

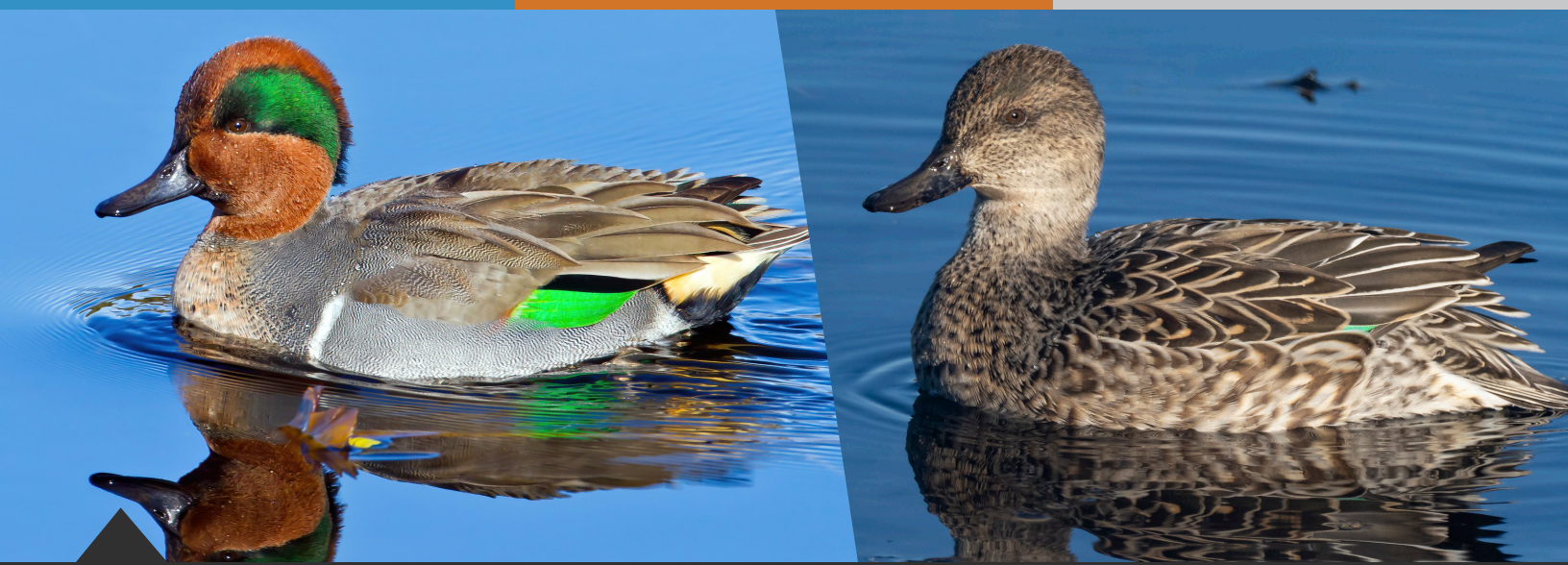


# EVERGLADE KITE

## NEWSLETTER

Monthly Newsletter for Audubon Everglades

VOL 61 | Issue 2 | October 2020



Left: Green-winged Teal Male © Mick Thompson; Right: Green-winged Teal Female © Mick Thompson

## Bird of the Month: Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca*)

by Clive & Celecia Pinnock

*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 Green-winged Teal is the smallest waterfowl in North America, measuring 14 inches long. Although highly maneuverable, it is slower in flight, compared to other ducks. The species is an uncommon to abundant migrant and winter resident throughout mainland Florida, but is rarely seen in the Keys. Our smallest dabbling, it inhabits a variety of shallow wetland habitats, including ponds, lakes, estuaries, flooded fields, and marshes.

Adult males sport a chestnut colored head with dark green eye patches that extend to the nape. The breast is pinkish in color with black spots, and there is a vertical white stripe on either side of the breast. Under-tail feathers are yellow. Adult females have brown and tan mottled bodies with a dark eye-line, light colored throat, and whitish under-tail feathers.

The beak in both sexes is small; the male's beak is black and the female's is brownish gray.

While foraging for food, Green-winged Teal glean aquatic vegetation and insects above and below the surface of the water. They also probe mudflats for invertebrates such as worms, seed shrimp, midges, tadpoles, and copepods living just above the sediment. Vegetation consumed includes sedge fruit, seeds of pondweeds, bulrush and spike rush. Agricultural crops such as corn and rice are also consumed, and feeding can commence by night or day.

