President's letter from Barbara Singer

We have new meeting place, projects and goals

It is just August 20th as I write this and already I’m excited about the coming year. We have a new location for our monthly meetings: First United Methodist Church of Palmetto, 330 11th Ave. West, Palmetto. See map and directions on page 3. We also have three additions to the Manatee Audubon Board: Dee Hanny, Patty Petruff and Carol Webster and they have all hit the ground running.

As a Board, we have been very active this summer planning our goals, field trips, programs, over-night trips and budget for the coming year. Some of our newest projects include the establishment of Manatee County’s first Beach-nesting Bird Stewardship Program as well as a new Junior Audubon group. We want to set up a Manatee Audubon Environmental Scholarship Program for graduating seniors, and we look forward to going “green” with our newsletter for all members who would like to save a tree and receive our newsletter electronically. To register for electronic delivery of the newsletter, email me at president@manateeaudubon.org

Two of our goals for this year go hand in hand: to recruit new members and to get more of our members involved in Manatee Audubon. One way you can help is to bring a friend or neighbor to our meetings and encourage them to join. We will continue to provide opportunities for participation, ranging from a couple hours at a special event to a monthly commitment as a committee member. You can volunteer at Felts, lead a field trip, help out at one of the Junior Audubon meetings or get involved in conservation issues. There are any number of opportunities for you to put your talents to work and make a difference. All you have to do is say “YES” when asked to help. Please do not hesitate to come to me with your suggestions as I will not hesitate to come to you in our efforts to make Manatee County Audubon Society a strong and vital chapter.

See fall migration at Fort De Soto Park on 9/19 Details page 4
**Look back at our history**

By Don Bansen, MCAS Historian

The Manatee County Audubon Society discontinued its informal bird counts at Myakka River State Park in the 1960s and the local bird count in 1976. The Christmas Bird Count was resumed in 1982 when Charlie Pead decided he would like to try it again.

National Audubon took control of Cortez Island in December 1981 and posted signs designating it as a wildlife sanctuary. Thirteen species of birds were found on the state-owned island off the Cortez fishing docks.

A few days before Christmas 1982, a Bald Eagle was shot by someone wielding a shotgun. Catherine Spurr, who started and operated Sarasota Wildlife Center Inc., took the bird in and with help from a local vet, restored the bird’s health.

Robert McNesky, an artist and teacher of art, became our chapter president in 1984. He drew the original logo for our chapter, a Black-crowned Night Heron. He was hired by Randy Chastain, developer of Tidy Island, to illustrate a book, “The Birds of Tidy Island,” which was to be given to residents there. This was about the same time that the Perico Bay Club was being developed by Neal, Buskirk and Adams. They agreed to set aside a portion of the development as a wildlife sanctuary and installed 25 signs, “Posted Wildlife Sanctuary.”

A “Raptor Release Program” was kicked off on December 1, 1984, on Perico Island, adjacent to the site of the development, when Barnie the Barn Owl was released by Lisa Shockness, who had rehabbed him. The program was funded by a donation from the family of Dr. Robert White.

A “Raptor Release Program” was installed by Lisa Shockness, who had rehabbed him. The program was funded by a donation from the family of Dr. Robert White.

By Lucette Wombacher

**We were privileged to witness the release** of three Eastern Screech Owls at Felts Audubon Preserve one evening in early August. The owls were freed behind the storage barn at the edge of Oak Alley, as far away from the Great Horned Owl (perched in the pine next to the Bird Blind) as we could get. It happened very quickly. Two Screech Owls took off in a blur as soon as the door to their cage was opened. The third owl needed encouragement to leave the cage. Bob Wombacher got some photos of one owl perched in Oak Alley. Fred Allen got a photo of another one. Above left, an owl peeks out the cage door. Above right, one Screech Owl has found a spot to contemplate his newfound freedom. Or is it a she? My understanding is that the mother owl was found dead and the nestlings were brought to a St. Petersburg veterinarian, who is a licensed wildlife rescuer. She raised the babies until they were old enough to release. But where and how? It just happened that the vet lives across the street from Julia Schneider, daughter of board members Jack and Bunny Schneider. When the idea of Felts was suggested as a place to free the owls, Jack and Bunny phoned board members for approval and coordinated plans. Present for the release were Jack and Bunny Schneider, their daughter Julia and her veterinarian friend, Fred Allen, Lea Etchells, her daughter Buffy and grandson James, and Bob and me. Fred Allen reports that the the Mockingbirds, Wrens and Cardinals “had a lot to say about their new neighbors” and some of what they said was “not so friendly.”

