

Audubon Everglades

EVERGLADE KITE

Monthly newsletter for our invaluable members.


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BIRD OF THE MONTH: COMMON LOON - (*GAVIA IMMER*)

BY CLIVE & CELECIA PINNOCK

The Common Loon is a fairly common migrant and winter resident of the Florida panhandle and northern half of the peninsula. It is, however, rarely seen in southern parts of the state. Measuring 32" long, this loon, a signature bird of distant northern lakes, frequents coastal bays and estuaries while it winters here but is occasionally seen on large inland lakes as well.

In winter plumage (from September to March), the bird is typically plain gray above and white below. When seen in mid-April, prior to and during its northward migration, adult plumage pattern changes to display black upperparts with white checkering. The head is black with white vertical stripes on the throat and hind neck. This adult plumage is not acquired until the bird is two to three years of age. The dagger-like bill is black during breeding but blue gray in winter adults and juvenile birds. Due to the placement of the feet towards the rear of the body, the Common Loon exhibits powerful and agile swimming and diving skills as it pursues fish, its main quarry, beneath the surface of the water. In

flight the loon displays a long body and a short tail (which is usually not visible), feet extending beyond the tail, and an out-stretched neck and bill.

Common Loons forage by swimming and diving beneath the surface of the water to chase fish and other aquatic organisms. They locate fish, their main staple, while swimming slowly at the surface, with their heads partially submerged. Once a loon spots a fish, it dives and gives chase, using its rear-placed feet for propulsion. The loon can rapidly change direction to match the darting swimming pattern of the fleeting prey. Once it has captured a fish, the loon returns to the surface with it. It then nimbly flips the fish to catch and swallow it head first, so that the fish's dorsal spines will not rake and scratch its throat. Other menu items include crustaceans, mollusks, frogs, snails, aquatic insects, and leeches. The loon occasionally consumes some aquatic plants (algae and pond weeds).

Common Loons breed on quiet, remote freshwater lakes of the northern U.S. and Canada and are highly sensitive to human

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**OUR MISSION:**

EDUCATING AND INSPIRING PEOPLE TO
CONSERVE WILDLIFE, ESPECIALLY BIRDS,
AND THE ENVIRONMENT THAT
SUPPORTS THEM.

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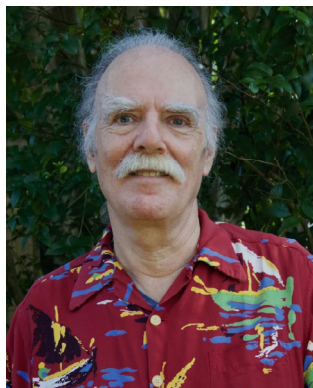
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NOTE FROM PRESIDENT



Greetings!

I hope that everyone is doing well and survived Sunday, January 30, our coldest day in the past decade, which I discovered when I got up that morning, went outside, and it was 37° (brr!). I wonder if our avian winter visitors will be modifying their migration plans next year.

Although Florida's numbers have not improved dramatically, the latest Omicron surge seems to be waning nationally as positivity rates, daily infections, hospitalizations, and death rates continue to decline, and our birders seem to be stepping out more frequently and taking full advantage of our field trips.

About 30 eager birders joined Avian Ecologist Dr. Mark Cook at the Pine Glades Natural Area early Sunday morning February 12th. Mark explained the ecology of this restored 665-acre habitat of restored wet prairies, marshes, ponds and pine flatwoods and then led us in a three-hour walk along the levees. Mark enriched our sightings with information about the behavior and ecology of some of the 41 bird species we saw that morning. I hope you will be joining us on the field trips that AE has planned for March. To learn more, see our [Calendar](#).

The Audubon Everglades Board met on January 27th. We decided to continue having our monthly meetings on Zoom through the summer months with the hope of having in-person meetings from time to time in the 2022-23 program year. The Board voted unanimously to rent a larger storage facility in order to house all our equipment and materials in one location. The Board also voted to allow all Audubon Everglades members to participate in the Photography Group meetings and events, which were previously limited to only Friends of Audubon Everglades.

