



# The Night Heron

www.manateecaudubon.org  
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We are committed to protecting the environment in our community, our state and our country.

Junior Auduboners study spiders, owl pellets, dead mole on page 3

## We're offering Two \$1,000 Scholarships

By Bunny Schneider

Manatee County Audubon Society is offering two \$1,000 scholarships to college-bound high school students who plan to study environmental science, biology or another environmentally related field at the college level with the intention of pursuing the protection of birds, wildlife and the environment as a career.

Applications are available on line at [www.ManateeAudubon.org](http://www.ManateeAudubon.org). Submit completed applications to Manatee County Audubon Society, P.O. Box 14550, Bradenton, FL 34280-4550.

Students must be from Manatee County to qualify for the scholarship. Applications will be reviewed on the basis of academic excellence, outstanding character, citizenship and a demonstrated interest in the environment and wildlife. Deadline for applications is April 1.

For more information, contact me, Bunny Schneider, Scholarship Chair, Manatee County Audubon Society, phone 792-1794 or email me at [JBRabbits@aol.com](mailto:JBRabbits@aol.com)



### Dr. Ken Meyer to talk About Short-tailed Hawk

Our speaker for the March 18 meeting of Manatee Audubon will be Dr. Ken Meyer, co-founder, executive director and research ecologist at the non-profit Avian Research and Conservation Institute in Gainesville. What we know about two fascinating raptors, the Swallow-tailed Kite and the Short-tailed Hawk, comes from the institute's research. The talk will be on Florida's rarest hawk, the Short-tailed Hawk. The meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 330 11th Avenue West, Palmetto.

### President's letter from Barbara Singer

## What a time for birds!

As I think back over the last month, what first comes to my mind is the coldest February I can remember in this area. All I could think of was when is this cold going to end. But also during this past month I have experienced some of the most exciting birding of the year.

After visiting a few ponds in our area what I found was that the ducks didn't really think it was cold. They were all there and welcoming visitors. It was also early February when the Felts Preserve feeders became extremely active. I guess the cold wasn't important to the Painted or Indigo Buntings. The Felts bird blind is the easiest birding you could ever experience. Where have you seen a Pine Warbler eat from a feeder or a Common Yellow-throat Warbler eat at the base of feeders. This last month at Felts feeders has reminded me of migration fallout.



*Painted buntings feeding at Felts Preserve on February 13. Photo by Bob Wombacher*

The next cold birding experience was participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count held at the DeSoto Memorial on Saturday February 13. It was cold; wind was whipping at about 20-25 mph. The temperature was about 43. But those who came out were treated to up close views of multiple Loons, two adult and three immature North Gannets blown in close and the best sighting of the day: a Short-tailed Hawk.

The lesson here is we can sit home and complain about the cold or we can go out exploring and just maybe see that next life bird. Life is too short to just standby and let the birds pass you by.

Special report on "Lurking Danger" on page 3



## Spring Break Camp Starts March 29 At Felts Preserve

The second annual Spring Break Camp for elementary students will run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday March 29 through Friday April 2 at Felts Audubon Preserve.

Manatee Audubon has partnered with Karen Fraley's Around the Bend Nature Tours to sponsor the camp, which costs \$50 per student.

Campers will learn to identify birds and the plants they need as well as the good bugs that birds like. There will be a nature art class each day and campers will create a fort to be presented on Earth Day April 17.

For more information, contact Karen Fraley at 794-8773 or Karen@aroundbend.com

## New MCAS Board To be elected At March 18 meeting

### Nominees for Board of Directors:

- Paul Wills
- Dick Comeau
- LaDonne Mayberry

### Nominees for re-election:

- Jack Schneider
- Bunny Schneider

### Nominee for Vice-President

Legislative and Public Affairs  
(to replace Arlene Flisik)  
OPEN

We are hoping that someone will volunteer to fill this important position. If interested call Barbara Singer at 922-4488.



Ground north of Felts parking area has been prepared for wildflowers. Photo by Tom Heitzman.

## **Felts ready for wildflowers, birds, photographers**

*By Barbara Singer, president*

Improvements continue at Felts Audubon Preserve. Over the past month the main Wildflower Meadow has been cut to help reduce the thatch buildup. We continue to work with the Florida Department of Forestry hoping to have a prescribed burn in that area as soon as conditions will allow. We have prepared three-fourths of an acre of land just north of the parking area as our next wildflower area. Twelve members came out to help rake the area after the grasses had been killed. Once the area was prepared it was hydroseeded with wildflower seeds. We look forward to wildflower and grasses in that area in the spring and summer.

