



EVERGLADE KITE

NEWSLETTER OF THE
AUDUBON SOCIETY OF THE EVERGLADES
Serving Palm Beach County, Florida
Volume 45, Number 12
September 2005

CALENDAR

Tues. Sept. 6th, 7:30 p.m.

Monthly Program, Howard Park

Sat. September 17th

Fall Migration Count

Contact Cynthia Plockelman

Sat. Sept. 24th, 7:30 a.m.

Spanish River Park. Meet at SW
Corner of Spanish River Blvd.

and A1A in Boca Raton. Leader:
Ray Buchholz

Sat. Oct. 1st, 8:00 a.m.

Turkey Creek Sanctuary, Palm
Bay. Meet at 6:30 a.m. behind
Applebee's Restaurant, Jupiter,
N side of Indiantown Rd. 1 mi
E of I-95 (exit 87A) to carpool.
Leaders: Bill and Shirley Hill.

FEATHERED FRIENDS with David Hitzig

And maybe some furry and scaly ones, too! David Hitzig, Director of the Busch Wildlife Sanctuary, is one of South Florida's most popular speakers because of his great rapport with his animals and his audiences. He always brings a wonderful selection of live animals from the sanctuary—maybe an eagle, owl or Swallow-tailed Kite, maybe a bobcat, panther or opossum, maybe an alligator, crocodile or rattle snake! It is always a delightful surprise.

David began his career in wildlife rehabilitation in Miami and moved to the Jupiter area after Hurricane Andrew. Call (561) 575-3399 for more information. Please join us for FLORIDA'S FABULOUS WILDLIFE Tues. Sept. 6, 7:30 PM at the Howard Park Community Center.

The Ivory-billed Woodpecker is back—And it's looking for beetles

Marcella Munson and Ben Kolstad

After astonishing the conservation world by announcing news of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker's return from extinction this April, the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology found itself in the news again in August. Seeking to head off a scientific battle in print, the Lab released some newly analyzed audio recordings made last spring from the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge in Arkansas.

The latest evidence comes in response to advance news of an article submitted by three scientists (Richard Prum of Yale, Mark Robbins of the University of Kansas, and Jerome A. Jackson of Florida Gulf Coast University) to the Public Library of Science, in which the three voiced concerns about the strength of the evidence for *Campephilus principalis*'s return from the dead.

They were not convinced by the all-too-brief and none-too-clear video evidence released last spring. According to the *New York Times*, however, two of the three authors of the paper are now thoroughly convinced of the identification by the newly released sound recordings, and the third had not yet received them as we go to press. This episode is a vivid reminder of how science works: public presentation and public scrutiny of all evidence.

Even if Dr. Jackson doesn't withdraw his objection, though, the news of the birds' recovery has already prompted some counter-intuitive actions by conservationists. According to the AP wire (August 5, 2005), scientists with the Nature

Conservancy and the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission are beginning a tree-killing campaign in an effort to increase potential food sources in the area for the beleaguered birds.

That's right, conservationists are actively killing one native species in an attempt to encourage another. It seems that these woodpeckers have very particular tastes, preferring to dine on the larvae of beetles that bore into dying trees. Unfortunately for this struggling bird population, the refuge site is full of healthy, living trees. Scientists speculate that this abundant growth is forcing the birds into greater and greater foraging circuits, increasing the pressure on them and perhaps reducing their brood success. By killing as many as 30 to 35 trees in a concentrated geographic area (several four-acre plots) scientists hope that within two years the beetle larvae manifestation will hit its peak. Methods proposed for killing the trees include herbicide application and girdling. This is one story worth watching closely!

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The Everglade Kite

is the newsletter of the Audubon Society of the Everglades, published 12 times a year.

