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EVERGLADE KITE NEWSLETTER

Monthly Newsletter for Audubon Everglades
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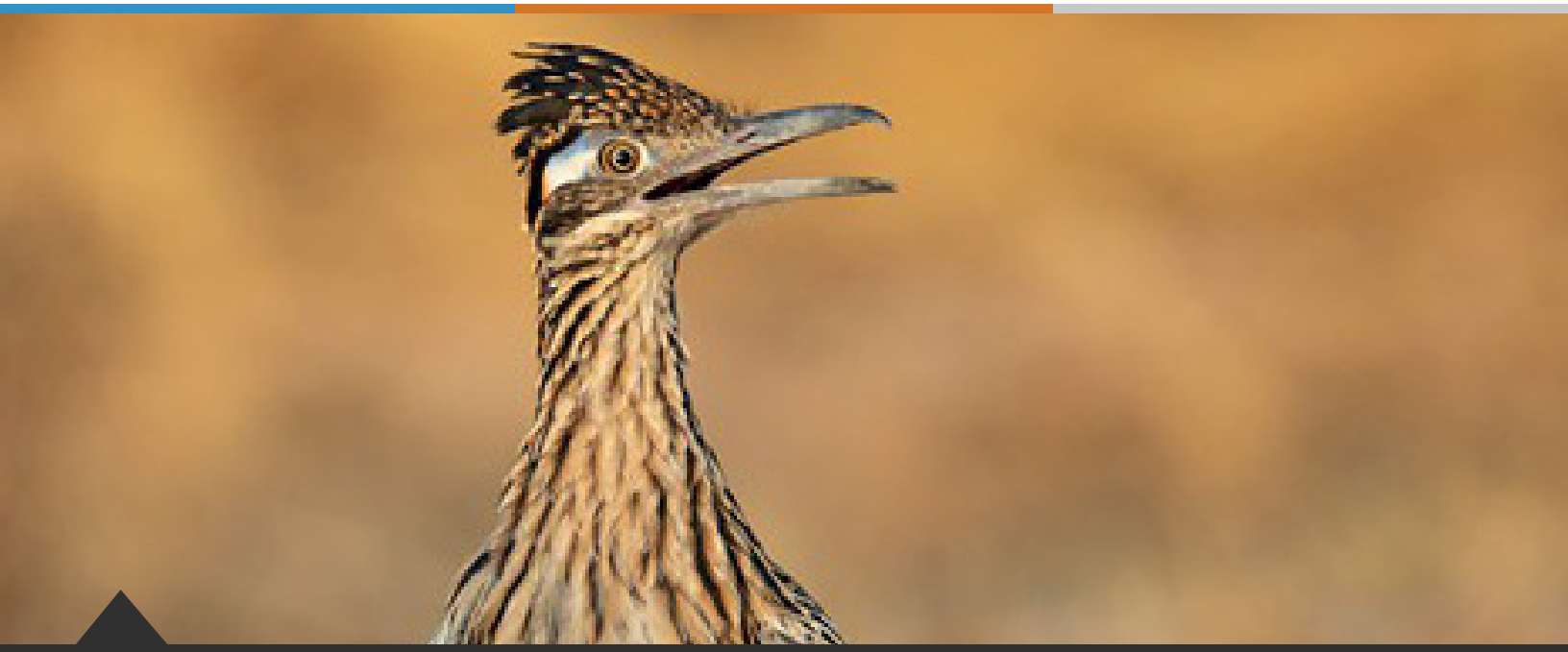

Photo: Greater Roadrunner © Dan Scolara

Bird of the Month: Greater Roadrunner *(Geococcyx californianus)*

by Clive & Celecia Pinnock

The 2021 Bird of the Month Series will focus on twelve North American species requested by our Audubon Everglades members. Each month, information on the featured species will cover its description, range, habitat, food, and reproduction. This information will also be covered in the Bird of the Month Power Point presentation at each monthly meeting.

At home in the American southwestern scrub desert and mesquite groves, the Greater Roadrunner is a large ground-dwelling member of the cuckoo family often featured in folklore and cartoons. Streaked with brown and white, roadrunners have long legs, a sturdy, slightly down-curved bill, a conspicuous bushy crest, and a long, white-edged tail. They also have short, rounded wings with a white crescent on the primaries.

