



EVERGLADE KITE

NEWSLETTER OF THE
AUDUBON SOCIETY OF THE EVERGLADES

Serving Palm Beach County, Florida

Volume 50, Number 1

October 2009

CALENDAR

- Sat., Oct. 3, 8 a.m. Spanish River Park, Boca Raton.** Meet at the split fence on the south side of Spanish River Blvd, just W of A1A. Leader: Ray Buchholz
- Sat., Oct. 3 & 4. Bahamas Trip.** Call Linda (561) 742-7791 to register
- Tues. Oct. 6. General Meeting.** Pine Jog.
- Sat., Oct. 10, 8 a.m. Juno Dunes/Juno Pier.** Leader: Clive Pinnock.
- Wed., Oct. 14, 7:30 a.m. Okeehelée Park.** Forest Hill Blvd, 1 mi W of Jog. Meet at Nature Center. Ethel Kujanpaa
- Sat., Oct. 17 & 18. Explore Keys/Hawk Watch.** Call Linda (561) 742-7791
- Tue., Oct. 20, 1:00 p.m. Afternoon meeting.** Gumbo Limbo Nature Center, Boca Raton.
- Sat., Oct. 24, 7:30 a.m. Solid Waste Authority/Rookery.** Meet at Palmetto Trail Head Parking Lot. Leader: Claudine Laabs
- Sun., Oct. 25, 9:30 a.m. Bird walk for kids 7+ Green Cay Wetlands, Boynton Beach.** Leader: Clive Pinnock
- Sat., Oct. 31. Shorebird Trip, Fort Myers.** Call Linda to register (561-742-7791)
- Wed., Nov. 4, 7:30 a.m. ARM Loxahatchee NWR, Boynton Beach.** Leader: Pat Canning
- Fri., Nov. 6, 7:30 a.m. Wakodahatchee Wetlands, Boynton Beach.** Leader: Linda Humphries
- Sat., Nov. 7** Tropical Audubon invites you to Everglades NP. Leader: John Boyd, TAS.
- Sat., Nov. 14, 11:00 a.m. J.D. McArthur Beach SP.** Estuary Walk, Meet at Entrance to McArthur Park, Kayak Launch. Leader: Leni Bane
- Mon., Nov. 16, 10:00 a.m.** Behind the scenes at Okeehelée w/Clive Pinnock
- Fri., Nov. 20, 4:00 p.m. Green Cay.** Leader: Valeri Brauer
- Sat., Nov. 21, 7:30 a.m.** Join ARM Loxahatchee NWR's weekly walk. Leader: Pat Canning

General Meeting: "The Florida Keys" Tuesday, October 6, 2009, 7:30 p.m.

Our general meeting for October will feature a presentation about the Florida Keys by James Duquesnel, the Environmental Education and Conservation Manager of the Gumbo Limbo Nature Center in Boca Raton. Jim Duquesnel manages Gumbo Limbo Nature Center, and five Environmentally Sensitive Lands (ESL) preserves for the City of Boca Raton. A resident of the Florida Keys since 1979, Jim worked as a Biological Scientist with the Florida Park Service for 17 years. In that role he worked in State Parks from Key West to Fort Pierce Inlet, but specialized in management and restoration of natural communities of the Upper Florida Keys (Key Largo to Marathon). His wife Janice has held a similar position since 1995, and is currently the Park Biologist for Lignumvitae Key Botanical State Park. Jim has also worked for the national Marine Sanctuary and in research on queen conch and dolphins. With a lifelong interest in the conservation of nature, and looking for opportunities to contribute toward that cause, Jim was drawn into the State of Florida's battle against invasive species, served as the Exotic Pest Plant Council's Training Committee chair for over ten years, and has lectured statewide on invasive species and their control in natural areas. In 2007, Jim left the Park Service for his position in Boca Raton, but still has many photographs and knowledge gleaned over 30 years in the Keys to share, along with tips to help Audubon members make the most of their planned trip to the Keys. As usual, the doors at FAU Pine Jog Environmental Education Center (Summit Blvd., WPB) will open at 7:00 p.m.; the meeting will start at 7:30 p.m.

Afternoon Meeting, Tuesday, October 20, 2009, 2:00 p.m.

Our afternoon meetings are continuing again at Gumbo Limbo through April. This month, come on out and learn more on harnessing energy from the Gulf stream. Continue our informative presentation and discussion with Gabriel Alsenas from September's meeting.

