



# EVERGLADE KITE

## newsletter

AUDUBON SOCIETY OF THE EVERGLADES

volume 57, number 8 - May / June 2017

### ASE FIELD TRIPS CALENDAR May / June 2017

#### May

- 03 Wed (8a-10a) Seacrest Scrub**, Moderate/Medium (Sue Young)
- 06 Sat (7a-12p) STA-1E**, Easy/Drive, **RR** (Linda Humphries)
- 07 Sun (8a-10a) Frenchman's Forest**, Moderate/Medium (Bart Scott)
- 07 Sun (9a-11a) Snook Islands**, Easy/Short (Gael Silverblatt)
- 13 Sat (7a-9a) Cypress Creek**, Challenging/Medium (David Wimer / Chuck Weber)
- 19 Fri (5p-7p) Green Cay**, Easy/Medium (Valleri Brauer)

#### June

- Jun 03 Sat (7a-12p) STA-1E**, Easy/Drive, **RR** (Linda Humphries)

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*Always check the web site calendar for details, registration links and last minute changes. Field trips listed in italics are new and/or unique.*

*\*\$ There is an associated cost; see website calendar for details*

*\*RR advance registration required. Trips, unless otherwise specified, are "Just Show Up."*

### ASE NOTICES and OPPORTUNITIES:

**Volunteers are needed:**

#### **Citizen Science - Project Perch**

Have you seen Florida Burrowing Owls within the past 12 months anywhere in Palm Beach County? If you have, please contact Susan Davis ([susandavisdesign@gmail.com](mailto:susandavisdesign@gmail.com)) with location of your sighting and any observation details so we can follow up.

#### **Citizen Science - Audubon Jay Watch**

Audubon holds its annual Florida Scrub-Jay Watch, a count of adults and fledglings, in June/July. Contact Jacqui Sulek ([jsulek@audubon.org](mailto:jsulek@audubon.org)) to sign up NOW for the training session held at Jonathan Dickinson SP on May 20th. We need volunteers for the Palm Beach count held at Jupiter Ridge Natural Area. Contact Susan Davis ([susandavisdesign@gmail.com](mailto:susandavisdesign@gmail.com))

#### **Photographers**

Please send your best bird photographs to Sheila Hollihan-Elliott ([sheilaelliott@yahoo.com](mailto:sheilaelliott@yahoo.com)) for publication in the Audubon Society of the Everglades website and/or the Everglade Kite newsletter. Red-Cockaded Woodpecker for July and Bachman's Sparrow for August. (Please note that the next issue of the Kite is JULY/AUGUST combined)

### May Membership Meeting & Lecture:

#### "ASE Photography Club Annual Show"

by Dr. Peter J. Lekos, Club President and much published and award winning photographer.

**Tuesday, May 2nd at 7:00 pm**

Please join us at the May 2 meeting of the Audubon Society of the Everglades (ASE), where members of the new ASE Photography Club will share and discuss their nature images, many of which have won awards in various categories this season.

Dr. Lekos, Club President, and Scott Zucker, Club Treasurer, co-founded the Photography Club this past year to provide ASE members the opportunity to become better photographers, meet other people who share their passion, and support ASE's efforts to protect birds and wildlife habitats through conservation and education.

Dr. Lekos has a BS in Biology, a BS in Pharmacology, and a Doctorate in Dental Medicine. He has been a member of camera clubs for nearly 35 years and achieved international recognition through the Photographic Society of America, where he ranked #3 in North America and #12 in the world. He is also an accomplished judge of prestigious international photography competitions.

If time permits, Dr. Lekos will share a short presentation about a Bluebird nesting box trail that he maintained as a volunteer for the Wildlife Conservation Corps of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife.

Also at the meeting, our expert Clive Pinnock will tell us about the May Bird of the Month: Sandhill Crane.

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. Meeting is free and open to the public.

### JUNE Meeting & Program:

#### Audubon Film at Library

Our June 6 meeting will be at Palm Beach County's Main Library at 3650 Summit Blvd., West Palm Beach. We will be showing a film about James Audubon, entitled "Rara Avis." Doors open at 6:00 p.m. The meeting will start at 6:30 and the movie at 6:45. **Reservations are required. Please call the library at 561-233-2600 to reserve your place.**

The film's web site is <http://www.audubonthefilm.com/>. It has information about Audubon himself, the film, the filmmakers, the historians, and even a short trailer.

