



EVERGLADE KITE

NEWSLETTER

Monthly Newsletter for Audubon Everglades
VOL 58 | Issue 2 | October 2017



Photo: Florida Grasshopper Sparrow © Paul Thomas 2013. All rights reserved.

Bird of the Month: Florida Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum floridanus*)

by Ben Kolstad

This federally endangered bird is sometimes a victim of the confusion between taxonomic and common names. You could be forgiven for assuming that *Ammodramus savannarum* is the Savanna Sparrow. After all, *Ammodramus* = sandrunner, and *savannarum* = savanna (or, more technically, treeless plain). But no, of course not. Savannah Sparrow (next month's bird of the month) is *Passerculus sandwichensis*. Its common name comes not from a savanna but from the city of Savannah, Georgia (hence the h on the end of the name). So what is *Ammodramus savannarum*? Why, the Grasshopper Sparrow, of course. Were it a more conspicuous sight, you might see it in the company of the federally

threatened Crested Caracara. Unfortunately, owing to its secretive habits and its excellent camouflaging plumage, this bird is almost impossible to spot except when there are "singing" males to triangulate on. Even then you have to know what you're looking/listening for. True to its common name, Grasshopper Sparrow's song sounds more like the buzz of an insect than the call of a songbird.

Although populations of Grasshopper Sparrow are relatively stable throughout North America (it's designated a species of least concern by the IUCN), the Florida population of this bird, restricted to the dry prairies in south-central parts of the state, is

federally endangered and has been since 1986. (If you're wondering why this subspecies of a bird that is quite common elsewhere is considered federally endangered, [read this blog post from Florida Audubon](#).)

[In a different article](#), here is what Florida Audubon had to say about this bird's plight: The sparrow is so highly endangered due in large part to its exclusive dependence upon Florida dry prairie habitat, more than 85% of which has been destroyed. Most prairie loss has resulted from conversion to domestic pasture grasses, which support more cattle per acre and can support some species of prairie wildlife, but

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UPCOMING TRIPS

OCTOBER 2017

Always check the website calendar for details, registration links and last minute changes. Unless otherwise specified, trips are "Just Show Up."

01 SUN (8A-10A) Spanish River Park \$ (Luis 'Beto' Matheus) ● 1.5

07 SAT (7A-12P) STA-1E (David Simpson) ● 1.5

07 SAT (7:30A-11:30A) ★ Green Cay (Big Sit!) (Linda McCandless/Al Pelligrinelli) Meet at NW Gazebo. ● 1.5

08 SUN (8A-10A) Frenchman's Forest (Chuck Weber) 1.5

08 SUN (9A-3P) ★ MacArthur Beach SP (Hawk Watch) \$ (David Simpson, leader; Linda Humphries, coord.) ● 1.5

09 MON (8A-11A) Morikami Park (Gardens closed) (Sue Young) 1.5

14 SAT (7A-9A) ★ Cypress Creek South (David Witmer) ◆ 1.5

22 SUN (8A-10A) Green Cay (Valleri Brauer) ● 1.5

29 SUN (8A-10A) Pine Glades (Chuck Weber) 1.5

DECEMBER 2017

The following advance registration field trips in December will become available for online registration on their corresponding dates during the month of October, e.g., registration for Dec 04 trip begins Oct 04.

02 SAT (7:30A-12P) STA-1E (Dan O'Malley) ● 1.5

09 SAT (6:30A-9:30A) Loxahatchee Slough (Dale Gawlik) ● 1.5

10 SUN (8A-12P) STA-2 (Susan McKemy, coord.) ● 1.5

14 THU (ALL DAY) T.M. Goodwin/Broadmoor Unit (Rick Schofield) ● 1.5

17 SUN (7:30A-12P) STA-1E (Rick Schofield, coord.) ● 1.5

TRIP KEY

EFFORT/DIFFICULTY

● **Easy:** Boardwalk or paved level surface; or birding mainly from bike / boat / auto

■ **Moderate:** Improved trail; dirt and uneven surfaces

◆ **Challenging:** Improved or unimproved trail; uneven, rocky, and/or wet surfaces

DISTANCE

● 0 **Sitting /Driving:** no walking required

● <1 **Short:** less than 1 mile

● 1.5 **Medium:** 1-1.5 miles

● >1.5 **Long:** more than 1.5 miles

OTHER

★ New and/or unique trips

\$ There is an associated cost

📅 Advance registration required

👤 Family-friendly

♿ Handicap Accessible

🌿 Audubon Everglades member priority

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

October 2017

by Paton White

We were fortunate that Irma was as gentle as she was in Palm Beach County. I have not heard that any of our members' homes received major damage. Three days after Irma's passing, Sue Young led our first field trip of the new season. Fortunately migrating birds will find both food and roosting areas available here, and my local birds seemed to have fared well.