**Butterflies counted at Felts** submitted by Jeanne Schlesinger

Don Stillwaugh and Fred Allen conducted the annual butterfly count at Felts Audubon Preserve on Saturday July 11 and recorded 26 species and 246 individual butterflies. One Giant Swallowtail was seen as well as three Black Swallowtails and one Spicebush Swallowtail. The most prevalent butterfly was the Ceraunus Blue, a small but brightly colored species. One new species, a Viceroy, was spotted this year to bring the total of butterfly species that have been identified in the Preserve to 41. As the butterfly plants mature in the new native planting of butterfly plants adjacent to the Bird Blind, we may be able to see larger numbers of butterflies and perhaps some new species. The additional seeding in the wildflower meadow which was completed this spring may also attract more butterflies to the preserve.

**Thanks to Felts Audubon Preserve hosts** submitted by Carol Webster

**May 2 - Bunny and Jack Schneider** were our Felts hosts greeting 19 visitors on a pleasant good weather day. Jeanne Dubi, with some Sarasota Audubon members, enjoyed the preserve, observing the butterflies. One visitor applied for membership.

**June 6 - Dee Hanny** hosted 11 visitors and reported 26 species, including a Great Crested Flycatcher, two adult Eastern Bluebirds with four young, two young Great Horned Owls and a juvenile Sandhill Crane that walked within 10 feet of Dee. One new member was accepted.

**July 4 - Don and Betty Bansen**, in spite of the summer heat, came out to host four visitors and to report eight bird species.

**August 1 - Lea Etchells** hosted 11 birders and photographers on this warm humid morning. She and Fred Allen spotted two immature Bald Eagles riding the thermals above Felts. Fred said we have our first generation of butterflies about to emerge from the Butterfly Garden.
Help wanted to lead field trips....

By Connie Zack
Thank you to our trip leaders who led enjoyable adventures during the 2008-2009 season. They were Don and Bobbi Benson, Steve Black, Bob and Nancy Dean, Arlene Flisik, Chuck and Joann Froman, Dee Hanny, Ron and LaDonne Mayberry, Chuck and Ginny Oshaben, Patty Petruff, Carol Webster, Bob and Lucette Wombacher, and Connie Zack.

You do not have to be an expert birder to lead a field trip. It requires that you plan and lead the group and send in a write-up for the Night Heron. There are always “expert” birders on the trips who share their knowledge. We need new volunteers to lead trips which will take the burden off those who lead more than one trip per year. We have exciting plans for 2009-2010 and we hope you will participate. To volunteer, contact me at 758-2929 or zacodo@verizon.net

......and to monitor Beach-nesting Birds

By Dee Hanny
Greetings to ALL members. This year our chapter is planning to have a new and more active Beach-nesting Bird Stewardship monitoring and protection program. I have volunteered to be and have been chosen to be Co-ordinator of the program for the chapter. I am seeking volunteers to participate. The most active part of the project will be next spring but I want to get a head start. I will be providing more information in the near future and will accept any suggestions and help. Please contact me if you are interested. Dee A. Hanny--941-745-1553 or email me at ynnahda@yahoo.com.

We’ll meet at Palmetto’s 1st United Methodist

By Barbara Singer, President
As we discussed at our meetings last season, we have decided to change meeting locations. This was strictly a financial decision to save money. Over the summer, a team visited five suggested locations looking for a facility that would meet our needs. We were able to secure the First United Methodist Church of Palmetto, 330 11th Ave. West, Palmetto. This church is about a mile from our previous meeting location and will be as convenient for most of our members. From Bradenton, go north over the Green Bridge (U.S. 41), turn left at the base of the bridge onto Riverside Dr. West, go three blocks to 11th Ave. West, turn right to 330 11th Ave. West. From Parrish and Palmetto, take U.S. 41 south, turn right onto Riverside Dr. West (before the bridge), go three blocks to 11th Ave. West and turn right to 330 11th Ave. West.