Our 2021 Annual Report to National Audubon was reviewed by the Board and submitted on January 28. The popular annual Conservation Steward Training Course, which was to have begun in February, was canceled for the second straight year due to Covid. Board members and Committee leads are currently working diligently on their budget proposals for the upcoming April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023 fiscal year, and a variety of new programs and events, including family and youth oriented field trips and activities, are being planned.

I hope that you are continuing to enjoy our monthly Zoom meetings and were able to take a plunge into our ancient past with Anthropologist Sara Ayers Rigsby at our February meeting.

Our March featured speaker, world famous Everglades Photographer Clyde Butcher, will take us on the journey, "America's Everglades: Through the Lens of Clyde Butcher." Our AE Photography Group's March presentation will be a critique session by Guest Photographer Carl Seibert of AE members' Conservation and Nature photographs. To get involved and have your photographs critiqued, please contact AEPG. (aepgregister@auduboneverglades.org) In case you have missed one of our AE Monthly Meetings or Photography Group programs or wish to view them again, please visit our [AE YouTube channel](#).

We hope you will join us at our monthly meeting on Tuesday March 8, and we look forward to seeing your smiling faces at our social time before the start of the meeting!

Sincerely,

Scott Zucker
President



COMMON LOON (CONT.)

disturbance. Because they require crystal clear water to see and pursue their fish quarry, which needs to be in abundance, they are excellent indicators of water quality. They prefer lakes with coves and islands since they provide cover from predators while they are nesting and resting.

Loons reach breeding age at between two and three years old. Nesting pairs bond for life. The male establishes his territory by calling repeatedly to announce his claim, as well as by welcoming his mate on her return to the territory. He also flies around the lake where the territory is established to deter other males from occupying it. The pair conduct elaborate courtship displays prior to consummating the bond with copulation. The male selects the nest site, and both birds construct the nests, which they

typically place on a protected, hidden spot on the lakeshore. Because loons can't walk well on land, due to the placement of their feet, they often place the nest on shoreline with a steep embankment. This allows the birds to approach and access the nest from below the water. They also use artificial nesting platforms, offered as an alternative habitat on lakes with extensive shoreline development.

The nest is a mound of grasses, twigs, and reeds. The female lays two olive-colored eggs, spotted with brown or black, which both adults incubate for 24 to 31 days. The young, tended to and fed by both parents, can leave the nest within one to two days after hatching and can dive and swim underwater at two to three days old. Chicks will sometimes ride on the backs

of their parents and are capable of flight at about 10 – 11 weeks after hatching. One brood is produced each year.

The 2021 Bird of the Month Series continues to focus on 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 is also included in the Bird of the Month Power Point presentation at each monthly meeting.





AUDUBON EVERGLADES PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

We hope that you enjoyed the Audubon Everglades Photography Group's (AEPG) February presentations by Margi Hass on Swallow-tailed Kites and by Joel Such on conservation photography. March is a month for AEPG members to not only practice what we learned, but also to receive feedback on our photographic efforts. Pro photographer Carl Seibert will be critiquing our photographs on March 21.

Swallow-tailed kites begin arriving in South Florida to breed in early March, so don't forget to look up for sightings. Improve your reflexes and sharpen your shooting skills so you can catch their grace and acrobatics as they glide through the air, snatching insects. If you're lucky, you'll see a pair bond beginning their courtship ritual. You can capture the beauty of nature in photography with subjects like these. Maybe the conservation