Our Audubon Regional Conservation Coalition (with participants from Tropical Audubon, South Florida Audubon and Audubon Everglades) met at my house and prepared our Everglades RCC Priorities, which will be presented at Audubon Assembly in October. The complete report will be on our website under Conservation. The highlights are:

1. To educate our community about climate change
2. To advocate to improve Everglades Restoration
 - A. To enhance water conservation
 - B. To advocate for use of Amendment 1 funds for restoration projects

3. To enhance Bird and Wildlife Conservation
 - A. To participate in bird monitoring programs
 - B. To prevent degradation and fragmentation of bird habitat
 - C. To inspire legislators to recognize the importance of local Florida Forever projects
 - D. To preserve, expand and enhance wetlands
- C. To advocate for a reservoir south of Lake Okeechobee
- D. To advocate for timely implementation of CEPP

The Audubon Everglades board approved an expenditure of \$250 to support Boy Scout Jacob McDougal's project to improve the raptor compound at Okeehelie Nature Center.

Looking forward to seeing you at our programs and field trips of the 2017-18 season!

Doreen LePage: New Audubon Everglades Board Member and Membership Chair



A warm welcome to Doreen LePage, our new Audubon Everglades board member and Membership Chair!

Doreen, who grew up in Connecticut and Massachusetts, established a connection to Florida when she came down to attend the University of Miami as a marine biology major. It was here that she fell in love with birding. Three weeks into a course in Parasitology, the students were asked to dissect halibut worms. Aghast, Doreen made a beeline to her advisor and said she had to drop that one and switch to another science course. He suggested Ornithology.

"Ornithology," Doreen asked, "is that about plants?" Well, no, it was about birds, and Doreen got hooked. The class was small – just ten students (she was the "only girl"). It was taught by Professor Oscar T. (Bud) Owre, a legendary faculty member and president of Tropical Audubon whose passion for South Florida's birds was infectious. Owre opened Doreen's eyes to birds and the conservation of critical habitats of South Florida. In the field for every class, they walked in waist deep water through the Big Cypress Swamp and other areas of the Everglades. One of the most memorable field trips was a shrimp boat ride to the Dry Tortugas, where they banded terns, slept in the fort, and got serious sunburns. An early environmental activist, Doreen was an organizer of UM's first Earth Day in 1970 and was active in efforts to block the development of a Jetport in the Big Cypress.

Doreen went back north after graduation from UM and took a research position at a private research foundation in the Boston area that had received a grant for research in experimental oncology from the National Cancer Institute (NCI). Doreen then worked 20 years at a Boston satellite of the NCI. While there she received her Master's degree and PhD in Immunology

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Monthly MEETING and LECTURE: “Voyagers on the Open Sea - The Pelagic Birds of Florida,”

Michael Brothers, Executive Director, Marine Science Center, Ponce Inlet, FL

OCT

03

Tuesday, October 3, 7PM meeting & lecture

Meeting and program is free and open to the public. Doors open at 6:30PM 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. We look forward to seeing you there!

Michael Brothers has been studying Florida birds for the last 45 years and has been leading pelagic trips off the coast of Florida and Georgia for the last 12 years. This program will offer an introduction to the challenging pelagic birds of Florida and the attempts to unravel the dynamics of their occurrence and their relationship to the oceanic environments.

Black-capped Petrel, White-tailed Tropicbird, Bulwer's Petrel, Manx Shearwater, Band-rumped Storm-Petrel – these are names that set a birder's heart racing in Florida. The pelagic birds are one of the last frontiers of our understanding of Florida's avifauna. These birds of the open ocean come from distant shores of the Arctic, remote islands of the Caribbean and South America, the coast of Europe, northwest Africa, and even islands off Antarctica. Great travelers, they pass by our shores largely unseen. The difficulties of offshore access, which limit the numbers of observers, are compounded by the challenges of identification. Our knowledge is often limited to brief glimpses of a shearwater or storm-petrel by coastal observers. Systematic studies of Florida's oceanic birdlife are few.

[Please enjoy this gallery of Pelagic Birds by Michael Brothers.](#) Come enjoy this informative program!

About Michael M. Brothers:

Mr. Brothers is the Director of the Marine Science

Center in Ponce Inlet, Florida, where he has worked since 2004. He is the former director of museums in Florida and Georgia and has worked as a professional interpretive naturalist for over 40 years.

