



EVERGLADE KITE

NEWSLETTER OF THE
AUDUBON SOCIETY OF THE EVERGLADES
Serving Palm Beach County, Florida
Volume 47, Number 3
December 2006

CALENDAR

SAT. Dec. 9, 8:00 a.m.

Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, Boynton Beach. Meet at Marsh Trail. Lee Rd. Rd. west side of 441, south of Boynton Beach Blvd. Admission to Refuge is \$5 per car. Leaders: Marge Eaton and Gloria Hunter.

TUES. Dec. 12, 9:00 a.m.

Green Cay, Boynton Beach. Meet at the nature center on Hagen Ranch Road, 1mi S of Boynton Beach Blvd. Leader: Barbara Liberman.

SAT. Dec. 30, Christmas Count.

Chuck Weber, compiler. For information, call 561-585-7714.

SAT. Jan. 6, 8:00 a.m.

Wakodahatchee Wetlands, Delray Beach. Meet at boardwalk, E side of Jog Rd., 1.5 mi north of Atlantic. Leader: Ethel Kujanpaa.

TUES. Jan. 9, 9:00 a.m.

John Prince Park, Lake Worth. Use Congress Ave. entrance, follow signs to campground. Meet at campground office. Leader: Dorothy Brindle.

SAT. Jan. 13, all day

Babcock Ranch. For details, call Ben Kolstad, 561-367-7689.

SAT. Jan. 20, 7:30 a.m.

Riverbend Park, Jupiter. Indiantown Road, 1/4 mi W of I-95 on south side. Leaders: Ed Kawecky and Walt Hackenjoes.

SAT. Feb. 10, Everglades Day.

Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. Free entrance (park at Monte's).

Program for Tuesday, December 5th

Everglades and Lake Okeechobee: *Col. Paul Grosskruger*

Born and raised in eastern Iowa, Colonel Grosskruger has spent all of his adult years in the U.S. Army. He is a graduate of West Point, received his M.S. in civil engineering from the Iowa State University and is currently a registered professional engineer in Virginia. He served much of his time in Germany where he acceded to the level of Commander of the 94th Engineer Combat Battalion and in later years was stationed in Colorado, Kansas, Missouri and Georgia. He has accumulated numerous awards and decorations, including the Bronze Star. He has also been the recipient of medals from Nicaragua, Poland and Germany. Recently he was appointed the command of the Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District which oversees operations and activities in Florida. He will be our guest of honor at our December meeting and will explain the current status of Lake Okeechobee and Everglades Restoration.

ASE turned 40 this year!

Come to our pot luck supper on December 5 and help us celebrate. ASE will provide the meat, beverages and birthday cake! Last names with letters A-S should provide casseroles, vegetables, fruit or salads. Letters T-Z bring desserts. Food should be delivered by 6:30. Dinner will be served at 6:45, followed by the program at 7:30.

President's Comments

Marcella Munson

Want to help the environment but don't know where to start? Small actions can go a long way toward effecting larger environmental change. Habitat restoration can be as simple as removing exotics from your yard and planting native species that attract birds instead. Reduce watering needs by eliminating turfgrass in favor of beautiful native grasses. Reduce bird predation by keeping your cat indoors. And, with holiday weekends fast approaching, encourage your friends, children or grandchildren to enjoy nature by taking them to your favorite natural area.

One of my favorite local areas is Wakodahatchee Wetlands, in Boynton Beach. It's not large, as natural areas go, but it has been restored to native habitat, with spectacular results. Wakodahatchee's boardwalk loop creates an amazingly intimate space in which shy birds become almost attention-seeking. Just a few weeks ago we were lucky enough to catch sight of three less common visitors: a Purple Swamphen, an American Wigeon, and a Gadwall. We also were treated to close-up views of four Sora rails and two Wilson's Snipes.

The Everglade Kite

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

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Loxahatchee NWR to lose staff in upcoming budget cuts

On November 1, the federal government announced a 10% across-the-board cut in funding for the National Wildlife Refuge system. The US Fish & Wildlife Service Southeast Region recently released a 26-page report detailing its plan to deal with this reality. Here in Palm Beach County, the Loxahatchee refuge will lose 4 of its 21 full-time employees, including the ecologist who monitors water quality in the refuge, 2 maintenance positions, and an administrative position. These cuts will not only affect the public's experience at the refuge, but also have the potential to jeopardize Everglades restoration. SFWMD is already unhappy with the refuge's difficulties removing invasive exotics; these staff reductions will further reduce the NWR's ability to manage the refuge. It may even provoke the SFWMD to revoke the lease on the property. If this happens, Loxahatchee would be without federal management, and

the refuge would simply be WCA-1, without even a water-quality ecologist on staff! We need to do everything we can to urge our elected officials to restore funding to the refuge system. Loxahatchee NWR is a key component of CERP (Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan). Saving the Everglades means saving our refuge.

Please write to the Department of the Interior's staff to protest these budget cuts, and to our senate and congressional delegation to ask that the funding be restored to the refuge system.

1. Dirk Kempthorne, Secretary, Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington DC, 20240.
2. H. Dale Hall, Director, USFWS, 1849 C Street, NW, Washington DC, 20240.
3. Sam Hamilton, Regional Director, USFWS, 1875 Century Blvd., Atlanta, GA 30345.

