

EVERGLADE KITE

NEWSLETTER

Monthly Newsletter for Audubon Everglades VOL 59 | Issue 6 | February 2019



Photo: Brown Thrasher © 2019 Nicola Labrador. All rights reserved.

Bird of the Month: Brown Thrasher (Toxostoma rufum)

In eastern North America, within habitats composed of dense thickets, shrubs, hedgerows, scrubby fields and overgrown clearings, Brown Thrashers lead inconspicuous lives. These 11.5-in songbirds sport a plumage of reddish brown on their backs and dark streaking on their whitish underparts. Similar in shape but larger in size to their relatives, the Northern Mockingbird and the Gray Catbird, Brown Thrashers have long legs, a long tail and a slightly down-curved beak. The face is gray-brown with yellow eyes, and there are two black and white wing bars on each wing.

Primarily secretive in nature, Brown Thrashers are usually seen lurking in shrubby tangles or foraging on the ground below dense cover. While foraging, they

run, walk or hop, using their beaks to sweep through leaf litter, uncovering insects and other invertebrates. Their diet also includes small vertebrates (lizards, snakes and tree frogs), fruit, seeds and nuts. They may sometimes be observed foraging on an open lawn, but, at the slightest disturbance, they dart back to dense cover, where they seem to disappear, due to their cryptic color pattern breaking up their outline.

These birds are most obvious when they are seen and heard singing loudly from tree tops or shrubs. The songs are a combination of many musical phrases and are usually composed of the songs of other songbirds. Within a typical song, a phrase is generally repeated before moving on to other parts of the

by Clive & Celecia Pinnock

song. To the keen listener, these repeated (or double) phrases make identifying the singing Brown Thrasher relatively easy.

During the nesting season, their territorial defense of the nest site is noteworthy, since they have been known to attack and strike potential threats (people, cats or dogs) with such force as to draw blood. Mated pairs work together to construct the nest, incubate the eggs, raise and feed the young; however, it is unknown whether the pair remains monogamous year after year or partners are changed annually.

Photographers – please note that next month's March bird of the month is the Gray Catbird.

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UPCOMING TRIPS FEBRUARY 2018

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

02 SAT (7:30A-12P) STA-TE (Rick Schofield, coord.) **03 SUN (7:30A-11A) Riverbend Park (**Ed Kawecki) **1:2>1.5** 05 TUE (8A-10A) Wakodahatchee (Chris Golia)

09 SAT (8A-4P) ★ Everglades Day (20th Annual) (Serena Rinker/Sue Snyder) • 1915 in &

09 SAT (8A-12P) STA-2 (Shorebird Survey) (Brian Garrett) • !! O

13 WED (7:30A-11:30A) Loxahatchee NWR (\$ (Rick Schofield) 19>15

16 SAT (8A-10:30A) Peaceful Waters (GBBC) (Scott Zucker) 19 1.5 🛊

17 SUN (7:30A-12P) **STA-1E (GBBC)** (David Simpson) !! O

17 SUN (12P-3P) Snook Islands (GBBC) (Gael Silverblatt) • in the state of the state of

21 THU (7:30A-9:30A) Wakodahatchee (Paton White)

21 THU (4:30P-6:30P) Grassy Waters (Sunset Canoe Fly-in) Cindy Bush) ! O 🌬

22 FRI (8:30A-10:30A) Loxahatchee NWR (Clive Pinnock) • 115 i

24 SUN (6:30A-4P) Belle Glade/West County (Chuck Weber) 15 Meet at Costco for carpool.

APRIL 2019

The following advance registration field trips in March will become available for online registration on their corresponding dates during the month of January, e.g., registration for the April 06 trip begins February 06.