## President's Letter ■ ■ ■ Paton White

**Many of you have recently left Florida or will do so shortly. We will miss you. Please stay in touch and let us hear about your exciting bird sightings and the ideas you pick up from other chapters that would enhance ASE.**

### **1. New At- Large Board Members**

Sean Borak, a.k.a. Noah's father, and Gerry Felipe were approved by our membership at the annual meeting and will join our board. Both come with a wealth of knowledge about computers, websites, and social media. They will be a huge asset as we update all aspects of our communications. At-large members remaining on the board are Anne Hocter, Linda McCandless, Eric Ray, Vicki Rogerson, Debbie Smith, Susan Snyder, Marcia Yeip and Mary Young

Gail Tomei, Susan Davis and Linda Humphries are retiring from the board. Gail will be active with the Program Committee, Susan will continue doing the Kite layout and leading Project Perch, and Linda, who is the President of Pack and Paddle, is also starting a special project for ASE. I am grateful to all three for continuing to take leadership roles.

### **2. Custard Apple Trail**

The Custard Apple Trail in John Prince Park was a wonderful birding location in the late 1900s and an ASE project. It has since fallen into disrepair. Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation, which is actively trying to restore it and improve on its original plans, invited members of our chapter to join a planning session. While we did not commit to anything, we are excited about this potential partnership.

### **3. Conservation Stewardship Program**

The participants' reviews of the first two classes have been amazing! Scott Zucker, Mary Young, and Paul Davis have created a program getting rave reviews that can be adapted by other chapters around the country.

**4. The Purple Martin House at Wakodahatchee** has visitors, and there are reports that it may have been chosen as a nesting site. The two PUMA houses at Peaceful Waters are occupied.

### **5. Volunteers**

You don't have to be a board member, committee chair, or field trip leader to be an important volunteer. Sometimes it can be only a day that you participate. Bev and Don Bernard, Nila Wilbur, and Ron Frendreis, who literally produced our annual meeting: set up, tear down, food management, and trash removal, gave a tremendous amount of time and energy for one day. You can also volunteer for just a few minutes on a regular basis.

### **6. Be Informed and act**

This is a challenging time for Conservation. Please sign up for ASE's conservation updates at <http://www.auduboneverglades.org/contact-us/email-list-signup/> and act on them! It won't take you long. Volunteer to help save the earth. Global warming and environmental threats are real. Our birds, our parks, and our government all need YOU!

## **2016 Green Schools Award**

*By Susan Snyder*

ASE is one of the organizations that participated in the initial development of the Green Schools Recognition Program in 2009. Each year we give a \$500 Habitat Improvement Award named after two outstanding Palm Beach County and ASE environmentalists - Rosa Durando and Stella Ross - to recognize the school that makes the greatest strides in improving its campus habitat.

We recently received this thank you note from Kate Lane, Student Services/Ecology Club Staff at the 2016 winning school:

"I am writing to you on behalf of Wellington Elementary School, and wanted to update you on some of the ways that we have spent the Habitat Improvement Award money. I would like to start by thanking you again for selecting us and for giving us the incredible opportunity to improve our nature trail and the educational experience for our students. We have used the money to purchase and repair owl boxes, installed a new bird feeder, added benches to the trail, and we recently purchased a video camera that has night vision. We are most excited about our camera because the students are able to watch videos of animals in their natural habitat without being disturbed. The kids are also very excited about seeing what goes on at night on our nature trail."

With much gratitude,  
Kate Lane (Wellington Elementary)

2016 ASE Green Schools judges included Paton White, Scott Zucker, Janet Schreiber, Susan Snyder, and Susan Coppola. If you were a judge and your name is not here, we apologize. Please let managing editor Sheila Elliot know ([sheilaelliot@yahoo.com](mailto:sheilaelliot@yahoo.com)), and we will include it in a later issue of KITE.

The 2017 Award is currently in the judging process, and we will announce the winning school when the selection is made.

### May: Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) ST (State Threatened)

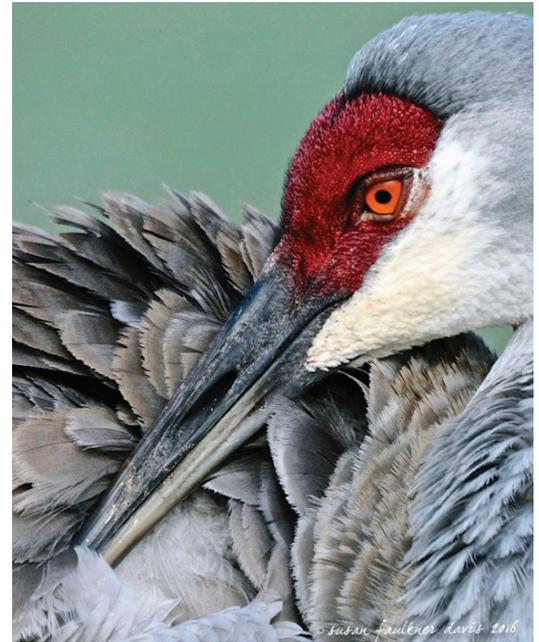
Although technically a wetland bird, the Sandhill Crane can just as often be encountered in upland habitats like grasslands and prairies. These large birds are the size of our Great Blue Heron, but, unlike herons and egrets, cranes keep their necks extended rather than curled into the S-shape of the Ardeidae, and their black bills are substantially thinner and shorter. They are very large, pale silver and gray birds with long, black legs and a red patch on the crown that stands out against a white cheek. They also have unique “curved” feathers at the rump, often called a bustle.