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Audubon Assembly Goes to the Beach! Saving our Birds, October 20-22, 2005

Mingle with old friends and make new ones as you join birders and environmentalists from across the state at the 2005 Audubon Assembly. Help shape Audubon of Florida's legislative policies and take an active part in saving our birds, wildlife and habitats. Register by September 28 and pay \$99 for all receptions, meals, programs, and workshops. After September 25, this all-inclusive package is \$125. The Audubon Assembly will be held at the Holiday Inn Cocoa Beach Resort. **Make your hotel accommodations** directly with the Holiday Inn. Call 800-206-2747 or log onto http://www.ichotelsgroup.com/h/d/hi/1/en/rates/coibe?&_GPC=AUA&. Assembly participants receive a reduced rate of \$89.99/night, up to 4 in a room. The daily resort fee has been waived and parking is free. **Special rate valid through September 28.** Oceanfront suites and lofts can be reserved, if available, at prevailing rates.

Field trips will be offered, courtesy of Space Coast Audubon and Orange Audubon Society. Look for detailed information in the next **Florida Naturalist** or www.audubonofflorida.org.

President's Comment

Claudine Laabs

Early morning on July 23, sixteen members gathered in the pre-dawn glow to head to the west side of Lake Okeechobee to see the gathering of the Swallow-tailed Kites. Thanks to the Army Corps Rangers, we were treated to a great wildlife spectacle that few people ever see. Approximately two thousand kites were roosting on oak trees and cypress trees. They stretched their wings and held them out as the sun warmed their feathers. As thermals formed, the kites flapped off their roosts and swirled over our heads. By 9:30 AM, they had all left the roosts to feed on dragonflies to fuel their long journey to South America and we went to breakfast in Clewiston.

NOTE: We need volunteers for the Sanctuary Island Clean-up which is scheduled for September 17. It is an enjoyable experience with beverages and snacks included. Please call Claudine (561)655-9779 or sign up at the next meeting.

Conservation

Rosa Durando

On July 26 a small group of active environmentalists representing organizations from Palm Beach to Dade were invited to meet with Colonel Carpenter of the Army Corps of Engineers and his new regulatory chief. We were assured the Corps does not control land use: that is in political hands, from the very local bodies (city/county) to the state. Add the Feds to that, with the proposed Veterans Cemetery.

The colonel also told us "we" [the Corps] are the best friends "you" [environmentalists] have.

If that's true, we are indeed in bad shape. Colonel Carpenter declared that the Corps was so far behind in checking out and issuing permits, they closed the local office in Palm Beach Gardens for about 10 days last month to catch up on the backlog.

This was probably used as the crutch to usher in a bill in Tallahassee to allow more local permitting **not to be reviewed by the Corps, but solely by the state.** The colonel has strongly recommended this to the politicians and is supported by the Pentagon. I am not aware that Audubon of Florida took any kind of stand on this one.

August 10 was another unhappy monthly SFWMD board meeting, it seems the only projects that get permitted rapidly, ahead of schedule, are brought by influential developers—before members of the public can learn sufficiently what was at stake. The July meeting hustled through the **Palm Beach**

County Veterans Cemetery out of town (an infrequent occurrence) and a month ahead of schedule. To shed some light on this project:

- It is west of SR7, close to the Strazzulla Marsh and the Refuge.
- It is outside the Urban Service Area.
- It is in the Water Preserve Area Basin.
- It is adjacent to a CERP designated Environment Protected Area.
- No permits ever issued to develop.
- One unit in 10 acres in Palm Beach County Comprehensive Plan.
- On the county's list to purchase as an "A" site for 10 years.

This is not about accommodating vets, this is about using land in areas that otherwise would not have been built on, thus degrading and opening up new areas for building. The county had found three other more appropriate sites.

I fail to share AOF's cheery outlook on what happened in the legislative session. "It could have been worse" was the theme song.

Lake Okeechobee remains a sink for bad water and good money. The Lake, the lagoon, and the Refuge will not be improved if there is a continued lowering of water control elevations (which there is) and more discharges into limited canal and reservoir space (which there are).

On August 16 there will be a public meeting on a **draft manatee protection plan** for the county. Call Paul Davis at 233-2509 for details and comments. [*Editor's Note:* the comments period ends September 9.]