Courtship begins in the fall and peaks during January and February; the birds choose new partners each breeding season. Courtship displays by males are quite elaborate, involving posturing and vocalizations, with groups of up to twenty five males courting females both on the water and in courtship flights. Pair bonding is established on wintering grounds as well as during spring migration and on the breeding grounds.

With the male following behind in flight, the female chooses a well concealed site on the ground, typically within 200 yards from water. The bowl-shaped nest, built by the female, is placed in a sedge meadow or grassland and located under shrubby ground thickets, where the nest is well concealed. The nest is constructed of grasses, twigs, and leaves, with breast feathers and down lining the center of the nest, where the eggs are placed.

Six to eleven cream to pale-buff eggs are laid and incubated solely by the female. Once incubation begins, the male abandons the female. The incubation period lasts 20-24 days, and the down covered ducklings hatch within minutes of each other. Being precocial, the ducklings leave the nest soon after hatching and are led by the female to water nearby. They are immediately capable of fending for themselves and consume large quantities of aquatic invertebrates for the first few weeks of their lives. The female continues to care for the young, which may return to the nest for the first few nights. The young fledge at about 35 days after hatching.



# Audubon Everglades Presents “Caracaras of Florida”

Rachel King, Senior Scientist with Ecological Associates Inc.

OCT  
06

Tuesday, October 6 at 7PM  
Zoom Hosted Presentation



Photo: Rachel King

Audubon Everglades invites its membership to the October member lecture program, “The Life History and Legal Status of Crested Caracaras in Florida,” with biologist Rachel King. Join us for this Zoom-hosted presentation on Tuesday, October 6 at 7pm and hear about Rachel’s adventures in the field, surveying these winged beauties and their conservation status.

Originally from South Carolina, Rachel moved to Orlando as a teenager and attended the University of Central Florida, where she earned her B.S. in Biology. She received her M.S. in Ecology at the University of Georgia, studying spatial ecology and overland movements of aquatic turtles. Rachel began her career as a regional biologist with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, where she learned how to conduct bird surveys for species that included the White-Crowned Pigeon, Florida Scrub-Jay, Crested Caracara, and wading birds. At Ecological Associates, Inc., Rachel continues to work with bird species, particularly the Florida Scrub-Jay and Crested Caracara.

**Please check your email for a link to join this exciting member presentation via Zoom.**



Photo: Crested Caracara Adult and Juvenile © Dan S.

## GETTING THE YARD READY FOR FALL MIGRATION

by Linda McCandless



Photo: New Painted Bunting Feeder © Linda McCandless

To get ready to welcome Painted Buntings back to my yard in west Boca, I’m trying a new style of feeder this season. I hope they go for it. I loved the style of the previous feeder I used. It was a caged round feeder about the size of a soccer ball and easy to clean and refill. I would have continued to use it, but by the end of every season, the feeder was so rusted, I’d have to throw it out and buy a new one. Enough of that planned obsolescence. The new feeder is a caged tube feeder which has a domed top to provide a bit of weather protection, and the open bottom will allow some seeds to fall to the ground for other birds. The wire cage will offer the Buntings a safe place to feed and, I hope, keep squirrels and large birds at bay. I bought both the feeder and the millet seed to fill it online.

When I first moved to my home, my yard was mostly grass, so no Painted Buntings would visit. I’ve spent the last few years replacing the grass with native trees and bushes, which proved a successful strategy. In October 2013, I hosted the first Painted Bunting in my yard, and, in April 2020, the first Indigo Bunting came to my feeder. They like the seeds from the native Salvia and hide in the Fire Bush and Indigo Berry.

Finally, I provide a clean bird bath, which attracts both local and migrant birds.

# PROFILE: LOUANN DILLON

by Kristen Murtaugh



Photo: Louann Dillon © Adriane Medina

Louann Dillon has been the treasurer of Audubon Everglades since 2016. Much like other board members, she had started going to monthly meetings and on field trips, and the astute officers of the club could see that she would make a great candidate for treasurer.

