



# EVERGLADE KITE

## NEWSLETTER

Monthly Newsletter for Audubon Everglades  
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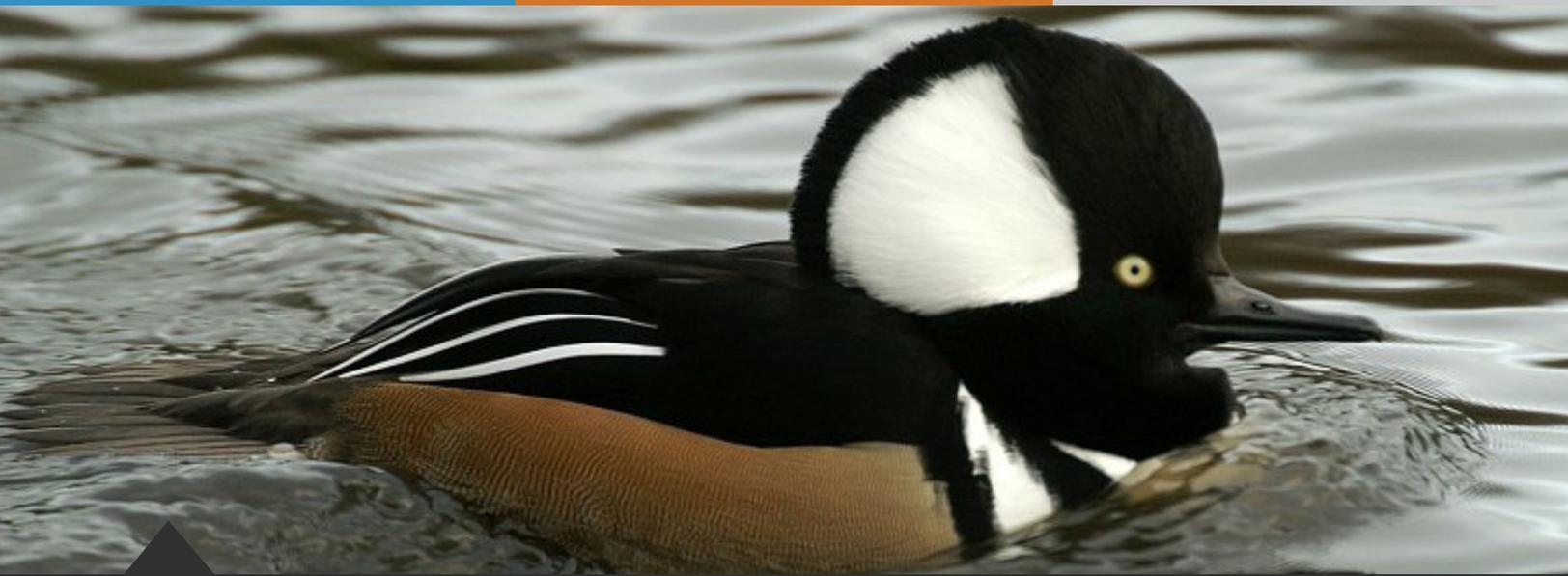


Photo: Hooded Merganser © Wikipedia

## Bird of the Month: Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*)

by Clive & Celecia Pinnock

*The 2020 Bird of the Month series will focus on species of waterfowl that permanently reside in or are seasonal visitors to our state. To assist our members in viewing these birds more readily, efforts will be made to indicate possible locations that they might be seen. As in the past, basic information on each species will be shared in the News Letter and in the Monthly Meetings.*

The Hooded Merganser is the smallest of the three mergansers that live in the United States. Seasonal occurrence of this species in Florida is mainly from October to April, and it is generally considered an uncommon to abundant migrant. The species name is derived from the prominent feathered hood or crest atop the head of both male and female ducks. Males sport a sharp black and white patterned body off-set by chestnut flanks. The highlight of the male's plumage is its black head with a large white patch which varies in shape and size when the hood is raised or lowered. Females and immatures are colored with rich and soft tones of gray and brown throughout their bodies and a white patch (not always apparent) on the wing. The

female's hood is cinnamon in color.

Hooded Mergansers are found here in large open freshwater areas such as wooded ponds and lakes but are also occasionally found in saltwater bays, estuaries and tidal creeks, where they can be observed as a single species or with other waterfowl divers such as Ruddy Ducks and Buffleheads. Their diet is primarily fish, which they catch with their thin serrated bills. Additional menu items are crayfish, aquatic insects, snails, tadpoles and, to a lesser extent, plants. Their diet is broader than other mergansers, which eat fish almost exclusively.

Pair bonding is established on the wintering grounds, thus minimizing the time needed when the birds arrive on their nesting territories. Hooded Mergansers, like Wood Ducks, are cavity nesters, utilizing natural cavities in trees in wooded areas in their northern nesting ranges. They also readily accept nest boxes set out for Wood Ducks. Nest cavities are chosen by females and are typically located in live or dead trees

close to water. The cavities are generally 10 to 50 feet above ground. Nests are built with natural wood chips and debris in the bottom of the cavity with down from the female's breast added.

