



EVERGLADE KITE

NEWSLETTER OF THE
AUDUBON SOCIETY OF THE EVERGLADES
Serving Palm Beach County, Florida
Volume 46, Number 6
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CALENDAR

Tues. Mar. 7, 7:30 p.m.

Monthly Program, Howard Park

Sat. Mar. 11, 8:00 a.m.

Wakodahatchee Wetlands, Boynton Beach. Meet at boardwalk. East side of Jog Road, 1.5 miles north of Atlantic Boulevard. Leader: Ben Kolstad

Tues. Mar. 14, 8:00 a.m.

Royal Palm Beach Pines, Royal Palm Beach. West on Okeechobee Blvd., turn north (R) to Royal Palm Beach Blvd. Turn left at traffic light, elementary school on NW corner. Turn west (L) at school. Proceed to Saratoga Blvd. Continue north on Saratoga (there will be a sign to RPBP). Turn west (L) on Nature's Way. Meet at parking lot. Leader: Barbara Liberman

Sat. Mar. 18, 9:00 a.m.

John Prince Park, Lake Worth. Leader: Bruce Offord

Sun. Mar. 19

Sunset Cruise, Lake Worth Lagoon. Meet at 5:45 PM at the Banyan Street dock in West Palm Beach. Bring a picnic dinner! \$25 per person. For reservations, call Claudine at 655-9779.

Tues. Apr. 4, 6:00 p.m.

Annual meeting, Green Cay Nature Center, 12800 Hagen Ranch Road in Boynton Beach

Warblers of Florida and the Bahamas

Peter Merritt, Ph.D.

Get ready for those tiny little birds to move through Florida this spring. Although some warblers stay in Florida, most migrate, some all the way to and from South America. It is truly amazing that these 4 inch insect-eaters can fly so far. It is a delightful challenge to be able to identify them as they flit through the branches. Which will be your favorite warbler this year?

Dr. Merritt's programs are very popular and this one will help us learn field marks and behavior. In 1978, he moved to Florida where he received a Ph.D. from the University of Miami. Since 1985 he has held the position of Regional Ecologist at the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council. He has served as editor of the *Florida Field Naturalist*, a scientific journal of ornithology published by the Florida Ornithological Society. He has also served as president of FOS.

Please join us at 7:30 PM on March 7 at the Howard Park Community Center!

President's Comments

Claudine Laabs

Everglades Day was a day to remember. It was full of excellent programs and bright minds. Special thanks to our volunteers who made it a success.

It is hard to believe that my two year term as president it almost over—it has been both exhilarating and exhausting! As you know, this is an all-volunteer organization—all help is appreciated! Please join our committees and do what you can to help with environmental education and conservation. Election of officers is in April.

Refuge Designated Gateway Site for Great Florida Birding Trail

At noon on February 11 the southern portion of the Great Florida Birding Trail was finally completed with the dedication of the second gateway site, our own Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. Visitors and dignitaries from far and wide attended the event, which coincided with ASE's annual Everglades Day.

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The Everglade Kite

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

President

Claudine Laabs 655-9779

1st Vice President

Carol Shields 964-1522

2nd Vice President

Cynthia Plockelman 585-1278

Secretary

Rick Byrnes 798-6566

Treasurer

Leah Schad 848-9984

Field Trips

Gloria Hunter 585-7714

Marcella Munson
fieldtrips@auduboneverglades.org

Bird ID

Gloria Hunter 585-7714

Conservation

Rosa (Cissie) Durando 965-2420

Education

Susan Snyder 627-7829
roysuesnyder@aol.com

Membership

Debbie Smith 712-1100

Sales

Stella Rossi 732-4786

Library

Gloria Hunter 585-7714

Hospitality

Sheila Reiss 627-0510

Grants

Esther Zaresky 689-6689

Kite Editor

Ben Kolstad
newsletter@auduboneverglades.org

Webmaster

Bob Srdoch
webmaster@auduboneverglades.org

ASE on the Internet

Audubon@auduboneverglades.org
<http://www.auduboneverglades.org>

Audubon Society of the Everglades, incorporated in 1966, serves communities from Jupiter and Tequesta south to Boca Raton; in other words all Palm Beach County. Our purpose is to promote the conservation of wildlife and the natural environment and to advance human understanding of our place in the total ecological system.

Conservation Report

Rosa Durando

It is difficult to escape the self-promotion of the powers that be, whether originating from at the county, state, or federal level. The “Acceler8” program to fund Everglades Salvation by state action—fast—bears some close scrutiny. It was followed rapidly by a desk-pounding governor in Washington with brother president to get the Feds to walk away from Restoration oversight. This really needs a strong “NO” to Congress people and legislators. [Ed.: *the SFWMD website, www.everglades.now, for a schedule of public hearings.*]

In my opinion neither of the two state-managed rapid programs (both in our county) will perform satisfactorily as touted. They are both still under public scrutiny and will have public hearings. It would be great to see some more of our chapter attend the public hearings and comment. I would be happy to brief you in detail (or not...).

One involves our Refuge, which is supposed to be rescued by December 31, 2006, according to the original CERP agreement. An unbelievable amount of nutrient loading is to be dumped in the West Palm Beach Canal (C-51) running east to Lake Worth Lagoon along Southern Boulevard. The plan is the dirty water will go west to the STA-1-E at the north point of the Refuge. But if that gets overloaded it COULD be pumped east!