President's Comments

Linda Humphries

As I write this article I am sitting in Michigan on my parents' patio. It is early September and the smell of fall and burning wood is in the air. This is my favorite time of the year as the trees start to turn red. I saw 14 different species of birds this morning, including the hummingbird that visits my Dad's beautiful flowers and the birds who enjoy splashing in the bird bath. I didn't need a bird book, because I am very familiar with these birds. As I scan from one bird to another, I still pick up several different details I have not noticed before. My Dad built a couple of new feeders this year and they are definitely appreciated by the birds. I look at birding like reading a wonderful mystery book—a bird's identification can be quite a mystery, but I get great satisfaction figuring out who they are.

There is exciting news from Everglades National Park where a pair of Western Spindalis have successfully fledged three young. The last young fledged on September 1, 2009. This is such an exciting find because this is the first U.S. record of Western Spindalis nesting as far as anyone knows.

Fall migration is underway and so are the challenges figuring out the fall warblers passing through. Come join the fun and bird with us. We are going to have an overnight trip to the keys and a day trip to Fort Myers in October, plus we have lots of fun trips scheduled throughout the year. Have fun birding and hope to see you soon.

The Everglade Kite

is the newsletter of the Audubon Society of the Everglades, published 10 times a year.

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Moved Recently?

If you have moved and no longer wish to receive this newsletter please contact Linda by email (hlinda@aol.com) or phone (561-742-7791). If you would rather receive this newsletter via email instead of regular mail contact Ben Kolstad, ben@kolstad.com. Thanks for helping us reduce our environmental impact and our printing/postage costs.

Bird of the Month:

October's Bird of the Month is the Gray Catbird. This bird isn't entirely gray; he sports a black cap, blackish tail and a cinnamon patch under the tail. They are described as "secretive but energetic," and it's a rare field trip during migration that doesn't turn up at least one, more often a half dozen! These birds also have one of the most recognizable calls in the avian order: mewwww!

Green Expo 2009

October 3, 10 am-4 pm, PBCC at Lake Worth, 4200 Congress Avenue.

Learn how you fit into the new green economy. See the latest products, services, and technologies to reduce environmental impact. Increase your awareness of greenhouse emissions and climate change. Free admission. For more info, 561-868-3702, or www.pbcc.edu/greenexpo.xml

Conservation Meeting

Meet at Lantana County Library (4020 Lantana Rd, Lake Worth) October 5, 2009 at 1:00 PM. Audubon Society of the Everglades is starting a Conservation meeting to discuss upcoming events and important public meetings being held within our local area. This is a one hour informal discussion about upcoming issues so that we can be better informed. Come join the discussion. Call Linda at 561-742-7791 for more info.

Book Review

Olivia Gentile's *Life List*

Phoebe Snetsinger is probably the most famous birder since John James Audubon. Every birder knows her life story: she discovered birding in her 30s as a housewife in St. Louis, became very good over the course of a few years, and then discovered she had malignant melanoma with only a few months to live. She decided to spend those last few months the way we all dream we could: birding, as often and as far afield as she could. And since she was the daughter of one of the most successful advertising men ever, she was able to go quite far afield, and quite often. As those few months become years, and then decades, she pursues her passion with a determination that borders on obsession. She writes her own story in a book published by the American Birding Association, *Birding on Borrowed Time*.

Olivia Gentile's new biography, *Life List* (NY: Bloomsbury, 2009) adds a new dimension to this already familiar story, by interviewing family members and others who knew her, to present a more well-rounded view of the life and achievements of this remarkably ordinary, but extraordinary, woman. The book reads like a novel: bored housewife discovers passion (birding), encounters obstacle (cancer), and uses her passion to overcome her obstacle. Gentile, though, is writing a biography, not a novel. She shows in a thorough, nonjudgmental way the real-world consequences of Snetsinger's pursuit: her satisfaction comes at the expense of her family, her health (birding around the world is grueling even if you don't have cancer!), and, ultimately, her life. Phoebe's passion/mania seemingly did, though, allow her to have much more life, and a much more satisfying one, than she'd expected after her diagnosis in 1972 (she died in 1999 in a van accident, while birding).

Gentile's style is, for the most part, nonjudgmental, although there are a few moments where you can feel her scratching her head at the choices her subject makes. There are also a few points where you can see the author has forgotten that her primary audience is likely to be birders: she notes that when Phoebe saw a bird that put her into the 200 club for the first time, "she marked the bird that put her over thop with an exclamation point." But she neglects to tell us what bird it was!

