



# EVERGLADE KITE

## newsletter

### AUDUBON SOCIETY OF THE EVERGLADES

Volume 56, No 8— May/June 2016

#### May/June CALENDAR

**May 1 Sun. 8:00 am Frenchman's Forest Natural Area**, Palm Beach Gardens, 12201 Prosperity Farms Road, 1.5 miles north of PGA Blvd. (Bart Scott)

**May 4 Wed. 8:00 am Seacrest Scrub**, Boynton Beach, 3400 S. Seacrest Blvd. (Sue Young)

**May 7 Sat. 7:00 am STA 1E**, Registration REQUIRED: send email to [asetripinfo@gmail.com](mailto:asetripinfo@gmail.com).

**May 7 Sat. 8:00 am Spanish River Park**, Boca Raton. Meet at corner of A1A and Spanish River Blvd. See web site for parking suggestions. (Lee & David Haase)

**May 14 Sat. 5:30 pm Wakodahatchee Wetlands**, PHOTO WALK "Baby Birds," Delray Beach, 13206 Jog Road. Meet at top of boardwalk. (Scott Zucker filling in for Valleri Brauer, who will be out of town that day)

**May 14 Sat. 8:00 am Loxahatchee River District**, Jupiter, 2500 Jupiter Park Drive, meet on Bush Wildlife gift shop porch (Jim Howe)

**Jun 4 Sat. 7:00 am STA 1E**, Registration REQUIRED: send email to [asetripinfo@gmail.com](mailto:asetripinfo@gmail.com).

#### Sad news:

**Long-time member and past president, Claudine Laabs, passed away. She will be greatly missed by her many ASE friends!**

#### HELP IS NEEDED!

*Time is running out and we need your help! The Florida Breeding Bird Atlas II runs from 2011-2016, so this is the last year that we can add data. We would like to include your backyard birds or any other birds that you have observed exhibiting breeding behaviors during this time period. These behaviors include courtship behavior or copulation, nest building, distraction displays, recently fledged young, carrying food for young, an occupied nest, or a nest with young seen or heard. Please send emails to [janeviewora@gmail.com](mailto:janeviewora@gmail.com) reporting the species, the behavior observed, a cross street location nearby, and the date. Any questions may be sent to the same address. Thanks for your participation.*

#### Monthly Membership Meeting & Lecture: Tuesday, May 3rd at 7:00 pm

**"Mangrove Ecology in Southern Florida"** by Clive Pinnock, Naturalist, Bird Keeper at Lion Country Safari, and retired Manager of Okeehetee Nature Center.

A native of Jamaica, Clive has been passionate about nature since childhood and has nurtured a keen interest in marine and avian studies, while developing his ability to recognize birds by song/call as well as field identification.

With a Bachelor's Degree from The City College of New York and an Associate's Degree in Business Management from Taylor Business College, Clive worked as a Wildlife Biologist with the National Park Service for 15 years. He also worked at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge in New York and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area in Arizona.

Clive worked for Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation as the Manager of Okeehetee Nature Center for 16 years. There he established several programs and exhibits in Marine Science, Raptor Ecology, Science for Seniors, Deer Management, and Gopher Tortoise Monitoring and participated in annual bird surveys and community events such as Everglades Day, Earth Day, NatureScaping, and Dark Sky.

He is currently the Bird Keeper at Lion Country Safari, where he oversees the care of Caribbean Flamingos, Southern Ground Hornbills, Lorikeets, and Budgies. He is working with other Lion Country Safari staff to establish a wild bird monitoring program.

Clive is an active member of the Florida Marine Science Educators Association, a group committed to educating Floridians about our precious marine resources. Finally, as a member of Audubon Society of the Everglades, Clive has served on the Board of Directors and leads field trips.

#### Monthly Membership Meeting & Lecture: Tuesday, June 7th at 7:00 pm

**"Scrub Jay Update"** by Rob Rossmannith, Park Biologist at Jonathan Dickinson State Park.

There is only one species of bird that occurs only in Florida: the Florida Scrub Jay, a rare and threatened species on the federal protection list. It lives in areas that are high and dry ("scrub") and open, that have low thickets of scrub oaks (the jays eat the acorns), and that are maintained by fire. Unfortunately, this unique habitat for Florida Scrub Jays is disappearing due to development and human population growth.