06 SAT (7:30A-12P) STA-1E (Rick Schofield, coord.) 110

14 SUN (ALL DAY) * Everglades National Park 2 9

(Mark Cook) • !! O

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

Sitting /Driving: no walking required

Short: less than 1 mile Medium: 1-1.5 miles

19>1.5 Long: more than 1.5 miles

New and/or unique trips















Wading Bird Nesting Responses of 2018: A Precursor to a Hydrologically **Restored Everglades?** by Gail Tomei

Dr. Mark Cook | Lead Scientist for the Everglades Systems Assessment Section of The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)

FEB

Tuesday, February 5 at 7PM

Meeting and program are 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!



Dr. Cook says. "The title of my talk begins. 'Fueling the Return of the Everglades Super-colonies.' In short, I'll be talking about the 2018 record-breaking wading bird nesting in the Everglades, the reasons why it happened, and some recent scientific data on wading bird diet and its importance to nesting. It's a good news story, and I'm excited to share it with everyone!"

ABOUT DR. MARK COOK

Dr Mark Cook is Section Lead of the Everglades Systems Assessment Section of The South Florida Water Management District. His current research is related to the restoration and management of wetland fauna in the Everglades and Florida Bay. It involves understanding the relationships among avian reproduction, their aquatic prey, wetland hydrologic conditions and nutrient levels, as well as the potential impacts of non-native species. The goal for much of this research is to help restore and manage wading bird populations in the Everglades.

Mark has over 23 years of experience studying the ecology of wild birds. Prior to working at the District, he spent four years as a post-doctoral researcher at the University of California, Berkeley, where he studied nesting strategies of a Neotropical passerine, the Pearly-eyed Thrasher, in the rainforests of Puerto Rico. Born and bred in the United Kingdom, Mark has a PhD in Avian Ecology from Glasgow University, Scotland, and a master's degree in Ecology from the University of Durham, England, where he studied the nesting behavior of Black Guillemots and Atlantic Puffins on remote Scottish islands. He also has a Bachelor of Science degree in Marine Zoology from the University of Bangor, Wales.

Mark has spent the past 15 years studying wading birds in South Florida. During his time here, he has authored and co-authored 23 peer-reviewed scientific publications and 30-plus professional reports on wading birds, waterfowl, fish, crayfish and exotic animal species. He is the editor of the highly cited annual South Florida Wading Bird Report, on which he collaborates closely with other wading bird scientists in South Florida.

In his spare time, he's a pretty good jungle gym and all-round plaything for his two daughters, aged 6 and 8. However, whenever he can, he likes to escape into the wilder areas of Florida and Panama, where he volunteers as a birding guide and takes photos of wildlife to promote nature conservation.

March's Monthly Meeting will be held Tuesday, March 5 at 7PM at FAU Pine Jog Environmental Education Center. The speaker will be Paddy Cunningham, Biologist, Expert Guide, and Instructor for Birding Adventures, presenting "Spring Migration." a Parade of Colorful Birds"

AUDUBON EVERGLADES PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB

by Scott Zucker



Oohs and aahs were heard throughout the crowded room on the evening of January 28, as the Photography Club audience viewed the wonderful images of noted photographer Lance Warley, who presented his excellent program, "Landscape Photography in the Wild – Local to Around the World." Warley, who travels all over the world photographing nature and capturing breathtaking landscapes, shared his vision of how the photographer can be an "active participant in nature, rather than just a passive observer."

Unfortunately, our January 19 field Trip to Peaceful Waters Sanctuary had to be canceled because the Wellington Water Reclamation Plant was experiencing problems and was unable to pump water into the adjacent Sanctuary, leaving the area bone dry with a scarcity of birds and blossoming plants.

Our February 25 monthly program [fourth Monday of the month] will feature two friendly club competitions open to both novice and advanced photographers: Macro Nature Photography and Open Nature. The competition will be judged by award winning photographer and past presenter, Art Silvergate, who impressed and taught our club last year with his informative and practical program, "Become a Better Photographer without New Equipment."

Please join us at our next meeting or outing and make your photography more rewarding and enjoyable. Club meetings begin at 7PM at St. Michael's Lutheran Church, 1925 Birkdale Drive, Wellington FL 33414

For more information please contact <u>Dr. Pete Lekos</u> at 201-600-646 or visit us online.