New in Print

***The Singing Life of Birds: The Art and Science of Listening to Birdsong* by Donald Kroodsma. Houghton Mifflin, 2005**

One of the world's experts on birds and their songs, Kroodsma teaches us how to identify and appreciate the diverse character of birds. CD included. Recommended.

***Identify Yourself: The 50 Most Common Birding Identification Challenges* by Bill Thompson, III, and the editors of *Birdwatcher's Digest*. Houghton Mifflin, 2005**

For the beginning to midlevel birder, the editors of a popular birding magazine sort out some of the more challenging IDs, providing encouragement and useful tips on separating the female mergansers, medium-sized terns, and other difficult calls. Recommended.

***Shorebirds of North America: The Photographic Guide* by Dennis Paulson. Princeton, 2005**

A comprehensive and detailed species account of all shorebirds documented in North America (except accidentals, 5 occurrences or fewer), with photos of most plumages. The author presents plumages, identification, in flight, voice, behavior, habitat, and range information in text. Highly recommended.

***The Far-Flung Adventures of Homer the Hummer* by Cynthia Reynolds, illustrated by Catherine McClung. Mitten Press, 2005.**

This children's story follows the adventures of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird from the rain forests of Costa Rica to an artist's garden in Michigan. Not reviewed. Audubon members receive 30% discount; contact Carol Bokas at 877-722-2264, email cbokas@annarbormediagroup.com.

Members—Display Your Digital Nature Images

If you enjoy taking nature images, particularly of birds, and have considered displaying them on the Internet, you're in luck.

The August meeting of members' photographs brought out some absolutely beautiful images and the idea came to share these and other great images that folks have. The Audubon Society of the Everglades will devote a page on their website to member's images. If you're an Audubon member, e-mail your best shots you'd like to share, which will get formatted for the Web, then placed on this new page. Images will rotate as new ones are received.

So if you've got one, two or a few great images you'd like to share send the digital file(s) to Carol at clsaudubon@yahoo.com. Along with your name, include a brief summary of where, when and with what camera the image was taken.

Green Cay

Hank McCall

This superb wetlands is located on the east side of Hagen Ranch Road, three miles south of Boynton Beach Blvd. The 175-acre site offers adequate parking, a large headquarters building with an educational nature center, and 125+ acres of carefully planned wetlands for a variety of Florida plant and animal life.

There are two boardwalks: a half-mile loop to the south, and a one-mile loop to the north. The land was formerly a green pepper farm owned by Ted and Trudy Winsberg, who sold it to the Palm Beach County Water Utilities department at a fraction of its estimated value, on condition that it be used for water reclamation and education.

The department uses the wetlands to filter treated water from the Southern Region Water Reclamation Facility, to conserve it for reuse, and to recharge the aquifer. They accomplish these goals naturally through the botanical specimens planted: fireflag, arrowhead, pickerel weed, spatterdock, dahoon holly, cypress, duckweed, and various other local plants that work to remove excess nitrogen and phosphorus from the water supply.

It is a paradise for birds. Even in the summer heat we have seen Black-necked Stilts with chicks, Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, Limpkins, Egrets, Herons, Moorhens, White Ibis, and Osprey, to name a few. [Ed.: *Roseate Spoonbills have also been spotted recently!*] The prize last Sunday (July 10th) was a Mottled Duck hen with a fleet of 12 ducklings in formation parading close to the boardwalk.

Green Cay is a special treat that will get "gooder and gooder" as we drift into the autumn months. Don't miss it!

Petition to Save the Arctic Wildlife

Monica Diane Bacchus, 2nd grade

(submitted by Ralph Bacchus)

To: George W. Bush, President,

I want to save the arctic wildlife because the USA has been my home since my birth and the arctic is part of the USA. My name is Monica Diane Bacchus. I go to Morikami Park Elementary School. I am in 2nd grade and I am 8 years old.