Rob Rossmannith has worked for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection/Florida Park Service since 2002 and has been the park biologist at Jonathan Dickinson State Park since 2004. His work at JDSP spans a wide range of organisms (such as the Scrub Jay) and ecosystems which rely on controlled burns as a management and conservation tool.

Doors open at 6:30 pm for light refreshments in rooms 101 and 102 at FAU Pine Jog Environmental Education Center, 6301 Summit Blvd, (near Jog Road) in West Palm Beach. The meeting is free and open to the public.

Also at the meeting – June Bird of the Month: Willet. Come to our June meeting to hear more about this bird from our expert, Clive Pinnock.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Congratulations to Tabitha Cale, Everglades Policy Associate at FAS and ASE's special contact and facilitator.** Starting April 11, she will be the Deputy Associate Director for Ecosystems for the White House Council on Environmental Quality and will be working on issues related to the Everglades, Gulf of Mexico, and other ecosystem restoration projects. [www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq](http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ceq). Tabitha writes, "I'm really grateful for the time I have had with Audubon Florida, and so glad I've had the chance to work with ASE."

## President's Letter ■ ■ ■ Paton White

Your board was delighted to see everyone socialize at the volunteer picnic and 50th anniversary meeting. The highlight was having Marge Eaton attend the 50th with her son. Marge was a star! Imagine: in 1966 she was a founding member of the board. Gerry Filipe's ten-minute slide presentation of pictures from our scrapbooks particularly delighted Marge, and we will see more pictures at our August meeting at the Library.

This month Everglades Restoration took a huge step forward with the passing of the Legacy Florida Act, which requires the legislature to dedicate up to \$200 million a year for Everglades restoration, \$50 million a year for Florida springs and \$5 million a year for Lake Apopka.

We have two conservation issues looming. The first one is the proposed route for an extension of State Road 7 that would run alongside Grassy Waters Preserve, which supplies the drinking water for West Palm Beach and the Town of Palm Beach and is a nesting area for Snail Kites and Bald Eagles. A spill from a truck carrying hazardous materials would threaten the drinking water of our county's largest population center. There are other routes, albeit more expensive, that would not threaten Grassy Waters.

Our second area of concern is ARM Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) leases and operates the refuge on land owned by South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). The refuge has met all thirteen performance standards under the agreement except the control of Melaleuca (which should be met shortly) and of Old World Climbing Fern (*Lygodium Microphyllum*). Due to the lack of funding, USFWS has been unable to halt the spread of this aggressive invasive. SFWMD's webpage has as a lead article: "USFWS failing to meet obligations to control invasive plants." The article estimates that the US Congress needs to invest \$5 million per year for the next five years, and it suggests various steps, such as amending the licensing agreement, if funding is not provided to stop the continued invasion of Lygodium. This could mean that SFWMD would take control of 97% of the refuge, possibly resulting in weaker water quality regulations, increased hunting, and the eventual lease or sale of sections of the 143,954 acres that comprise the last vestige of the once vast northern Everglades.

If you are interested in working on either of these important issues, please send an email to our new conservation email [ASEconservation@gmail.com](mailto:ASEconservation@gmail.com). Tell us which issue you want to learn more about and what you can do to help. This will allow us to quickly mobilize our conservation efforts. If you don't use e-mail, please call me Paton: 551-818-7574



### **IN SEARCH OF THE WILD FLAMINGOS** by Lori Hayes



The anticipation had been building for months. My first chance at a glimpse of a wild flamingo! The Audubon Society of the Everglades (ASE) offers a series of tours in March and April to STA 2 located in southwestern Palm Beach County. My husband Pat and I signed up for the first tour of the season Sunday, March 13, at 9:30 am.

We left a sleepy Boca Raton in the predawn of daylight savings time. We arrived early and found excited birders and photographers anxiously waiting from all over Florida - Palm Beach to the east, Orlando to the north, Miami to the south, and Englewood to the west. At 9:30 a.m. the gates to STA 2 were opened. Each car was checked in, signed liability releases were collected, and walky talkies were distributed. The group fit into 12 cars to keep disturbance at a minimum. We rode with Steve Siegel, a videographer from Miami.