Roadrunners spend much of their time walking or running on the ground while foraging for prey. They are capable of flight but only do so as a last resort. While running, they hold their bodies almost parallel to the ground, using their tail as a rudder, and can attain speeds of up to 15 miles an hour. They can, however, reach faster bursts of speed in pursuit of fleeing quarry. After chilly desert nights, the roadrunner often "sunbathes" in the morning with its back to the sun. While doing so, it raises the feathers across its back and wings, exposing the black heat-absorbing skin.

Prey includes reptiles, amphibians, centipedes, tarantulas, scorpions, insects, small mammals, and birds. While foraging, Greater Roadrunners sometimes startle and flush prey by flashing the white spots on their open wings (like Northern Mockingbirds). They can also jump straight up to snag insects, bats, and even hummingbirds in flight. Additionally, these opportunistic predators will eat carrion and birds' eggs and chicks. Their ability to kill and eat rattlesnakes is quite note-worthy; they skillfully and repeatedly peck the snake in the head, while avoiding the deadly strikes of the venomous reptile. Snakes, lizards, and rodents, when caught, are repeatedly slammed on the ground or on a rock to soften and elongate them, making them easier to swallow. In winter, fruit, seeds, and other plant material make up about 10 percent of the bird's diet.

Adult pairs form permanent pair-bonds but re-solidify the bond each spring after an elaborate but brief courtship period. The territory is defended year-round. The nest, constructed of sticks, grass, leaves, feathers, and sometimes snakeskin, is placed in a dense brush, low tree, or cactus from 2 to 12' above the ground. Three to six white to yellowish eggs are laid and incubated by both adults for about 20 days. The altricial young, helpless at birth and requiring parental care, are attended to by both parents and are able to leave the nest after 18 to 21 days. Both parents continue to care for the young an additional 30 to 40 days afterwards

Audubon Everglades Presents "Climate Change is Real: and it is Really Hurting Birds and Wildlife"

with speaker Dr. Terry L. Root, Nobel Laureate

JAN 05

Tuesday, January 5, 2021 at 7PM
Zoom Hosted Presentation
(advance registration required)

Photo: Dr. Terry L. Root

Audubon Everglades invites its members to the first program of the new year with speaker Dr. Terry L. Root, Professor Emerita at Stanford and lead author of the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change 4th Assessment Report, which in 2007 was co-awarded the Nobel Peace Prize with Vice President Al Gore.

Back-to-back 100-year floods, extreme heat, and the polar vortex are all connected to the disruption of our climate, due to greenhouse gas emissions. Since the late 1800s, the average global temperature has increased about 1.8oF (1oC), and we are on track to surpass the Paris Agreement target of 2.7oF (1.5oC) by 2030. In response to this rapid warming, much is changing on our planet, including earlier spring warming, so flowers are blooming and birds are breeding earlier and species are moving to cooler regions on land and in the oceans. Unless we soon slow the rapid warming, enumerable people will suffer, due to heat waves, storm surges, and spreading diseases. Additionally, hundreds of thousands of species—including species we rely upon—will face extinction. We must stop our fossil-fuel addiction to avoid such problems. Thankfully, there are many things that we can do, collectively and individually, to decrease the emissions of CO2. We just need the will to do it.

Dr. Terry L. Root is Senior Fellow (University Faculty) Emeritus in the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment at Stanford University. Her research addressed how plants and animals are changing with the changing climate.

Please check your email for a link from Audubon Everglades to register for this outstanding member Zoom presentation.

JOIN OUR KITE NEWSLETTER VOLUNTEER WRITERS' GROUP

by Scott Zucker

Photo: © Unsplash

Do you have an interesting story to tell or something to report about our many resident or migratory birds, the many varied habitats where they are found, or the conservation efforts needed to ensure their survival? If, so, perhaps you would be interested in sharing your story with the Audubon community through our monthly Kite online publication.

Your story might be about an involvement in a past Christmas Bird Count, a citizen science bird monitoring effort like EagleWatch, or a scientific study affecting birds or their habitat.