The female lays 10 – 12 white eggs and incubates them for about 33 days. Males abandon the females soon after incubation begins. The young are able to leave the nest within the first 24 hours of hatching, so, with the female calling from the ground beneath the nest, the young climb to the cavity entrance and leap to the ground. The mother then leads them away to a nearby pond, where the young can fend for themselves, feeding primarily on protein-rich aquatic insects.

Note: There have been unconfirmed reports of Hooded Merganser nesting in Wood Duck nest boxes here in our state.

Possible locations to observe Hooded Mergansers: Everglades National Park, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Peaceful Waters Wetland, the STA's, Viera Wetlands, Flying Cow Road Wetlands.

# UPCOMING TRIPS

## FEBRUARY 2020

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

**04 TUE** (8A-10A) **Wakodahatchee** (Chris Golia) ●

**06 THU** (4:30P-6:30P) **Grassy Waters (Sunset Canoe Fly-in)** (Cindy Bush)

**08 SAT** (8A-11A) **Riverbend Park** (Ed Kawecki) ●

**08 SAT** (8A-10A) **Wakodahatchee** (Valleri Brauer) ●

**09 SUN** (8A-12P) **STA-2 (Shorebird Survey)** (Brian Garrett/Susan McKemy, coord.) ●

**12 WED** (7:30A-11:30A) **Loxahatchee NWR** (Rick Schofield)

**14 FRI** (7:30A-9:30A) **Wakodahatchee (GBBC)** (Paton White) ●

**15 SAT** (ALL DAY) ★ **Viera Wetlands and Click Ponds (GBBC)** (Bob Dieterich) ●

**16 SUN** (8A-11A) **Snook Islands (GBBC)** (Gael Silverblatt) ●

**21 FRI** (8:30A-10:30A) **MacArthur Beach SP (Birding/Mangrove Ecology)** (Clive Pinnock) ●

**22 SAT** (8:30A-12P) ★ **Kissimmee Prairie Preserve SP** (Paul Gray)

## APRIL 2020

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

**04 SAT** (7:30A-12P) **STA-1E** (David Simpson / Rick Schofield, coord.) ●

**05 SUN** (6:15A-10:30A) **DuPuis MA** (Chuck Weber) Meet at Gate 1.

**10-12 FRI-SUN** (ALL DAY) ★ **Fort De Soto/Celery Fields** (Dan O'Malley)

**19 SUN** (ALL DAY) ★ **Everglades National Park** (Mark Cook) ●

## 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
- 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 Friend priority

by Mary Dunning

# February 2020 Monthly Meeting and Lecture Program: Dr. Ken Meyer, Executive Director, Avian Research and Conservation Institute



Tuesday, February 4 at 7PM

Meeting and program are free and open to the public. Doors open at 6:30PM for light refreshments. Origin Church, 6073 Summit Blvd., West Palm Beach. We look forward to seeing you there!

Please join us and learn about the conservation biology of Reddish Egrets and the Great White Herons, the only species that have not recovered substantially from the plume-hunting decimations of wading-bird populations a century ago, will be the subject of Audubon Everglades speaker program by Dr. Ken Meyer on Tuesday, February 4, 2020.

Dr. Ken Meyer, Executive Director of the Avian Research and Conservation Institute (ARCI), will present results and recommendations from the non-profit's 11 years of pioneering studies on Florida's small and vulnerable populations of these spectacular birds. Besides addressing the threats of climate change, sea-level rise, habitat loss, and human disturbance, Meyer will describe the techniques and technology ARCI has employed – satellite tracking,

nest-searching, prey assessments, aerial and boat population surveys, and nest-camera surveillance – to help our federal and state wildlife agencies protect and sustain these and other imperiled species. Ken Meyer obtained his B.S. degree in Zoology from the University of Maine, Orono, in 1977, and his Ph.D. in Zoology from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, in 1987. From then until 1996, he studied imperiled birds as a post-doctoral and then research associate in the University of Florida's Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, and as a research biologist with the National Park Service. Since 1996, he has served as an adjunct Associate Professor in the University of Florida's Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation. Ken co-founded Avian Research and Conservation Institute (ARCI) in Gainesville, Florida, in 1997.

## Thank You to GHP Environmental + Architecture for Their Holiday Gift!

Audubon Everglades received an unexpected gift this holiday season. GHP, a national company providing environmental and architectural services, has one of its five headquarters in Jupiter. The firm works with commercial and institutional customers such as hotels, hospitals, high tech labs, and institutions of higher education. GHP Environmental + Architecture tackles indoor air quality issues such as asbestos, mold, and mildew and flooding and wind damage from storms. It also works on historic building restoration and redesign and much more. Mark Smith, who heads up the regional headquarters here, told AE said that GHP wants to give back to the community and, at the firm's annual Jolly Holiday Reception. collects donations for local

charities whose causes resonate with the employees. This year they chose three different local non-profits for their "Stockings for a Cause" – the Palm Beach County Food Bank, the Panther Ridge Conservation Center, and Audubon Everglades. Their sensitivity to the need to protect the environment and our natural resources led them to select Audubon Everglades. Mark attended a recent AE Board meeting and presented the chapter with an envelope of \$320 in checks and cash collected in the Audubon Everglades "stocking for a cause" at their holiday party in December. We are grateful to the folks at GHP Environmental + Architecture for their selection of Audubon Everglades, and we wish them a happy and healthy 2020!

