



EVERGLADE KITE

NEWSLETTER OF THE
AUDUBON SOCIETY OF THE EVERGLADES
Serving Palm Beach County, Florida
Volume 47, Number 1
October 2006

CALENDAR

Tuesday Oct 3

Monthly Meeting, Howard Park,
7:30 p.m.

Tuesday Oct 10, 8:00 a.m.

Spanish River Park, Boca Raton.
Meet at south side of Spanish
River Blvd. just west of A1A.
Leader: Dorothy Brindle

Sat. Oct 14, 7:30 a.m.

Spanish River Park, Boca Raton.
Meet as above. Leader: Ray
Buchholz.

Audubon Assembly 2006 Saving Birds and Special Spaces October 19-21, Cocoa Beach

Join Audubon of Florida at the Holiday Inn Cocoa Beach Oceanfront Resort for engaging programs that highlight Florida's coastal environments and issues that affect their well-being. Get inspired and sharpen skills for advocating for birds and their protection. Hear scientists share insights on global warming and its consequences for Florida's extensive coastal areas. Collaborate with other environmentalists and birders from across the region to shape policies and take an active part in saving our birds, wildlife, and habitats. Enjoy one of Florida's best beaches while you catch up with friends, colleagues, and fellow Audubon members. Field trips will take in some of Florida's birding hot spots, so don't forget your binoculars!

Program for Tuesday, October 3rd

Alan Trefry: *Exotic Plants*

Allen Trefry will be the speaker at the October 3rd meeting of the chapter. Trefry is the former Environmental Director for the Resources Protection Division of Palm Beach County's Department of Environmental Resources Management.

He was responsible for management of environmental activities that included wellfield protection, petroleum storage tank compliance, pollutant site cleanups, surface water quality management, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System, water and irrigation conservation, upland and wetland protection, sea turtle lighting compliance and incentive programs for prohibited vegetation removal to mention a few.

Trefry spent 5 years with the City of West Palm Beach as Assistant Director of Utilities and 8 years with the Palm Beach County Health Department. He has a Bachelor of Science in Biology and a Master's in Public Administration.

His talk will focus on vegetation...what's good and what's bad for the environment. Please join us at 7:30 p.m. on October 2nd in the Howard Park Community Center located in Howard Park on Parker Avenue just south of Okeechobee Boulevard.

President's Comments

Marcella Munson

Fall is upon us, and with it the semiannual migration of birds and people to and through our state. But even though Florida is truly a winter paradise for avian and human residents and visitors, only we people have a say in making sure it stays that way. Critical environmental areas have no voice to speak with; we have to protect them from short-sighted development. Poorly-regulated population growth remains one of the biggest conservation challenges in Florida (see the Conservation Newswire, next page, for the latest installment in the Mecca Farms saga). Long-time Floridians (seasonal and permanent residents alike!) know only too well the rapid pace of development in our state, and how much of Old Florida is being lost to unsustainable growth. Balancing land use with conservation is an uphill battle, but a timely new book by Bill Belleville (*Losing it All to Sprawl: How Progress Ate My Cracker Landscape*, University Press of Florida, 2006) may prove to be one of the most effective literary weapons in the conservation battle since Marjorie Stoneman Douglas's *River of Grass*. I encourage you all to give it a read!

The Everglade Kite

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

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Audubon Society of the Everglades, incorporated in 1966, serves communities in 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 Newswire

Babcock Ranch On July 31 the State of Florida took possession of nearly 74,000 acres of the Babcock Ranch. The land will continue to be operated as a working ranch with some public access. Audubon put considerable effort into the preservation of the ranch – lobbying for a special \$310 million appropriation, shaping the management plan and supporting the last minute push to overcome litigation and other objections to the preservation plan.

Big Cypress The fight to protect Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary from inappropriate wetlands impacts in the watershed continues. Audubon, along with other groups is challenging a wetlands permit and leaning on the South Florida Water Management District to take a better, more regional look at the impacts of development around Corkscrew.

Everglades The efforts to restore transparency to the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan process resulted in Audubon staff once again being allowed to participate in planning meetings for the South Florida and Lake Okeechobee CERP planning processes. Audubon continued to coordinate a series of robust discussions with government scientists and agencies on the decompartmentalization of the central section of the Everglades, called Decomp.