Louann grew up in Western Massachusetts, where she lived in Stockbridge and Williamstown. The many summers she spent at a Massachusetts Audubon Camp in the Berkshires as a young child fostered her enjoyment of nature. She loved the ferns, and trees, and, of course, the birds. While she was growing up, her family spent many summer vacations on the Outer Banks of North Carolina, where they went on terrific shore bird walks.

Louann went to Smith College, where she majored in Economics. After graduation in the late 70s, she moved to New York to work for Chase Manhattan Bank as a programmer analyst in the controller's office and eventually made her way up to vice president. It was the time that interstate banking was starting and the federal Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) was first being implemented. This was at the time that money transfers were first being made by computers. The computers were behemoths stored in giant computer rooms. Top-level reports for senior management were generated only once a month and were 132 characters wide on huge sheets of folded paper. Information came out of dumb terminals. The executives did not use desktop computers for their

own work. In those days they considered "typing" below them.

Louann met her husband, Cesar Medina, at Chase Manhattan. They lived in Croton-on-Hudson in Westchester County. When Louann was pregnant with her second child, she left the bank and became a PTA mom. Cesar had always loved Florida, and they decided to move to Boca Raton in 1988. At the time Cesar was working for a medium-sized software company located in Manhattan, and he initially worked for that firm from Florida but eventually moved to a position at IBM. Louann worked for a transportation brokerage firm in Boca, running the back office, which involved billing and other activities.

Louann had not done much birding besides having feeders in her yard during her years in New York. After her retirement in Florida, however, she began to develop her interest. She enjoys birding at Green Cay, Wakodahatchee, Spanish River, and Seacrest Scrub and going on field trips offered by AE. She sees a lot of Cardinals in her Boca yard and Great Egrets and White Ibis also show up. She looks forward to the return of the Painted Buntings to her feeders every fall. They are planting more bird-friendly native plants in their garden. Their neighborhood has a lot of Live Oaks, and they see many species of warblers in them.

Louann and Cesar travel frequently to the U.S. National Parks, and they have taken excellent Road Scholar trips and tours. On one trip in Wales, the bus driver knew that she was interested in birds, so he stopped the bus to show her a special species that had popped up. The western coasts of Brittany and Normandy are among the highlights of the trips they have taken to Europe. They have cruised in Alaska. One of their daughters had a college semester in China and then spent a year there. Louann was able to visit China twice. She and Cesar took a cruise down the Yangtse River during one of those trips. Louann keeps a life list of the birds she has seen. She does not list on eBird, but she uses the resource to see what's been seen before she goes out birding and to identify the hotspots in a new region.

One of Louanne's most exciting birding trips was two years ago, when she won the Audubon Assembly Holbrook Travel trip to Costa Rica. This was a trip

designed to show non-profits the kinds of tours the company gives. Louann was enthusiastic about the knowledge and skill of the guides on the trip. They stayed mostly inland and not far from San Jose, exploring rain forests full of Red-and-green Macaws, trogons, and tanagers of all colors.

I asked Louann about her duties as AE treasurer. She said that her job is made up of lots of little pieces. She uses Quicken for the records. There are multiple recurring expenses, including insurance, storage units, and the PO Box and permit. Louann files the state registrations, and AE employs the services of a CPA to file the Federal Tax return. Louann also chairs the Budget and Investment Committees and prepares monthly reports for the board.

One of Louann's daughters lives in California, the other lives in New York. However, both daughters, her son-in-law, and her twin grandchildren, a boy and a girl born in April (!) have been here in Florida living with Louann and Cesar since June. The infants have their doting grandparents for company while Louann's daughters and son-in-law work remotely. Louann's mother lives nearby in Boca, so the family has become a safe stay-at-home "pod" during this Covid time. Louann looks forward to being able to take bird walks once again with her AE friends!



# AUDUBON EVERGLADES PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB KICKS OFF NEW SEASON

by Scott Zucker

Has your camera been overlooked and under appreciated during the pandemic? Well, whether you're a beginner, intermediate or advanced photographer, get your camera out, charge the battery, clean the lens, and get ready for a brand new season with the Audubon Everglades Photography Club (AEPCC). Our first program of the year will be a Zoom meeting: "Gardening for Wildlife & Backyard Photography" on Monday, October 19 at 7PM. (Participants are welcome to join early for social time at 6:45PM until about 7PM. This will be much like a face-to-face meeting but without the refreshments -- of course you can snack on your own, if you want. During this time, you will be able to turn on your video and audio and talk with others via their audio or by using Zoom's Chat function.)