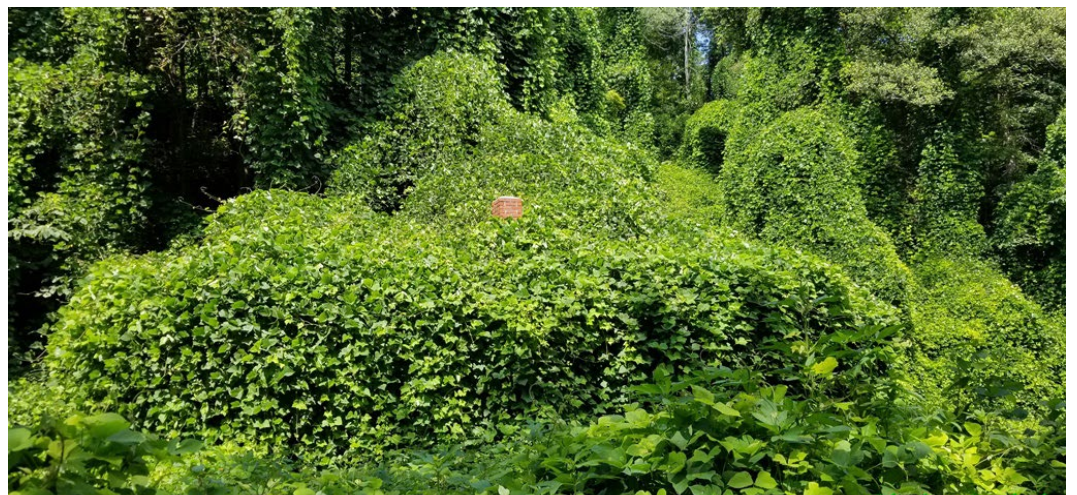
presentation spoke to your inner wildlife photographer and changed the way you now look at a subject, capture an image, and tell a story. Apply those insights in support of conservation, stewardship, community science, or education. Photograph what you see in your neighborhood, nearby parks, and waterways, using your camera if you have it with you or your cell phone if you don't. Follow your passion.

Document the problems: blue-green algae, invasive flora strangling

natural habitat, plastics littering roads and shorelines, flooding from clogged storm water drains, and sea level rise. Bear witness to environmental issues through photography. Document the successes: improved habitat through stewardship, burrowing owls peeking out of artificial burrows, the rescue and comeback of threatened species. Bear witness to environmental solutions through photography.

With our photographs we can share the beauty of nature and also educate and advocate, furthering Audubon Everglades' mission of educating and inspiring people to conserve wildlife, especially birds, and the environment that supports them.

House covered in Kudzu. Photo By Charlene Raphael



MARCH PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP SPEAKER

CRITIQUE SESSION

GUEST PHOTOGRAPHER: CARL SEIBERT

March 21, 2022, Zoom 6:45 Social time, 7 pm Program

Two Categories – Please submit your photos in PhotoContestPro no later than March 18. Submit photos in either or both categories, but no more than 3 photographs in total; see <https://photography.auduboneverglades.org/critique-sessions/> for details.

1. **Nature:** any nature subject
2. **Conservation:** any environmental issue or conservation effort. Your title will be important to define the issue.

Critique Format: Each photo will be critiqued by the guest photographer without identifying the member or grading the images. The goal is to learn how our photographs

successfully speak to our audience and how we can make them even better.

Guest Photographer: Carl Seibert

We are pleased to once again have Carl Seibert critique member's photographs. Last year Carl reviewed our Nature & Macro photographs. His insights and humor, as well as his explanation of his thought process as he evaluated the images, provided a valuable learning experience.

Carl has had a long career in journalism as a news photographer, project manager, and photo editor. As an editor, he became known for reverence for the craft and a laser focus on

honing content to its essential meaning and cropping tightly!

He continues to shoot and contributes to a wire service. Since the advent of the pandemic, his work has been focused on a project documenting nature close to home, now quite literally in his own back yard. He lives and works in South Florida with his wife and a furry management team.

To see some of Carl's pictures, go to his SmugMug page at metadatamatters.blog/photos.

UPCOMING PHOTOGRAPHY PROGRAMS 2022

April 18, 2022 Program: Getting the Keeper

Guest Photographer: Don Hamilton 7:00 pm ZOOM, 6:45 Social

May 16th, 2022 Roundtable: Internal AEPG Photo Share and Summer Discussion

7:00 pm ZOOM, 6:45 Social

BE PART OF AUDUBON EVERGLADES PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

By Mary Young

While membership now includes participation in Audubon Everglades Photography Group (AEPG), mailings will only include limited photography information.

To receive all photography events information, including the ability to submit your photographs to critique sessions and to post on our AEPG Facebook page, please send an email to: aepgregister@auduboneverglades.org and provide your name, email address and phone number.

Please note that unless you send an email to register for Audubon Everglades Photography Group to the above email address, you will only receive partial information about our photography activities.

Membership of Audubon Everglades is required to be part of AE Photography Group. To join Audubon Everglades, please [click here](#).