# Profile: Bob Dieterich

by Kristen Murtaugh



Photo: Bob Dieterich © Kristen Murtaugh

If you haven't spent time chatting with Bob Dieterich, the author of the wonderful entertaining and educational "Bird Nerd" articles in the Kite, you need to. He is a remarkable man, both for his interesting life experience and for his positive and infectious love of life and of all things related to the natural world, especially birds.

Bob was raised in Bayside, Queens in New York City. His lifelong love of nature and curiosity about birds began as a child adventuring in the woods near his home. As he walked the family dogs, he became interested in birds, and he used a bird ID book from the old Golden Series. At first, he had only a pair of opera glasses to bring the birds in closer. At age 16 he received his first pair of real binoculars. He started birding around the NYC area and studied where to go to see the birds. What really clinched his interest was the sight of a Flicker only fifteen feet away in a Linden tree outside his window. He was amazed by its spots and stripes, its barring and colors. As a teenager Bob joined the Queens County Bird Club. He had read about the club's Big Spring Day and decided to participate. The club members were welcoming, and he got his first Great Blue Heron in the event. He went to his first Christmas Bird Count in Queens when he was 17 years old and got his life Red-shouldered Hawk. The next year he was asked to be the co-compiler for the CBC, and he did that job for the next 35 years!

Bob got his BS in Wildlife Management in 1974 from the College of Environmental Science and Forestry at the State University of New York in Syracuse. Close

to graduation he filled out the generic federal job application, and three weeks later he was offered a position as a chemistry technician at the Food & Drug Administration's Food Department in Brooklyn. The job was fun. His lab was nicknamed "the filth lab." It was responsible for testing imported foods for mold and storage pests. He told me about huge bricks of imported fig paste they would boil up and then pour kerosene on to separate out insect fragments. They would look at the results under a microscope and count the number of heads of insects – more than 14 heads in a sample would disqualify the product. The focus was on storage insects, which could contaminate warehouses. Traces of insects from the field, such as grasshoppers, were not a cause for concern. Bob stayed at the food lab for two years, during which he was able to strengthen his chemistry background with coursework at Brooklyn College.

Bob's next job was at the environmental branch of the Army Corps of Engineers in Manhattan, where he reviewed permit applications. The work involved a lot of field work and travel across New York State, which he enjoyed. He reviewed citizen projects and typical Army Corps projects such as flood control and beach erosion protection programs. Some of the projects were major. Bob wrote the environmental impact statement for a coal-burning power plant proposed for Staten Island, which would require millions of acres of dredging and wetland fill-in. The plant was one of the projects that was not built.

After 12 years with the Army Corps, Bob moved to the Environmental Protection Agency. Here he worked on Fish and Wildlife projects. The last major initiative he was involved with was the National Estuary Program initiated in 2000. The program looked at the harmful changes to the chemistry of coastal estuaries from pipe discharge from sewage treatment plants and factories as well as from unregulated run-offs ("non-point source pollution") from animal feces and fertilizer. There are 28 projects under the program now. One of its hallmarks is reaching out to get buy-in from the local communities in the estuaries. The federal government provides seed money that is matched by states, counties and municipalities. From the Chesapeake Bay to Long Island to Barnegat Bay to San Juan Harbor, fishing, crabbing and shell fishing are important economic activities for the communities. There are four Florida projects in the National Estuary Program: Charlotte Harbor, Sarasota Bay, Tampa Bay, and, closer to us, Indian River Lagoon.

After 20 years with the EPA, Bob retired in 2009 and says he's now "just a snowbird," dividing his time between Boynton Beach and Matawan in Monmouth County, New Jersey. He and his partner Peter live in Peter's mother's place, where they had come for visits since 1992.

I always ask the people I interview if they have a favorite bird. Bob does – the Red-headed Woodpecker. He has vivid memories of seeing a flock of at least eight going through Cunningham Park in Queens in a slow and deliberate way, stopping in trees for a pause, not just flying through. It was an iconic event.

Bob and Peter are intrepid globe trotters. They have visited every continent on earth. Bob told me about several extraordinary trips they have taken, including an Indian Ocean cruise, a trip to Antarctica, and two trips to China and India. As a retirement present to himself, they spent three months in Australia and saw the entire eastern half of the continent. They are preparing for an exciting trip to Egypt in April.