2018 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

by Chuck Weber, compiler

This year's West Palm Beach Christmas Bird Count proved to be like none I can remember in my 25-plus years participating. Doreen LePage said she had a good feeling at the start of the day. Wow was she spot on!

The rare bird reports started coming early and never stopped, it seemed-- culminating early afternoon with a stream of birders rushing to Lake Worth Pier and Dreher Park, hoping to view reported rarities. Then, at the end of the day, counters enjoyed a compilation gathering that was the best attended in years, likely due to a different format with a dinner provided at sundown.

We credit overall excellent weather and the hard work and skill of our counters for the lengthy list of good birds this year. The rarities helped boost our tentative total of countable species to 149, an increase over last year's final total of 143.

Marcus Kelly and Meghan Frey stole the show at Lake Worth Pier, finding Masked Booby and Black-legged Kittiwake, both incredible birds for our area. I found one prior record of Masked Booby on our count, in 1985. To my knowledge, Black-legged Kittiwake has only appeared during count week and one other time -- Richard Crossley's sighting last year.

Staying at the shore, Richard Crossley reported Parasitic Jaeger and Black Scoter at Boynton Inlet. Our records show this was just the fifth time on the count for Parasitic, the tenth for Black Scoter.

Gael Silverblatt and Laura Quinlan, at Snook Islands, got the Common Eider, which was another fantastic find by Marcus Kelly a couple days earlier. Our only other count record of this species came in 2013.

An additional phenomenal discovery came from Marcia Abrahams and Mary Dunning: Western Tanager at Dreher Park South, just the third time for

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NEW FLORIDA GOVERNOR PROMISES TO SAVE FLORIDA'S ENVIRONMENT

by Scott Zucker



Two days after his inauguration, new Florida Governor Ron DeSantis shocked the environmental community of Florida by unveiling his environmental priorities in an executive order that, unlike any of his predecessors, addresses many of the most pressing needs of the state's environmental and water resources.

"The water is part and parcel of Florida's DNA," he said, and "protecting it is the smart thing to do; it's also the right thing to do."

His executive order calls for the Departments of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Health (DOH) to work with the state's tourism agency (Visit Florida) and Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) to secure \$2.5 billion over the next four years to help restore the Everglades and protect Florida's water resources.

If realized, this amounts to a \$1 billion increase in spending over the past four years and the most funding ever allocated for Everglades restoration. This would certainly go a long way to speeding up stalled projects such as phase 2 of raising the Tamiami Trail so water can flow into Everglades National Park and work (called for in this order) on the C-43 and C-44 reservoirs to alleviate discharges to the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers, which have been causing massive slimelike cyanobacteria outbreaks and exacerbating red tide events. Where the \$2.5 billion will come from is anyone's guess, since DeSantis is a follower of the

Republican mantra on cutting taxes. It may mean that he will try siphoning off 2014 Amendment 1 real estate document stamp dollars or that the State Legislature decides not to allocate money to Florida Forever for the purchase of critical conservation land.

DeSantis' order also calls for the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) to start the next phase of the Everglades Agricultural Area Storage Reservoir south of Lake Okeechobee. This is in conjunction with his calling for the resignation of all members of the SFWMD Board of Governors, who, at their November 8 meeting, in an agenda item added at the 11th hour, unanimously approved the leasing to Florida Crystals of 16,000 acres of state-owned land where the reservoir is to be built. So far, only four board members have resigned. And, while two more are facing the end of their terms on March 1st, the guestion is whether Gov. DeSantis will have the political courage to remove for cause the remaining three who were appointed by his Republican predecessor, Rick Scott, as he recently did when he suspended the Democratic Palm Beach County Elections Supervisor, Susan Bucher, and replaced her with a Republican.

