



The Night Heron

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

Karen and Matt Holman to speak on December 16

The speakers for the December 16 meeting of Manatee Audubon will be Karen and Matt Holman of the Wild Bird Center. They will explain how to attract the most desirable birds to your yard. Thanks to the Holmans, we now have Painted Buntings, Indigo Buntings and many more rare birds coming to our Bird Blind at Felts Preserve. Don't miss this chance for expert advice. The meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. at the United Methodist Church of Palmetto, 330 11th Avenue West, Palmetto.



Karen and Matt Holman

Christmas Bird Count is fast approaching

By David Williamson, CBC Chair

Hi everyone! It's that time of year again. Manatee County Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Counts are right around the corner. I have heard from, or met with, some of you already. If you haven't confirmed yet, please let me know that you will be able to participate. If you aren't sure yet, I can keep you on the list as tentative.

Remember, you don't have to be a birder to participate. We need drivers, spotters, and volunteers to write down what we see. Everyone's help is welcome and needed.

- Saturday December 18 is the Bradenton Circle count, which is centered in downtown Bradenton and extends from the bay to Lakewood Ranch Blvd. and from the Sarasota County line to I-275.
- Tuesday December 28 is the Gulf Circle count, which includes Anna Maria, part of Longboat Key, Perico Island, and Cortez.

Feel free to invite all your birding friends to participate. Contact me at david@localbirder.com with questions. Sarasota's bird count is Sunday January 2. The contact is Jeanne Dubi at dubi@comcast.net

President's Letter from Barbara Singer

Here's the big picture from Florida Audubon

As members of Manatee Audubon we can at times become self-absorbed. But we need to try and keep track of the issues that are important to all facets of "our" Audubon conservation efforts.

And based on the annual fall Audubon Assembly, held October 22-23 in St. Petersburg, coastal conservation is one of Florida Audubon's four key policy priority resolutions for 2011. The other three are Florida Special Places, Greater Everglades Ecosystem, and Energy and Climate Change. Over the next few months I will cover all of the policy priorities outlined in the Audubon of Florida Conservation Action Agenda. But today I want to focus on conservation.

Manatee Audubon needs a volunteer to be on the Regional Conservation Committee to represent our chapter at its quarterly meetings. If you have a passion for the environment and a little extra time or you are a college student seeking to make contacts in the environmental field, this could be an opportunity of a lifetime. Email me at president@manateeaudubon.org for information.

To best cover the conservation actions of the Florida Gulf coast, this area's Regional Conservation Committee has recommended we work on the following:

- Promote water conservation and the protection of aquifers, springs, lakes and rivers from water pollution.
- Advance coastal habitat protection, strengthen programs of beach nesting bird stewardship, and the monitoring and conservation of shorebirds.
- Promote regional visioning to apply principals of green planning.
- Support energy and water conservation and renewable energy.
- Provide outreach, education and leadership on climate change and oppose offshore drilling.

The Deepwater Horizon oil spill disaster brought the imperilment of the coastal habitat resources to the front of our concerns. It made very clear what can be lost by decisions to open Florida *Continued page 3*

November Donors

- Ron and LaDonne Mayberry
- Steve Black
- Patty Petruff
- Suzanne Dickie
- Kathy Tushaus
- Jack and Bunny Schneider
- Stephani Meister
- Kay Rennie

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Fall at Felts Bird Migrants on the increase

By Fred Allen

October: Bird sightings started out slow but by the end of the month it started to pick up. The last week saw a few migrants like six Palm Warblers, two Pine Warblers, two Goldfinch, two Catbirds, one Eastern Phoebe, one Painted Bunting and 4 Indigo Buntings. On the ponds were 16 Wood Ducks, two adults Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, five ducklings and one Great Blue Heron.



Great Blue Heron

The Butterfly Garden also had few visitors in October. Last winter's freezing weather cut our butterfly population in half. Missing this year were Sleepy Orange, Queen and Malachites and we had very low numbers of Zebra Heliconian, Cloudless Sulphur, Fiery Skippers and Gulf Fritillaries.

November: The first week started out slow at the feeders. The second week we had our first American Goldfinch, Chipping Sparrow and a female Painted Bunting. One Eastern Bluebird and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker showed up in the pines at the parking lot. The third week brought three more Painted Buntings and four Indigo Buntings.



American Goldfinch

Butterflies in November were few and far between with only White Peacock, Barred Yellow, a couple of Gulf Fritillaries and Long tailed Skippers.

Bush hogging has cleaned up the wild flower garden. The ponds have dropped a couple of feet, which should bring more wading birds.

Felts to be certified as Monarch Waystation

By Barbara Singer, President

Within the next few months Manatee Audubon will submit an application for Felts Audubon Preserve to be certified as an official Monarch Waystation. Watch for our certification plaque to be displayed in the Butterfly Garden in the Bird Blind.

Monarch Waystations provide the resources necessary for Monarch butterflies to produce successive generations and sustain their migration. Without milkweeds throughout their spring and summer breeding areas in North America, Monarchs would not be able to produce the successive generations that culminate in their fall migration. And without nectar from flowers these fall migratory Monarchs would be unable to make their long journey to overwintering grounds in Mexico.

