



# EVERGLADE KITE

## NEWSLETTER

Monthly Newsletter for Audubon Everglades

VOL 60 | Issue 10 | July 2020



Wood Ducks © Wikipedia

## Bird of the Month: Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*)

by Clive & Celecia Pincock

*The 2020 Bird of the Month series will continue to focus on species of waterfowl that permanently reside in or are seasonal visitors to our state. As in the past, basic information on highlighted species will be shared in each Newsletter.*

The Wood Duck is an uncommon to common permanent resident throughout Florida except in the Keys, where it is a rare non-breeding visitor. Wood Ducks frequent freshwater marshes and ponds, slow moving rivers, forested lakeshores, and swamps. As cavity nesters, they utilize natural tree cavities, as well as wooden or plastic nest boxes placed in wetlands.

Wood Ducks are ranked as the most beautiful of all waterfowl species. The male's breeding plumage includes a greenish-black head with purplish crest and a white neck and throat. The breast is brownish-red with white spots separated from the yellow belly

and sides by white and black stripes. Adult females are patterned with a bold comet-shaped eye patch around each eye, and their underparts are white with brown streaking on their breasts and flanks. Non-breeding males look similar to females; however, they retain their reddish bill.

Wood Ducks are often observed in small groups or individual pairs, keeping apart from other waterfowl. They are extremely wary and take flight at the slightest sign of potential danger. They feed by dabbling or short shallow dives, foraging for aquatic invertebrates, seeds, and a variety of aquatic vegetation. They will also forage on the forest floor for acorns, other nuts, grain from grain fields, and terrestrial insects.

Breeding pairs search for nest cavities during the early morning. When a potential site is located, the male stands outside the cavity, while the female enters to

inspect it. The nest tree is usually a foot to two feet in diameter and cavities that are two to sixty feet high are preferred. The tree cavities are typically places where a branch has broken off the trunk of the tree and the tree's heartwood has subsequently rotted. Because Wood Ducks cannot make their own cavities, abandoned Pileated Woodpecker nest cavities are sometimes used. Man-made wooden nest boxes (even those placed near the ground or in open marshes) are often used where trees are scarce.

The nest tree is normally situated near or over water, but nest cavities are sometimes used in trees up to a little over a mile away from water. Nest cavities are lined with down feathers from the female's breast, and six to fifteen dull white to pale buff eggs are laid and incubated solely by the female. Female Wood Ducks will sometimes "dump" their eggs in the nest of other Wood Ducks, but where too many eggs exist, no

*continued on page 2*

# NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

The Nominating Committee is proud to present the following slate of officers:

- President: Doreen LePage
- Vice President: Scott Zucker
- Secretary: Cathy Hanson
- Treasurer: Louann Dillon

Usually, when we have an out-going President, we have the opportunity as a chapter and as individuals to thank him or her. Unfortunately, the COVID pandemic does not allow us to properly thank Susan McKemy as a group during a meeting. Susan has been an indelible part of our organization's life for six years, both as president and vice president. The Board is thankful for her extensive contributions to the club. Please make sure to acknowledge all that Susan has done when you next see or talk with her.

Doreen has been on the AE board, has masterfully handled membership for several years, and works closely with Chuck Weber on the Christmas Bird Count. Scott, Cathy and Louann continue in the positions they have so ably held.

Your board is working on creating a way for you to vote on both the nominating slate and the budget.

**- Paton White**

---

*Wood Duck continued from page 1*

incubation is carried out.

Eggs hatch in 25 – 35 days, and the young will typically stay in the nest until the morning after hatching. They then climb to the nest entrance using their sharp claws and leap to the ground where the calling female awaits her brood. Once the entire brood has exited the nest cavity, the female leads them to the water where she cares for them for five to six weeks. The young are able to feed themselves immediately, feeding predominantly on aquatic insects. Young are capable of flight at about eight to nine weeks. One brood per year is usually produced in northern regions, while two broods are common in the south.

# PROFILE: BRIAN HOPE

by Kristen Murtaugh



Photo: Brian Hope

What a fun time I had meeting with Brian Hope - the first masked Kite profile interview! There is an article in this issue about the Palm Beach County Checklist of Birds that Brian first drew up 17 years ago. This winter he updated the list for the second time, and AE has printed the third version. More than 20 birds on that list were first recorded in Palm Beach County by Brian himself, including several Warblers, such as Cerulean, Mourning, and Kentucky. We can thank Brian for many other contributions to birding in our county and in Florida. He has participated in over 45 Christmas Bird Counts. 25 years ago, Brian recorded the first Cuban Pewee (aka Greater Antillean Pewee) in the United States (in Spanish River Park). He has recorded several first sightings for Florida, including what was also the first U.S. winter sighting of the Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (in his backyard!). A reviewer for several years for the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee, Brian's strong skills in the field contributed greatly to the work of the academic members of the committee.

