



EVERGLADE KITE

NEWSLETTER

Monthly Newsletter for Audubon Everglades

VOL 60 | Issue 7 | March 2020



Photo: American Wigeon Male © Wikipedia

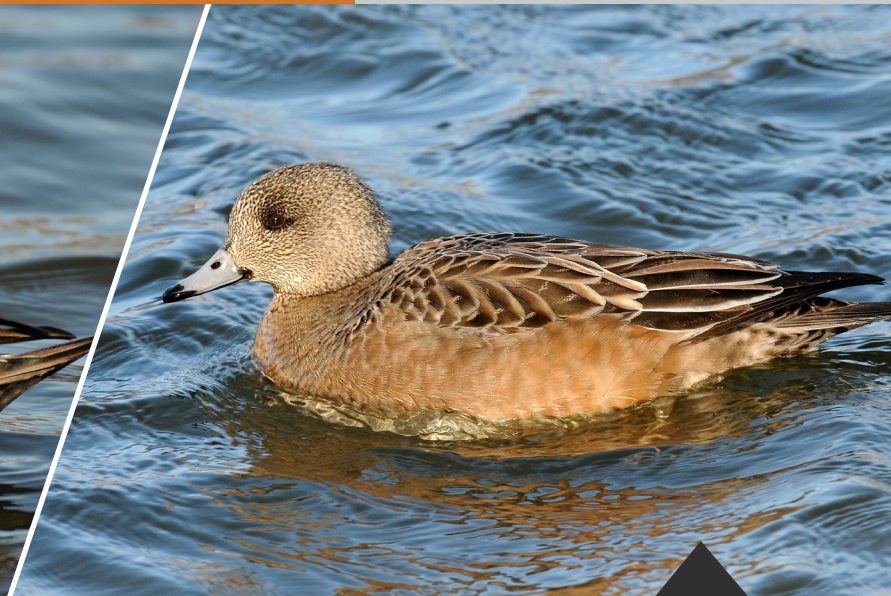


Photo: American Wigeon Female © Wikipedia

Bird of the Month: American Wigeon (*Mareca Americana*)

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 where they might be seen. As in the past, basic information on each species will be shared in the Kite Newsletter and at the Monthly Meetings.

A common migrant and winter visitor to the state's coastal marshes and inland wetlands, the American Wigeon is a dabbling duck that frequents fresh and brackish water habitats, including ponds, lakes, rivers, tidal marshes, and estuaries. They are sometimes observed in large rafts of hundreds of individuals, and their seasonal occurrence here is generally from November to March.

The showy plumage pattern in the male and, to a lesser extent, in the female, helps in identifying the species in the field. Adult males have a round, tan head with fine black speckling, a green eye patch and nape,

and a white forehead (whence they are sometimes called "Baldpate"). The underparts are brownish pink with a white vent in front of a black tail. The females are somewhat similar with a pale round head that is finely speckled throughout and a small blackish eye patch. Females lack the white vent and black tail. Both sexes have a short gray bill with a black tip.

While most dabbling ducks frequent shallow waters, up-ending to reach food items on the bottom, American Wigeons spend equal amounts of time in flocks grazing on land (parks, pastures and golf courses). Their winter diet primarily consists of aquatic surface plants as well as vegetation located in the water column and on the bottom. These include duckweed, wigeon grass, cattail, sedge, eelgrass, wild celery and water milfoil. The vegetation they graze on in fields, grasslands and other upland areas includes grass seeds, rice, clover, and barley. Their diet of aquatic vegetation is periodically supplemented on wintering grounds with aquatic invertebrates when available. A

dietary shift occurs on their nesting grounds, where the intake of insects and aquatic invertebrates (midges, horseflies, caddisflies, damselflies, beetles, mollusks and crustaceans) is increased, especially by the female wigeon, to aid in egg production. Also noteworthy is the fact that, although American Wigeons, like other dabbling ducks, frequent shallow water habitats, they are quite often observed in deeper water, associating with other waterfowl, including diving ducks and coots. They are even notorious for stealing food from the diving ducks when they return to the surface.

