



EVERGLADE KITE

NEWSLETTER OF THE
AUDUBON SOCIETY OF THE EVERGLADES
Serving Palm Beach County, Florida
Volume 48, Number 4
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CALENDAR

Tuesday January 8, 7:30 p.m.

General meeting, Howard Park Community Center, West Palm Beach. Florida's Endangered Birds.

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. Please call Ben Kolstad at 561.367.7689 if you are interested in carpooling and birding on the way up. We'll meet at 10 a.m. in the parking lot of Applebee's on Friday the 11th. We will reconvene at 3 p.m. in the hotel lobby for an afternoon trip to Black Point Drive. This is always a great trip, so please come join us!

Saturday, February 2, 8:00 a.m.

Riverbend Park, Jupiter. 1/2 mile West of I-95 on Indiantown Road. Leader, Ed Kawecki

Saturday, Feb 9, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

EVERGLADES DAY 2008: Walking Wild in the Everglades. Exhibits, presentations, nature walks, canoeing, live music, and more!

ASE 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.

Program for January 8

Status of Florida's Birds, Region by Region

Julie Wraithmell

Our speaker for the first meeting of the new year is Julie Wraithmell, Wildlife Policy Coordinator for Audubon of Florida. She will give us a photographic tour of some of Florida's most recognizable and declining bird species. Audubon believes birds are indicators of ecosystem health, and our ability to maintain a landscape supporting healthy bird populations is integral to maintaining healthy human communities in Florida too! Learn about the trends in bird populations from important surveys conducted by citizens just like you, as well as how you can help Audubon work to reverse recent declines.

Julie Wraithmell grew up birding in Central Florida, and earned her BS in Biology from Duke University in 1996. Returning to Florida after graduation, she worked for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for eight years, where she coordinated the state's wildlife viewing programs and oversaw creation of the Great Florida Birding Trail. She earned her MS from Florida State University in 2006, and is currently the Wildlife Policy Coordinator for Audubon of Florida. In this capacity, she leads Audubon's wildlife policy work in Florida, coordinates the organization's electronic grassroots advocacy system, leads Audubon's Northeast Florida program and lobbies the state legislature. She lives in Tallahassee with her avid birder husband, Andy, their bird dog Lucy and frustrated indoor cat, Harley.

President's Comments

Marcella Munson

As I write these comments, 2008 is almost here—and so is our annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Begun in 1900 as a substitute for the typical Christmas Day bird shoots during which thousands upon thousands of individual birds were killed and entire species put in peril of extinction, the Audubon CBC has today grown to include locations throughout the US, as well as locations in Canada, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Islands. (Last year 57,851 birders counted 1,894 different species!) The Audubon CBC thus stands as one of the first clear acts of environmental advocacy in the United States. It also serves as a powerful symbol of the public environmental advocacy at the heart of the Audubon mission.

The annual CBC gives us all the chance to remember that we are not just an organization of bird watchers, nor have we ever been. At our very origins is the understanding that to maintain environmental balance (not just for birds but for all aspects of our ecosystem, of which birds are a crucial indicator of overall health), we must provide environmental leadership, especially in our local communities.

The annual rite of the CBC also provides a wonderful occasion for me to stop and thank each and every one of our chapter members. We simply could not exist without you! Whether you are a frequent volunteer at some of our local events, a participant in our bird walks and classes, or a regular member, YOU are a vital part of our organization! On behalf of our chapter board, a heartfelt thank you for your continuing support of the Audubon mission—and a happy and healthy New Year.

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.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is set for February 15-18!

Join birders around the country in this citizen science project. Visit www.birdcount.org for details.

EVERGLADES DAY 2008

On February 9, 2008, the 9th annual Everglades Day festival will be held at Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. The event runs from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., featuring exhibits, presentations, nature walks, canoeing, live music, and food. The guest speaker is Ron Magill, Communications Director at the Miami MetroZoo.

Visitors will be able to pick and choose from an all-day fun-filled lineup of activities. The theme this year is *Walking Wild in the Everglades*, and will emphasize nature walks focusing on birds, butterflies, fishing, and plants. Speakers, live animal presentations, and much more. There will be special Strazzulla Marsh bus tours and LLA golf cart tours. Thirty exhibitors from agencies, clubs, and non-profits will have booths. There will be two special storytelling sessions by Javier del Sol.

Parking: Visitors will receive free, off-site parking at Monte's Packing House, 1/2 mile south of the refuge. Shuttle bus service to the hub of activities and day-long trolley service will be available to transport visitors to every venue at the festival.

For more information, call 561-734-8303, or visit the refuge's website at <http://Loxahatchee.fws.gov>

Conservation Notes

Drought in our region a (recurrent) reality This year's drought, while not severe in our area, has hit Lake Okeechobee hard. The most recent lake level was just over 10 feet; substantially lower than average. The Water Management District recently voted to impose the most severe restrictions on water use: Phase III. Water use will be limited to one day a week for residential users. The good news is that we will have a choice of morning or evening (but not both!) for irrigation. One potential silver lining: the same strong La Nina that will keep our ecosystem in water deficit should enable Everglades restoration projects to proceed without weather-related construction delay! Now if only the feds would live up to their end of the "partnership" that was so publicly promised back at the beginning of our current regime...