I learned that Brian was responsible for Wakodahatchee Wetlands. About 40 years ago Brian started birding the area around the water treatment plant. He got thrown out two or three times, but eventually got to know the plant manager. The two got along well; soon the manager was riding around with Brian to check out the birds and calling Brian if he saw something interesting. Eventually the manager told the Palm Beach County Water Utilities Department about what the two were doing. They got in touch with a company that had done something similar in the Orlando area, and Wakodahatchee was born. And, of course, Brian created the first Wakodahatchee checklists.

Brian was born and grew up in England, in Bolton in

Lancashire. He and his wife Joan moved to Florida almost 50 years ago. His sister, a world-class ice skater, had settled in Ft. Lauderdale, and the whole family – Brian and Joan and both sets of parents – moved here. Brian and Joan have one son, who lives in Miami, and two grandchildren. In his youth Brian pursued interests in music and sports (soccer and cricket). An accomplished trumpet player, in England he had earned a living with his music. Here in Florida Brian earned his living installing sprinkler systems. This line of work gave him the freedom to travel the world to follow his new birding passion.

Brian did not get into birding until he moved to Florida. His interest in birds piqued, he first birded with a telescope (naval style) and then bought a pair of binoculars at Kmart. He made friends with an accomplished birder and traveled with him to see birds in Mexico. He has never put down his binoculars (better ones now, of course!) since. Brian birds every day. He and Joan have had a lifetime of trips birding across the world. They have birded in over 60 different countries and on all the continents except Asia. Their travel to South America frequently; their favorite country there is Ecuador, where they have gone at least eight times and where Brian played a role in having an area of the country named a national park. Brian does not count the birds he sees but figures that he has seen some 3000 species. He uses guidebooks, but he does not use guides. He does not like tours or large groups. He prefers to find the birds himself. He and Joan rent cars wherever they are, and they go off on their own, finding inexpensive lodgings and food. Brian prepares well for his trips and spends a lot of time studying the birds he might find in the area they will be visiting. He told me that, when he runs into bird tour groups abroad, the local guides often ask him where to find the rare birds. And he can take them right to them!

Brian and Joan regaled me with stories of their birding adventures. They are an exceptionally intrepid pair, who can talk their way into any place they want to go and can figure their way out of any tight situation. They confessed that they've gone down roads the wrong way and into a lot of places they shouldn't have. They've been chased by pigs, people, and vehicles. They were robbed on the beach in Panama by someone who thought Brian's binoculars were camera equipment. They somehow got into the

*continued on page 3*

*Brian Hope continued from page 2*

middle of a walled city in Spain and theirs was the only car in the plaza. They get lost frequently and, at least once, almost missed the departure of their cruise ship, when they had trouble finding their way back to it. On their return from trips, their son always asks, “what happened to you this time?” One story involved a flat tire in a refuge in South Africa that was not open to the public but to which they had been given entry. Joan stood guard with the tire iron in her hand while Brian changed the tire. He joked that, had NASCAR seen how fast he’d worked, they would have hired him on the spot! Back on the road, they had not gone more than a hundred yards before coming across a large and unhappy herd of rhinos! In another challenging adventure, Brian and three other men, birding for the Christmas Count by boat in Everglades National Park, had to fight their way back in pouring rain from the mud flats on Ingraham Lake through Florida Bay. They were in a 20-foot boat, and the seas were five feet high. Not far out, the boat’s motor died. By this time, night had fallen. Luckily, they were able to get the small auxiliary motor to work, and the drenched crew was able to get back to their starting point in Flamingo.

Brian and Joan told me many wonderful stories. There’s not space for all of them, but I did want to relate another of my favorites. One day Brian was standing on the Ecuadorian side of a river between Ecuador and Peru and heard a familiar chip on the Peruvian side. He pished, and the bird flew across to him. It was, as he’d thought, an American Redstart, not a bird he’d expected there, but he knew its chip.

Brian really likes Trogans but doesn’t have a “favorite” bird. He does have a favorite birding spot – Cairns, on the east coast of Australia, just off the Barrier Reef, where there’s a vast array of species – ground birds, shore birds, and mountain birds. I asked Brian what advice he had for people starting out birding. He said that a lot of people these days were photographing birds and then looking them up when they got back home. Brian has done some bird photography over the years, and he has some exceptional video footage of some of the rare birds he has seen around the world. But that’s not how he thinks you learn about birds. You must watch them closely in the field, learn their flight patterns, see if the way they walk is different than birds they could be confused with, identify what distinguishes them in their plumage. Take your guidebook, and go out as often as you can, both by yourself and with experts. And, if you’re lucky enough to run into Brian on one of your trips, ask him to tell you some of his wonderful stories!