As with many of our wintering waterfowl visitors, pair-bonding occurs on the wintering grounds prior to spring migration. Nesting occurs in northern regions in large inland marshes consisting of fields and grasslands with tall grass or low shrubs. The nest site, concealed by tall vegetation, is selected by the female, who builds the nest on the ground, usually within 100 ft. of water but up to half a mile away. The shallow nest is made of grasses and weeds and lined with down from the

continued on page 3

UPCOMING TRIPS

MARCH 2020

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

08 SUN (8A-10A) Jupiter Ridge (Melanie & Steve Garcia)

13 FRI (9A-12P) Jonathan Dickinson State Park (Wildflowers & Scrub-Jays) (Lori & Tony Pasko)

14 SAT (8A-11A) Lakeside Ranch STA (Roy Netherton coord.)

15 SUN (5P-7P) Wakodahatchee (Valleri Brauer)

18 WED (6:30A-11:30A) Loxahatchee NWR (Fly-out) (Rick Schofield)

21 SAT (7A-11A) Fran Reich Preserve (Bruce Pickholtz)

21 SAT (8A-10A) Wakodahatchee (Chris Golia)

22 SUN (7:30A-10:30A) Hungryland Slough (Bart Scott)

28 SAT (8A-10:30A) Peaceful Waters (Scott Zucker)

29 SUN (8A-11A) Green Cay (Birds, Bellinis & Brunch) (Linda McCandless)

29 SUN (8A-11A) Phipps Skate Park (Gael Silverblatt)

MAY 2020

The following advance registration field trips in May will become available for online registration on their corresponding dates during the month of March, e.g., registration for the May 09 trip begins March 09.

09 SAT (6:30A-12:30P) Spring Pelagic (Rick Schofield)

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

March 2020 Monthly Meeting and Lecture Program: Dr. Paul Gray, Okeechobee Science Coordinator, Audubon Florida

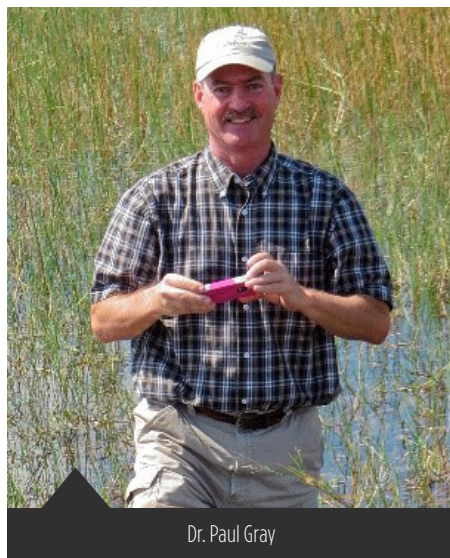
"Snail Kites and Grasshopper Sparrows"

MAR

03

Tuesday, March 3 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!



Dr. Paul Gray

Please join us and hear Dr. Paul Gray speak about the status of The Florida Snail Kite and Florida Grasshopper Sparrow, two endangered species found nowhere in the United States but Florida. Dr. Gray will provide the attendees with the very latest on their status of the birds and their conservation needs on Tuesday, March 3, 2020.

Florida Snail Kites were once found from the Everglades to southeast of Tallahassee, but wetland drainage and land development eliminated or altered much of the birds foraging habitat. The Snail Kite feeds almost exclusively on apple snails found in shallow freshwater wetlands, and prolonged

droughts and habitat loss affects the availability of the snails.

The Florida Grasshopper Sparrow is a non-migratory subspecies with a range limited to the dry prairie region of south-central Florida. Over 80 percent of the bird's habitat has been lost in recent decades with much of the remaining prairie degraded by fire suppression and encroachment by trees and shrubs. A captive breeding program was created in 2015 in an attempt to save the species from imminent extinction. In May 2019, three sparrows hatched and raised in captivity were released into the wild. Dr. Gray is an original member of the Florida Grasshopper Sparrow working group that oversees all research and conservation activities involving the subspecies.