Alan Chin-Lee, AEPCC chair, expert photographer, butterfly expert, and gardener, will give a presentation about gardening principles to maximize your chance of attracting wildlife to your yard - everything from butterflies to birds to bees and other animal life. The complementary focus of his presentation will be on

photographing the wildlife you have attracted to your garden. His recommendations will help everyone, gardeners and photographers, improve their opportunities for backyard photo possibilities and create great images, all without leaving home.

Alan worked at Butterfly World for 10 Years, managing the butterfly breeding program. He then worked with the Florida Museum of Natural History to help build the Butterfly Rainforest, a live exotic butterfly exhibit. He continued with the museum as the exhibit's project manager.

All Friends (local chapter members) of Audubon Everglades are invited to this first meeting of the AEPCC, and you will receive an email invitation a week prior to the event. We will introduce you to the reformatted programs and activities of AEPCC presentations, workshops, constructive critique sessions, and field trips - and encourage you to join the club. The AEPCC Committee has developed new opportunities this season that will enhance member participation and elevate everyone's nature photography talents,

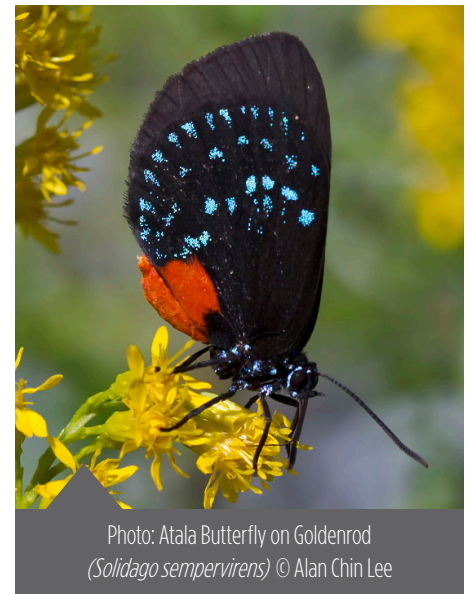


Photo: Atala Butterfly on Goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens*) © Alan Chin Lee

regardless of skill level. Our goal is to foster a community where members share information to help each other accomplish individual photography goals and become better stewards of wildlife and the environment that we love to photograph.

The AEPCC is a dues-supported club open to Friends (local chapter members) of Audubon Everglades. Participation in future programs of the club will require the payment of an annual dues payment of \$10.00 for individuals, \$15.00 for households, and free for students. We will soon have a link available on [Auduboneverglades.org](http://Auduboneverglades.org) for you to be able to join.

Our AEPCC webpage on [Auduboneverglades.org](http://Auduboneverglades.org) will also be available soon, please plan on visiting it to see the new club format, a calendar of upcoming activities, and membership information.



Photo: Prairie Warbler on Grayleaf (*Melochia tomentosa*) © Alan Chin Lee

# Figulus, Bingham Island and the Audubon Preserve

by Bob Davidsson

*Article reprinted with permission by Bob Davidsson, Editor/webmaster, Palm Beach County Issues & Views, and Origins & History of the Palm Beaches.*

Located midway across the Lake Worth Lagoon, between the “Billionaire’s Row” in Palm Beach and assorted McMansions along South Flagler Drive in West Palm Beach, are six islets preserved exclusively for the birds and wildlife of South Florida.

To early pioneers in Palm Beach County the heavily wooded islets were known generically as the “Mangrove Islands”. They were identified collectively as the “Bingham Islands” in 1893 after the property was purchased by Charles W. Bingham (1846 - 1929).

The islands also became the “Audubon Islands Sanctuary” on Nov. 23, 1942 when the Bingham, Bolton and Blossom families, descendants of Charles Bingham, leased the land to the Audubon Society as a natural preserve for 99 years until Oct. 31, 2041.

Today the islands fall within the jurisdiction of the Town of Palm Beach. The Future Land Use Element of the Palm Beach Comprehensive Plan designates the Bingham Islands as “Conservation intended to preserve and protect unique natural areas from development and negative impacts of public use. No urban development is permitted.”