Mr. Brothers' pelagic trips extend to the Gulf Stream and out 100 miles to the 3,000 foot deep canyons beyond the Gulf Stream. He has extensive natural resource and natural science interpretive experience, with specializations in the bird life and flora of Central Florida, and he has lead birding tours throughout Florida, the Okefenokee Swamp, the Galapagos Islands, Kenya, Machu Picchu and the Amazon. Mr. Brothers' research specialty is in the coastal and oceanic birds of Florida. He is currently a member of the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee, which evaluates reports of birds recorded in the wild in Florida and is responsible for updating the scientific record of Florida's avifauna. He is also the Florida editor for the journal "North American Birds."

Also at the meeting, our expert, Clive Pinnock will speak about the October Bird of the Month, Florida Grasshopper Sparrow.

Note: If you missed last month's program by Dr. Ridgley on Florida's Bonneted Bats, you can view it [online](#).

Bird of the Month continued from page 1

not Florida Grasshopper Sparrows. This "improved pasture" lacks the structure that these birds need. Research indicates the sparrows need native prairie in prime condition—it should burn every two years and as a result have virtually no brush or trees. Burns at the end of the dry season (April-June) are considered better than other times of the year.

As with most endangered species, the main culprit is habitat loss. If you happen to find this bird anywhere in Palm Beach County, send me an email. I don't chase birds much anymore, but I might make an exception for this one.

[See the Virtual Online gallery here: Florida Grasshopper Sparrow.](#)

Photographer's please note: next month's BOM is the Savannah Sparrow.

2017 National Audubon Convention

Roy and Susan Snyder attended the 2017 National Audubon Convention in Park City, Utah in July. The theme of the convention was "Elevating Audubon: America's Most Effective Conservation Network." Among the most interesting topics presented were those on Diversity – being intentional about equity and inclusion when expanding membership; Collaboration – creating initiatives and alliances with other advocacy groups; and Coastal Bird Stewardship – ideas and a new toolkit for developing programs. Roy and Susan recommend that everyone plan to attend an NAS Convention sometime.

It was a truly worthwhile experience. As a side note, they brought copies of the new Audubon Everglades brochures to the Convention and attendees were impressed with them!

[If you would like to enjoy Camilla Cerea/Audubon's photos of the event, click here.](#)



Photo: © Michael Brothers. All rights reserved.

CONSERVATION NEWS

2018 CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP TRAINING COURSE

Planning has begun for the 2018 Conservation Stewardship Training Course that will run on consecutive Mondays from February 5 through March 19. Audubon Everglades, in partnership with UF/IFAS Extension of PBC, will hold its 7-week basic environmental education course again this year. Expert biologists, environmentalists, and advocates will teach us how five different Florida natural habitats sustain plants and wildlife and adapt to climate change. Registration will begin in December.

NEW AUDUBON EVERGLADES ADVOCATES IN PLACE

We are excited to announce that Robert Franzino will be our “PBC Conservation Policy Advocate” attending the PBC Commission meetings and keeping us updated on environmental issues around the county, and that Ida Plaia will be our “Greater Everglades Conservation Policy Advocate” attending the South Florida Water Management District meetings and informing us on issues affecting the Everglades. Frank and Ida will be our Audubon Everglades voice at these important board meetings.

HABITAT CLEAN-UPS AND INVASIVE PLANT REMOVAL

Some of you met Christa Ciociola at our September meeting. She comes to us from AmeriCorps, where she has been leading habitat restoration crews at Jonathan Dickinson State Park and at other state parks. She will be supporting our efforts to do more habitat clean-ups and invasive plant removals.

UPCOMING WORKSHOP: “HOW TO WRITE GREAT LETTERS TO THE EDITOR”

Since “Letters to the Editor” is the most read section in the newspaper, it is a great place to make your voice heard on environmental issues that you care about. Learn how to write these letters well and get them published. Contact: vp-conservation@auduboneverglades.org for more information.

AUDUBON EVERGLADES PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

Don Marchetto will be leading an effort to provide photographs of birds, butterflies, insects, plants, etc. taken by our photography club members to environmental organizations for their use in promoting wildlife and habitat awareness.

Noah Borak Helps Bird Banding

On my summer vacation, I was with the bird banders at Weymouth Woods - Sandhills Nature Preserve in North Carolina, helping the bird banders catch and release many birds. It was the first time I touched a White-breasted Nuthatch. I hope to do it again because I love birds.