PLEASE
VISIT THE
PHOTOGRAPHY
GROUP
WEBSITE
FOR UPCOMING
PROGRAMS.



MARCH FEATURED SPEAKER



AN EVENING WITH ACCLAIMED PHOTOGRAPHER CLYDE BUTCHER

Clyde Butcher, recognized both nationally and internationally, is regarded as Florida's finest landscape photographer. He has been preserving the untouched areas of the landscape on film for more than thirty-five years. His black and white images are created using an 8"x10", 11"x14", or 12"x20" view camera. Clyde prints his images in his own darkroom on fiberbase paper in a limited edition. The photographs are selenium toned, then mounted and matted to current archival standards. His images come in sizes from 8"x10" inches to 5'x8' feet. His love of art and nature is seen in the exceptional detail and more subtle textures of his photography

Clyde has been honored by the State of Florida with the highest award that can be given a private citizen: the Artist Hall of Fame Award. He was also chosen as "Person of the Week" on the ABC Peter Jennings TV evening news program, and has received the Heartland Community Service Award from Florida Governor Chiles for educating the people of Florida about the beauty of their state. He has also been honored with the Conservation Colleague Award, given to him by The Nature Conservancy. The Sierra Club has awarded him

the Ansel Adams Conservation Award, which is given to a photographer who shows excellence in photography and has contributed to the public awareness of the environment.

A collection of his work can be seen in his books: *America the Beautiful*, *Cuba - The Natural Beauty*, *National Parks*, *Clyde Butcher - Visions of Dali's Spain*, and his newest legacy book *The Everglades - Clyde Butcher*.

A large selection of Clyde's photography, can be seen at his Venice Gallery & Studio in Venice, Florida, and at his Big Cypress Gallery, which is located on thirteen acres in the center of the Everglades, mid-way between Naples and Miami on the Tamiami Trail (Hwy. 41), in the Big Cypress National Preserve. The gallery is surrounded by more than a million acres of National Park wetlands and cypress strands of wild Florida.

**Big Cypress Gallery 52388 Tamiami Trail
Ochopee, FL 34141 (239) 695-2428**

**Venice Gallery & Studio 237 Warfield Ave.
Venice, FL 34285 (941) 486-0811**



- Zoom Hosted Presentation
- Tuesday, March 8, 2022 at 7:00 PM
- 6:45-7:00 PM Social time with fellow members

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

UPCOMING VIRTUAL SPEAKERS

**SNAIL KITE CONSERVATION**

Tyler Beck, Snail Kite Coordinator, Florida Wildlife Commission, presents on the status of Snail Kites.

Tuesday April 5, 2022
7pm - 8:45pm

[REGISTER HERE](#)

**ILLEGAL TRAPPING OF SONGBIRDS**

Captain Jay Marvin of Florida Wildlife Commission Law Enforcement will talk about efforts to stop the illegal trapping of songbirds.

Tuesday, May 3, 2022
7 PM-8:45 PM

[REGISTER HERE](#)

**RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER**

Dr. Reed Bowman, Associate Research Biologist, Archbold Biological Station discusses his research on the conservation and management of the Red-cockaded woodpecker

June 7, 2022
7 PM - 8:45 PM

[REGISTER HERE](#)

**DROUGHTS, FLOODS AND IBIS NESTING IN THE EVERGLADES**

Dr. Nathan Dorn, Professor of Biological Sciences at Florida Atlantic University will be discussing the effects of wetland water levels on food webs and the consequences for wading bird nesting.

July 5, 2022
7 PM - 8:45 PM

[REGISTER HERE](#)



Can't make it? All presentations are recorded and available on our youtube channel. Subscribe today!



VOLUNTEER



MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY: VOLUNTEER WITH AUDUBON EVERGLADES

Become actively involved in AE and support our mission to inspire and educate others to conserve wildlife and the environment. Help ensure that future generations can enjoy all the wonders that nature has to offer! We have plenty of volunteer opportunities and are sure to have a place where you can make a difference. If you have a special interest or talent or simply want to give to the community as an Audubon Everglades volunteer, please check this list of volunteer opportunities.