Ill-conceived road projects behind Everglades rock mining A double disaster for Everglades restoration is in store if Palm Beach County Commissioners fail to keep the state's feet to the fire over rock mining in the Everglades Agricultural Area. In order to feed the Department of Transportation's boondoggles waiting to happen (the DOT's Future Corridors Action Plan runs roads right through environmentally sensitive areas in central Florida), county landowners are lining up to blast holes in the ground, threatening our aquifers and setting huge potential roadblocks for if and when the federal government ever does get around to helping clean up the Everglades. One landowner alone (U.S. Sugar) has plans for 11,000 acres of mining. Despite Mr. Wade's assurances that any further study would be "overkill," the state's Strategic Aggregates Review Task Force is set to report on February 1 about rock mining operations in Florida. Let's hope that all stakeholders will have a seat at the table when this report comes out, despite the environmental community being largely outnumbered on the task force.

Sacred Ibis Update As promised, we are being kept up to date on the protocol for the removal of the Sacred Ibis from the SWA property. All Fish and Wildlife employees involved in removing sacred ibis will familiarize themselves with the sacred ibis identification chart provided by FWC and other field guides as appropriate. FWC biologists will accompany USDA staff during the initial month of the project, and will be available thereafter to resolve questions of bird identification, including additional field visits as appropriate. WS employees will refrain from lethal control if sacred ibis are mixed with wood storks or other native birds, either on the ground or in flight. Sacred ibis carcasses collected at the SWA site will be utilized for scientific and research purposes. Birds will be shipped to Florida Atlantic University (FAU) for genetics, food habits, and health assessment. When this research is completed, FAU will provide carcasses to the Florida Museum of Natural History (FLMNH) for further public education. A monthly report of the number of sacred ibis taken and their disposition will be provided to the Palm Beach County Solid Waste Authority and FWC. Reports of inadvertent take of non-target species will be reported immediately; if necessary, this protocol will be revised to avoid future incidental take.

Bird of the Month: Common Loon

The Common Loon (*Gavia immer*), a member of the family Gaviidae, has only recently been removed by the American Ornithological Union from its long-standing place at the beginning of our field guides, to be replaced by the Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, Swans). Nevertheless, it is still a regular winter visitor to Palm Beach County. Anyone who has walked along the Lake Worth Lagoon between September and May is sure to have seen this large, thick-billed bird with a blue-gray bill.

It is nearly exactly the same size as our year-round resident Double-crested Cormorant (32" in length), and they reside in similar situations (the Intracoastal Waterway and surrounding coastal waters). Nonetheless, they are simple to differentiate even beyond binocular or spotting scope distance, because cormorants tend to keep their bills pointed toward the sky, as if expecting trouble, while the loon, perhaps more confident, or more trusting, swims with its bill parallel to the water.

In flight, cormorants have broader wings; the loon's flight appears quite a bit more fluid and graceful. Anyone who has tried to approach this bird has discovered why another common name for it is the Great Northern Diver: it will disappear fairly quickly. Although it can't dive that deep near our coasts, it has been recorded at depths of 55 meters. Its longest recorded dive is only 124 seconds, so odds are you'll be able to spot a vanished bird again if you keep looking.

Another difference between the loon and the cormorant is their underwater "flight": cormorants use their wings for propulsion, while loons use only their feet. The loon's feet are so well adapted to the water (their fibula actually extends beyond the femur, allowing their leg muscles to attach past the fulcrum point, which gives them enormous strength, leverage, and flexibility. This mechanical advantage, combined with their need to dive, requires their bones to be more solid than those of most birds, who have hollow bones. It also means that loons are unable to walk upright on land; they push themselves along the ground on their chests on those rare occasions when they do leave the water.

So next time you're out on the Lake Worth Lagoon, and it looks like it might be a first quarter moon, take a look for your new friend—*Gavia immer*, the loon!

Everglades Day Coalition Conference Captiva Island, January 10-13

This annual forum brings together the 47 allied organizations of the coalition with local, state, and federal partners. Sessions on topics such as growth management, political and public partnerships, endangered and invasive species, wildlife habitat, energy policies, water quality and flow plans. For more information, visit www.evergladescoalition.org

IN MEMORIAM

Barbara Liberman, 1927-2007

Our dear friend and coworker on many environmental matters is gone! Surely, Barbara's passionate interest in birds, plants, butterflies, teaching and literacy will not soon be forgotten. When volunteers are needed, Barbara and her late husband, Al, were always among the first to step forward. For 52 years, they taught school, raised three sons, mentored grandchildren, and enjoyed everything offered in the natural world. Their retirement included many trips around the USA, chasing birds, listening to music and enjoying life. They were always together until Al's passing, a few years ago.

Barbara, and Al, were early members of Florida Ornithological Society—the citizen science side of bird-watching. They were the first coordinators of the North American Migration Counts in Palm Beach county, as well as regular participants in our Annual Christmas Bird Counts. Barbara excelled as a frequent leader on ASE field trips, especially enjoying Wakodahatchee, Spanish River Park and Duda Farms in the hot August days. For the last 4 years, she assisted me with the Shawano breeding bird survey, out old SR 80 and down Browns Farm Road. Truly, we made a team, with Barbara driving and recording, while I timed, listened and surveyed the sky and fields for any and every bird available.

We will all greatly miss Barbara's enthusiasm for life and adventure, and willingness to share to in doing the administrative offices and chores of Audubon, Florida Native Plant Society and Atala Chapter, North American Butterfly Association. In her honor, Barbara's family requested memorials to Audubon Society of the Everglades.

Our sympathies to her sons and their families, as well as her brother, James Sel in Houston, Texas.

Cynthia

SFWMD and Pine Jog STA-1E Birding Tour dates Time: 8:00-noon

The next four scheduled excursions to STA-1E are **January 5, January 19, February 2, and February 16**. 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 **February 2008** issue is **January 10th**

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