Editor's note: Noah, who just turned 11, frequently joins Audubon Everglades birding trips with his father Sean Borak

Doreen continued from page 2

from Boston University. She joined Biogen, a bio-tech company in Boston, where she became Director of Pharmacology with an emphasis on experimental oncology. When Biogen moved their oncology programs to San Diego, Doreen decided to stay behind, and she took a director position at the U.S.-based facilities of a Spanish pharmacology company, where, going full circle to her original interest in biology, helped them develop oncology drugs from marine organisms!

Ten years ago, after her husband's death, Doreen retired and decided to come back to Florida. Her parents were living in Boynton Beach at the time.

One of Doreen's passions has been pure breed dogs. She and her husband were active in the American Rottweiler Club and raised and trained dogs together. They titled Rottweilers in obedience, tracking, herding of sheep, the German sport of Schutzhund and had many champion titled dogs. Doreen took the secretary position with the ARC and was the breed's liaison to the American Kennel Club. Her love for dogs, her science background, and her desire to “give back” led Doreen to be involved in the development of the Canine Health Association, a non-profit organization which does research on diseases specific to dogs. She has reviewed grant proposals and helped the organization connect with researchers.

Doreen is an avid and energetic traveler. She loves cruises, hiking, photography, seeing new places, learning about different habitats, and meeting new birds. She has traveled all over the world, and during a trip to Iceland this past May she reconnected with her favorite bird – the Puffin. She had seen Puffins in Maine at Eastern Egg Rock Island, and in Iceland she was able to get within six feet of Puffins popping in and out of their nests in rock crevasses. Doreen got wonderful photos of these Puffins!

Doreen has been an active member of Audubon Everglades for the last three years. She's joined the new Photography Club, she enjoys volunteering at educational activities, and, of course, she's an active participant on field trips. As Membership Chair, she looks forward to working with Sean Borak, one of our tech specialists, to automate the membership data base, and she also wants to bring fundraising for Audubon Everglades to a higher level. Doreen speaks frequently of her desire to “give back.” How lucky we are to have this interesting woman put her incredible energy, experience, and expertise to work for Audubon Everglades!

Claudine Laabs' Work Amazes Children in Connecticut

by Kevin Longo

excerpts of Kevin Longo's report – [for full report click here](#)

For years, I have presented a variety of hands-on science exhibits and experiences for the children enrolled in summer day camps in northeast Connecticut. These have included making rainbows and touching and studying fossils and rocks. I have also collected 35mm slides of planets and deep sky objects and have several handheld slide viewers which the children take turns using.

In January 2017, I began planning new summer science exhibits, and I decided to incorporate more biology in them. I wondered if the slide viewer approach could be used for biology, too. I began to search for slide collections online, and I saw the listing for a collection of 35mm slides of exotic Florida birds by a woman named Claudine Laabs. I could see immediately that these slides were not just everyday bird pictures. They had been taken by someone who combined rare bird watching skills and exquisite photographic talent. Some of the shots had clearly been made in a one or two-minute window of opportunity at the end of hours of planning, waiting, and good luck. I had to have these Laabs slides.

In July, I presented the interactive science exhibits. Eighty campers ages 5-12 did various hands-on activities. For the bird project, the activity consisted of handheld viewers, each with a preloaded and secured

35mm slide. The slides included Laabs' images of the Great Egret, the Purple Gallinule, the Tricolored Heron, the American White Pelican, and the Barred Owl. I gave a brief introduction to the experiment and augmented the learning with audio recordings of chirping birds and sounds of the rain forest and a laminated 8.5 x 11 poster identification guide to birds of the Everglades.

The campers had amazing reactions to the slides. They were proud to be able to match birds on the chart with the birds in the slides, and they worked hard to pronounce their names. My goal is always to inspire as well as to inform, and I was pleasantly surprised at the children's enthusiasm for bird identification. The variety of birds of the Everglades had had the intended effect. The magic in this activity in a small Connecticut town was made possible by Ms. Claudine Laabs. That so many children saw her slides and then took the extra step of identifying the birds she captured on film, convinces me that her work lives on and that enthusiastic learners of all ages can see the rare and beautiful sights of Florida's birds through her eyes. Thanks go to Audubon Everglades and Ms. Laabs.

Editor's note: Audubon Everglades recognizes educator Kevin Longo as the acquirer and archivist of the bulk of the Laabs slides donated by the Laabs Estate to Audubon Everglades, where Ms. Laabs served as President. If anyone can recount remembrances of Claudine Laabs and her photography, please do contact Kevin at nlongo01@snet.net.

The Native Plant Tour

The Native Plant Tour is a Go for October 1. Native plants are resilient!