If your interest area is not listed but you would like to volunteer, get in touch with us by contacting us at info@auduboneverglades.org

CURRENT VOLUNTEER OPENINGS

Plants for Birds Garden Stewards

Volunteer gardeners or plant lovers are needed to help once a week or so for a few hours in the Audubon Everglades Plants for Birds Teaching Garden at FAU Pine Jog Educational Environmental Center in West Palm Beach. Tasks may involve weeding, pruning, plant identification, watering, transplanting, and mulching to help the garden thrive. Training will be provided. If you are interested, please contact Lauren Butcher at lauren@auduboneverglades.org.

Purple Martin Stewards

Volunteers are needed to support our ten Palm Beach County Purple Martin partner locations by assisting with public outreach, education, housing, etc. No previous knowledge of Purple Martins is required. All that is required is a desire to learn and a passion to make a positive change for Purple Martin conservation. Shelly Rozenberg, our Purple Martin Project Coordinator, guarantees that volunteers will fall in love with these unique and social birds! Please contact Shelly at shellyrozenberg@bellsouth.net.

Community Outreach

Assist with other volunteers in staffing the Audubon Everglades Display booth at local events and festivals. Have fun interacting with the public while providing valuable education about birds and the environment. Experience or prior training is not necessary, and all materials/information are provided. Please contact us at info@auduboneverglades.org for more information.





AUDUBON EVERGLADES FIELD TRIPS

Please join us on our Audubon Everglades field trips. Most trips are led by volunteer Audubon Everglades leaders. Unless otherwise indicated, they are free and open to the public. When you arrive, we will have our usual sign-in sheet with some additional CDC practices we need to follow.

With safety in mind for all participants and trip leaders at AE sponsored and led field trips during the Covid-19 pandemic, Audubon Everglades recommends that face masks be worn and social distancing be practiced. Audubon Everglades also recommends that you stay home if you have a fever, cough,

shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle aches, or new loss of taste or smell. Audubon Everglades Field trip leaders reserve the right to refuse those who exhibit these symptoms.

Please register on our [Eventbrite](#) for more trip details and updates.

MARCH 2022

3/4 Green Cay Wetlands

Field Guide: Valerri Brauer

3/5 STA 5/6 Hendry-Glades

Field Guide: TBD

3/6 Birding Class: Ascend to Be a Better Birder

Field Guide: Paddy Cunningham

3/12 Fran Reich

Field Guide: Brian Pickholz

3/16 Jonathan Dickinson State Park Scrub Jay Walk

Field Guide: Jim Howe

3/17 Robert J. Huckshorn Arboretum at FAU Jupiter Campus

Field Guide: Alana Edwards & Tuly Datena

3/18 Wakodahatchee Wetlands

Field Guide: Valerri Brauer

3/19 STA 1 West Expansion

Field Guide: Brian Garrett

3/26 Peaceful Waters Sanctuary

Field Guide: Scott Zucker

APRIL 2022

4/3 Wakodahatchee Wetlands

Field Guide: Valerri Brauer

4/14 Robert J. Huckshorn Arboretum at FAU Jupiter Campus

Field Guide: Alana Edwards & Tuly Datena

4/16 STA 5/6 Hendry-Glades

Field Guide: Hendry-Glades Staff

4/20 Jonathan Dickinson State Park Scrub Jay Walk

Field Guide: Jim Howe

4/23 - 4/24 Ft. DeSoto Overnight

Field Guide: Paddy Cunningham

4/23 Wakodahatchee Wetlands

Field Guide: Valerri Brauer

MAY 2022

5/14 Green Cay Wetlands

Field Guide: Valerri Brauer

5/18 Jonathan Dickinson State Park Scrub Jay Walk

Field Guide: Jim Howe

5/22 Wakodahatchee Wetlands

Field Guide: Valerri Brauer

JUNE 2022

6/1 - 6/30 June Challenge

Organizer: Vicki Rogerson/Paula Gatrell



PLANT OF THE MONTH: *Cabbage Palm (Sabal palmetto)*

-By Helen Laurence

Sabal palm gets a bad rap. Granted, it can be messy, dropping fronds, fruits, and inflorescences (flower stalks). But these objections have more to do with arbitrary human expectations imposed upon the natural environment than with any fault in the tree itself. Once again, it's a case of "right plant, right place." Sabal palms shouldn't be planted next to sidewalks, where plant detritus will make a mess, nor right next to fences where the tree will encroach, nor right under powerlines, although Sabals are "about as hurricane-proof as a tree can be. They stand after many hurricanes have blown over the oaks and snapped the pines in two" (University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, https://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/database/documents/pdf/tree_fact_sheets/sabpala.pdf).