Other highlights of DeSantis' executive order include calling for a ban on fracking, appointing a Chief Science Officer, creating an Office of Environmental Accountability and Transparency, establishing a Blue-Green Algae Task Force, ordering DOH to finally

investigate the health concerns associated with red tide, putting all five water management districts on a tighter leash when it comes to addressing water quality standards, starting the process of purging septic systems, empowering DEP to once again handle environmental enforcement, and, perhaps the most shocking of all, creating an Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection. So, without saying the "cc" words, DeSantis acknowledged that the state finally needs to address the effects of climate change.

Questions remain. Will Governor DeSantis follow through on his tough Big Sugar campaign rhetoric by denying sugar price supports and by discontinuing the practice of allowing polluters such as the sugar industry to determine and police their own waste practices, which has cost Florida taxpayers billions to clean up? Will any regulations be forthcoming that will cut off the pollution of our waters at the source by demanding that farms, industry and homeowners pay for or clean up the discharges they generate? Will he also protect all 11,000 million miles of our springs and rivers, which have received much less publicity, but which are also experiencing the catastrophic effects of ground water discharges? Will his administration follow the example of states like California and do more to prepare for and mitigate against the onslaught of what climate change has in store for Florida? (Will we even hear DeSantis utter the dreaded "cc" words?)

Finally, will Governor Ron DeSantis heed his own words and do what many of his predecessors have found difficult, if not impossible, to do, which is to protect Florida's environment because "it's also the right thing to do?"

So, let's embrace this moment of hope and cheer on his environmental agenda by <u>contacting Governor DeSantis</u>, and let's also remember to do the right thing by staying vigilant and reminding our elected leaders that actions speak louder than words.

We cannot allow Florida's leaders to further compromise our environment.

Christmas Bird Count continued from page 5

our CBC, the last one in 2014. (On Monday, birders reported a second Western present at the same location.)

On the warbler front, two different teams scored Cape May Warbler. John and Chadda Shelly had 3 at Lake Ida Park, and Marcus Kelly and Meghan Frey one at Lantana Scrub Natural Area. Cape Mays can stay through winter in small numbers and have been reported recently at several locations, but this is only the species' fourth count appearance, the first since 1993.

Another great warbler sighting came from Carl Edwards' team, finding a Blue-winged Warbler west of 441. We've seen this species just six times on the count, the last in 2014. Carl also heard and observed Whip-poor-will, before dawn, while owling. We have a number of count records for Whip, but this was the first one identified since 2004.

Beto Matheus' team produced Piping Plover at South Palm Park, Lake Worth. This is apparently the same individual Gael Silverblatt has seen for several years now at Snook Islands—the 7th count appearance for Piping.

Wakodahatchee teams, both morning (Walt Hackenjos, Ben Solstad leaders) and afternoon (Chuck and Linda Hignite leaders) recorded ongoing rarity Neotropic Cormorant. The morning team had

two individuals. Also, the 7th time on the count.

Short-tailed Hawk (documentation required, per state compiler) was seen by two Loxahatchee teams (Sonia Bollinger and Carolyn Kline's group, as well as Marcello Gomes, Kenny Miller, and Kyle Matera). The groups almost certainly had the same darkmorph bird, first identified and nicely digiscopephotographed by 15-year old Connecticut birder Will Schenk (Sonia and Carolyn's team), while the bird perched on a Marsh Trail cypress!

In addition to the birds listed above, we had a number of other species seen by just one or two teams-- many "saves" this year. Our count is truly a team effort. Although still tabulating, I can safely say each count team made important contributions to our numbers!

And, if great birds were seen on Count Day, why not during Count Week? Richard Crossley had 2 Cory's Shearwater and an Audubon's Shearwater. Marcus Kelly came up with Brown Booby. Marcus and Will Schenk separately reported Pomarine Jaeger. And, Pat Demko relocated Lark Sparrow.

While we've had an incredible list of rarities this year, we also had a few misses. And, numbers for some species so far seem very low. We'll know more once we finish our tabulations.

We feel honored field guide author Richard

Crossley joined our effort again this year. Also, we were privileged to have eBird/Cornell University benefactor Bill Macaulay join one of our teams.