Their feeding strategies are also different from those of herons and egret; rather than searching for fish and aquatic prey, cranes feed on grains and invertebrates in grasslands and prairies.

Sandhill Crane breeding dances and unison calls, like those of many crane species, are not to be missed. And, since this is the world’s most common crane, its behavior is less likely to be missed than that of other cranes. What’s more, it even dances and calls in the nonbreeding season, although perhaps with less regularity and urgency.

The Florida population is nonmigratory, so we don’t see the huge aggregations (hundreds of thousands of birds) that occur seasonally on the Platte River in Nebraska. Our wintering population is increased substantially, though, by northern-breeding birds that stay over in our hospitable climate.

Fun fact: Sandhill Cranes have existed relatively unchanged for at least 10 million years, according to fossil evidence from Miocene deposits in Nebraska. For more info on this bird, check out the FWS’s fact sheet at [https://www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/Region\\_1/NWRS/Zone\\_2/Mid-Columbia\\_River\\_Complex/Columbia/Documents/sandhill-crane-facts.pdf](https://www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/Region_1/NWRS/Zone_2/Mid-Columbia_River_Complex/Columbia/Documents/sandhill-crane-facts.pdf)



Susan Faulkner Davis

### June - Everglade Snail Kite (*Rostrhamus sociabilis plumbeus*) FE (Federally Endangered)

The North American population of snail kites is restricted to peninsular Florida, although there is a South American population of this marsh resident species. As their common name suggests, their principal prey is snails; here in Florida, that’s the Florida apple snail (*Pomacea paludosa*). Since 1989 several introduced snail species have been documented in the Everglades, one of which—the channeled apple snail—appears to have the potential to outcompete the native

apple snails on which these endangered kites depend as (almost) their sole source of food

Snail Kites have hooked bills, the better to extract the meat from their prey. One reason ecologists are worried about the introduced species of apple snail is the specialized adaptation of the kite to the Florida apple snail; the larger channeled apple snail is harder for the kites to carry and to eat. From the NPS website about this species:

The bill is a distinguishing characteristic for field identification of adults as well as juveniles. Although sometimes confused with the northern harrier, the Snail Kite's flight is slower and characterized by more wing flapping, and the head typically is tilted down to look for snails while in flight. Snail Kites do not plunge into the water to capture snails and never use the bill to capture prey. Rather, they use their feet to capture snails at or below the surface of the water.

Locally, the best places to see this bird—larger brown females, smaller gray males—are at the ARM Loxahatchee NWR and Grassy Waters, west of West Palm Beach.



Walt Hackenjoes

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We offer Amazon Smile and eBay fundraising programs, as well as direct giving.

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

## ASE APPLICATION

There are two ways to join **Audubon Society of the Everglades**.

**Chapter-Only Membership:** An annual membership that starts on January 1 and runs through the calendar year. **New members who join after Oct 1, 2016 and anyone who renews after that date are paid up until Dec.31, 2017.** All your membership dues are put to use supporting local projects and educational programs. You receive 10 issues of the Kite newsletter and priority for some special trips and events.

**National Audubon Society Membership:** It also includes membership in Florida Audubon and Audubon Society of the Everglades. You receive 6 issues of the Audubon magazine. Cost is \$20.00 a year. Please enclose a check for \$20.00, include our chapter code C9ZE000Z and mail it to: National Audubon Society, 225 Varick St., 7th floor, New York, NY 10014 Attn: Chance Muehleck.

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

**Yes, I want to become a chapter-only member of ASE.**

Go to <http://www.auduboneverglades.org/about-ase/membership/> and pay with a credit card.

**Or,** complete this form and mail your check to: Audubon Society of the Everglades, PO Box 16914, West Palm Beach, Florida 33416-6914

Please check one:

\$20 (Regular) \$15 (Student/Senior) \$25 (Household) \$50 (Patron)

Please accept my additional contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to help the environment, and see the cost of printing and postage used for conservation and education instead; please send my Kite newsletter via email.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_