Planted in the right place, this tree (our Florida State Tree, although botanically grouped with grasses and sedges) is a wildlife mecca. Kushlan and Hines in *Attracting Birds to South Florida Gardens* describe the cabbage palm as an excellent bird plant. A profusion of fragrant flowers attracts many bees, wasps, flies, and butterflies. These provide a buffet for woodpeckers, flycatchers, and other insect-eaters, while the fruits attract "resident, migrating and early wintering birds, including cardinals, mockingbirds, flickers,

woodpeckers, phoebes and other flycatchers, catbirds, thrashers, grackles, jays, turkeys, bobwhites, blackbirds, robins, conures and Amazons" (p. 184).

Then there's the question of the "boots." Landscapers tend to chop off these naturally persistent, rich detritus-collecting leaf bases, giving the tree an unnatural, manicured look while depriving ferns, epiphytes, insects, spiders, millipedes, anoles, frogs and snakes of important habitat and nutrients. In fact, according to Rufino Osorio, "three species of ferns occur almost nowhere else except in the boots of cabbage palms: hand fern (*Ophioglossum palmatum*), golden polypody (*Phlebodium aureum*), and shoestring fern (*Vittaria lineata*). There is also a species of moss that is found nearly exclusively on the trunks of cabbage palms" (*A Gardener's Guide to Florida's Native Plants*, p. 151). Some trees keep their boots for the life of the tree. Mysteriously, other trees drop their boots, and when they do, the smooth trunk provides a perfect place for woodpeckers and flickers to create nesting cavities. The sabal palm also shelters and supplies nesting material to bats, caracaras, cardinals, crows, doves, flycatchers, gnatcatchers, hawks, hummingbirds, kinglets, mockingbirds, shrikes, wrens, possums, raccoons, squirrels, snakes, tree frogs, lizards, and an assortment

PLANT OF THE MONTH (CON'T).

of insects (FANN infographic: https://www.plantrealflorida.org/info/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/sabal_palm_trim2pg_apr2013.pdf)

These trees are naturally adapted to hurricanes and fires and do not need "hurricane pruning" (G. Rogers, Native Plants, Weeds, and Sustainable Landscapes in South Florida, p. 138). Only old, brown fronds should ever be removed. The green fronds are feeding the tree! The pineapple-topped, unnecessarily "hurricane pruned" trees are not only less useful to wildlife but are themselves lacking needed nutrition provided by the green leaves and susceptible to possibly fatal disease. Plus, they look naked and embarrassed. This is literally tree abuse (UF/IFAS: <https://blogs.ifas.ufl.edu/browardco/2021/08/04/sabal-palm-tree-of-life/>).

The sabal palm is the cornerstone of a sustainable South Florida landscape, planted or allowed to remain as a benefit to the environment rather than as an expression of our own human aesthetic. An enhanced understanding of the palm's use by other creatures may also enhance our own perspective, enabling us to see it as a thing of beauty in its own right. Mockingbirds, catbirds, thrashers, cardinals, jays, crows, grackles, titmice, Carolina Wrens, tanagers, and orioles. Other wildlife, including opossums, raccoons, and squirrels, benefit as well. Once the fruit falls, quail and box turtles may gobble it up.

Helen Laurence is a regular contributor to Audubon Everglades. A Master Gardener who loves plants, birds, and butterflies, Helen has a lavish native plant garden on her five acre property bustling with birds and butterflies. Helen also volunteers at our recently established Native Habitat Teaching Garden at Pine Jog Environmental Education Center.



**Sabal Palm with Golden Polypody fern growing in the boots.
Photo by Scott Laurence**

VISIT US AT

WWW.AUDUBONEVERGLADES.ORG