



EVERGLADE KITE

NEWSLETTER OF THE
AUDUBON SOCIETY OF THE EVERGLADES
Serving Palm Beach County, Florida
Volume 48, Number 3
December 2007

CALENDAR

Tuesday December 4, 6:30 p.m.

Please join us for our holiday dinner prior to the meeting. ASE will provide meat and beverages.

Letters A - R bring vegetables and salads.

Letters S - Z bring desserts.

Saturday December 29

Christmas Bird Count. Palm Beach County Court Circle. For information and assignments, contact Chuck Weber, 561-540-8473, or Gloria Hunter, 561-585-7714.

Friday/Saturday, January 11-12

Overnight trip to Merritt Island. Joint excursion with Space Coast Audubon. Costs will include carpool and hotel. We are staying at the Clarion Inn Kennedy Space Center in Titusville. To reserve your room at our special group rate (\$80, \$90 for riverfront rooms), call 321-269-2121 and mention that you are with Audubon Society of the Everglades. This is always a great trip, so please come join us!

Audubon Society of the Everglades needs you! Our annual election of board members is coming up in April. If you are interested in helping protect the natural areas in our county, or promote the welfare of birds, please consider volunteering, in any capacity, to help.

December 4 General Meeting:

Holiday Pot Luck Dinner

Guest Speaker: Chris Davenport

"Archeology of Lake Okeechobee"

Our speaker for the December meeting is Chris Davenport, Palm Beach County's Archaeologist. He has worked to identify and protect historic resources since the age of seven. His work has taken him up and down the east coast of the United States to as far south as Oaxaca, Mexico. He received his BA from Franklin Pierce College in New Hampshire and his MA from the University of Tennessee. He has worked for some of the largest Cultural Resource Management (CRM) firms in the United States, and taught at Johns Hopkins University, University of Baltimore, and various local community colleges.

His discussion will be on the recent archaeological finds from Lake Okeechobee.

Please join us at 6:30 p.m. for the **Holiday Pot Luck Dinner**, which will be followed by this exciting presentation. Last names with letters A-R should provide casseroles, vegetables, fruit or salads. Letters S-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

Although the flurry of migration is over, the end of the calendar year does seem to bring the greatest number of winter residents to our state. I hope you and yours enjoy a healthy and happy holiday season. While you're resting up between the major holidays and the start of the new year, please consider participating in our annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). This year marks the 108th year since ornithologist Frank Chapman proposed replacing the annual Christmas "side hunt" (the goal was to see which team had the highest pile of bird carcasses at the end of the day) with a bird census, whose goal was to compete to have the most checkmarks at the end of the day. The first year saw 25 counts from Toronto to Pacific Grove, CA (my hometown); 90 species were recorded by a total of 27 participants. In 2006-2007, there were 2052 counts worldwide (over 1600 in the U.S. alone), with 57,851 birders counting 1894 species. Obviously, birding has come a long way! We hope you will join us for this, our 57th annual CBC. Please call Chuck Weber (540-8473) or Gloria Hunter (585-7714) for information on how you can help.

The Everglade Kite

is the newsletter of the Audubon Society of the Everglades, published 11 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 Notes

Congress overrides presidential veto to bring the first federal contribution to environmental restoration of the Everglades in nearly seven years.

Congress enacted the Water Resources Development Act 2007 on November 8th, overriding President Bush's veto of this important legislation and authorizing three projects crucial for restoring the Everglades. We all have cause to celebrate this historic veto override because it restores the federal promise to bring America's Everglades back to health. Your help engaging in this issue, sending letters and calling upon your elected leaders was critical to today's victory.

In total, the \$23 billion piece of legislation **authorizes** funding for navigation, flood protection, and \$6 billion in ecosystem restoration. The level of ecosystem restoration funding is unprecedented. This is the first veto override of the Bush presidency and only the 106th in U.S. history. The law authorizes funding for the projects; the funding must still be approved in the 2009 **appropriations** process.

Inland Natural Gas Port Still in the Pipeline

According to a Reuters article dated November 16, 2007, Floridian Natural Gas Storage LLC is planning to build the largest inland liquefied natural gas (LNG) port in the United States. The (re)proposed Indiantown facility would be used to liquefy gas from pipelines and store it for later regasification. They hope to have approval from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission by May to begin construction next summer; operations would start in 2011. Stay tuned!