Bob has been an active member of Audubon Everglades since 2004-2005, when he signed up for the Christmas Bird Count. He credits his neighbor, Doreen LePage, our chapter membership chair(!), for getting him involved in AE.

Bob's bird lists are impressive. He's been an eBirder only since 2016, but he has kept track of his sightings over the years. He has more than 2000 species in all; 600+ for the United States (581 for the lower 48); 300+ for Florida; and 276 for Palm Beach County!

Audubon Everglades is fortunate to have Bob as an active member of our chapter. He brings intelligent and useful data about our avian subjects and puts them in engaging stories and reports. I spent a lot of time smiling during our interview!

# CRITICAL FLORIDA ENVIRONMENTAL BILLS IN 2020 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

by Scott Zucker



Photo: Florida's Everglades © Scott Zucker

The first Florida Legislative session of the new decade is in full swing. Fortunately, there are several bills aimed at protecting Florida's precious natural resources where Democrats and Republicans agree. Let's hope they will work in a bipartisan manner to protect Florida's future. Here are a few of the important environmental bills before the legislature. To see a more complete list, go to [1000 Friends of Florida Legislative Update](#).

## WATER

**SB 712 (Mayfield) Water Quality Improvements:** Titled the "Clean Waterways Act," this major piece of legislation includes recommendations made by the Blue Green Algae Task Force, which was comprised of noted scientists from universities around the state who met numerous times to hammer out recommendations to the governor and legislature to protect Florida's waterways. The bill would transfer regulatory authority of septic tanks from the Dept. of Health to the Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP); direct DEP to make new rules relating to septic systems, wastewater, stormwater, biosolids, and agriculture; revise the basic management action plan for Outstanding Florida Springs, and require DEP to create a real-time water quality monitoring program. We expect amendments to come flying as the Agricultural Industry tries to derail any new rules governing the discharge of pollutants from its lands.

**HB 791 (Mayfield) & SB 1608 (Fitzenhagen) Florida National Estuary Program Act:** This bill would help our estuaries by paving the way for estuaries identified under the National Estuary Program to be eligible for funding consideration by DEP.

**SB 1098 (Cruz), and SB 1112 (Taddeo) and HB 861 (Willhite) Fees/Bottled Water Companies:** These two

somewhat differing bills would impose a per gallon excise tax ranging from 5 to 12.5 cents per gallon on companies extracting water for bottled waters. SB 1098 directs the fees raised to the Water Protection and Sustainability Program Trust Fund, while SB 1112 and HB 861 would send fees to the Wastewater Treatment and Stormwater Management Revolving Loan Trust Fund. Either bill would end the practice of simply giving away our water to bottling companies.

**SB 454 (Rodriquez) Discharge of Domestic Wastewater:** This important bill would prohibit the construction or expansion of new deep injection wells for domestic wastewater discharge. It would also require current ocean outfall and deep well injection permit holders to install a functioning water reuse system and prohibit them from discharging domestic wastewater through ocean outflows and deep injection wells.

## LAND CONSERVATION

**SB 332 (Stewart) and HB 849 (Altman) Land Acquisition Trust Fund:** Similar to Stewart's 2019 bill, this bill requires that \$100 million a year be appropriated to the Florida Forever Trust Fund from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund, which legislatures have abused over the years by misappropriating 2014 Amendment I dollars for executive support or technology services instead of for their intended use -- acquiring critical habitat. While significantly less than the 300 million dollars Florida Forever historically received, the bill would triple the amount allocated in 2019.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

**SB 286 (Rodriquez) Tax Credit for Carbon Farming:** This bill would provide farmers with Tax Credits for maintaining or adopting practices that maximize the state's carbon sequestration potential and minimize

greenhouse gas emissions. Farmers would have to implement specific land strategies to receive the incentives.

**HB 913 (Diamond) & SB 1232 (Rouson) Florida Climate and Resiliency Research Program:** DEP would be tasked with creating a Florida Climate and Resiliency Research Program and submitting a Florida Resiliency Plan to the governor and legislature at least once every four years. The plan would assist the state in understanding, assessing, predicting, and responding to the effects of both human-induced and natural factors causing climate change.

## FRACKING

**SB 200 (Montford) and HB 547 (Fitzenhagen) Advanced Well Stimulation Treatment:** This much needed bill would broadly ban fracking and, most importantly, includes both "high-pressure well stimulation" and "matrix acidization." For this bill to pass, the governor, who supports the bill, will likely have to pressure the Republican leadership of the legislature.

## PLASTICS & POLYSTYRENE

**SB 182 (Stewart) and HB 6043 (Greico, Eskamani) Preemption of Recyclable and Polystyrene Materials:** This bill would protect the local control of municipalities, such as Coral Gables, from state laws seeking to delete preemptions (state bills that attempt to overrule local governments) of their laws regulating auxiliary containers, plastic bags and polystyrene.