These minor quibbles aside, though, this new presentation of a story we might have thought already familiar is a worthwhile read for birder and nonbirder alike, and I recommend it strongly.

--Ben Kolstad

PS--Olivia Gentile will be at the Miami Book Fair on November. 14th and 15th. The detailed schedule isn't available as of this writing, so check out www.miamibookfair.com this month for more information.

Native Plants—You Betcha!!!!

Cynthia Plockelman

I hope everyone saw the excellent article by Carl Terwilliger, our outstanding writer on native plant, horticulture and environmental matters in the *Palm Beach Post*, on Sept. 6, 2009. Title: “With the right mixture of plants and pests, your yard will thrive: Welcoming Wildlife.” Translation: birds will thrive!!!! And, that is what it is all about for Audubon of Florida(AOF), in addressing the crash of our native bird populations, especially the migrants. John Ogden has rejoined AOF specifically to work on/coordinate matters on the serious problem of how we can support our native birds and migrants with the right mix of trees, plants and insect life (“protein” needed to raise nestlings and a new generation).

We all know, subconsciously, that our personal environments, including our “yards”, are ecosystems...just don’t think about it very often. Those ecosystems need to have a wide variety of creatures (besides ourselves) in order to be functional and attractive. Think about what it would be like without the butterflies, dragonflies, gnats, lizards, ants, snakes, weeds, fruit trees, wetlands, canopy to clean the air, and flowering plants. You leave out one element, or introduce plants and animals that have not evolved with the surrounding ecosystem=big problems. For instance, consider the current horticultural use of exotic ficus hedges (which contribute zero to birdlife) and the maintenance practices associated—and you have a recipe for potential problems. Takes up space,

uses lots of water, fertilizers and pesticides, requires constant maintenance—lots of \$\$ and nothing much in return!!!!

So, Audubon Society of the Everglades is trying, hard, to raise awareness of the effects we have on the birds we love, by the things we have and support in our yards. ASE President Linda Humphries has done a flyer with list of important native plant and tree species for birds and butterflies. I am bringing native plants and talking about these at each ASE meeting. Plus, I pot up appropriate seedlings from my yard and those of friends, and bring to each meeting for sale. In September, I talked about Gumbo Limbo, Crabwood (which was eradicated from our coastal hammocks in the days of the “barefoot mailman”), wild coffee, native cassias—all of which are critical to the support of bird populations.

You have to suit the selection of trees, shrubs and butterfly plants to your location—what works on the coast does NOT work in wetlands to the west, or in between on the sugar sand ridges/former dunelines. A good investment, and update on the situation would be purchase of a copy of Doug Tallamy’s book, *Bringing Nature Home; How You Can Sustain Wildlife With Native Plants*. Dr. Tallamy was the keynote speaker at the recent 29th annual conference of the Florida Native Plant Society, here in WPB, and had everyone’s attention on this important subject. It is available in paperback. Try it, your yard and neighborhood birds will thank you!

Young Naturalist Program

Sunday, October 25, 2009, 9:30 am we are beginning our Young Naturalist Program with a bird/nature walk at Green Cay. This free walk is for children between 8-15 years old. Contact Linda Humphries 561-742-7791 with any questions.

Getting Out There...ERM Properties

Carol Keller Bass

It has come to my horrified attention that my very first attempt in sharing the experiences of the average Joe, in this case Jane, that I have committed a faux pas of the worst kind, not only to my fellow Audubon members, but also to myself, a lover of all things natural. Please let me assure you that the day my husband and I trekked through the Frenchman’s Forest Nature Area, we saw no sign indicating that bikes were not allowed. We read the entire sign at the trailhead and made note that dogs were not allowed (and made an agreement to share that news with some friends who had said they wanted to run the trails with their dogs). Not only did I not realize that this area was an Environmental Resource Management area, I also did not know what the guidelines for such an area were. As always, education is the key. The idea that we may have damaged a habitat with our ignorant behavior was the most innocent of oversights. I am as disturbed by it as I know most of you are and I also wish to apologize to *Kite* editor Ben Kolstad for putting him in such an awkward position. Please accept my humble apologies.

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Articles NEEDED! Send to ben@kolstad.com by the 10th of the month.

Join Audubon Society of the Everglades

There are now two ways to join ASE: Chapter-only membership, and membership through the National Audubon Society.