Each fall, hundreds of millions of Monarch butterflies migrate from the United States and Canada to overwintering areas in Mexico and California where they wait until conditions favor a return flight in the spring. The Monarch migration is truly one of the world's greatest natural wonders, yet it is threatened by habitat loss in North America. Milkweeds and nectar sources are declining due to development and the widespread use of herbicides in croplands, pastures and roadsides. Because 90% of all milkweed/monarch habitats occur within the agricultural landscape, farm practices have the potential to strongly influence Monarch populations.

To offset the loss of milkweeds and nectar sources, we need to create, conserve, and protect milkweed/monarch habitats. At Felts, we already have milkweed on which the migrating females lay their eggs but we intend to use a donation from the Anna Maria Garden Club to increase the quantity and species of milkweed and nectar plants on which the Monarchs feed. Without a major effort to restore milkweeds to as many locations as possible, the Monarch population is certain to decline to extremely low levels.

You could win Hot Air Balloon ride

By Patricia Petruff, Secretary

Manatee County Audubon is sponsoring a raffle for a Hot Air Balloon ride for two. This fun filled adventure can be scheduled at any one of 150 locations across the United States. A list of the locations will be available at MCAS meetings through March. The experience which includes a champagne or fruit juice toast at the end will take approximately three hours from start to finish. Of this, about an hour will be spent floating above the treetops and below the clouds.



Up up and away

Raffle tickets are \$10 each or three for \$25. The raffle drawing will be held on April 2 at the Felts Preserve Nature Day event. The winner need not be present and will be notified by mail. Winners will have 12 months in which to use the certificate. The raffle will be held only if a minimum of 30 tickets are sold. If 30 tickets are not sold, all funds will be returned to the purchasers of the tickets. No more than 100 tickets will be sold. For more information or to purchase tickets, please contact Patty Petruff at ppetruff@dyefirm.com or 941-730-0579. There will also be opportunities to bid on balloon rides for one, two, or four persons at the Nature Day event. For more information about the company visit their website at www.800soaring.com.

Junior Auduboners learn about bird migration

At the November 20 meeting of Junior Audubon at Felts, we had the Press family (David, Mathew, and James) and the Kaufman family (Brian, Brody, and Reid). Steve Black led a discussion about bird migration and how some animals travel a very short distance during migration while the Arctic Tern goes from the North Pole to the South Pole. We then set out to find migrants at Felts. Afterward, we played a migration game to make the kids aware of all the pitfalls birds endure during migration.

Bird of the Month

Take another look At Loggerhead Shrike

By Dick Comeau, Field Trip Chair

When birding our local areas in Florida be sure not to write off that gray looking bird on a telephone wire or fence as just another Northern Mockingbird. It is very possible that it is a Loggerhead Shrike, especially in a semi-open country with smaller trees and arid pasture conditions. It always pays to take a second look and check it out with your binoculars. If the bird has a short hooked bill and a black mask it is possibly our Loggerhead Shrike.

Further details include a thin tail, big head and black and white coloration. When it flies, it drops down from where it was perched and then flies somewhat like a flicker and then swoops up to another perch. The only other possibility would be the Northern Shrike, which would be extremely rare in Florida. It only comes down from Canada to some of our northern states during winter months. The Northern Shrike has a longer more hooked bill, pale color at base of bill, and a slight barred breast for comparison.

Shrikes are neat birds and have the nickname of "Butcher Birds" because they catch small rodents, insects, lizards, and have a habit of impaling their prey on barbed wire or thorns of various shrubs to dine on at a later time. Keep your eyes open for a chance to watch the behaviors and other activities of these fascinating members of our Florida bird world.

On a recent birding trip with Manatee Audubon to the Laurel Landfill in Venice, we spotted a minimum of four Loggerhead Shrikes, which was a special treat.

Reserve now for Dean trip on January 12

Those taking the January 12 field trip to Lettuce Lake, Columbia Restaurant, Ybor State Museum and Cockroach Bay Road Trip will need to pay for their lunch at the Columbia Restaurant, as well as a \$4 cash fee for admission to the museum, which does not accept credit cards. Car pooling for this trip occurs at the southwest corner of the Walmart parking lot, 508 U.S. 301 at 10th Street East, Palmetto. Departure time is 7 a.m. Those who want to meet at Lettuce Lake County Park, which opens at 8 a.m., may pick up a trip map at the December 16 Audubon meeting from the Deans. This trip will last until at least 5 p.m. but you may leave early if all in your car agree. Participants should make reservations by calling Nancy Dean at 941-792-9235.