The islands encompass 22 acres of land in the Lake Worth Lagoon. Along the north end of the largest island a fence separates the sanctuary from the Marjorie Merriweather Post Causeway and two Southern Boulevard (SR 80) bridges connecting the island of Palm Beach to the mainland.

The islands feature native vegetation such as gumbo limbo, paradise, mastic, buttonwood, ironwood, cabbage palms and crabwood trees. Herons and ospreys are year-round residents of the sanctuary, and seasonal visitors such as turkey vultures flock to the islands nightly during the winter months to roost.

In December 2018, Audubon Florida and local supporters of the sanctuary, with the approval of the Town of Palm Beach, completed the first of three restoration phases designed to remove invasive plant

species such as Brazilian peppers and Australian pines. The goal is to restore the Audubon Islands Sanctuary to a natural state as it appeared to Seminole Indians and early pioneers in the 19th century.

## Figulus, the Potters and the Bingham Family

What became the Audubon Islands Sanctuary was within the unincorporated community of “Fugulus” (Latin for Potter) between the years 1881 and 1893. The community was founded by brothers George W. Potter and Dr. Richard Potter of Cincinnati.

In December 1873, the brothers moved to the rough-and-tumble village of Lemon City in Dade County. Seeking a more tranquil homestead, George Potter visited the island of Palm Beach in 1881 and purchased a tract consisting of 160 acres, including 2,000 feet of ocean front property, the six islands in the Lake Worth Lagoon, and a small plot of land on the opposite shore of the mainland.

The second post office to open on the island of Palm Beach was established Jan. 7, 1886 by the Potters in Figulus with Dr. Potter as its first postmaster. The Potters purchased a schooner as their primary means of transport for mail service and trade along the 20-mile Lake Worth Lagoon.

The Potter family also built a dock connecting Figulus to the Mangrove Islands to the west. It was same site selected for three future bridges connecting Palm Beach with West Palm Beach.

The community of Figulus came to an end in 1893 when Cleveland, Ohio, investor Charles Bingham purchased the property from the Potter family. The investment was made on the advice of his friend and neighbor in the wealthy Euclid district of Cleveland - Henry Flagler.

Charles and Mary Payne Bingham were an Ohio power couple, making their fortune through major financial holdings in the Standard Oil Company. Their goal was to create a winter retreat in Palm Beach for their ailing

son. They built the shingle-style Figulus “Bingham-Blossom House” mansion on the property for their seasonal visits.

Beginning in 1919, Charles Bingham subdivided the former Figulus property among the Bingham-Blossom-Bolton family heirs. Their six islets in the Lake Worth Lagoon appeared on county maps and atlases as Bingham Island.

The north end of Bingham Island was used to build a causeway and the two original bridges connecting the southern ends of Palm Beach and West Palm Beach. Two Southern Boulevard replacement bridges were dedicated on Sept. 15, 1950.

The section of island connecting the two bridges was renamed the “Marjorie Merriweather Post Memorial Causeway” historic site in 1974 following the death of the Post cereal heiress. Her mansion, Mar-a-lago (Ocean-to-Lake), was built between 1924-27 immediately east of Bingham Island. Today her estate is owned by President Donald Trump.

Work on a second Southern Boulevard (SR 80) replacement bridge project began in April 2017. A temporary lift bridge was completed a year later and is in use until the new permanent span is opened. The construction site is fenced off from the sanctuary, but the noise penetrates far into the preserve.

North of the Bingham Island causeway there is a popular beach used as a launching site by kayakers and paddle boarders to explore the Audubon Islands Sanctuary. Once the bridge project ends sometime in late 2021, life will return to normal in this protected natural area for both wildlife and human observers.



# 2020 Rooftop Nesting in Palm Beach County

by Greg Braun and Paul Davis



Photo: Skimmer chick & terns 7-24-2020 (43cropped2x) © Greg Braun

Imagine the heat on a rooftop in south Florida during the summer – it doesn't seem like a very desirable place to raise a family. But, at locations where natural ground-nesting sites are too heavily used by people, dogs, raccoons and other potential disturbances and predators, some least terns and black skimmers have found that nesting on flat, tar and gravel roof tops is less undesirable than beaches. They do have to contend with heat and rain, but there are fewer predators.