Chapter-Only Membership

When you become a member of the Audubon Society of the Everglades by using the form at right, all of your membership fees are put to use supporting **local** projects: Everglades Day; Education Programs such as model schools and field trips; Scholarships; and Conservation activities. Audubon Society of the Everglades members also receive 11 issues of the *Everglade Kite* newsletter.

National Audubon Society Membership

When you join ASE through the National Audubon Society, you also receive 6 issues of *Audubon Magazine*, and membership in Audubon of Florida. For details, visit www.audubon.org. To join the National Society, send your information as above, but make your check out to **National Audubon Society**. NOTE: The annual fee is \$20 for regular NAS membership. In either case, send your check, payable to ASE (\$15/\$10) or NAS (\$20) as appropriate, along with this form to

Membership, Audubon Society of the Everglades
P.O. Box 16914
West Palm Beach, FL 33416-6914

Audubon Society of the Everglades (ASE)

YES! I want to become a **chapter-only member** of ASE. Enclosed is my check made payable to Audubon Society of the Everglades for:

Regular \$15 Senior (62+)/Student \$10

I would like to save ASE postage and printing costs; please send my *Kite* via email

I would like to donate an additional

\$20 \$50 \$100 \$_____

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____

e-mail _____

I would like to volunteer for:

- Education
 Conservation
 Everglades Day
 Fundraising
 Other: _____

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Audubon Society of the Everglades general meetings are held the first Tuesday of every month at 7:30 p.m. (refreshments at 7) at FAU Pine Jog Environmental Education Center, located on Summit Blvd, near the intersection of Summit and Jog, in West Palm Beach. The public is welcome to attend.

The Technology of Birding

We birders are living in a moment of opportunity. While it's true that bird numbers appear to be down almost everywhere, and biodiversity is in a crisis, we are quickly gaining access to some remarkable tools to help us become better birders.

Taking pictures of birds has become easier than ever, thanks to digiscoping—using a digital camera mounted to a spotting scope. Using this technique, birders are able to capture amazing shots of birds without having to disturb them nearly as much as we used to.

The great thing about digiscopers is that they share their results and their techniques on the web. Just enter “digiscoping” in any search engine, and you'll get a ton of links to information and products.

The iPod and other MP3 players have really improved the arduous process of learning bird songs and calls. No more scratchy LPs or squeaky cassette players. BirdJam, one of the oldest companies to make playlists available to birders with iPods and iPhones, has many different offerings these days, from the Stokes' eastern and western guides to iPod-friendly playlists for Lang Elliott's recent guides to frogs and toads!

Field guides are being issued with CDs and DVDs of bird song and pictures. The most recent one I'm aware of is Ted Floyd's *Smithsonian Field Guide to*

the Birds of North America, which includes a DVD with images and songs of 138 bird species. Only 138 species? Yes, but... What you get is not just a recording of the birds. You get several different recordings, with descriptions of the behavior and locale—7 different songs and calls for Chipping Sparrow alone! This is a great addition to any birder's MP3 player or iPod. (Floyd's field guide also has many little touches all ABA birders will enjoy, such as the ABA code for each species—from Code 1, a species that occurs widely and regularly in N. Am. to Code 6: “extinct or impossible to observe in the wild”).

Roger Tory Peterson's contributions from beyond the grave continue apace: his latest guide is the first to combine his Eastern and Western guides, with updated maps, new arrangements and size of the plates, etc. But what's really intriguing (and the reason it's in this column on the technology of birding) is the video podcasts that come with it.

I haven't even begun to touch on the various computer programs for listing and IDing birds, like the Thayer software, Avisys (Windows only, sadly), and others. If anyone out there wants to fund some review and research, let me know, and we can have future articles like this.

Western Spindalis Update

As Linda mentioned in her article this month, a pair of Western Spindalis were seen this summer at Everglades National Park. And now they have fledged young! Here is a post from the ABA blog, PEEPS, about the birds:

September 09, 2009 Update - Florida Western Spindalis

In an early post, I mentioned a pair of Western Spindalis had been reported from South Florida. At the request of the people who discovered the birds, the exact location was not mentioned because the birds had been seen mating. On 9 September, Larry Manfredi reported that the pair successfully fledged three young from the same location in Everglades National Park. A second adult female is also present, so six Western Spindalis are now in the area. It was 1 September when the last nestling fledged.

Western Spindalis (formerly Stripe-headed Tanager for those of you with long memories or the Golden Guide) are fairly rare but regular visitors to south Florida, having been recorded in every month of the year. They have turned up on ASE field trips to Frenchman's Forest in the past. So come on out, and keep your eyes peeled!