The cold has taken a toll on some bushes and shrubs so we will need the help of members to trim off the dead twigs so new growth can begin. We also need help in getting the preserve in top condition for our upcoming Earth Day Event on Saturday April 17. Meantime, birds are abundant. Purple Martins continue to check out our lodging and we are hopeful that we will once again have Martin babies. If you haven't been out to see the Painted and Indigo Buntings you are missing a real treat.

On Saturday February 20, Ron Mayberry conducted a free photography seminar for 23 inquisitive photographers. Individuals with all levels of skills came to get the one or two pointers that will help them turn their good shoots into super pictures. After completing the class portion of the seminar all headed out to Felts to put what they had learned into action. The group now had the opportunity to spend time with Ron in the field and get some actual hands-on help. All attending were very happy with their experience and left having a greater knowledge of what it takes to get that super shoot.

I want to thank Ron for his continued unselfish support of Manatee Audubon. He has always shared his photos with us gratis and has provided photography boat trips which have proven to be great fundraisers for us.

### Thanks to Felts Hosts

*By Carol Webster*

*An Eastern Bluebird greeted Dee Hanny upon his entrance to the preserve on January 2, a chilly morning at 45 degrees. Dee greeted 14 visitors and reported 28 species with the American Goldfinch the most prevalent. A \$20 donation was received.*

*On February 6, Mike and Marge Corso welcomed 41 guests including the Junior Audubon group. Out-of-state visitors were from Maryland, Michigan and North Carolina. Everyone enjoyed the property and the progress being made. In spite of the cool, cloudy, windy morning, 31 bird species were sighted. Two Painted Buntings -- one female and one male -- were the stars of the day and also life birds for both Mike and Marge.*

## Lurking Danger

By Arlene Flisik, vice president

The state legislature is in session. Danger lurks in many places. Near-shore oil drilling is the most obvious at this point. We know:

- Routine maintenance and small "accidents" over time sully the waters near drilling rigs where fish like to congregate.
- Pollution from spills in open water contaminates any living thing in its way.
- Nearshore and on-shore pollution causes long-term devastation of the entire web of sealife and its nurturing habitat, from the micro-organisms at the bottom of the food chain through the catch that perpetuates our fishing industry and graces your dinner plate.

Healthy mangroves and seagrass protect not only sealife but also on-shore property from erosion. Clean beaches are important both for tourism and for various wildlife.

On-shore support industries could change our entire quality of life, not for the better. Florida has no basic knowledge of the drilling industry, no Department of Geology or similar institution, no pertinent regulations or regulatory apparatus, and no skilled work force to compete for jobs. The supposed economic windfall is largely a mirage. And, this perpetuates dependency on fossil fuels.

EVERYBODY needs to contact these prime decision-makers ASAP:

Senate President Jeff Atwater, <atwater.jeff.web@flsenate.gov> OR Rm 312, Senate Office Bldg., 404 S Monroe, Tallahassee FL 32399-1100

House Speaker Larry Cretul, <larry.cretul@myfloridahouse.gov> OR Rm 420, The Capitol, 420 S Monroe, Tallahassee FL 32399-1100

Chair of Sen. Energy, Environment and Land Use Committee Alex delaPortilla <portilla.alex.web@flsenate.gov> OR 303 Sen. Office Bldg, 404 S Monroe, Tallahassee FL 32399-1100

Our own Sen. Mike Bennett, Chair of Sen. Community Affairs Committee (727-6349).



At top left, Junior Auduboners examine a dead mole found on the trail. Clockwise from top they are working with sterilized owl pellets. The red Crab Spider was found in the bird blind. Photos by Lucette Wombacher.



## Junior Auduboners study owl pellets, spiders and dead mole

By Steve Black, vice president

At our Junior Auduboners meeting at Felts Audubon Preserve on Saturday February 6, we studied spiders from Audubon Adventures. We looked for some spiders on the property with limited success, but were rescued by Fred Allen who showed us a Black Widow Spider, House Spider, a Golden Orb Spider and a few others. The most popular activity was opening the sterilized owl pellets. My thanks to Shirley McGinnis and Lucette Wombacher for their help.



## MCAS dues are now due in January

By Lucette Wombacher, treasurer

Members, with our electronic newsletter, we can no longer rely on mailing labels to remind everyone when it is time to pay annual dues. Therefore all payments are now due in January. Because this is a transition year, everyone who has made a payment since July 1, 2009 is current. Everyone else is due now. If you are in doubt as to whether you are current, please call Lucette Wombacher at 941-776-8424 or see her at the next General Meeting. Annual dues are still \$15 per household and can be mailed to MCAS, P.O. Box 14550, Bradenton, FL 34280.