Paul Gray is based out of Lorida, FL, near the Kissimmee River, and has been working in Florida for 28 years, with the last 20 years for Audubon. For Audubon, Paul has managed the 7,300-acre Kissimmee Prairie Sanctuary, supervises the Lake Okeechobee Sanctuaries established in 1938, and works on water, land and bird management issues with public and private entities. Paul's educational background includes a BS from the University of Missouri, an MS from Texas Tech University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Florida.

Mark Your Calendar: Dessert Pot Luck Annual Meeting

Our annual meeting is April 7. That is the meeting that the budget committee formally presents the budget and nominating committee presents the slate for you to vote on. This year we are going to try something new, our holiday party was so nice and you made such wonderful food, we are going to do a pot luck dessert. So, start looking at your favorite dessert recipes! Help make it a sweet occasion.

Profile: Marcia Yeip

by Kristen Murtaugh



Photo: Marcia Yeip

Marcia was born in Cleveland, where she spent most of her early life, except for about a decade of her childhood, when she and her brother and two sisters and their parents lived in Miami. She attended John Carroll University in Ohio, which at that time was an all-male, Jesuit school with only a night program open to women. Because her mother worked at the university, however, Marcia could attend day classes. She majored in biology with a concentration in medical technology. When she had her degree, she moved to Boston to begin a 40-year career in medical technology. After two years at the New England Baptist Hospital, she moved back to Cleveland, where she worked in various hospitals before getting a job at the Cleveland Clinic. There she worked in the Immunopathology Department and Microbiology. She stayed at their Ohio facility for fourteen years, and, when the Cleveland Clinic opened a satellite in Fort Lauderdale, Marcia moved to Florida to help set up the new lab. She stayed there for 8 years, working as a generalist. Marcia enjoyed working with the nurses and doctors and loved learning how things work and how research in biology contributes to advances in medicine. Her last job before retiring was at the Boca Raton Regional Hospital, where she was happy to work the 3–11PM shift for 13 years, because she had her mornings free.

I was excited to learn about two citizen science projects that Marcia volunteers for. The first is Painted Bunting banding. Her bird feeders, which she fills with millet only, are highly attractive to Painted Buntings, so her yard has become a site for counting them. A licensed

bird banding crew has come twice now to band her birds. Every year she sees some of the banded birds return to her yard. Last year she saw a “greenie” from the previous year return in bright male plumage. Marcia’s second citizen science project is Audubon EagleWatch. She has been watching the same pair of Bald Eagles in Quiet Waters in Deerfield Beach for five years. Three years ago, they had three young, two years ago, two, and last year, one. Last year their nest fell out of the tree after the eaglet fledged. This season Marcia looked at almost every tree in Quiet Waters to see if the pair had returned, and, after spotting one perched adult, she finally found the nest in a tree on an island. This year there are two eaglets in the nest, eaglets #13 and #14 for this pair of adults. Interestingly, there are only two Bald Eagle nests in Broward County.

Marcia is a regular volunteer at the Loxahatchee NW Refuge visitor center/gift shop on Monday afternoons. She travels frequently to birding hot spots, mostly on the eastern seaboard, but also farther afield. She particularly enjoys birding the Outer Banks of North Carolina, where she has had a time share for many years. In 2006 she did a tour of the National Parks in the western U.S. with a friend. Marcia speaks highly of the tours and local guides of Carefree Birding and has gone on their trips to Alaska, New England and the Caribbean. This January she attended the Space Coast Festival in Titusville and enjoyed seeing the birds on the Black Point Wildlife Drive at Merritt Island NWR and in the Orlando Wetlands Park, the oldest water treatment plant in Florida. Marcia does bird photography and recently upgraded her camera equipment.