The Exxon Valdez hit a reef and all of the oil spilled and spread in the water and animals got covered in oil and most of the animals died. So, I want to help the animals like sea otters, polar bears, eagles, wolves, and caribou. I want you to stop the drilling. My friends will sign and help the animals too.

(signed)

Monica Diane Bacchus

News and Notes from Palm Beach County

During the summer months, birders in South Florida can get somewhat complacent. However, resident bird species are still in evidence through July, which brings a reminder that migration is just around the corner.

On 3 July, water levels in the Loxahatchee NWR were high enough to force **King Rails** onto the road in broad daylight. M. Munson and B. Kolstad observed an adult and two chicks cross the road leading to the canal.

There were reports throughout July and early August of **Swallow-tailed Kites** in eastern Palm Beach County, over Belvedere Road, I-95, and Wellington. One of the most graceful of fliers, these birds start to gather in great numbers in central and southern Florida in July. On July 22, ASE President Claudine Laabs took a group to Fisheating Creek to witness the gathering of enormous flocks of these birds gearing up for their cross-Gulf journey to Central America. Overflows from these gatherings routinely make it as far east as West Palm Beach—local birder C. Fredrickson, among others, reported seeing them on at least two separate occasions in West Palm in July.

August brought the scouting trip to Duda Farms on the first weekend in August, which turned up a **Pectoral Sandpiper**, several **Wilson's Phalaropes**, and hundreds of **Stilt Sandpipers** and **Roseate Spoonbills**. No migratory warblers had arrived yet, but a few resident species were present (**Yellow Warbler**, **Common Yellowthroat**, and **Prairie Warbler**).

From the Audubon Newswire

Audubon Magazine Needs Your Help: Creative Mulching

New York, NY, July 22, 2005

Historic Ivory-billed Woodpecker habitat in Louisiana and Florida is being logged for - of all things - cypress mulch. Fortunately, there are better mulch alternatives for gardeners looking to cut their water use, control weeds, and insulate against temperature extremes. Leaves, pine straw, compost, even cocoa hulls make perfectly good mulch, and they're also environment friendly. If you use mulch that's both creative and easy on the environment, Audubon magazine would like to hear from you. Please send an e-mail titled "mulch" to editor@audubon.org

Audubon Partners with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on Birding Trail

Grand Forks, ND, July 22, 2005 -

Audubon North Dakota recently partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to establish the Lake Region Birding Trail. With the cooperation of several local communities, the Environmental Protection Agency and the North Dakota Department of Tourism, organizers established a birding trail. Additionally with these partners, Devils Lake Wetland Management District staff developed a guide for the birding trail.

"We had a great time partnering with Roger Hollevoet and the USFWS on this project," said Genevieve Thompson, executive director of Audubon Dakota. "An added benefit is that the birding trail is located in an area that is also home to a notoriously bad water diversion project, so it gave us the opportunity to promote the very positive aspects of the region."

Audubon Supports Cape Point Closure to Protect Threatened Piping Plover

Buxton, NC, July 22 - Audubon North Carolina, the State Office of the National Audubon Society, has announced its strong support for the National Park Service's recent decision to temporarily close the Cape Point area of Cape Hatteras National Seashore to protect

the federally threatened Piping Plover chicks.

The Cape Point area closure and the associated monitoring by Park Service staff are great improvements in management, said Chris Canfield, Executive Director of Audubon North Carolina. We hope the Park Service will commit to a long-term management plan for beach-nesting birds based on current science.

On July 5th, four eggs in one of only two Piping Plover nests in Cape Hatteras National Seashore hatched.

Within days, the breeding pair and chicks moved from the South Beach area of Cape Hatteras - a distance of 0.6 mile - to a closed area in the interior of Cape Point that protected other nesting birds, presumably to seek a productive foraging and resting area capable of sustaining the plover adults and their chicks

Until the chicks are able to fly - which occurs when they are between 25 to 35 days old - they are extremely vulnerable to being run over by off-road vehicles. Disturbances by pedestrians and dogs also make it more difficult for these rare chicks to survive.