## SUNSCREEN

**SB 172 (Bradley) and HB 113 (Roach) Florida Drug and Cosmetic Act:** This confusing sounding preemption bill is a state bill that would overrule local governments by preventing municipalities like Key West from banning sunscreen to protect their offshore coral reefs.

To find out specific details about bills, their sponsors, their progress during this busy legislative session or about the committees that will hear them, visit the [state legislative website](#).

To be able to receive this year's upcoming legislative action alerts, if you haven't received them in the past, [sign up for Audubon Everglades Conservation emails](#).

# BIRD NERD: WHAT THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS CAN TELL US

by Bob Dieterich

Here we are, early in a new year with a wealth of opportunities in front of us, but let's take a moment to reflect on our recent accomplishment. Our Christmas Bird Count (CBC) in late December was a smashing success, with close to 150 species of birds documented and a near-record outpouring of participants. We thank Chuck Weber for his dedicated leadership in guiding this endeavor, as we do those who took part and helped assemble the bird list compilation.

We now have a record of more than 60 years of data documenting wintering bird populations in this part of Palm Beach County. Can you imagine what it was like in 1960 and before, when the local human population was one-sixth that of today, and Military Trail was the western outpost of civilization? It may be hard to believe, but you can look up the Census data for this region for confirmation. And, in fact, you could get an inkling of this past by looking at our historical CBC records.

Let's look at some birds associated with grasslands and wide-open spaces. A prime example is Northern Bobwhite. Our records show tallies of up to 100 individuals or more through the 60s and 70s. The species was first missed in 1985 but was recorded in small numbers into the mid-90s. Our last record is 2003. Did you know we used to have American Crow in our CBC circle? It was a go-along with Fish Crow in our early years and last recorded in 1976. Cattle Egret was a new species in Florida, getting established at about the same time as our early Counts. As is typical with a species occupying new territory, Cattle Egrets burgeoned in Palm Beach County, topping out at 7,479 in our 1980 CBC. Numbers have subsided since then, but we still record them at up to 100 every year.

American Woodcock is an open land denizen, but we haven't documented it since 1973, after getting it regularly in the 60s. And Eastern Meadowlark appears to be a species that is on its way out in our Circle. We recorded robust numbers of this species from the start and into the hundreds annually until 1979, when there was a drastic reduction. We still got them every year, though, until we missed them for the first times in 2017 and 2018. Where we go from here is anyone's guess. Some sparrows follow a similar pattern. Bachman's Sparrow was on our CBC from the start and reported

periodically, but it hasn't made an appearance since 2012. Field Sparrow used to be a regular but was last tallied in 1996, and Chipping Sparrow made its last gasp in 2013.

Now, look back at the history of these species and imagine the landscape in which we recorded them. Kind of seems like the agricultural lands around Belle Glade or the ranchlands north of Okeechobee, doesn't it? The lower population of Palm Beach County had tremendously more open spaces than it does today and much more room to accommodate these sensitive species.

So as not to give the impression that our CBC history is all bad news, I'll turn now to other data in the record. In fact, many of our regularly occurring species have maintained themselves throughout this period of rapid population increase. It may sound ironic, but our marshland waders, as a group, are found today in numbers comparable to those of our early years. In fact, species like the ibises, White and Glossy, are typically tallied at higher numbers than they have been previously. And we've added another wader to our regular checklist — Roseate Spoonbill. First recorded in 2000, this species is an annual entry to our CBC total. Limpkins are much more common than they were in earlier years, and American Oystercatchers are regular additions since 2002. Belted Kingfishers seem just as much at home perched on a wire overlooking a drainage canal as they do on the bank of a wilderness river, and their steady numbers on our CBC totals reflect that.

The CBC history gives us the ability to note negative changes in bird populations and to take measures to address them. The lesson here is that there are birds capable of adapting to man-altered environments while others are more sensitive to environmental changes. While we have lost some species that were common in earlier days, our CBC species totals remain robust because other species are recorded in their place. We're more sophisticated today in the ways to manage the environment for wild creatures, and it is our task to see that it gets done. The point is to maintain the biological heritage that we have been given and which can be all too easily taken for granted.

## CURRENT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

by Susan McKerny

### YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE VOLUNTEER WITH AUDUBON EVERGLADES

Do you have some free time to share? Would you like to get more involved with Audubon Everglades? We have plenty of volunteer opportunities and are sure to have a place where you can make a difference. Remember, YOU are what hope looks like to a bird - get involved!

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. If your interest area is not listed but you would like to volunteer, get in touch with us and let us know your interest. There are new ways to get involved all the time.

If you would like more information or are ready to get involved, please send an email to [President@AudubonEverglades.org](mailto:President@AudubonEverglades.org). We look forward to having you on our team!

### CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES

#### Community Science Projects

(bird surveys, habitat projects, etc.)