I want to recognize David Smith of Palm Beach County Environmental Resources Management. As he's done for many years now, David facilitates our access to county-owned land not yet open to the public. David makes sure the property is maintained and passable when our count team arrives. Thank you!

My thanks to everyone who helped in any way-counting or behind the scenes! A special thank you to Alan Summersgill for offering his church's fellowship hall for the compilation. Susan McKemy, Doreen LePage and Anne Hoctor took the ball and ran with it, organizing and providing a fantastic meal. Alan and his wife Cherie also worked hard setting everything up for us at the church. Again, a team effort—thanks!

My gratitude as well to Rick Schofield for taking on the chore of producing our updated count checklist, conforming with the new taxonomic order-- not fun. Doreen LePage served as a sounding board for me on many count-related issues. And, I appreciate the count circle intelligence provided by Brian Hope, Alan Summersgill, Gael Silverblatt, and Bob Dieterich.

It was quite a day!

AUDUBON EVERGLADES VOLUNTEERS FLOCK TO BUSCH WILDLIFE

by Vicki Rogerson, Photos by Linda McCandless and Marcia Yeip

Ninety Audubon Everglades volunteers turned out for the special appreciation event planned just for them at Busch Wildlife Sanctuary on Saturday, January 12th. They received Audubon Everglades pins and stickers and special hand-painted Snail Kite pins created by glass artist Joan Ives. The WPB Office of Sustainability sent us a wonderful assortment of waste-minimizing, water-saving and energy-saving items. Volunteers had their choice of photography by Claudine Laabs and many other special door prizes. We gave out Florida-grown native wildflower seeds and live Simpson Stoppers, which are considered among the best plants to grow for birds. And, as if all that wasn't enough, the chili buffet and the special program put on for us by Busch Wildlife featuring a Crested Caracara, a Great Horned Owl and an American Kestrel were enjoyed

by all. Far and away the best part of the event was the chance to "flamingle" with old friends and new. Thank you to all who signed our Volunteer Opportunity sign-up sheets and to everyone who helped put on this event. Audubon Everglades volunteers are truly the best. If you missed the event but are interested in volunteering, it's never too late to join our flock! Email Vicki Rogerson with questions at or contact any of our board members.







CURRENT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

by Susan McKemy

Do you enjoy Audubon Everglades events, field trips and programs? We couldn't offer them without YOU, our treasured volunteers. It has been said that many hands make light work - that rings true in Audubon Everglades. We have opportunities in many different areas in the club, one of which is sure to be a match for your interests and skills! We would love to have you join the team of Audubon Everglades volunteers. Won't you consider volunteering with us this year?

If you have a special interest or talent or simply want to give back to Audubon Everglades as a volunteer, please check the list of volunteer opportunities below for an area where you might get involved. If your interest area is not listed and you are ready to volunteer, get in touch with us and let us know your interest since there are new ways to get involved all the time.

If you would like to see the details of one of these volunteer needs or want more information, please send an email to President@AudubonEverglades.org. We look forward to having you on our team!

CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteer Team Organizer

Program Support

(Audio Visual, room set-up and closing)

Citizen Science Projects

(shorebird surveys, Eagle Watch, Purple Martin project)

Communications and Connections

(Newsletter, Social Media)

Community Event Support



Conservation Advocacy Team

(conservation policy advocates and public advocacy outreach)

Education and Outreach

(Plants for Birds program, speakers, Pathfinders and Science Fair judges)

URGENT VOLUNTEER NEED

Kite Newsletter Coordinator

We're looking for an organized, detail-oriented person to coordinate all the moving parts for our monthly newsletter. Training provided.

This volunteer would be responsible for: checking the newsletter article submissions and getting them to the editor, receiving edited articles and getting approval from the writers, and compiling all the final articles and photos for the designer. Requires a computer with internet and email access. Approximately 5-10 hours per month. If you're interested in filling this vital role, email President@AudubonEverglades.org.

HMMM...EXACTLY WHEN IS MY FRIENDS OF by Doreen LePage AUDUBON EVERGLADES MEMBERSHIP DUE AGAIN?