Marcia’s connection to Audubon Everglades began around 2005, when she started going on field trips and attending chapter meetings. She still lives in the home she bought in Coconut Creek many years ago when she moved to Florida. When I asked her about the long drive she has to meetings in West Palm Beach, she said that she finds the programs and speakers well worth the effort. She has been a member-at-large of the Audubon Everglades Board since 2015. She volunteers at various chapter functions, and she greets and signs in attendees at the meetings.

Marcia showed me pictures of her dog, Mischu, a 13-pound retired mini-dachshund show dog that she has bred twice. He’s now definitely retired to the life and role of a typical lap dog. She has a large yard on a canal, where she grows bromeliads, orchids,

and butterfly plants. I knew Marcia a bit from having spoken briefly with her on field trips, where she generously shares her scope with attendees like me who don’t have one and want to see the special birds in the distance. It was fun to have the opportunity of a Kite profile interview to get to know her better. I really enjoyed sitting with her over coffee and learning more about her interesting life and interests and her commitment to the mission of Audubon Everglades.

Wigeon continued from page 1

female’s breast. Five to twelve whitish eggs are laid and incubated by the female for 23 – 24 days. The precocial chicks can leave the nest shortly after hatching, feeding themselves on terrestrial and aquatic insects and other invertebrates. The young are capable of flight 45 – 63 days after hatching, and the adult female remains with them for much of their pre-flight stage.

The males leave and prepare for molt usually when the females are part of the way through incubation. The female covers the eggs with down and takes short breaks to feed herself, then returns to the nest to continue incubating the eggs. Males leave the breeding grounds first, followed by the females and immatures. They migrate mostly during the day, forming small flocks during spring migration and larger flocks during fall migration. On wintering grounds, they congregate with large groups, often mixing with Mallards, Gadwalls, other ducks, and American Coots.

Possible locations to observe the American Wigeon: Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Everglades National Park, the STAs, Viera Wetlands, Flying Cow Road Wetlands.

BIRD NERD: ENJOY THE AUDUBON ORNITHOLOGY COLLECTION AT THE PALM BEACH COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

by Bob Dieterich



Photo: Birding Backpack © Adam Davis

How many of our members are aware that we have a gem of a literary collection at the Palm Beach County Library System? This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Audubon Ornithology Collection at the Library's main branch on Summit Boulevard. It is a cooperative effort of the County Library and Audubon Everglades to maintain an ornithological resource available to the public. Building on an original grant from the Charles E. Merrill Trust in 1979 and supplemented by additional funds over the years, this collection has grown to hundreds of volumes related to the topic of birds.

As far back as 1991, the value of this collection was widely recognized. An article from the Audubon Everglades chapter newsletter at the time noted that "Colleges and Universities throughout the United States have called the library, requesting to borrow books because of its reputation as one of the best collections in the Southeast." The newsletter also quoted Fred Lohrer, an ornithologist and librarian at Archbold Biological Station, who stated, "This is probably the best ornithological collection in any Florida public library, and it can hold its own when compared with ornithological holdings in the better academic libraries in Florida." Other wildlife artists and authors have made extensive use of the collection, with one commenting, "It must be the finest collection of books on birds available to the

public in South Florida." David Sibley commented that the collection was a great resource of current and historical materials that should be preserved.

The collection offers numerous books that cover a wide range of topics related to birds. They include bird-finding guides for most areas of North America, comprehensive field guides for many different areas of the world, and even compilations of recorded bird songs. I have found this collection invaluable in researching articles for this newsletter as well as for my personal use. I'm fortunate to have the opportunity to pursue birds near and far, and this collection is ready-made for a deep dive into the world of birds. It also presents a terrific opportunity to examine books and field guides that you may have an interest in purchasing for your own home library. Do you have a special interest in a family or group of birds such as owls or woodpeckers or shorebirds? You will find the appropriate volume to satisfy your curiosity here. It's a good thing the library has closing hours, because there have been times I've been tempted to spend an all-nighter going through all of the shelves of books!