To read the full release and more information on Piping Plover visit http://ncaudubon.org/PIPL_CHNS_PR.htm

T. Roosevelt Sanctuary and Schlitz Audubon Nature Center Participate in Potter-mania

New York, NY, July 22, 2005 - This past Saturday, the much anticipated sixth installment of J.K. Rowling's popular Harry Potter series - *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* - was released, after a strict 12:01 AM embargo was lifted.

The festive releases in New York City and Milwaukee were made more exciting when live owls from the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and Audubon Center and the Schlitz Audubon Nature Center were brought in by Audubon staffers for the amusement of all "muggles" in attendance.

Review of the Tele Vue-60 telescope

Ben Kolstad

Street price: \$795 OTA only; figure another \$400 for mirror diagonal and high-quality eyepiece. Sometimes available used.

The Tele Vue-60 is a 360mm f6.0 apochromatic doublet refractor designed to provide precise color-free views of terrestrial and astronomical objects in a lightweight, easily transportable package. Like most birding scopes put out by astronomical manufacturers, the optics are superb. Such exquisite image quality, however, has traditionally required substantial tradeoffs that the birding community has had difficulty accepting. Chief among them is the ability to take the scope into the field; I know very few birders who are willing to take the TV-85, Cornell Lab's highest-rated telescope for image quality, anywhere other than the boardwalk at the nearest nature center, despite the incredible image quality.



The TV-60 is designed to address these shortcomings. And it nearly succeeds. The package is lightweight (3 pounds), and small enough to fit in a case the size of a 3-ring binder. However, there are still some tradeoffs that the design team at TeleVue needs to convince us are worthwhile:

(1) the scope is not waterproof (TeleVue recommends that those interested in pelagic birding from the beach or inlets purchase a 77mm UV haze filter to protect the objective lens from salt spray and windblown sand)

(2) the recommended 60 degree mirror diagonal reverses the image left-to-right, which is awkward for many birders accustomed to straight-through viewing

(3) the drawtube and helical (screw-type) focuser are irritating until the motion becomes habitual

(4) the eyepieces are sold separately

Most major high-end spotting scopes are also sold sans eyepiece (Pentax, Swarovski, Leica), so item 4 is not as big a drawback as it might seem. What is harder to ignore, however, are the ergonomic tradeoffs: the lack of a focus knob (a drawtube and helical focuser on a scope of this quality strikes me as a needless inconvenience), and the lack of a high-quality erecting prism are two strikes against this scope.

Nevertheless, one look through the eyepiece is enough to convince many birders (this one included) that this is a serious contender for dedicated birders despite the aforementioned inconveniences—they are nothing short of superb. The intricate network of barbules and cilia that “zip” many contour feathers together is difficult for any birder to see outside of museum specimens, but it is evident even in relatively distant birds through this high-magnification scope.

Digiscoping (using a digital camera or videorecorder through the eyepiece of a telescope) is simple with this scope—adapters are available for many of the popular camera lens threads (28, 37, and 49mm). For wading birds on the Anhinga trail, or at Green Cay and Wakodahatchee, the potential is awesome.

Bottom line: for those able to adapt to the reversed field of view, the awkward focusing, and the need to cover the scope in the field, this telescope's images make it a winner.

March of the Penguins

By Hank McCall

This is a superb film starring thousands of Emperor Penguins living their life cycle on Antarctica. Intimate shots show going ashore, courtship, incubation, underwater feeding, and schooling of the chicks. No humans are shown. The color photography is unbelievably beautiful and the narration is clear.

This documentary, coproduced by National Geographic, is the movie of a lifetime. Don't miss it!

Editor's Note: Please let me know whether you enjoyed this first issue of the expanded *Everglade Kite*. If you have any comments or suggestions, email me: newsletter@auduboneverglades.org. Thanks!

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The Audubon Society of the Everglades General Meetings are held the first Tuesday of every month at 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 **October 2005** issue is **September 10th**

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