Bird ID Class set for January

By Nancy and Bob Dean

The Manatee County Audubon Society (MCAS) bird ID course for beginning bird watchers has been updated. The course includes four evening class sessions and two all day field trips. Class sessions will be held at the Synovus Bank Community Room, 2520 Manatee Avenue, West (NE corner of Manatee Avenue and 26th Street West in Bradenton), from 6:30 p.m. until about 8:45 or 9 p.m. on Monday, January 17, Thursday January 20, Wednesday, January 26 and Friday January 28. The two Saturday field trips begin promptly at 7 a.m. on January 22 and 29. The field trips require a car, so carpooling is encouraged. Each trip lasts until about 2 p.m.. The price for the 2011 course is \$40 for Manatee Audubon members and \$55 for others (includes first year local Audubon membership). Participation is limited to 36 individuals. Some late requests for course inclusion could not be filled for several years. Interested persons should reserve a seat as soon as possible by calling Nancy Dean at 941-792-9235.

This Bird of the Month article is the first in a series by Dick Comeau, our field trip chair.



Loggerhead Shrike

The Big Picture

President's Letter continued from Page 1

waters to oil and natural gas. If we can say any good came from the disaster it would be that we raised awareness about the pitfalls of oil drilling and engaged more people in meaningful coastal conservation.

Audubon's coastal programs are built on information learned and practices developed by individual chapters and 75 years of research, management and stewardship by the Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries. At the local level we belong to the Gulf Coast Region which stretches from Citrus County to northern Charlotte County. Audubon has been active in this area for more than 100 years and today has 10 Audubon chapters.

At the state level Audubon sees our coasts as home to a large diversity of habitats, birds and other wildlife that need to be protected. Coastal areas are being shared with a growing human presence that is altering the shorelines and waterways in ways that are harmful to the health and functioning of the coastal ecosystem and the survival of birds and wildlife. Florida's shorebirds and seabirds depend on our coastal habitat for breeding, wintering and as a migratory habitat. Many of these birds are state or federally listed, designated species of greatest conservation need or on Audubon's watch list.

Our area's primary focus has been the protection of colonial waterbird islands such as Dot and Dash Islands, spearheaded by the Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuary, and programs such as the protection of beach nesting birds, the educational stewardship for our beach nesting birds and the monitoring of Least Tern rooftop nesting.

Our Gulf Coast area is fortunate enough to have three of the state's estuaries in our backyard: Tampa Bay, Sarasota Bay and Charlotte Harbor. The health of these estuaries is critical to the ongoing existence of birds, fish and other wildlife. Our estuary systems have been altered by upstream drainage, development, flood control and water use projects. We must work to correct declining water quality due to sediments and pollution.

Upcoming Events

Saturday 12/4

Open House Felts Preserve
8 a.m. to noon

Sunday 12/5

Tour Felts Preserve to see
fall migrants
with Matt Holman, 351-9500
Meet at 8:30 a.m.
at the Preserve,
4600 24th Avenue East,
Plmetto

Tuesday 12/14

Emerson Point Palmetto
Two-hour walk with Lucette
Wombacher, 776-8424, and
Manatee's Natural Resources
Department. Meet at 8:30
a.m. at the Welcome Center
at Emerson Point

Thursday 12/16

General Meeting
Manatee Audubon Society,
7:30 p.m.
First United Methodist
Church
of Palmetto, 330 11th Ave. W.
Palmetto. Our speaker will
be Karen and Matt Holman,
owners of the Wild Bird
Center, who will describe
how to attract birds to your
feeders, ways to increase the
numbers and kinds of birds

Saturday 12/18

Bradenton Circle
Christmas Bird Count
David Williamson,
302-1808

Tuesday 12/28

Gulf Circle
Christmas Bird Count
David Williamson
302-1808

Saturday 1/1

Felts Open House
8 a.m. to 12 noon

Sunday 1/2

Sarasota Christmas Bird
Count
Jeanne Dubi
dubi@comcast.net



Sunday morning, November 7, was a little nippy and not many birds were active when we first arrived at Tom Heitzman's Sweet Bay Nursery in Parrish. Tom and Richard Beaupre greeted us with hot coffee, bagels and fixings to get us started. The 30-some birders then made off to scout up some Nursery birds. We were able to locate a Brown Thrasher and both Red-bellied and Pileated Woodpeckers along with the usual birds. Reported by Barbara Singer. Photo by Karen Fraley.

20 birders see 33 species at Venice Landfill

Patti and Barry Clauser led about 20 brave souls to the Venice Landfill on Tuesday October 26 and if you weren't in one of the six cars along on this field trip, then you missed an excellent birding experience. It was a beautiful day and birders were able to see 33 species. Some great finds included the Common Yellowthroat, Glossy Ibis, Wild Turkey, Eastern Phoebe, Loggerhead Shrike, Eastern Bluebird, Kestrals and Bald Eagles. Submitted by Patti Clauser.



Woodpeckers among Rothenbach highlights

Thirteen enthusiastic birders set out on Friday November 19 for a birding adventure at the new Rothenbach Park. Quantity of birds was not high but quality more than made up for quantity. Highlights were multiple Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Downy and Pileated Woodpeckers, Kingfisher, Common Yellow-throat Warbler and a few young deer. Submitted by trip leader Barbara Singer.

Nancy and Bob Dean report that Bob Flat refused payment for transporting other MCAS members on the Rothenbach Park trip, asking that his riders instead donate that amount to Felts Audubon Preserve. "We commend Bob for this generosity and for creating a unique donation opportunity, which we hope others will adopt," the Deans said.

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