Sacred Ibis at the Solid Waste Authority

As you may have read in the newspaper, the Solid Waste Authority, Everglades National Park, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission have sought approval to kill an invasive exotic bird species that has been sighted at the SWA property in Palm Beach County. The Sacred Ibis has been documented breeding at three locations in the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge and at the SWA site. This species is a serious threat to our native wading bird populations. Not only is it a potential competitor for ever more scarce natural resources, it is a known predator of both eggs and chicks; furthermore, its breeding cycle is not based on the seasonal water fluctuations like our native birds. This means that it can raise 2 or even 3 broods per year, compared to our native species' 1 or at most 2. The potential for a population explosion, therefore, is real (can you say "European Starling?"). Therefore, at our November 8 meeting, the ASE board voted to support Audubon of Florida and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the director of Everglades National Park, and the Solid Waste Authority staff in their efforts to remove the sacred ibis from the Solid Waste Authority site in Palm Beach County. We do have some serious concerns, however, about how the eradication program will be carried out, and we have asked that we be kept informed, to ensure that no inadvertent harm is done to our existing native bird populations as the sacred ibis is removed.

Fall Migration Count

Cynthia Plockelman

I want to thank all participants for making the Fall 2007 North American Migration Count a big success. The weather was hot, depressing and at times, showery, but we did have migrants moving through Palm Beach County. On Warblers, no “fall out” as in Spring 2007, but 20 species showed up to be counted, including 4 gorgeous prothonotaries yellow and a Cerulean (Hope/McCandless). Chuck Weber and Jo Key covered the inland route to Duda and Lake Okeechobee. This really was their day to shout about: 87 species, including the ONLY Ani, 500 Roseate Spoonbills, 16 American Flamingos, Marbled Godwits, 32 Avocets and Wilson’s Phalarope. A nice photo of the flamingos graced the PALM BEACH POST, after the August Duda trips.

The Weinrich team came up with a juvenile brown booby, at the Lake Worth Pier, and provided notes and Phil’s sketch of details. It made the Florida birding hotlines and a lot of people trekked to see it. Fortunately, despite the weather, the juvenile booby hung around for several days. I picked up the 3 American oystercatchers (1 juvenile plumage) late in the afternoon off Snook Island. Ed Campbell, back to birding again, got the lone Gannet, while covering JD MacArthur Park, Singer Island and Riviera. LNWR had 60 snail kites and we added 1 more at Grassy Waters. Purple swamphen was documented, again, at STA1-W, off 20 mile bend. Two single Florida Scrub Jays were seen, 1 at Hypoluxo and 1 at Juno Dunes.

The drought undoubtedly led to the concentrations of wading, water and shore birds in the few wetlands, STA’s and LNWR. Covering the huge PB County for NAMC was difficult, with many people out, due to extended vacations, work, school, coastal cleanup or football. DuPuis and Corbett had hunters on the 15th and Riverbend was closed for work on the bridge. Several new county parks and preserves (just opened) will be added for the Spring Count. Our misses: Bald Eagle (we know where these frequent, but not to be found in the iffy weather); Reddish Egret (4 opportunities); Red tailed Hawk; Peregrine; Pine Warbler! Frigatebird!

Still, a great day for birders!

The Big Sit

Linda McCandless

The Big Sit is an annual, international, noncompetitive, 24-hour October birding event hosted by *Bird Watcher’s Digest* and founded by the New Haven (CT) Bird Club. This year, the National Wildlife Refuge System adopted it as an activity for National Wildlife Refuge Week.

On Sunday, October 14, I participated in the first ever Big Sit to be held at Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee NWR. The weather was pleasant, albeit windy (all the better for discouraging blood-thirsty mosquitoes). I met U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s David Underwood at the appointed time, 6:00 a.m., at the Refuge gate. Packed in the car was all the paraphernalia (binoculars, scope, lawn chair, cooler) needed for spending the morning counting every species of bird we saw or heard from our 17-foot diameter circle. Actually, ours wasn’t a circle at all, it was the observation tower at the boat ramp at the end of Lee Road. David had chosen “Loxahatchee Lookouts” as the name for our team, and that’s exactly what we did for the next 6.5 hours.

The beauty of arriving at the Refuge before sunrise is that one gets to see hundreds of birds disperse from their roosts to their feeding grounds. Among all the herons, egrets, grackles, and ibises flying over our circle were six Snail Kites. My favorite bird of the morning, however, was the brilliant male Painted Bunting who finally popped up long enough to give us a splendid look before ducking down, never to be seen again. While our final count was a respectable 38 species, we didn’t even come close to the most birds seen by a Big Sit team (two teams tied at 115!), but we smoked the Carbondale Chickadees in Illinois, who tallied 8 species for the day.

So, if the thought of sitting around and letting the birds come to you sounds appealing, join us for next year’s Big Sit. The tower had plenty of room for additional chairs, scopes, and birders!

SFWMD and Pine Jog STA-1E Birding Tour dates

Time: 8:00-noon

The next four scheduled excursions to STA-1E are **December 8** and **December 22**. Tours are open to anyone, but participants must register before the desired date to reserve a space on the trip. To register for the tour or more information, contact Helen Beers at Pine Jog Environmental Education Center (561) 686 6600.

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.

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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.

Articles Welcome! Deadline for submissions for the **January 2008** issue is **December 15th**

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