



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.

Laurel Schiller to speak on January 20

Activist, author and educator Laurel Schiller will speak at the Thursday January 20 meeting of Manatee County Audubon Society. Laurel has served two terms on the Sarasota County Planning Commission and has been vice president of the Florida Native Nursery Association. She is co-author of the book, "Natural Florida Landscaping." She will talk about how we can maintain the natural Florida landscape. The meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. at the United Methodist Church of Palmetto, 330 11th Avenue West, Palmetto.



Annual member dues are due

By Lucette Wombacher, Treasurer

Members, it is that time again. Annual dues are still just \$15 per household. If you have paid since July 1, 2010, you are set for the year.

Otherwise, you need to pay by January 31, 2011. You can pay at the General Meeting or mail your check to MCAS, P.O. Box 14550, Bradenton, FL 34280. Be sure to include any change in mailing address, phone number or e-mail.

Welcome

Please welcome our new members, who are listed below:

- Diane Gumpel-Sherman
- Peg and Art Saltz
- John and Carol White
- Mary Anne Morris
- Joy Hyde
- Martin and Nina Young
- Bill Mies
- George Burtless
- Susan and Carl Olsen
- Diane Hoagland
- Keith Gerber
- Karen Jensen
- Brenda and Jerry Alcorn
- Dale and Lorie Foster
- Jim and Carmenza Stephenson

President's Letter from Barbara Singer

Let's work on Energy and Climate Change

For my first message of the year, I want to wish everyone a Happy and Healthy New Year. I also want to express my gratitude to all of our members and visitors who have so generously given their money and/or their time to make Manatee County Audubon Society and Felts Audubon Preserve something we can all be proud of.

As promised last month, I want to cover another topic from the Audubon of Florida Conservation Action Agenda, which was presented at the October Audubon Assembly meeting. A topic that should be very important to all of us is Energy and Climate change.

The increases in atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases (GHG) are the direct results of our day-to-day activities. Major sources of increased greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide, methane and emissions from fossil fuel use and extraction for power generation and transportation. There is scientific consensus that an increase in GHG in the atmosphere over the last century is contributing to climate change, including increased air and water temperatures leading to altered weather patterns and rising seas. Though we have some skepticism on the amount of change that exists, there is obviously a change and it appears to be created by human activities. For this, we must take responsibility.

Climate change brings a host of negative impacts for birds, other wildlife and habitat. Because of learned migration habits and the need for specialized habitat for nesting and foraging, many bird species will be significantly affected by climate change and altered seasons. These impacts, along with stresses on their environment, could lead birds to a greater risk of extinction. I think we all know some of the things we can do to have an impact:

- **Advocate local, state and federal** laws to set specific enforceable GHG emissions reduction goals and target levels that will stabilize the climate.

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December Donors

- Peter Mattina
- Anne Roberts
- Marilyn Matecun
- Robert and Elaine Danielson
- Margaret Kelley
- Kitty Kole
- Connie Beukema
- Dick Comeau
- Bob Flatt
- Carolyn and Gino Primus

Dick Comeau's Bird of the Month on Page 3

Great Backyard Bird Count set for February

By Barbara Singer

People of all ages and all levels of bird-watching experience are invited to take part in the 13th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count, scheduled for February 12-15. This is a great way to learn more about the birds in your own backyard. Whether you are brand new to watching and counting birds, or an expert birder, your count counts. Your checklist will contribute valuable information for science and conservation when you enter your birds. It's easy to participate. Visit www.birdcount.org for instructions or pick up literature at our January 20 meeting.

Thanks from Ivan and Eleanor Marion for the party

We would like to thank the Manatee County Audubon Society for the wonderful December 5 birthday and wedding anniversary party that was arranged and hosted by Jan and Roger Robson at their home in Parrish.

The party was in honor of two birthdays -- mine and Roger's. I turned 89 in December. I won't say how old Roger is.

The anniversary was to mark the date that Eleanor and I were married 69 years ago, in 1941, just one day after my 20th birthday and one day before Pearl Harbor was bombed.

Eleanor and I very much appreciate the special gift of a stained glass solar bird display. It is something we will cherish for the remainder of our lives. Thank you all so much.