There have been more recent developments in support of the Audubon Collection. For example, the Jupiter Branch Library houses a permanent collection of 58

framed Audubon prints of life-sized birds. The prints were purchased for the Jupiter Branch expansion and are permanently on display throughout the building. A binder of background information and location in the building of each print has been compiled and is kept at the reference desk. The prints and accompanying directory are available for library patrons' perusal.

Additionally, the County Library is making available to the public use of its "Birding Backpacks." It's a full-service birding resource that one can take into the field to become an active participant in the birding community. It includes the following components:

- Daypack
- Binoculars – one for adults and two children's size
- Laminated copy of "Florida Birds: a Folding Pocket Guide"
- Lens wipes
- Blank notebook for keeping records
- Copy of the Audubon Everglades Birding Locations pamphlet
- Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation Park Guide

Backpacks are available at all Palm Beach County Library System locations! Library members can place a hold on backpacks to be picked up at any location. Due to high demand, however, the Library cannot guarantee that backpacks will be available at a specific time. Each one is checked out for a total of 21 days.

More recently, a generous donation of a private bird library has been made to Audubon Everglades for transfer to the County Library. Consisting of dozens of volumes, the donation is being screened so that it best complements the existing collection. We expect that it will be a valuable addition to what the County Library already has to offer. So, stop by the Main Branch at 3650 Summit Boulevard some time to see this tremendous resource available to everyone in Palm Beach County.

OUR WINDOWS ARE KILLING OUR BIRDS: HOW WE CAN HELP

by Scott Zucker



Photo: A white-eyed Vireo bird-window collision casualty. © Peter Saenger

By conservative estimates, at least one million bird-window collision deaths occur each day. That's 365 million bird-window collision deaths each year, every year. In human terms, that would be equivalent to wiping out the populations of both the United States and Canada in one year. 290 species of North American birds have so far been documented as bird-window casualties.

While these huge numbers may be sobering and difficult to comprehend, think about how many buildings and windows are out there and, with a bird here and a bird there, it all adds up. The only other causes of bird mortality that exceed bird-window collisions are cats and habitat loss. Add up the deaths from all other sources of human-caused mortality (powers lines, vehicles, pollution/pesticides, etc.); they do not come close to the deaths caused by windows.

One of the reasons that this problem persists and has not generated a public outcry is that, in most cases, we don't see the carnage under our windows or the truck loads of dead birds being hauled away. Studies show that only between 25-50% of bird-window collisions leave any evidence at all, even on clean glass.

We don't have piles of dead birds under our home's windows for several reasons, one of which is that many animals eat birds, and predators like cats, squirrels, and raccoons learn to hunt for dead or injured prey under windows. Another reason is that birds have incredibly flexible necks, and hundreds of x-rays have shown that they do not break their necks when they collide with glass, as people assume. They

get concussions and internal injuries. These injuries can take days to kill a bird, who still needs to stay active to survive. Since injured birds rarely receive medical attention, most victims fly away to die elsewhere. Out of sight and out of mind.

Most collisions that are reported and that garner publicity occur during migration and in urban areas along migratory corridors. These events usually occur in bad weather, when migrating birds are forced to fly lower than normal, placing them closer to cities, where, on cloudy nights, reflected light can blind and confuse them, causing them to fly around aimlessly until they flutter down to street level, exhausted. There, at dawn they are faced with glass canyons and the confusing noise and activity of a city. They fly into reflections of sky and into the glass in front of atriums filled with trees and other inviting vegetation. The carnage can be stunning, with hundreds of dead and dying birds on sidewalks in front of individual buildings. These mass mortality events draw much attention and are the reason most people think this is the main location and timing of bird-window collisions, but it's not.

Research has shown that it is the day-to-day collisions that occur year-round at residential and low-rise commercial buildings that account for most bird-window collisions. Sadly, they occur often at homes with good habitat and feeders offering food and shelter.

Birds simply do not see glass and do not realize that buildings hold glass. Glass poses two major problems: it is either clear (see-through) or reflective.