#### Community Events

#### Conservation Advocacy Team

#### Education and Outreach

#### Social Media

#### Volunteer Organizer

# PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB EXPLORES NATURE UP-CLOSE AND PERSONAL

by Alan Chin Lee



Photo: Snowy Egret in breeding plumage display  
© Pete Lekos

As we speed into a new decade, AE Photography Club members will be showcasing their skills on Monday, Feb. 24 with Close-up/Macro as the competition theme. And, prior to the competition, Club President Pete Lekos will be hosting a Close-up/Macro workshop on Monday, February 10.

Macro photography is one of the most accessible forms of photography, since great macro images can be created at any time of the day, even at noon - the worst type of lighting for landscape photography! Compared to bird photography, where wind direction, time of day, weather, etc. are critical factors to consider before you pack your gear to head out, for macro, you can walk around your back yard or neighborhood to prospect for potential subjects. This by no means implies that macro is easy. While opportunities to create great images are more easily accessible, the photographer must isolate subjects and details worthy of showcasing that a casual observer might overlook. When using a dedicated macro lens and auto-focus, as little as an eighth of an inch off your intended focal point, a butterfly's eye, for example, can make or break your image. The Macro theme category will be accompanied by an Open category, which accepts any nature subject that does not include man-made elements.

February also brings great birding photography opportunities.

A field trip to a yet undetermined local natural area (We'll be watching for where the birds are.) is scheduled for Feb. 15. Nesting season is upon us, and many wading bird species are already arrayed

in their breeding plumage. In many species, males are generally first on the scene to claim their nesting sites in preparation for the arrival of the females. In late December 2019, some Great Blue Herons and cormorants were already nesting at Wakodahatchee Wetlands.

This is an important time for the birds, since food availability dictates the number of adults that will occupy historically used areas for raising their families and the number of chicks raised per breeding pair. The nesting hierarchy in breeding areas is worth noting. For example, Great Blue Herons build their nests on the tops of trees, while Snowy Egrets build their nests on the lower parts of trees. Colonial nesting species can also be seen. Some species of herons, egrets, ibises and storks prefer nesting in colonies. In Florida, colonial nesting bird species are best exhibited by seabirds such as Royal Terns, which can dominate their historic breeding beach areas with thousands of adults in a single colony!

During this time of the year, it is important to be a steward for wildlife when visiting breeding sites. It is not unusual for birds to become accustomed to the presence of people, making them seem tame. Photographers who enter breeding sites should always use best practices and minimize their impact on the birds. These situations provide amazing opportunities for all visitors to have up-close and personal experiences with wildlife. They also provide an opportunity to create future stewards for wildlife and habitat conservation.

Guests may attend up to two club meetings. However, Audubon Everglades Photography Club membership is a requirement for entry in club competitions and attendance at field trips. [You can join online here.](#) To learn more about the upcoming competitions, future presentations, and field trips scheduled for this year and to find out more about membership and meetings (time and place), please visit our [informative club section on the Audubon Everglades website.](#)

by Chuck Weber

# 2019 West Palm Beach Christmas Bird Count Report

This season's West Palm Beach Christmas Bird Count saw significant new efforts aimed at increasing coverage in our count circle. The moves paid off since we managed an impressive species total to submit for review by the state compiler -- 149, just one less than last year's 150, despite breezy, rainy conditions.

The new endeavors boosted the number of participants to 120, certainly the greatest number I can recall and a big increase over the 87 who took part a year ago, which was also very good. Count day concluded with a delicious compilation dinner provided by Audubon Everglades. Many went directly from the field to the gathering at Hatch 1121 in Lake Worth Beach. 72 counters and family members attended, another likely record.

Leading this year's CBC list is the continuing Heermann's Gull, mostly at Lake Worth Beach's pier and municipal beach. It's believed this chocolate-brown, first-year gull is the same bird that showed up this past fall in Brevard County and later in Miami-Dade County. The Heermann's arrived here on Thanksgiving, a new Palm Beach County species, fortunately sticking around to become a first for our count, too. Several teams sighted the gull on count day, and Will Schenck, of Connecticut, joining us for a second year, wrote up and documented the Heermann's.

The rarities do not end there:

- Gael and Howard Silverblatt recorded Red Knot at Snook Islands, apparently only the second time on our count.

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- Richard Crossley got a Cory's Shearwater at Boynton Inlet, only the second time recorded count day on this CBC.
- Brian Hope and Doug Beach tallied 7 Pomarine Jaeger in the afternoon south of the inlet, again only the second time on count day.
- Edwin Wilke spotted a nightjar in flight before dawn at Loxahatchee Refuge. Others on the team then saw the bird, and Marcello Gomes and Kenny Miller believe it was likely Lesser Nighthawk, only confirmed on count day three times previously, but will go in the books as "nightjar species."
- For the second year in a row, but only the fourth time on count day, Cape May Warbler makes an appearance, found by Richard Crossley.
- Also, for the second year in a row, at the same location west of 441, Carl Edwards and Heather Shirley heard Eastern Whip-Poor-Will, while owling. Last year's Whip was the first time on the count since 2004.
- The north Lake Worth Lagoon boat survey team of Ricardo Zambrano, David Simpson and Dan Scolaro came up with a Great White Heron form of Great Blue Heron. Records show this is only the seventh time for this subspecies, and the first since 1986.
- A difficult bird for our CBC, Yellow-throated Vireo, returns to the count day checklist for the first time since 2001, again thanks to Richard Crossley.
- Will Schenck on Jody Levin's north barrier island team was first to spot Hermit Thrush at Lantana Nature Preserve. This species was last reported on our CBC in 2016 but is another that's become tough to get.
- Dunlin and Short-tailed Hawk were also documented, along with count week rarities Neotropic Cormorant, Nashville Warbler, and Blue-winged Warbler.
- As has become the norm, Alan Summersgill's team logged the largest species total, this time 80. Alan's group and several others picked up important "saves," that is, birds seen by just one team. Several species were recorded by only two or three groups. So, everyone's efforts are so important!