Perhaps you've had an unusual, even amusing, encounter with birds that you would like to tell our readers about. Or, on a more serious note, perhaps you might wish to share your personal reflections regarding the threat that climate change, habitat loss, and other stressors pose to birds.

These are just some examples of the types of articles we would like to include in the monthly AE newsletter. If you would like to volunteer to share your knowledge, passion, and writing ability to help keep our local birding community informed, entertained, and inspired, please contact Mary Dunning, AE Kite Editor at aevolmary@gmail.com.

AE PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB PRESENTS "THE MAGIC OF BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY"

by Nancy Freeman

Photo: Black Skimmers © Judy Lynn

Happy New Year, everyone! The AE Photography club is excited to announce that Judy Lynn Malloch will be our guest speaker this Monday, January 18, 2021, when she will enlighten us on "The Magic of Bird Photography."

Judy has been photographing birds and other wildlife for many years during her travels around the globe. In fact, Mrs. Malloch and her husband have a travel photography business called 'Nature's Tapestry' that offers guided trips to many wonderful and photogenic destinations throughout the world. As described on her website:

"Mrs. Malloch's travels have taken her to many of the remote and beautiful wildlife refuges throughout the world. She has photographed the wildlife in the Klamath Basin and other National Parks in Oregon, the Bosque del Apache National Park and Refuge in Southern New Mexico, Alaska, and the wetlands and wildlife refuges of the Florida Everglades.

Outside the United States, Mrs. Malloch has journeyed through the wildlife park of the Botswana and Kenya. On the other side of the world, her travels through the rain forests of Panama, the highlands and lowlands of Costa Rica and the Bahamian Island of Inagua have enabled her to capture amazing images of a wide variety of birds and other species."

We hope you will join us on Monday, January 18th at 6:45PM for her inspiring presentation on photographing birds! The presentation is free for all AE Photography Club members, so if you are interested in being inspired or entertained, please consider joining us and attending this wonderful bird-centered evening. Hope to see you there!

The AEPC is a dues-supported club open to current Friends of Audubon Everglades who wish to join the Photography Club. Participation in programs of the AEPC require an annual dues payment of $10.00 for singles, $15.00 for households, and $1.00 for students, in addition to your Friends of Audubon Everglades Membership. You can join here.

Biodiversity and Conservation from the Bottom Up Resilience and Adaptation in the Time of Change

by Scott Laurence, PhD

The Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, has declared that "Our planet is broken" and that humanity is waging what he describes as a "suicidal" war on the natural world. Strong words! He states that the health of the biosphere is necessary for the continued survival of humans and that meeting climate change is imperative. *Already, many biologists and economists are focusing on triage strategies.* Will the Holocene mark the end of Anthropocene? Is there anything individuals and communities can do to at least ameliorate the increasing threats to the natural world?

The UN Convention on Biological Diversity earlier released recommendations to prevent the 6th Mass Extinction and stated that new climate models and biodiversity analyses conducted in the past year underscore the need to conserve at least 30 percent of the planet. Immediate efforts will have immediate effects; the Save the Bees campaigns within the EU, for example, have shown significant cultural and biological changes after only 2 years. The extent and timing of this conversion will not be easy; according to the United Nations Environment World Conservation Monitoring Centre, only 15 percent of all land and 7 percent of our oceans are protected. At least, this gives us a measurable goal.

Biological diversity supports social diversity and each reflects the many-layered, underlying health of their respective systems. The recent focus by Audubon on climate and biodiversity is not essentially a moral or an aesthetic choice, and it should not be a political one; i.e., birds are wonderful to observe, and are also perhaps the best indicator of overall ecosystem diversity. In turn, diversity indicates that there are sufficient resources and multiple niches available for growth and prosperity. Such systems are inherently

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Backyard Activism

by Helen Laurence, December 14, 2020

Photo: Spiderwort (Tradescantia ohiensis) with Tropical Salvia in the background © Scott Laurence

In his new book, *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation that Starts in Your Yard,* Doug Tallamy has proposed a domestic version of Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson's Half-Earth Project. If American homeowners converted half of their lawn to productive native plant communities, they would create a "Homegrown National Park" larger than the Everglades, Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Teton, Canyonlands, Mount Rainier, North Cascades, Badlands, Olympic, Sequoia, Grand Canyon, Denali, and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks combined! (from Janet Marinelli, "How Non-Native Plants Are Contributing to a Global Insect Decline" in YaleEnvironment360).