# Checklist of Birds for Palm Beach County – 3rd Edition

by Linda McCandless

Audubon Everglades is proud to release an updated 2020 edition of the Palm Beach County Checklist of Birds. It is available in two forms: as a printed copy on cardstock paper, and, new this year, [as a digital PDF version for self-printing](#) via the Audubon Everglades website under the “Birds” tab. The checklist is designed to be printed on legal-sized paper, but it can be printed on standard-sized paper.

The checklist author, Brian Hope, has provided the following commentary regarding the 2020 edition of the checklist: “Just recently I completed updating my 3rd edition of the Palm Beach County Checklist of Birds. My first two lists were completed in 2003 and 2013. Anyone will see immediately that this list is much different than the previous two lists. For the 2020 edition, I decided to go back as far as I could, which was certainly into the 1950s.

All of the bird species added to this 3rd edition were seen by multiple observers or were photographed or videotaped. Any birds seen by single observers were not included, and that includes two of my own. I hope this information sheds some light on the Palm Beach County birding scene.

## Audubon Everglades Online Speaker Presentation

by Mary Dunning

**“Bird Migration in South Florida” with Brian Rapoza, Tuesday, July 7, 2020 at 7PM**

Each year in the spring and fall, thousands of birds migrate through Florida, some travelling extreme distances between their breeding and wintering grounds. Audubon Everglades guest speaker Brian Rapoza will provide us with answers about which birds migrate through south Florida, why and when the birds migrate, what triggers migration, how far birds migrate, how they navigate, what hazards birds face during migration, and how we can help migratory birds on their journey.

Until his retirement in 2018, Brian Rapoza was an environmental science teacher, outreach specialist, and internship coordinator at MAST Academy, a Maritime & Science Technology High School located in Miami. During his tenure with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, he led thousands of school children on bird-watching expeditions through Everglades National Park and other area birding destinations. In 2006, he was named MAST Teacher of the Year. Brian is a board member of Tropical Audubon Society and serves as their Field Trip Coordinator, leading birding field trips throughout Florida, the U.S., and the Neotropics.



Photo: Brian from birding tours in Honduras (2011)

Brian is the author of *Birding Florida*, a bird-finding guide to more than 200 locations throughout the state. Since 2001, he has also served as the Christmas Bird Count compiler for both Miami and Coot Bay/ Everglades National Park. Brian is originally from New Bedford, Massachusetts and attended the University of Massachusetts, where he graduated in 1980 with a B.S. in Marine Biology.

Please join us on Tuesday, July 7 at 7pm for an online “Zoom” Member meeting and presentation by Brian Rapoza. An email with a link to attend this online presentation will be sent to all Audubon Everglades members.

# WHY STOPPING DEVELOPMENT IN THE AGRICULTURE RESERVE AND PALM BEACH COUNTY-WIDE MATTERS

by Scott Zucker

The amount of development we allow anywhere matters!

The number one reason for loss of wildlife (wild animals and birds) and other species in the world is habitat loss. According to the World Wildlife Federation, residential, commercial, and industrial development accounts for approximately 50% of all habitat loss worldwide. They also estimate that we have lost 60% of the world's animal population since 1970.

In addition, recent research estimates of Cornell scientists indicate that we have lost 25% of our total bird population (3 billion birds) in North America during that same period.

The UN estimates that 1 million species are currently threatened with extinction. They warned in 2019 that “nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history – and the rate of species extinctions is accelerating, with grave impacts on people around the world.” They are describing serious threats to the quantity and quality of ALL life on the planet.

In PBC, 19 bird species, such as the endemic Everglades Snail Kite, Florida Scrub Jay, Florida Sandhill Crane, and Limpkin, and five mammal species are currently on the Endangered species list.

Worldwide, the African Conservancy estimates that wildlife habitat in the world is being lost or destroyed at a rate of approximately 5,760 acres per day or 240 acres per hour.

In 1990, in the spirit of preserving rural lands and as part of its Comprehensive Plan, Palm Beach County Commissioners formed the Agricultural Reserve, which is a 22,000-acre zone west of Florida's Turnpike, from Clint Moore to Lantana roads. Where development is allowed, residential and commercial development in the Ag Reserve was limited to 40 percent of a property, as long as builders preserved 60 percent of the land, a rule that was unfortunately modified in 2016 to exclude properties less than 16 acres. This has led to increased fragmentation within the Reserve.

Additionally, in 1999, county residents approved, by a 70% margin, a bond issue to spend \$100 million to buy



Photo: Birds bathing in a flooded Bedner's Farm field in the Agriculture Reserve. © Scott Zucker

and preserve nearly 2600 acres of farmland in the Ag Reserve, as well as to spend \$50 million to purchase Natural Area land to be restored and managed by ERM elsewhere in the county.