The new location will cost $75 each meeting – half what we were paying at our former location. Over the summer a devoted member wanted to insure that our meetings would not be disrupted and made a $150 donation to cover two meetings. It is with thoughtful members like this that we can continue to provide educational programs and events for the membership.

Thanks to all who suggested locations, those who visited locations and donors who keep us going with their contributions.

Deadline looms to help Alaska Seas

By Arlene Flisik
Write now and help stop the assault on Alaska’s Chukchi and Beaufort Seas.

A part of the Outer Continental Shelf, they’re one of the world’s most biologically unique, environmentally sensitive - but least studied - marine ecosystems. Currently undisturbed, they face imminent oil and gas development - while little relevant scientific research has been done and little baseline data is available to evaluate or monitor impacts.

The shallow Chukchi is the most productive high-latitude sea in the Arctic. The Beaufort is a main whale migration route, and its health is critical for many species.

Ice is the distinctive and DANGEROUS feature of both. The ice edge produces myriad phytoplankton on which depend all marine and Coastal Arctic wildlife spiraling up the food chain, eventually including the native peoples living nearby. BUT THERE IS NO WAY TO CLEAN UP A SPILL IN BROKEN OR SOLID ICE. And, it’s dark 24/7 during the winter!

Even routine discharges, noise, air pollution, vessel traffic and habitat encroachment will further stress areas already impacted by climate warming. The answer: stop leasing; obtain up-to-date comprehensive and credible research; and go from there.

Write comments “Re OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2010-2015,” and mail BY SEPTEMBER 14 to “Sec’y of the Interior Ken Salazar; c/o Ms. Renee Orr; Chief, Leasing Division; Minerals Management Service, MS 4010; 381 EIden St.; Herndon, VA 20170-4817.”
September 2009 Newsletter

To register for electronic delivery of future newsletters, email your request to president@manateeaudubon.org

Welcome New Members
Wade and Betty Matthews
Elizabeth H Gould
Richard Greenspun
Stephen and Joanne Doyle
Dony Motta
Yvette Little
Linda M. Harris

Upcoming Events

Saturday 9/19
Fort De Soto Park Fall Migration
Steve Black, 376-0110, leads trip to island park near St. Petersburg, at the mouth of Tampa Bay. Depart Main Post Office at 8 a.m. to visit one of the top birding spots in Florida, especially during the peak fall migration period.

Saturday 9/26
Workday Felts Preserve
8 a.m. to noon

Saturday 10/3
Open House Felts Preserve
8 a.m. to noon
Junior Audubon
9 a.m.

Saturday 10/10
Honeymoon Island and Dunedin Hammock City Park. Steve Black, 376-0110, leads trip to bird a barrier island that boasts nature trails and bird observation areas. $5 charge per car. Depart Main Post Office at 7 a.m.

Thursday 10/15
Monthly Meeting
First United Methodist Church
330 11th Ave. West, Palmetto

Bird Identification Course Set for January

By Nancy and Bob Dean
Again, new and updated information has been added to the MCAS Beginning Bird Watching Course, which will be offered in January. This course includes four class sessions and two full-day field trips. Class sessions in the Synovus Bank community room, 2520 Manatee Avenue West, Bradenton, are on Mondays and Thursdays: January 18, 21, 25 and 28, begin promptly at 6:30 p.m. (door opens 6 p.m.) and end about 8:45 or 9 p.m. The two Saturday field trips begin promptly at 7 a.m. on January 23 and 30. These trips require a car, and car pooling is encouraged. Each trip lasts until about 2 p.m.
MCAS has kept the 2009 price for the 2010 course, which is $35 for MCAS members. The $50 fee for non-members includes first year local Audubon membership. Remember that several interested 2009 participants had to be turned away, as that course filled in early January. Already, a record number of 2010 participants have reserved a space in this course and less than 16 spaces remain. If you want to take this course in 2010, you are urged to contact Nancy Dean at 941-792-9235, as soon as possible, after November 1.

Send your items for the newsletter to Molly McCartney at msmccartney@sprintmail.com or call 778-3228.

Photos by David Williamson

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