Conservation Tidbits

Cynthia Plockelman

The Everglades Regional Conservation Committee (RCC) met in the Doc Thomas House headquarters of Tropical Audubon Society on Nov. 18, 2006. The agenda included an update on the 22nd Annual Everglades Coalition Conference, set for Jan. 18-21, 2007, at the Rosen Shingle Creek Resort & Golf Club, outside Kissimmee, Fla. Conference schedules and registration forms have been mailed out and you will find Audubon Society of the Everglades listed as a "Saw" Grass Roots Sponsor. Early Registration deadline is December 15, 2006. You can also find the conference schedule and registration information online : www.evergladescoalition.org

We have also received public notice of US Fish & Wildlife Service plans to conduct a 5-year status review of 37 endangered and threatened species. Eight species from South Florida are listed for review, including the Everglade Snail Kite. You can get the whole list and additional information from Cindy Schulz, US

FWS, at 772-526-3909, ext. 305, or Cindy_Schulz@fws.gov

The US Army Corps of Engineers and State of Florida are working on interim goals and targets for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). Final drafts of the goals and target agreements are available for review and comment at <http://www.evergladesplan.org>

Discussions at the RCC also included heavy development pressures in St. Lucie, Martin and PB counties: the West County Energy Center at 20 mile Bend (gas line) and the proposed Glades Power plant (coal fueled) to replace the one rejected by St. Lucie County; rock mining permits/impacts in Martin and PB Co.; and manipulation of development rights in the PB Co. Agricultural Reserve, which made headlines in the *Palm Beach Post*.

"Introducing the Florida Land Use Initiative: Ag Lands, Development and the Future of Florida" was the subject of a day long conference presented by

the Florida Earth Foundation, aided by Decision Makers Forum, at the PB County Convention Center, Nov. 14, 2006. It was a who's who gathering of government, business, agriculture, engineers, attorneys and interested citizens/conservation organizations. The main sessions were: "Visioning the Future", "Case Studies -Smart Growth Tools", "What's the Next Crop?" and "Review Panel - What Needs to Happen?"

It was too much information for one day and not enough time for questions and discussions. There was lots of praise for "saving" Babcock and Adams Ranches, lots of plans for new developments, such as Ave Maria and Harmony, and big roads to open up and impact agricultural areas and conservation lands. What was really needed: more thinking outside the development box and discussion of the future of the Everglades Agricultural Area. There will be three follow up regional conferences in the next year.

Eastern Screech Owl

Ed Kawecki

The Eastern Screech Owl (*Megascops asio*) is a locally common, year-round resident of South Florida, equally at home in a backyard or in the woods. It is the smallest Florida Owl at 8 1/2 inches tall and only six ounces and has a gently descending tremolo call and strictly nocturnal activities.



Mom in her nest.

This low profile and small size make it easy to overlook. They are around, though, and keeping an alert ear from dusk until bedtime, or before sunrise, will often be rewarded with a Screech Owl calling its “NO-NO-NO-NO-NO-NO” descending tremolo. Follow the call and look for a dark outline staring back at you from a low branch or fence.

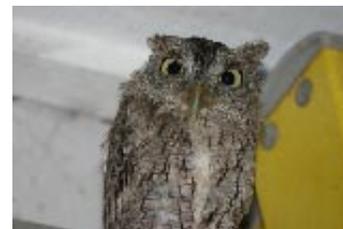
A cavity nester, the Screech Owl will use an old woodpecker hole or fabricated birdhouse. Two years ago a bird house in my yard was home to a family of Red Bellied Woodpeckers, while another was home to a family of Screech Owls. The woodpeckers returned the following year and



Fledgling

set up housekeeping but were shortly displaced by a Screech Owl. The owl defiantly peered out the hole while the woodpecker complained noisily from a nearby branch. The verbal harassment was not successful so the woodpecker started making a new hole through the bottom of the wooden birdhouse while the Owl was inside. The woodpecker was almost through the bottom when a new birdhouse was hung nearby; the woodpecker promptly discovered and moved in. This seemed like the height of aggressive behavior for the diminutive owl until a neighbor showed me a photograph of another Eastern Screech Owl that had taken over a Wood Duck box in his yard. The owl persisted and actually held off the much larger Wood Duck.

Be on the lookout for Eastern Screech Owls in your neighborhood this winter. Prime time for screech Owl activity, though, is in the spring when they are quite active and very vocal. Find one, or hang up a birdhouse, and there just might be an adventure unfolding in your yard.



Juvenile on a ladder

[Editor's Note: In the 2006 revision to the ABA Checklist, the members of the *Otus* genus, including *O. asio*, were moved to a new genus, *Megascops*.]

Babcock Ranch, January 13-14

ASE is going on a field trip to inspect this property on the west coast (near Ft. Myers). The ranch was recently acquired by the state in one of the largest purchases of contiguous conservation land in history. Options are (1) carpool followed by a guided tour of the ranch, or (2) if enough people are interested, a van/bus trip to the ranch followed by a river cruise on the Caloosahatchee (this would include an overnight stay in the area). Costs will be approximately \$50 for each tour, plus (if applicable) bus fare and overnight accommodations.

If interested, please contact Ben Kolstad, benkolstad@adelphia.net, 561-367-7689.

Seen Around Town

At Wakodahatchee Wetlands in Boynton Beach, the Sora rails and Wilson's Snipes have moved in. On our extremely well-attended sunset walk on Saturday, November 11th, they were joined by a female Gadwall and a male American Wigeon. An exotic Purple Swamp Hen (*Porphyrio porphyrio*) was also in attendance, providing excellent close-up views of this larger cousin to our Purple Gallinule (*Porphyrio martinica*). Over 30 species were seen in all.

American Robins have been seen in small numbers in SE Florida; a small flock was spotted in northern Broward on November 21.

What have you seen lately? Write and tell us! benkolstad@adelphia.net

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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 **January 2007** issue is **December 10th**

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