Audubon Everglades and the Atala Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association have teamed up for the Florida Native Plant Society's Annual Native Plant Garden Tour. All three organizations will be together at the Judd Garden ([see more information including garden list](#)) to answer questions and share information on creating your own bird and butterfly friendly habitat.

As birders, we know about the extreme loss of habitat our wildlife has suffered. One native plant at a time, you can help our feathered friends. Learn how to attract more birds to your yard and which native plants attract which bird species. It's not just for you, it's "for the birds!" Birds and butterflies have adapted to survive weather events like IRMA, but surviving humans is another story.

Audubon Everglades members will receive a special admission price of \$5 with a coupon, admission for non-members is \$10, and children 13 and under come for free. Contact Vicki Rogerson at Education@AudubonEverglades.org to receive a member coupon by email.

Start at any one of the gardens and receive a ticket to show at the others. The tour is self-guided, and there are docents and plant lists at each garden.

The first 300 households will receive a bird and butterfly habitat gift consisting of a Corky-Stemmed Passion-Flower and a Firebush. Join us, and learn about the amazing number of birds and butterflies that rely on these two native plants.

We hope many of you will be doing your birding with us, October 1, on the Native Plant Garden Tour!

Photo: © Claudine Laabs. All rights reserved.



Upcoming Photography Club Events

Starting Saturday, September 30 at 10AM

Our first Audubon Everglades Photography Club field adventure will be at Mounts Botanical Garden on September 30 at 10 AM. (531 N Military Trail, West Palm Beach, FL 561-233-1760.) Mounts has a suggested \$5 donation.

There will be a workshop on Monday, October 9 for new or returning members on "How to Submit Images into a Competition." This will be a review of how to prepare, resize and upload images. Please bring laptop and images for October competition.

The regular October meeting will be on Monday, October 23, when we will have our first Competition: "Open: Nature and Assigned Subject: Botany" with Judge Alan Fabricant, a much published and award-winning nature, travel and sports photographer.

One of the goals of the Photography Club this year is to support conservation. Don Marchetto will be leading an effort to provide images of birds, butterflies,

insects, plants, etc. taken by our photography club members to environmental organizations for their use in promoting wildlife and habitat awareness.

Meetings are at 7 PM (doors open at 6:30PM) at St. Michael's Church, 1925 Birkdale Drive, Wellington, FL 33414. (Go west on Forest Hill Blvd., pass 441/SR 7, make the first right turn just past the Stribling Way traffic signal. The church entrance will be on your left.)

Photography Club Membership: Audubon Everglades Member Individual-\$30, Household-\$40; Non-Member-\$40, Household-\$50. Guests of members of the Photography Club may attend up to two club meetings. Please contact Club President Dr. Pete Lekos for more information: 201-600-6463.

UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

Make sure to stop by our table at these upcoming community events:

Oct 1, Sun., 9am-3pm. NATIVE PLANT GARDEN TOUR - Eight Native Gardens. Audubon Everglades, the Atala Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association, and the PBC Florida Native Plant Society Annual Native Plant Tour, at the Judd Garden. See article on page 5 for details. (Vicki Rogerson)

Oct 7, Sat., 8am-noon. SWAT (Students Working Against Tobacco) International Beach Cleanup at Boynton Beach near Ocean Ridge (the beach just south of Boynton Causeway with the guard tower/small white building.) (Debbie Smith)

PARKING NOTE: Oct 8, Sun., Hawk Watch (See trips column on page 2 or website). Linda Humphries has arranged for free parking: mention you are attending the Hawk Watch to qualify.

JOIN AUDUBON

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

There are two ways to join Audubon Everglades:

CHAPTER-ONLY MEMBERSHIP: An annual membership that starts on January 1 and runs through the calendar year. All your membership dues are put to use supporting local conservation projects and educational programs. You receive 12 issues of the Kite newsletter and priority for some special trips and events.

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP: includes membership in Florida Audubon and Audubon Everglades plus one year of the Audubon magazine. Join online at Audubon.org by selecting JOIN. Or send a check for \$20 per person along with your address and email to National Audubon Society, PO Box 97194, Washington DC 20090-7194.

The Audubon Everglades Kite newsletter is available by email only.

Yes, I want to become a chapter-only member of Audubon Everglades.

Join now using a credit card: Go to AudubonEverglades.org/membership to complete the application.

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: \$25 (Regular) \$20 (Student) \$20 (Senior) \$35 (Household*) \$75 (Patron*)

Please accept my additional contribution of \$ _____

Name _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ ZIP _____

*If you selected Household or Patron Membership, please provide the names of all members living at the same address. (2 adults and children under age 18)

Household/Patron Additional Names _____