- Your current 2018 membership will expire on May 31, 2019.
- In May, an email will be sent to all members informing you that it's time to renew your dues; the current membership levels/fees and the methods for paying your dues will be included.
- The use of PayPal for membership renewals is strongly encouraged. PayPal is a secure site and provides us an opportunity to obtain your current email address, which is essential for being able to communicate with you. We will still accept payment via USPS or payments passed in at the meetings; however, these

practices require more volunteer hours, and many members do not provide us a completed renewal form with their updated information.

Friends of Audubon Everglades greatly appreciates the continued support of our members. We are a 100% volunteer-managed organization; therefore, all of your dues and donations are put to work. The resources you donate stay close to home, helping with habitat preservation and supporting conservation efforts and education projects in Palm Beach County. You are what hope looks like to a bird. We are a strong organization because of dedicated members like you.

Audubon Everglades to Participate in Festival of Trees Saturday, February 16



Audubon Everglades is participating in the 14th Annual Lake Worth Festival of Trees. The Festival takes place Saturday, February 16 from 9AM to 1PM at the Cultural Plaza at 414 Lake Avenue. The 2019 Festival theme is Make Lake Worth Cool. Admission is free; everyone is welcome. For more information or to volunteer, contact Debbie Smith.

HELP! WE'VE OUTGROWN OUR NEST!

ov Linda McCandless

Attendance at our general meetings has been growing, so much so that we have begun looking for a new meeting location, and we would like your help. The location should seat 120-150 and have audio/visual capabilities. Our new venue should be located central to our membership demographics (between Southern Blvd to the north, Lake Worth Road to the south, Florida's Turnpike to the west, I-95 to the east). If you know of such a place, please email us at Info@AudubonEverglades.org.



Saturday, February 9, 2019 8 am - 4 pm All Day — All Free

Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatche National Wildlife Refuge

10216 Lee Road, Boynton Beach off State Road 7/US 441

Give Wings to Your WILD Side

Promoting awareness, appreciation, and an understanding of the Everglades





Including: wildlife presentations • canoeing • fishing demos • birds of prey • music • educational programs • guest speakers • español presentations • food trucks • interactive activities LILA tours • explorations • over 30 exhibitors from agencies, clubs and non-profit organizations

Parking is at West Delray Regional Park 10875 West Atlantic Avenue, Delray Beach, FL 33446

Children's Services Council Healthy, Safe, Strong.





For more information, call 561/734 8303.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is committed to providing access to the Everglades Day Festival for all participants. Persons needing reasonable accommodations in order to attend and participate in this festival should contact Serena Rinker at 561/735 6029 or serena_rinker@fws.gov. In order to allow sufficient time to process requests, please contact us for assistance by close of business Friday, February 1, 2019.





JOIN AUDUBON

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Yes, I want to become a member of FRIENDS OF AUDUBON EVERGLADES

There are two ways to join Audubon Everglades:

FRIENDS OF AUDUBON EVERGLADES MEMBERSHIP:

All your membership dues and contributions are put to use supporting local conservation projects and educational programs in Palm Beach County. You will receive 12 issues of the Kite newsletter, priority for some special trips and discounted rates at some events and vendors. Join using the PayPal link off our website or by mailing the attached membership application. The Audubon Everglades Kite newsletter is available by email only.

NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP:

includes membership in Florida Audubon and Audubon Everglades plus one year of the Audubon magazine. <u>Join online here.</u>

Your NAS membership does not grant you the special privileges and discounts afforded to those who are local Friends of Audubon Everglades members. If you choose to join us through National Audubon Society, please also consider becoming a Friend of Audubon Everglades to support local conservation and education initiatives.

Join now using PayPal. 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: \$\sum \\$25 (\text{Single}) \quad \\$20 (\text{Student}) \quad \\$20 (\text{Senior}) \quad \\$35 (\text{Household'}) \quad \\$75 (\text{Patron'})

Please feel free to give above the membership amount with a contribution of \$\sum \quad \

*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 _____