And while very pleased with our species total, I cannot ignore that numbers will likely be down for likely many birds. This could easily be the last year

for Eastern Meadowlark on our count. The parcel where Alan's team got Meadowlark this year is slated for development.

We conducted the count's first-ever, to my knowledge, Lake Worth Lagoon boat survey, one of this year's new initiatives. There was also a push to put more teams inside gated communities and on golf courses, which make up significant portions of the count circle. Both concepts originated with Bob Dieterich, who compiled the Queens, New York, CBC for many years. Now wintering locally, Bob has taken a close look at our count circle and made numerous excellent recommendations. A huge thanks to Bob!

Enormous thanks as well to Paul Davis for organizing the Lagoon survey! Paul is the one who used his connections to line up captains with boats to make it happen. A big thank you to Ricardo Zambrano of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for captaining the boat for the north Lagoon survey team. Likewise, a big thanks to TJ Steinhoff of Palm Beach County Environmental Resources Management (ERM) for operating the boat for the team covering the south end of the Lagoon. The combined boat survey yielded a couple "saves" and provided significant numbers for certain species, even with unfavorable tides and conditions. Through the years, TJ's agency, ERM, along with state partners, have undertaken a series of projects creating habitat and improving water quality in the Lake Worth Lagoon. This has led to shorebird species appearing on our counts, which did not previously-- a big boost to our CBC. These efforts are also a big reason why a Lagoon survey is worthwhile.

Again this year, David Smith, also of ERM, enabled access and accompanied a count team on County properties not yet open to the public. Thanks to David! We also express appreciation to Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, Palm Beach County Water Utilities and Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation for supporting our counters as always. The latter agency provided access and golf carts at Okeehelée and Park Ridge golf courses. Thanks to the City of Boynton Beach for doing the same at The Links at Boynton. And thanks to High Ridge Country Club for hosting our count team led by Rick and Linda Byrnes, as they have for many years.

Kudos to Jen Esten for organizing several teams for the first CBC effort in her community, Quail Ridge

Country Club. Thanks also to those who welcomed counters at Wycliffe Country Club, Bellaggio, and Hunter's Run. Our teams also covered Homeland and Indian Spring.

We were honored again this year to have author and photographer Richard Crossley join our effort. It was also good having David Simpson, one of the state's top birders, travel from Fellsmere to join one of the Lagoon teams. And, Dr. Marc Kramer and wife Eliana Ardila, also known as Birding by Bus, made the trip from Miami to count at Loxahatchee. Thanks to you all!

We had several out-of-state birders, including the late Gloria Hunter's daughter, Anne Hunter, and her family from Vermont. Gloria served in many roles for Audubon Everglades through the years and was a mentor to so many of us. Furthest traveled honors go to Betty Sheen, an ornithologist from Taiwan! Working on her masters, Betty spent several months studying in Oregon, and we were fortunate her visit with family here locally coincided with our CBC.

I want to thank Audubon Everglades president Susan McKemy and her board for providing the food and location for the compilation gathering. Thanks to Doreen LePage and Linda McCandless for planning the event, and to Gael Silverblatt for suggesting the location. Major thanks to Rick Schofield for addressing multiple IT issues as they arose, including creating the compilation registration program and handling sign-up. Rick also reorganized our count checklist again this year, and Rick and Doreen are crunching our numbers. My greatest expression of appreciation goes to Doreen, who, throughout this year's CBC process, performed so many tasks and provided invaluable assistance and input! Thank you, Doreen! Thank you all!

# Christmas Bird Count

by Paula Gattrell

I heard many Audubon Everglades (AE) members talk about the Christmas Bird Count (CBC), but I had no idea of its purpose. To understand the event, I volunteered for it. 2019 was the 120th annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count and Palm Beach County's 65th year of participation. The CBC is the longest-running community science project in the world. It is administered by the National Audubon Society in partnership with the North American Breeding Bird Survey, Bird Studies Canada, and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Its purpose is to provide population data for use in science, especially conservation biology.