In addition to the least terns nesting on the beach in Deerfield Beach in 2020 that was reported in the August issue of *The Kite*, Audubon Everglades members and colleagues were also engaged in monitoring several rooftop colonies in Palm Beach County this year. Twelve sites were visited from April through July and monitoring confirmed successful nesting at three (per FSD database) four (per P Davis) sites, located in Juno Beach, Wellington and West Palm Beach.

Forget what you think you know about incubation – these adult birds aren't sitting on the eggs to keep them warm – they are standing over them to provide shade during the mid-day heat!

Least terns were by far the most abundant species, nesting successfully at these three sites. Numbers are

difficult to estimate, particularly when roof tops are not clearly visible. Direct observations have the highest accuracy and are the most reliable, but often numbers have to be estimated based on “flush counts” when the birds can be counted after they rise in unison from their nests in response to some temporary disturbance (e.g., noise, crows).

In addition to the unrelenting heat and sun, rooftop nesting also presents challenges when heavy

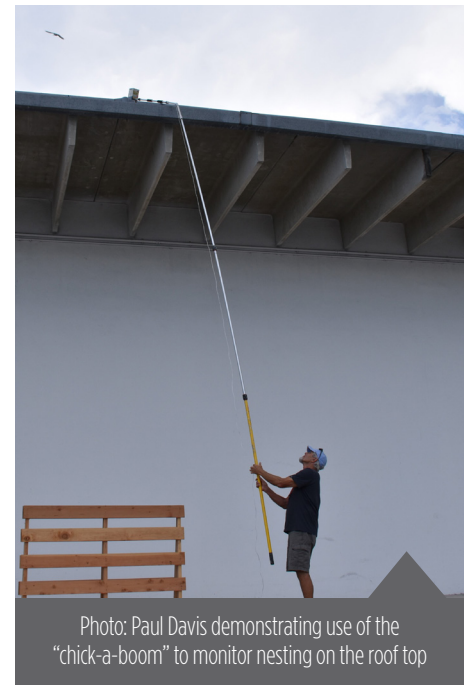


Photo: Paul Davis demonstrating use of the “chick-a-boom” to monitor nesting on the roof top

rainstorms wash chicks down drains. At a site in West Palm Beach, our stewards used a “chick-a-boom” to put 32 chicks back on the roof after a rainstorm.

Adult black skimmers were observed at two of the sites, but are believed to have only produced one fledgling – such are the rigors for this species that is designated by the State as “Threatened.”

Audubon Everglades thanks Greg Braun, Paul Davis, Niki DesJardin, Meghan Frey, C.J. McCartney, Andrea Pereyra, Bryce Pierce, Gael Silverblatt, Scott Tedford, and Natasha Warraich for their efforts.

If you are interested in participating in monitoring shorebirds in the future, check out the resources available from the [Florida Shorebird Alliance](#).



Photo: Skimmer & LETE on nests 6-23-2020 © Greg Braun



# Audubon Everglades Recognized for its Environmental Education Program

*Reprinted with permission by Audubon Florida*



Photo: 2019 Course Participants along with administrator, Scott Zucker, and instructor, Paul Davis at J.D. MacArthur SP during the Estuaries and Hammocks unit. © Mary Young

Expert instructors engage participants from Palm Beach County and beyond in this 7-week environmental education experience. The course includes field exploration as a vital complement to classroom study.

Throughout the class, students are encouraged to develop personal plans of action for engaging their communities in support of environmental conservation. More than 125 students have participated since the program started.

FAU Pine Jog's Environmental Leaders Awards recognize exceptional environmental leaders in Palm Beach County and the surrounding region each year. The annual award recognizes a formal or non-formal environmental education program that incorporates the five elements of best-practice environmental education: awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills, and participation.

Protecting the habitat birds need today and in the future is part of the Audubon mission, and impossible to achieve without community education and engagement. One Audubon Florida chapter has taken that goal to the next level.

Since 2017, the Audubon Society of the Everglades has offered a Conservation Stewardship Training Course.

Conceived, coordinated, and administered by Audubon Everglades Board Members and Conservation Co-chairs Scott Zucker and Mary Young, the course provides an unparalleled opportunity to explore five fragile natural ecosystems within South Florida and the Greater Everglades. The course was selected as the "Environmental Education Program of the Year" for 2019 by FAU Pine Jog Environmental Education Center.

# 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 \_\_\_\_\_