West Palm Beach The county commission has approved by a 4-2 vote the county planners' proposal to send a modified plan for developing Mecca Farms, increasing density from one residential unit per 1.25 acres to 2 units per acre. The state Department of Community Affairs has rejected last year's growth plan based on increased traffic density, so road capacity might be all that's standing between Mecca Farms and a 4,000-unit housing development. With this area, the adjacent Vavrus tract, and the Callery-Judge Grove development all pending, the Beeline Highway and Northlake Boulevard look to see quite a bit of heavy traffic in the next year or two.

Tyler Islands Is No More Condo Project Fails to Meet Corps Standard

This headline in the *Lake Worth Herald*, dated Sept. 14, 2006, made my day! Our Audubon chapter has opposed this proposed development on 13 acres of partially submerged land on the east shore of Lake Worth for a long time. The lease holder and construction consortium contend the development of 150+ condos south of the Lake Worth Bridge would keep the area in its natural state! It would be 4 buildings on top of 2 artificial islands built on pilings.

The Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) denied the permit 18 months ago, on the basis of damage to important seagrass beds and setting precedents of filling in the Lake Worth Lagoon. The original 99 year lease has 59 years to go. The would-be developers contend that the times have changed, and so has the philosophy of Lake Worth. But they will try one more time to get approval of their plans—there is the possibility of one more appeal, to the new leader of the Jacksonville District of the ACOE, Col. Paul L. Grosskruger.

Cynthia Plockelman

Bird of the Month: Spotted Sandpiper

Ben Kolstad

The Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*) is one of the most widespread breeding birds in the United States. This 7–8 long bird has pale yellow or pink legs and feet, orange bill with a black tip, and will rarely be seen in Florida with its namesake spots, being a winter resident of the state. A fairly common but usually solitary winter resident in Palm Beach County, it spends its time on the shores of the Intracoastal, bobbing its tail (one of its nicknames is “teeter-tail”) and searching for its main food source, aquatic invertebrates. This “shore” bird doesn’t get too close to the water, though—the spotty likes to keep its feet dry.

Although it does not look “spotted” in our area, it’s fairly easy for even a beginning birder to spot, either on the ground teetering or in the air karate chopping the breeze. It holds its wings very stiffly in flight, flapping with rapidly vibrating wingbeats alternating with droop-winged glides that make it look like it’s always just about to land, but afraid of hitting the water.

Another peculiarity about *A. macularia* is its breeding strategys—it is one of the relatively few polyandrous bird species. Females compete aggressively for partners, with their vigorous displays “occasionally” leading to physical combat (Ehrlich, *Birder’s Handbook*). The female lays multiple clutches (one each with as many as five different males!); the male does nearly all the work of raising the chicks. According to Ehrlich, the Spotted Sandpiper probably developed this unusual breeding strategy to take advantage of its relatively long breeding season; it is one of the few shorebirds that breeds in temperate areas, rather than in the short Arctic summer.



Steven d’Amato

Seen Around Town

Fall migration appears to have begun in earnest; along with hordes of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, various warbler species have been seen at our local birding areas. Late September and October is when the real action begins, though.

Spanish River: Yellow-throated Warbler, American Redstart, numerous Northern Parulas, Northern Waterthrush.

John Prince Park: Black-throated Blue (earlier than usual?), Prothonotary Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler.

Green Cay: Black-and-white Warbler, Waterthrush, Pine Warbler (also somewhat early)

MacArthur Beach State Park: Canada Warbler, various other species.

Further south, a Wilson’s Warbler was seen at Hugh Taylor Birch State Park in Fort Lauderdale, while an immature Northern Wheatear was entertaining visitors to Research Road in Everglades National Park around midmonth.

Help Birds Make it Safely to Their Wintering Grounds

Each year from August to November, 5 billion birds in North America - including songbirds, hummingbirds, raptors and others - make their way from their summer breeding grounds in northern areas to their winter homes in the south. Their migration is wrought with perils, such as storms, limited food supplies, and exhaustion. Compounding these natural threats are the ones created by humans, including the bright lights and tall structures of cities, prowling domestic pets and toxic lawns.

People can provide a safer journey for migrating birds, especially when the birds stop in their yards and communities for rest and food.

To view the steps the Audubon At Home program urges people to take to help ensure a successful fall migration for our feathered friends, please visit http://www.audubon.org/news/press_releases/Fall_Migration_Tips_09_13_06.html.

Memberships in the National Audubon Society make great gifts!

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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.

Reminder: Deadline for submissions for the **November 2006** issue is **October 10th**

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