Susan McKemy from ASE greeted us and gave us information on the STA and what to expect on the tour. The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) stormwater treatment areas (STAs) are man-made wetlands that play a vital role in protecting and restoring America's Everglades. Their key purpose is to reduce the phosphorus in urban and agricultural runoff flowing into the Everglades. Their diversity of aquatic vegetation maximizes water quality treatment and provides prime habitat for wading birds, ducks, alligators - and even flamingos!

Flamingos have been visiting STA 2 during March and April for the past 10 years with over 140 Flamingos present in 2014. Because so many people wanted the opportunity to visit this restricted-access site, in 2015 SFWMD contracted with ASE to provide tours similar to those ASE conducts in STA 1E. The tours were a huge success and many happy people got to see the flamingos. More tours were scheduled for this year.

No flamingos were found. But we were not disappointed in our sightings! Highlights included Northern Harrier, American Bittern in flight, American White Pelicans, Roseate Spoonbills, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Fulvous Whistling Ducks, two Peregrine Falcons and a nearby hawk nest. It was a beautiful day, and I know I will return next year for another chance to find the elusive American Flamingo. Thank you to our excellent tour guide Rick Schofield for leading a great tour, Susan McKemy for greeting us, ASE for arranging the tour, and SFWMD for sharing this Palm Beach County gem.

*Lori has been an ASE member since 2015 and has enjoyed many ASE sponsored field trips. She is the program coordinator for the Kelleys Island Audubon Club in Ohio.*

### **July and August Monthly meeting changes:**

Please note the following changes to the meeting schedule in the brochure:

**July 5 - PHOTO-SHARING AND ICE CREAM SOCIAL** replaces **CITIZEN SCIENCE: MINI PROGRAMS PRESENTED BY MEMBERS.**

**August 2 - ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIRDING MINI PROGRAMS** replaces **MEMBERS' PHOTOS** and, because the Pine Jog meeting room is unexpectedly unavailable for our August meeting, the location for this meeting only is at Palm Beach County Main Library, Summit Blvd, West Palm Beach.

## May Bird of the Month Semipalmated Sandpiper

by Ben Kolstad

The May bird of the month, *Calidris pusilla*, is one of several small sandpipers known in birding circles as “peeps.” Its name “semipalmated,” which means that it has webbing between its toes, may make you think that the feet could be useful in identifying this bird. Unfortunately, the peep most likely to cause confusion with this one is its close cousin Western, the only other small sandpiper with webbing between the toes.

ID: Note that bill shape can be misleading: although it tends to be longer and droopier at the tip than Western, this trait is variable and overlaps enough to cause confusion if this is the only field mark you can find. So - start with body shape: its belly and breast have been described as “robust,” making the head look more rounded than Western. Next, posture: Semipalmated tends to distribute its weight more evenly over the legs than Western, which often looks “front-heavy” by comparison. Behavior is often a good indicator: Semipalmateds tend to be more aggressive than other peeps, often seen fighting with nearby birds. Color can be another clue: in winter, Semipalmated Sandpipers are noticeably darker than Westerns, our palest peep, and stand out prominently.

Also, keep in mind that very few Semipalmateds winter in the States, and those tend to stay in the Keys, rarely straying north of Florida Bay.

Eastern-Arctic-breeding populations of Semipalmated Sandpiper appear to be in decline; this bird made the yellow Watch List (widespread but with troubling declines and high threats) in the 2014 State of the Birds report.

## June Bird of the Month - Willet

by Ben Kolstad

With the arrival of summer and the departure of most of the shorebirds from our area, we begin our investigation of some common larger shorebirds of Palm Beach County, genus *Tringa*. First up is *T. semipalmata*, the Willet. The easiest way to identify this bird is to close your eyes and listen for its characteristic call: pill-will-willet; pill-will-willet.

If you prefer to bird with your eyes open, Willets are still fairly easy to ID: large, strong gray legs, a long stout black bill, and, in flight, an amazing white wing stripe—so striking is this black-and-white wing plumage that the authors of the recent Peterson Reference Guide to Birding by Impression had to confess that, as beginners, they had once misidentified a Willet as a Black-necked Stilt, before they upped their game to consider the whole bird rather than just the most obvious plumage details!

