plockelman

Whales and Shearwaters

The **Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary**, just a few miles north of Provincetown at the top of Cape Cod, is the summer playground for whales and pelagic birds. From June through September, eddies from the northbound Gulf Stream hit this submerged mountain and surge to the surface, dumping tons of plankton. There storm-petrels, shearwaters, gannets, gulls, and terns feast on the surface, while whales, basking sharks, tuna, and dolphin swim through this living soup skim-feeding by the ton.

The Dolphin Fleet (800-826-9300, or www.whalewatch.com) provides specially designed boats to take passengers (\$50/head) out to sea to participate in this excitement.

Seen most often are baleen whales, whose "teeth" are actually long hairy stringers (baleen). They swim with open mouth slurping up the tiny plankton, while the baleen filters out larger particles. We saw Finback (85 feet), Humpback (55 feet), and Minke (30 feet) whales come to the surface, spout, and dive with their broad backs rolling into the sea. Some individuals would charge up with air three or four times before going deep. The humpbacks would wave their flukes as they dove. Each individual humpback has a different pattern on its flukes. The skipper and guide report that they have seen one individual in the same area for 17 years.

All of this is quite exciting for the passengers and crew on the boat, as the whales spout and roll, first on the port side and then to starboard, first ahead and then astern, sometimes 50 to 100 yards away and sometimes at "spitting distance." And the birds! The gannets, terns, shearwaters, storm-petrels, and gulls are flipping and flapping throughout this ocean circus.

You have only one life, so don't miss this show of a lifetime!

--Hank McCall

Summer Birding in Palm Beach County

Spring migration might be over, but there are still plenty of birds to see in Palm Beach County. Least Bitterns, usually among the shyer and more elusive of creatures, can be seen flying any which way in late May and early June at **Wakodahatchee Wetlands** in Boynton Beach, gathering food for their hungry broods of 4-5 (some *ardeid* species produce up to 7) chicks, who demonstrate prodigious climbing ability at a startlingly early stage of development.

Their larger cousins, the Green Herons, have smaller clutches, from 2-4 birds, who hatch asynchronously. Their parents can be seen waiting patiently for meals on the low-lying limbs of Pond Apples, as well as among the stalks of bulrushes and other emergent vegetation. Their vaunted patience is in less demand during the summer months, as the waters are practically roiling with millions of tiny fish at this time of year.

A lone pair or two of American Coots can be seen rearing astonishingly brightly-colored chicks, as can the far more numerous Common Moorhens with their many followers. Red-winged Blackbirds and their young can be found even late into June. The young Anhingas here seem to be particularly fearless, allowing photographers and other interested parties amazingly close. Quite a change, one imagines, from the plume-hunting days before Guy Bradley!

Squadrons of Least Terns can be seen taking turns feeding their young on the roofs of the shelters—bring a spotting scope!

Across the road at **Green Cay**, flotillas of baby Mottled Ducks can be seen following their parents from pond to pond, clambering up the berms and falling in line. The Black-necked Stilts have also had amazing success there, brooding since April, along with the Purple Martins, who seem to have rejected their old digs at Wakodahatchee in favor of the newer, larger ponds here. (Although the public boardwalks traverse only 3 of the 8 ponds at Wakodahatchee, so it's larger than it seems.)

So grab your binoculars, slap on some sunscreen, spray on some insect repellent, and get out there!

Memberships in the National Audubon Society make great gifts!

In Florida, a special 3-way membership automatically makes you a member in the National Audubon Society, Audubon of Florida, and Audubon Society of the Everglades. Your membership will include subscriptions to AUDUBON magazine and the EVERGLADE KITE.

Name _____ Address _____ City _____ State ____ Zip _____ Phone _____ e-mail _____ How did you hear about us? _____ Regular membership \$20.00	Recipient of Gift Membership: Name _____ Address _____ City _____ Make check payable to: National Audubon Society and send to: Membership Chair Audubon Society of the Everglades PO Box 16914 West Palm Beach, FL 33416-6914
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The Audubon Society of the Everglade General Meetings are held the first Tuesday of every month, 7:30 p.m. at Howard Park Community Center in West Palm Beach. The phone number for the Community Center is (561) 835-7055. The public is welcome to attend.

Deadline for submissions for the **September 2005** issue is **August 10th**

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