While the Ag Reserve has seen exponential growth this past decade and now has more than 12,000 additional homes, many shopping complexes, hospitals, schools, industrial parks and office buildings, it still boasts the largest Palm Beach County farming community outside of the Belle Glade area. And, despite the fact that farms, nurseries and landscape businesses, which occupy most of the preserved land, are not natural areas, in general they do provide habitat for wildlife and support biodiversity.

But, because the average home price in the area is around \$650,000, with many homes exceeding a million dollars, developers continue to seek development rights, to be exempted from density limits, and to exceed the commercial cap, as they continue their barrage of requests to the PBC Board of County Commissioners to make changes to the comprehensive plan in order to develop more of the area.

On June 10, 2020, the Lake Worth Drainage District voted unanimously to accept the ubiquitous GL Homes' \$21.9 million bid for development rights for lands next to canals to build 313 units in the Ag Reserve. And on June 12, just two days later, the PBC Planning Commission entertained three items attempting to gut the PBC Comprehensive Plan, as three developers sought to build a total of nearly 1400 more units, an additional 400,000 square feet of commercial space

(exceeding the 1.1 million-square-foot cap in the area) a hotel, and more industrial space.

Heeding the recommendations of the county planners, who stated that the three proposals “represent major departures from nearly all of the fundamental policy concepts... including requiring preserve area and limiting development in the Tier,” The Planning Commissioners wisely voted nearly unanimously to reject them.

However, developers continue to cue up to build in the Agriculture Reserve, and Palm Beach County Commissioners and Planners are fielding more applications for development there. Let's continue to encourage our PBC County Commissioners and board members at all levels of county government to come out on the right side of history by not adding to habitat loss for wildlife and biodiversity in the Agriculture Preserve or anywhere in Palm Beach County.

To see past and upcoming PBC Planning Commission Meetings (agendas, minutes, and videos), [visit the Planning Division here.](#)

To see all PBC government meetings, [see their calendar here.](#)

# It's Time to Build a Truly Inclusive Outdoors

by Corina Newsome  
Contributor, Audubon Magazine  
June 16, 2020

## As the nation continues to confront racism, the birding community must embrace difficult conversations.



Photo: Corina Newsome birding along the Savannah River in Georgia. © Katherine Arntzen/Georgia Southern University

It's early April and American Woodcocks have begun twilight mating displays, making whistling, twirling falls from the sky. You've seen them before with friends, but to abide by social distancing rules you decide on a solo trip. Then you recall the sound of gravel behind you as a police car followed you to a trail head the other day. You quickly but calmly grabbed your binoculars and pointed them to a nearby tree. Not because you saw a bird, but to prove your innocence—to de-escalate what you feared could unfold. It's cold outside and will be colder tonight when the woodcocks dance. You should layer up with your hoodie, but you know how that makes you look. Especially at night. Especially alone. You decide it's better not to go.

Every detail of this scenario is based on events experienced by me and my Black birding friends—and our fear is not for nothing. Law enforcement and vigilantes have endangered or taken Black lives more times than we can count. Names ring in our ears: Tamir, Breonna, George, Ahmaud. We have also seen

the discomfort of white hikers and birders when they encounter us, sometimes suspicious or fearful, other times shocked we're even there. To raise our concerns, we've reached out to our birding communities. But instead of finding listening ears, we've been told that discussion is too political. Nature exploration is “neutral territory.” How dare we bring race into birding.

As COVID-19 cases exploded, the outdoors, and birding in particular, became a source of solace and escape for many, bringing the anxiety and racism Black people experience in the outdoors into clear relief. Then a spark: [on video](#), a white woman tried to weaponize the police against a Black birder, Christian Cooper, by falsely claiming an African American man threatened her life. The issues we'd long known became international news, just as Black Lives Matter protests spread globally. My friends and I, [a group](#) of about 30 Black birders, scientists, and nature enthusiasts, decided it was the perfect time to tell the world that these aren't isolated incidents, but the fruit of an

entrenched culture. With this resolve, we organized the first [Black Birders Week](#), which began May 31.

Through online events and conversations at hashtags like [#BlackInNature](#), [#BirdingWhileBlack](#), and [#BlackWomenWhoBird](#), hundreds of thousands of people saw, heard, and celebrated Black birders. Large organizations amplified our message; we were no longer silenced. Even as the pandemic kept many apart, we saw more fellow Black birders, scientists, and hikers than ever before.

Still, our efforts must continue—and white people must join. We are at the cusp of a turning point that embraces human diversity as joyfully as the diversity of feathered creatures. To get there, white people must value Black lives and hear our voices—and lean into uncomfortable conversations about racism and privilege that follow. The birding community must show that it is not neutral. Neutrality is dangerous, and this is our protest.

*Corina Newsome is a biology graduate student at Georgia Southern University. She has worked in wildlife conservation for eight years, and is currently a field biologist studying the MacGillivray's Seaside Sparrow.*

# 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](https://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 \_\_\_\_\_