Clear glass windows with a view to plants inside the building or windows in the front of a building that line-up with the back windows so the backyard can be seen through the front window tempt birds to fly into them because they think they see a welcoming habitat. They often hit the windows with a terrible and fatal force.

Reflective glass can act as a mirror, reflecting sky, trees, hedges and plants, also inviting birds to fly through it to get to the habitat. (Note: if you examine your windows, they may appear reflective under one set of light conditions and transparent under other light conditions.)

Even small windows pose a threat. Birds are accustomed to flying through tight places so almost

no window is too small to kill them. There simply is no place birds are safe near glass.

Glass kills, but you can do something about it.

Since birds do not recognize glass, you must either physically prevent them from flying into it or make a visible deterrent that they avoid. Creating a physical barrier includes hanging netting in front of your windows or leaving your screens in year-round.

Making a visible deterrent on glass can be accomplished by using decals, stickers, strings, paints, dots, film, or anything that birds can see and avoid. There are two very important rules that must be followed to make this effective. The first is the 2" by 4" rule for the spacing of any item used to make a pattern. Any pattern using a wider spacing either vertically or horizontally will increase the likelihood of a collision. Rule two states that anything you hang in front of or place on the glass must be on the outside of a window. When a room behind glass is darker than the outdoors, perfectly clear, un-tinted glass can act like a mirror. This masks the view of anything placed inside the glass, making it ineffective in preventing bird-window collisions. Of course, there are exceptions, and closing blinds and other items on the inside can help, but placing deterrents on the outside is best!

Also, placing bird feeders near windows and keeping blinds down and partially closed during the day can help save avian lives.

All of us can make a difference.

Here are some products that you can purchase to make your windows safe:

- [Acopian BirdSavers](#): 1/8" paracord hanging on 4" centers, and self-cleaning and easy to clean behind without removing. ... easy and inexpensive!
- [CollidEscape decals](#): Cut into individual decals of any shape. Remember 2" x 4" rule.
- [CollidEscape informational signs](#): Covers glass door panels and is visible only from the outside.
- [Feather-Friendly](#): Do-it-Yourself tape in a 2" x 4" pattern that comes in kits.
- [Tempera Paints](#): Buy them online or at any craft store. Let your imagination run wild!

PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB MARCH MEETING CAPTURES THE BEAUTY OF YELLOWSTONE

by Scott Zucker

Imagine photographing at Yellowstone National Park. Doesn't that sound awesome? Now imagine photographing Yellowstone in the extremes of winter, when average daily high temperatures are in the twenties and average lows are near zero. Now factor in wind chill that can lower the real feel by over twenty degrees. Well, that is what Helen and Chuck Fine, our next presenters, had to endure when they traipsed around Yellowstone in winter, taking award-winning photos. See their beautiful images, learn vital information for shooting in cold weather, and receive instructions and tips for winter photography situations during our March Program – “Yellowstone in Winter: Cold Weather Photography” – in the comfort of our climate-controlled meeting hall, on March 23 at 7 PM at St. Michael's Lutheran Church (1925 Birkdale Dr. Wellington, FL 33414).

February Photo Competition

Our December photo competition, which featured our regular “Nature Only” category (any type of nature image) and “Macro/Close-up” as our special nature category, had nearly 200 submissions. Award-winning photographer Joe Marshall served as our guest judge. We had outstanding images from all three levels (Beginner, Advanced, and Salon), and the judge was so impressed by the quality of the work that he had difficulty deciding which images should receive merit awards. [For a list of winners see the website.](#)

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.](#)

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. We look forward to having you on our team!

CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES

Community Science Projects

(bird surveys, habitat projects, etc.)

Communications

Community Events

Conservation Advocacy

Education Outreach

Library

Membership

Organizers, Coordinators

(various programs and events)

Website

The 2019 Membership year runs from June 1, 2019 to May 31, 2020. Join Friends of Audubon Everglades today.

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 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 _____