We're all too familiar with the dire litany: Habitat Loss and Fragmentation, Looming Extinctions, Audubon estimates that two-thirds of North American bird species are at risk. See article. Insect Armageddon, Colony Collapse Disorder. The list goes on and on. What can be done? Perhaps more importantly, what can we do?

Grassroots activism and advocacy are powerful. There's a special place in heaven for those who can persevere on this path. For others, volunteerism or financial contributions in support of local, regional and national environmental organizations are similarly powerful. What else? The answers lie in our backyards. According to University of Connecticut entomologist David Wagner, the truly destructive stressors taking a toll on insects and birds are "agricultural intensification, deforestation, and land use change." While we as individuals have limited control over these factors, we have more control over choices we make in our backyards. As Susan Lerner, Horticulture Director at Pan's Garden and past president of the Palm Beach Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, has said, "This is what you can do to save the world: Plant Natives!"

What to Plant?

Taking her words to heart, I used two tools to search by zip code to generate a list of native plants best suited to our location – the Audubon Native Plant Database and the Native Plant Finder. Both tools are helpful; both have some significant shortcomings.

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Biodiversity continued from page 3

Photo: Bee on pink salvia (Salvia coccinea) with bee balm (Monarda punctata) in the background © Scott Laurence

more resilient as well. But a healthy ecosystem, relatively unmanaged and sustainable, requires a base of local and regional plants and, of course, the right environmental conditions.

There is sufficient land in PB County unincorporated areas alone to exceed a 30% or more conversion rate; current agricultural land practices could remain as productive while restoring biodiversity and also limiting greenhouse gas emissions. As always, our greatest danger is outdated thinking and methods. Our food system requires changes to protect nature and in doing so, agriculture itself will improve. Collectively, the major focus of Audubon Everglades and the 60 other conservation and environmental organizations that comprise the Everglades Coalition (Insert https://www.evergladescoalition.org) must continue to be conservation of the unique Everglades ecosystems, but individually we can and must do something now.

Though we might choose to leave larger 'top down' efforts to others, we can make immediate changes now from the 'bottom up.' One could add immensely to the volume of conservation within residential and commercial land in cities and towns. Even highly commercialized and industrialized areas and roadways can contribute to either limiting the threats or adding to conservation directly. If not part of the solution, kindly avoid fueling the problems!

There are virtually unlimited ways in which we can directly and immediately support biological diversity and conservation; few offer more immediate positive effects and personal rewards than does the effort to maintain a native landscape. Moreover, it is relatively simple, inexpensive and fast. Let us not leave conservation just to the conservationists! The very nature of conservation is changing, and each one of us must strive for a more cooperative and integrated relationship with nature. The need is immediate and hugely important. The solutions are in our own backyards.

Activism continued from page 4

Audubon Native Plant Database

The following "Best Results" list of 19 plants "hand-selected by Audubon experts" in our region and helpfully annotated with the names of birds most likely to use each species resulted from entering zip code 33449, which is southeast of Wellington near the northern boundary of the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge.

Blood Sage	Salvia coccinea
Dahoon	Ilex cassine
Firewheel AKA Blanketflower	Gaillardia pulchella
Florida Swamp-Privet	Forestiera segregata
Red-Cardinal AKA Coral bean	Erythrina herbacea
Seminole Balsamo AKA Wild Coffee	Psychotria nervosa
Southern Bayberry AKA Wax Myrtle	Morella cerifera
Spiny Fiddlewood	Citharexylum spinosum
Yellow Necklacepod	Sophora tomentosa
American Pokeweed	Phytolacca americana
Butterfly Milkweed	Asclepias tuberosa
Clustered Bush-mint	Hyptis alata
Dense Gayfeather	Liatris spicata
Purple Passion-Flower	Passiflora incarnata
Spotted Beebalm	Monarda punctata
Swamp Dock	Rumex verticillatus
Live Oak	Quercus virginiana
Satinleaf	Chrysophyllum oliviforme
American Beauty-Berry	Callicarpa americana