It was in the early 1990s when New York ornithologist Frank Chapman launched his Christmas Bird Count as a bold new alternative to what had been a longtime Christmas tradition of hunting birds, regardless of whether they had any use for the carcasses or whether the birds were beneficial, beautiful, or rare. The first Christmas Bird Count was done by just 27 people at 25 locations across North America, mostly in the Northeast. Last year's count involved more than

79,000 observers in 2,615 areas in the hemisphere, most in the United States and Canada, with an increasing number in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Chuck Weber served as our CBC Organizer and Data Compiler. The West Palm Beach CBC has a 15-mile diameter count circle that is subdivided into count areas, each with a team leader. Teams include both experienced birders, less-experienced birders (that would be me), who can help with keeping the tally of the birds, and photographers. Chuck meets with the team leaders to review the areas they have been assigned.

I was teamed up with Shaun Coulter. Unfortunately, our third team member had to cancel. We spent 10 hours navigating our circle, where we put 25 miles on her truck and about 6 miles on foot. We dodged rain and were rewarded with two rainbows. We spoke to people in private areas and gained access to these while promoting and educating them about the AE and CBC. Our circle included the Trump International Golf Course. Unbeknownst

to us, the President happened to be playing golf there, and we were not allowed on the property and could only bird the perimeter. Even there we were stopped a couple of times by the Palm Beach Sheriff's Office and the Secret Service. We observed 45 species of birds and counted 860 birds. Our unique find was African Geese, which have a large black knob on their heads and a dark stripe down the back of their necks. I learned that these are considered domesticated and not a reportable species.

The day ended with a hosted compilation gathering. The event had over 120 counters in the field, including an ornithologist from Taiwan; Will, a high school student from CT for a second year; The Birding by Bus couple Eliana & Marcus from Miami; and Gloria Hunter's family from Vermont. Teams reported their findings, and all members heard the successful stories of a great day of birding. It was an incredible day, and I am happy to have been a participant in it.

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## Not to be Missed! Everglades Day 2020

### Habitats of the Everglades: Promoting Awareness, Appreciation, and Understanding of the Everglades

Saturday, February 8, 8 AM – 4 PM

Parking: Park at West Delray Regional Park, 10875 West Atlantic, Delray Beach with free shuttle service to the Refuge.

Everglades Day has been a major part of Audubon Everglades community outreach since its inception in 2000. We financially support it, have members on the steering committee, exhibit, and supply volunteers. Held at the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, the event welcomes more than 3000 people to experience the Everglades through tours and programs. It is a day of family fun. Kids can fish, participate in games, and see live animals from Busch Wildlife Center, the Palm Beach Zoo, and Okeechiee Nature Center's Raptor Center.

Some of the highlights this year for the more adventurous include birding field trips, canoe tours, and tours of LILA, a "living laboratory," where scientists study on a small, controlled scale the effects of water depth and flow rates on the Everglades ecosystem. Watch an "electrofishing demonstration" and learn how it is used to control invasive fish. Get a fuller picture of the Everglades through lectures and presentations.

**10AM** Susan Lerner, Pan's Garden, "Gardening Naturally"

**10AM & 2PM** James Lipscomb, South Florida Herpetological Society, "Native Snakes"

**11AM** Laura Brandt, PhD, U. S. fish and Wildlife Service, "Alligators and Crocodiles"

**11AM and 3PM** Stephanie King, Florida Fish and Wildlife Service, "Nonnative Reptiles"

**12PM** Marty Main, PhD, University of FL and creator of "Florida Master Naturalist Program"

**12PM** Alyssa Borge, Seminole Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki

Museum, "Seminole Traditions"

**12PM** Raptor Chapter from Okeechiee Nature Center, "Raptors Up-close and Personal"

**1PM** Harold Wanless, PhD, University of Miami, "The Future of our Everglades and S. Florida in the Face of Global Warming"

**1PM** Cara Zarate, Palm Beach Zoo, "Everglades Wildlife with Animal Ambassadors"

**2PM** Richard Kern, Filmmaker, "The Embattled Everglades: Habitats in Peril"

**2PM** Nick Aumen, PhD, U. S. Geological Survey, "Everglades Ecosystem Restoration"

**3PM** Rebecca Reed, Busch Wildlife Sanctuary, "Everglades Wildlife with Animal Ambassadors"

Watch the talented Plein Air artists paint throughout the day and then enjoy their display and the judging from 3 to 4PM. Food trucks are available with delicious food to nourish you as you stroll between the sites. Enjoy the 21st Everglades Day.

# JOIN AUDUBON

# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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. [Join online here.](#)

Your NAS membership does not grant you the special privileges and discounts available to members of Friends of Audubon Everglades. 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.

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

**Join now using PayPal. Go to [AudubonEverglades.org/membership](http://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 ([make checks payable to Audubon Society of the Everglades](#))

Please check one:  \$25 (Single)  \$20 (Student)  \$20 (Senior)  \$35 (Household\*)  \$75 (Patron\*)

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

New Member  Renewal

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 \_\_\_\_\_