

Love birds? So do these folks at the Audubon Society of the Everglades

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Birds tend to bicker and fight.

But bird watchers apparently don't.



Audubon Society of the Everglades board member Linda Humphries holds a caracara during a presentation at one of the group's monthly meetings

Linda Humphries, who has served on the Audubon Society of the Everglades board for nearly a dozen years now — including two terms as president — praises its board of directors for its contributions. “We have a wonderful board. We all work together. It’s the board that makes our organization what it is.”

The ASE has been around since the 1950s, and it was incorporated in 1966. (Its members will celebrate its 60th anniversary in 2016). Its territory is from Jupiter/Tequesta south to Boca Raton – basically all of Palm Beach County. The club meets on the first Tuesday of the month at the FAU’s Pine Jog Environmental Education Center, 6301 Summit Blvd. in West Palm Beach.

Each meeting includes a lecture by an ornithology expert and well-known local birder Clive Pinnock usually comes and talks about the bird of the month, Humphries says. There’s also time set aside for sharing stories and photos, and for networking and refreshments. On Tuesday, Dr. Dale Gawlik, a professor of biological sciences at Florida Atlantic University, will speak about wading birds in a changing Everglades. Meetings are open to the public.

The ASE welcomed Humphries when she moved to Palm Beach County full time in 2003. The group elected her president twice, and now she’s on her second term as vice president. In addition to the monthly meetings, the members and board plan and guide nearly 150 bird watching walks and trips every year.

Because of its friendly relationship with the South Florida Water Management District, the ASE has received special permission to take field trips to two of the five Stormwater Treatment Areas that rim the Everglades. They visit STA 1E, 5,000 acres northeast of the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, about once a month, as well as STA 2, 15,500 acres west of Fort Lauderdale.

They added the Broward trip last year when a flamboyance of flamingos (yes, that's what it's called) decided to do its one-legged roost there. These members-only trips are one advantage of ASE membership; STAs are otherwise off-limits to the public. "We ran 13 tours and took over 600 people to see the flamingos last year," Humphries said.

Humphries says it's the board members' lasting relationships with the folks at the SFWMD that have garnered these opportunities for the club. "We don't try to reinvent the wheel," Humphries said. "We work with other organizations, like the Water Management District and the main library, on common goals."

At the main Palm Beach County library on Summit Boulevard in West Palm Beach, a special Audubon Collection contains thousands of books, field guides, maps, and pamphlets detailing the birds that live or migrate through South Florida. The ASE's Library Committee continues to add the best new books on birds and birding to the collection each year using money from bequests and donations to the ASE. Opened in 1979, it's become one of the most complete collections of bird books in Florida.

The club has even attracted a celebrity or two, including James Currie, a nationally-known birding expert, conservation advocate, and the host of Nikon's "Birding Adventures TV" and Nat Geo Wild's "Aerial Assassins."

"He's led trips for us and been a speaker at our meetings. He's got an unbelievable personality and he's invested in our chapter," Humphries said.

One of her favorite places to bird watch is Snook Island in Lake Worth. "This area has seen a flood of new bird activity. I think it's the quality of the water. We've seen American oystercatchers nesting there." (Snook Island is on the west side of the Intracoastal Waterway at the foot of the Lake Worth bridge, opposite of Bryant Park. Watch for the signs marking the trail and boardwalk.)

Every February, the club co-sponsors the annual Everglades Day Festival at the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge in western Boynton Beach. This free event highlights the importance of this unique ecosystem that supports a treasure trove of bird, aquatic and animal life.

The society also publishes a monthly newsletter, and has an active Facebook page. Their website is a real work of art-meets-technology, with incredible photos taken by members, a snappy, easy-to-read layout and tons of great information.

Today, the Audubon Society has almost 300 local members. "I'm so proud of how far we're come," Humphries said. New members are always welcome, and the annual dues are inexpensive: \$15 for seniors, \$20 for adults, and \$25 for families.

Visit www.auduboneverglades.org for information.

UPCOMING BIRDING EVENTS

STA 1E — 7:30 a.m. Saturday. A car pool tour. Reservations and release required.
Leader: Mark Cook.

Riverbend Park — 8 a.m. Sunday, 9060 Indiantown Road, Jupiter. Leader: Chuck Weber.

Tall Cypress Natural Area — 8 a.m. Sunday, 3700 Turtle Run Blvd., Coral Springs.
Leader: Bruce Pickholtz.

Presentation: Not Your Grandma's Audubon — 6:30 p.m. Wednesday. James Currie will speak at Mounts Botanical Garden, 531 S. Military Trail, West Palm Beach. Tickets: \$20 members **of Mounts and the ASE, \$25 nonmembers.**

MacArthur Beach State Park — 8 a.m. Oct. 10. Meet at the A1A bridge (300 yards south of the entrance). Park entry fee required. Leader: Jim Howe.

Florida Audubon Eagle Watch Training ARM Loxahatchee NWR — 10 a.m. to noon
Oct. 10, 10216 Lee Road, Boynton Beach. Park entrance fee waived for attendees.
Reservations required at asetripinfo@gmail.com

Green Cay Wetlands — 5 p.m. Oct. 11, 12800 Hagen Ranch Road, Boynton Beach.
Leader: Valleri Brauer.

Seacrest Scrub — 8 a.m. Oct. 11, S. Seacrest Blvd., Boynton Beach. Leaders: Chadda
and John Shelly.

Spanish River Park, Boca Raton — 8 a.m. Oct 17, 3001 A1A, Boca Raton. Leaders:
Brian Hope and Al Pelligrinelli.

STA 2 — 8 a.m. Oct. 17. Reservations required.

Florida Keys Hawk Watch — Oct 17-18. Reservations required at
birdpaddy@yahoo.com. Leader: Paddy Cunningham.

Mangrove Park — 8 a.m. Oct. 18, Lantana Preserve, South Palm Beach. Leader: Sue
Young.

Birds & Mangrove Ecology: A presentation by Clive Pinnock — 8:30 am. Oct. 21,
MacArthur Beach State Park, North Palm Beach. Meet outside nature center. Park entry
fee required.

America's Everglades: "The Unseen Everglades: Inside a Legendary Wilderness"
— 6 p.m. Oct. 21, at Palm Beach County main library, Summit Blvd., West Palm Beach.
A joint presentation with Sierra Club featuring a movie and panel discussion.

Frenchman's Forest Natural Area — 8 a.m. Oct. 24, 125th Street N., Palm Beach
Gardens. Leaders: Melanie & Steve Garcia.

Everglades National Park — 7:30 a.m. Oct. 24. Meet in parking lot Coe Visitor Center, Homestead. Hosted by the Tropical Audubon Society. Leader: John Boyd.

Spanish River Park, Boca Raton — 8 a.m. Oct. 25, 3001 A1A, Boca Raton. Leaders: Lee and David Haase.

Pine Glades Natural Area — 6:45 a.m. Oct. 31, 14122 West Indiantown Road, Jupiter. Leader: Chuck Weber.

Want to bird watch?

What can people do to attract more birds to their yard? What can they expect to see?

Planting native plants is important so the birds have food, and providing water. I like the tiny little millet. I have birds at my feeder all the time. Blue jays, cardinals, downy woodpeckers, and warblers.

What's the best time to bird watch?

Early in the morning or in the late afternoon.

Are there any misconception about birds?

We do not have American crows in Palm Beach County, but you can see them in Broward. We have fish crows.