This list was the result of an unfiltered search. However, the Audubon tool offers the option of filtering the results by:

- Type of Plant (annual/perennial, grasses, succulents, vine, trees, shrubs, evergreen)
- Plant Resources (nectar, fruit, butterflies, caterpillars, nuts, seeds), or
- Type of Bird (finches, chickadees & titmice, sparrows, cardinals & grosbeaks, orioles, woodpeckers, crows & jays, thrushes, hummingbirds, wood warblers, nuthatches, mockingbirds & thrashers, vireos, wrens and waxwings).

For example, if I filter the results by selecting "Hummingbirds," five plants remain: Salvia, Milkweed, Liatris, Coral Bean, and Necklace Pod. In our 30 years of growing native plants in our yard, we have had all of these plants at one time or another (with the exception of the Asclepias tuberosa, which we have never been able to grow here), and we have never seen a hummingbird on any of them! We have seen hummingbirds, however, on our Firebush (Hamelia patens) and on our Coral Honeysuckle (Lonicera sempervirens), neither of which showed up in the plant list generated. So, a caveat: your mileage may vary. There's no substitute for experimentation and experience.

Native Plant Finder from the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), based in part on the research of Dr. Doug Tallamy.

"No other online resource offers zip code specific lists of native plants ranked by the number of butterflies and moths that use them as caterpillar host plants. Plants are ranked by greatest number of butterfly and moth associations, since their young play a directly proportional role in supporting bird populations."

Our zip code search generated a list of the 8 top-ranked flowers and grasses and the 8 top-ranked trees and shrubs. Interestingly, there is almost no overlap between our NWF list and our Audubon list!

Plant (# of Lepidoptera associations)	Genus
Oak (395)	Quercus
Hickory, pecan, pignut (191)	Carya
Willow (190)	Salix
Maple (171)	Acer
Pine (171)	Pinus
Cranberry, blueberry (150)	Vaccinium
Elm (131)	Ulmus
Blackberry, dewberry, raspberry (93)	Rubus
Goldenrod (82)	Solidago
Sunflower (58)	Helianthus
Hibiscus, rosemallow (37)	Hibiscus
Hairypod cowpea (34)	Vigna
Baccharis (31)	Baccharis
Joe-pye-weed, thoroughwort (31)	Eupatorium
Bulb panicgrass, maidencane (25)	Panicum
Geranium (25)	Geranium

There are a couple of issues with this NWF list.

First, based on personal observations and the observations of other local butterfly gardeners, the number of butterfly and moth associations listed here probably reflects the number of species using the plant throughout its range, and not just within the local zip code. When this question was posed to Dr. Tallamy at a local presentation, he admitted that the NWF database search tool is "a work in progress." Second, it requires some detective work to identify which of these plants would truly be appropriate in a local garden. For example, we know that blueberries and raspberries are unlikely to flourish this far south. A search in the Institute for Systematic Botany's Atlas of Florida Plants for Vaccinium or Rubus finds only 3 species that might occur in the wild in Palm Beach County: Vaccinium myrsinites (Shiny Blueberry), Rubus cuneifolius (Sand Blackberry) and Rubus trivialis (Southern Dewberry). A further search in Plant RealFlorida shows no local availability of these plants.

As a starting point, the Audubon search tool is probably more useful because of the ability to filter search results and the list of local native plant nurseries provided. In either case, talking to local native plant gardeners and growers and learning by trial and error offer the best chance of finding the best combination of "right plant, right place" for birds, butterflies, and other insects and for doing our part to save the natural world!

Photo: Ruddy daggerwing butterfly nectaring on Florida Shrub Thoroughwort (Koanophyllon villosum) © Scott Laurence

120th Christmas Bird Count Summary

Geoff LeBaron breaks down everything we learned from the 120th Christmas Bird Count

Read this at Audubon.org

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

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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 _____

_____