## Welcome New Members

Karen LaBonte, Mary Scislowicz, Robert and Mary Zimmer, Edna R. Mitchell, Jim Larson.

## Upcoming Events

### Saturday 3/6

Open House Felts Preserve  
8 a.m. - noon

### Tuesday 3/9

Emerson Point two-hour walk with Lucette Wombacher. This is a joint activity of Manatee Audubon and Manatee Natural Resources Department.

To reserve a spot, call  
748-4501 ext 4605 or 776-8424.

### Wednesday 3/10

Circle Bar B field trip  
Carol Webster, 747-7295, leads trip to Circle B Bar Ranch in Lakeland. This reserve covers almost 1,200 acres of marsh, cypress, swamp and an enormous oak hammock. You will see hundreds of wading birds, Ibis, ducks and peeps. Thousands of White Pelicans winter here. There is a beautiful nature center and a tram for those unable to walk the trail.

Depart Main Post Office at 7 a.m.

### Thursday 3/18

Monthly meeting at 7:30 p.m.  
First United Methodist Church  
330 11th Avenue West, Palmetto

### Saturday 3/20

Sarasota Hot Spots -- Celery Fields, Ackerman Lake and Pinecraft Park. Barbara Singer, 504-0228, leads trip to Celery Fields looking for its many species. There is a stop at Ackerman Lake to check out the ducks, then Pinecraft Park, a hot spot for spring migration. Depart Main Post Office at 7 a.m.

### Tuesday 3/23

North Lido Beach, Sarasota  
John Ginaven, 383-5133, leads trip to North Lido Beach in search of migratory birds. Meet at 8 a.m. in North Lido Beach parking lot at deadend of Ringling Boulevard.

### Saturday 3/27

Work Day Felts Preserve  
8 a.m. to noon

### Monday 3/27 - Friday 3/2

Spring Break Camp for elementary students. Around the Bend Nature Tours with MCAS.

Contact Karen Fraley at 794-8773 for more information.

## *Bird ID Class draws 38 participants*

*By Nancy and Bob Dean, field trip leaders.*

***Participants in the January 2010*** Manatee County Audubon Society Beginning Bird Watching Course had the good fortune of viewing both Sora, a type of rail, at The Celery Fields and Wild Turkey at Myakka River State Park in Sarasota County during the second of the two field trips included in this annual course. These sightings occurred on January 30. Probably the most enjoyable birds seen on the January 23 field trip were a group of Eastern Bluebirds that use 4-H-supplied nest boxes at Felts Audubon Preserve. During this first field trip, birds were viewed at two other Manatee County natural areas: Whitney Beach on Longboat Key and Leffis Key in Bradenton Beach.

***Ten expert birders*** from both Manatee and Sarasota Audubon Societies helped participants use binoculars to view birds, and reviewed key identifiers while the birds were observed. Altogether 94 different bird species were seen during the course. The four 2.5-hour class sessions were held in the Community Room of the Synovus Bank on Manatee Avenue in Bradenton. The bank has donated this space for the past six bird ID courses. MCAS has offered this annual course for eight years.



*Bird ID Class birders examine a Great Horned Owl at Felts Audubon Preserve on January 23.*

***This year's course*** attracted 38 attendees, drawing participants from the following communities: Anna Maria (2), Bradenton (17), Bradenton Beach (2), Holmes Beach (1), Lakewood Ranch (2), Palmetto (3), Parrish (2), St. Petersburg (2), Ruskin (2), Sarasota (4) and University Park (1). Reservations for the 2011 course set for January 17-29 can be made at any time by calling Nancy Dean at 941-792-9235. It will cost \$40 plus the current MCAS membership fee.

## *Auduboners brave cold to tour Station 5*



*By Connie Zack, trip leader*

***On a COLD, WINDY Valentine*** weekend, 26 brave Auduboners carpoled to Clewiston. Our first stop was at Ollie's Pond in Port Charlotte where we did a mile walk around a lovely lake. Then on to Harnes Marsh in Lehigh Acres, a beautiful spot but unfortunately, the roads were gated and locked for the drive around the marsh. Clewiston was our next stop and we arrived in time to do some birding there. The Clewiston Inn is lovely, especially the bird and wildlife mural in the bar. We had dinner and breakfast at the Inn and then off to Station 5. Our bird count was 88 species. Almost everyone added to their life lists. We saw numerous Caracara, hundreds of Glossy Ibis and a Purple Gallinule, Purple Swamphen and Cassin's Kingbird. A fun time was had by all.

Send your items for *The Night Heron* to newsletter editor Molly McCartney at [msmccartney@sprintmail.com](mailto:msmccartney@sprintmail.com) or call 778-3228