Eastern Willet in breeding plumage looks rather like our yellowlegs species, but the honking black bill and strong black legs make it fairly simple to tell them apart. Also, Eastern Willet in nonbreeding plumage doesn't really matter, because the Eastern subspecies winters in South America and doesn't tend to come back to the states until it's in its breeding plumage. Like the Semi-Westerns we looked at in the spring, most of the Willets we see here in the East in nonbreeding plumage are in fact “Western” birds. Many authors consider that these two subspecies will be split in a few years.



Semipalmated Sandpiper - photo by Susan Davis

## Books Every Birder Should Read

by Corey T. Callaghan

Here is my third recommendation in my series of the top five books every birder should read:

**Wild America** by Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

Two prominent ornithologists traverse the North American continent on a 30,000-mile journey mainly in search of birds, but, also, of all things natural. The book is a compilation of journal entries from James Fisher's diary and commentary by Roger Tory Peterson. It presents the perfect cross section of birds and their natural surroundings through an epic adventure around the country that is sure to keep you flipping the pages.

This book is available to check out from our Audubon Collection in the main Palm Beach County Library on Summit Blvd, West Palm Beach.



Willet - photo by Larry Hess

## CALLING PHOTOGRAPHERS and WRITERS

Please send Bird-of-the-Month photographs (jpg format) - Lesser Yellowlegs for July and Greater Yellowlegs for August - for posting on the ASE web site to [SheilaElliot@yahoo.com](mailto:SheilaElliot@yahoo.com). Enjoy our growing on-line gallery of member images (click Bird of the Month on the left side scroll down topic list).

If you are a writer interested in submitting to the KITE, please send your article idea or draft article to [auduboneverglades@gmail.com](mailto:auduboneverglades@gmail.com).

Audubon Society of the Everglades  
Post Office Box 16914  
West Palm Beach, Florida  
33416-6914

Non Profit Org.  
U. S. Postage Paid  
Permit 46  
West Palm Beach, Florida

Dated Material - DO NOT DELAY

The **Everglades Kite** is published 10 times a year by the Audubon Society of the Everglades, P.O. Box 16914, West Palm Beach, Florida 33416-6914. Also available online at [www.auduboneverglades.org](http://www.auduboneverglades.org).  
AUDUBON SOCIETY OF THE EVERGLADES is a 501 c-3 organization # 59-6019854.  
We gratefully accept any donations or bequests at <http://www.auduboneverglades.org/donate/>

*Audubon Society of the Everglades general meetings are held the first Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. (refreshments at 6:30) 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.*

### **Join Audubon Society of the Everglades**

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

**1. Chapter-only membership.** When you become a chapter-only member, **ALL** of your membership fees are put to use supporting local projects and education. You will receive 10 issues of the Kite newsletter and you will also receive priority for special events.

#### **ASE Chapter Only Membership Application**

Enclosed is my check payable to the **Audubon Society of the Everglades** for my yearly dues.

**Membership runs from January 1 – December 31 of the current year**

Please circle one ►►► \$20 (Regular) \$15 (Student or Senior) \$25.00 (Household) \$50 (Patron)

\_\_\_\_ Please send my Kite by email; I would like to save trees, and also save ASE both postage and printing costs.

In addition to membership, please accept my contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to help further local projects/education.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to: Audubon Society of the Everglades P.O. Box 16914, West Palm Beach, FL 33416-6914**

**OR pay online at [www.auduboneverglades.org/membership](http://www.auduboneverglades.org/membership)**

**2. Membership through the National Audubon Society.** If you join **ASE** through **National Audubon** you will receive 6 issues of the Audubon magazine, and membership in Audubon of Florida. Mail your \$20.00 check along with your information to: **National Audubon Society** 225 Varick St., 7th floor, New York, New York 10014 Attn: Chance Muehleck. Include the code **C9ZE000Z**

**As a NAS member you will need to request the Kite newsletter to be emailed or mailed to you by contacting Gail Tomei. Call her at 561-969-7567 or email to [blackgrouper@comcast.net](mailto:blackgrouper@comcast.net).**