The second bad plan would store hundreds of thousands of acre-feet of water in a reservoir with a 23-foot high dike north of the Holey Land in southwestern Palm Beach County. The panther that remains is gone if this happens there. And I do think the Florida Conservation Commission is already softening us up for this possibility in news releases.

Everglades Day at the Refuge was great. I especially commend Nat Reed’s panel that had ex-South Florida Water Management represented, an ex Army Corps colonel, an ex DER-DEP staffer, an FWS senior scientist (that gave our chapter programs on the Everglades), an IFAS biologist, and: a SFWMD (defensive) plant commenting in the rear!

Please call me to learn about the potential impacts of these projects in our backyard. The public comment period ends March 26; please let our legislators know that we don’t want to lose federal oversight of these projects!

Beginning Birding at Riverbend Park

Adult program for adults to learn bird identification including slideshow of Riverbend Park birds and guided walk. Tour includes oak and pine woods, lakes, Cypress swamp boardwalk, citrus orchards and open fields. Join us at Riverbend Park, Saturday, March 4th from 8 a.m. to noon. Bring binoculars, water and curiosity. Riverbend Park is on the south side of Indiantown Road, one mile west of the Florida Turnpike Interchange. Please call (561) 748-2028 to reserve a place or for further information.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Marcella Munson

Are you a birdwatcher bent on knowing the scientific names of the world's avifauna and where they perch on the avian evolutionary tree? If so, be forewarned: a big shakeup to current taxonomic practice could be in the works.

According to a recent article in *The Economist* ("Today we have naming of parts," February 11, 2006, pp 75-76), a group of taxonomists representing ICZN (The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature) is calling for the implementation of a new universal taxonomic database.

Known as ZooBank, this massive database would enable scientists to assign and keep track of the scientific names of all of the world's identified species with much more accuracy than is currently possible. It would thus replace the piecemeal method of scientific nomenclature which, over two and a half centuries, has resulted in the establishment of 4 times as many scientific names as there are known species (approximately 6 million scientific names for only 1.5 million identified species!).

Although the idea of a universal databank of scientific names is generally welcomed by the world scientific community, there are still difficult questions to be addressed about ZooBank's operation. One key issue: which individuals or groups would arbitrate in the case of a naming conflict? Another key issue: how many, and which other, information databases would ZooBank link to? A third issue: should species names be available for purchase by the highest bidder?

Many also wonder how traditional methods of taxonomic appraisal (i.e., anatomy) will blend with relatively new methods of research (i.e., those based on genetics and molecular biology). Of course, birders are already quite familiar with how surprising the results of genetic analysis can be: one recent major revision to avian taxonomic groupings was the placement of vultures with storks, thanks to the Sibley-Ahlquist taxonomy.

The progress of the ZooBank project, with its potential to change not just what we call each bird species but also where we place it on the evolutionary tree, is worth watching closely.

Merritt Island NWR Field Trip Report

Ann Yeend Weinrich

Saturday, January 27, 2006, 8:00 a.m. An enthusiastic group of 27 birders, some experienced and some new to the sport, gathered at the causeway leading to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, binoculars, scopes, bird books in evidence.

Their first stop was on the "Pump House Road", where the group walked a dirt road with shorebird-filled mud flats on either side. They checked out some wooden posts several hundred yards away where Ann said peregrine falcons occasionally rested. No falcons. Hundreds of shorebirds were there – dunlin, black-bellied plovers, semi-palmated plovers, willets, and marbled godwits – all working in the mud to capture food. The first ducks of the day – northern shovelers – were in abundance.

The next stops were on the Black Point Wildlife Drive, and one highlight was seeing the cooperatively feeding American avocets and hooded mergansers. Phil described the avocets as turbulently roiling the waters, stirring up food as they scurried along, with the mergansers out in front taking advantage of the food being driven forward by the avocets. Cathy spotted a "frozen" American bittern and until the wild hog startled it, almost everyone got to see it.

After a picnic lunch at the boat ramp, some folks went to the nature center and some went on the Scrub Ridge Trail where Jo found a field sparrow. The group checked out the seashore at Playalinda Beach and could see diving gannets far off shore. Along the road to the beach, Ben got to see his first canvasback. Gloria's car followed the Peacocks Pocket Road during the afternoon and found the previously reported snow goose. Simon and Cecilia re-checked Pump House Road and found a peregrine on one of Ann's posts!

Most of the birders gathered for a great seafood dinner at the Dixie Crossroads Restaurant, thanks to Jo's reservation efforts. They then met at the motel for a slide presentation by Phil, which included photos and stories about much of what had been seen that day. Ann read the list of birds seen by everyone and the total was over 80 species – so far.

Next morning the group went back to the Refuge to find the snow goose! After a beautiful drive on a road through an "Old Florida" area of grasslands and wetlands edged by huge forests of cabbage palms, they came out onto the Indian River. Each marsh pond had to be scanned and each flock of white birds had to be inspected, searching for the snow goose. Finally, as luck would have it, the goose was found feeding in one of the ponds, and everyone got good looks before it waddled back and disappeared into the reeds.

The Scrub Ridge Trail was explored again – this time by most of the group – and several species of land birds and soaring hawks were found. They then returned to the seashore road ponds and found more canvasbacks and finally a few American wigeons to complete the list of ducks. The group ended the trip with a grand total of 104 species. What a pleasant way to spend a weekend!

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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 **April 2006** issue is **March 10th**

Audubon Society of the Everglades
PO Box 16914
West Palm Beach, FL
33416-6914
(561) 588-6908

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