Note: Ivan Marion is one of our most loyal volunteers at Felts Preserve, where he has worked on many projects with Roger Robson and always comes to help on our work-days at the preserve.

Visitors count 23 species at Felts

By Fred Allen

December started out on the cool side keeping the bird population down until about 10:30 a.m. Open house turnout was low. Now that we are open every day, I think, it has taken away from the open house. On the 5th, Matt Holman from the Wild Bird Center led a two-hour walk. Eleven birders showed up and we counted 23 species including the first male Painted Bunting.

The top of the berm has been mowed and is a nice walk, with a high vantage point.

Bird counts for the first two weeks were: 1 Bald Eagle, 1 Great Horned Owl, 1 Red-shouldered Hawk, 1 Anhinga, 1 Little Blue Heron, 1 Great Blue Heron, 6 Savannah Sparrows, many Palm, Pine and Yellow Rump Warblers and a pair of American Kestrels. One of the Kestrels has taken a liking to the bat house pole for a perch.

The third week brought a freeze, browning the grass and killing some plants. The feeders are busy at certain times of the day with Goldfinch and both Painted and Indigo Buntings, Cardinals, Tufted Titmice and Mourning Doves. Catbirds and Blue Gray Gnat Catchers can be seen around the bird blind.

Most of the butterflies are concentrated on the south side including 7-8 Monarchs. The south end is the only section that still has flowering plants. There was a Red Admiral Soaking up some sun under the Oaks. Walking the berm, I was glad to see quite a few Fiery Skippers on the bidden. Not many were seen after last winter's frost. The December 14 freeze may have killed most of the flowers, for a while.

Walk-ins seem to be on the rise. I have seen cars parked on the street on seven different days this month.

New checklists at Felts Audubon Preserve

By Lucette Wombacher

The next time you visit the bird blind at Felts Preserve you will find new checklists. As of December 20, eight more species had been seen since last January. The new birds are: Veery, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Savannah Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Marsh Wren and Muscovy Duck. This brings the total number of different species seen at the preserve to 149. Thank you to all our visitors who take the time to complete checklists. That is the only way we know which birds are visiting and living at the preserve.

During 2010, our busiest month was March, with 73 different species reported. The least busy months were July and August with only 22 species reported in each of those months. Those were also the months with the fewest checklists turned in, and undoubtedly also the fewest human visitors. The heat and humidity (and mosquitoes) kept most people away. So keep those checklists coming. If you see something new, write it in. And if you get a picture, even better.

Thanks to those who host Felts Open Houses

By Carol Webster

November 6: Mike and Marge Corso hosted 17 visitors who were mostly Audubon members. Mike reports it was a cool (48 degrees) clear morning and 32 bird species were observed. One new membership was accepted, along with a \$5 donation.

December 4: Dee Hanny hosted six visitors to wind up the year. It was 39 degrees but clear with very little wind. Most notable of 29 species seen was a Great Horned Owl.

Bird of the Month Painted Bunting is Shy and Secretive

By Dick Comeau, Field Trip Chair

The male Painted Bunting is the only North American bird to be red underneath and have a blue head. It also has a bronze-green back with a red eye ring. The female painted Bunting is greenish above and a pale lemon-green below. Painted Buntings are shy, somewhat secretive and despite being so colorful are hard to spot in the scrubby bushes or undergrowth that they typically inhabit. Luckily for us they will go to our feeders, especially if we keep at least one filled with white (proso) millet which they love. Using a cage type feeder which doesn't allow larger birds inside is beneficial for our smaller birds including the buntings.

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



Painted Bunting

Painted Bunting populations have declined about 60% over the years but generally breed from Missouri, east to coastal North Carolina, and south to Florida. They also have populations in Oklahoma, Texas and New Mexico. They are habitat dependent and need native scrubs, dense bushes, dense vegetation and thickets in order to nest. Golf courses and green lawns do not appeal to our Painted Buntings. The Brown-headed Cowbird has also been responsible for some nest parasitism, which also has contributed to the buntings' decline.

We are lucky in that we can see a few Painted Buntings at our own Felts Audubon Preserve. Keep an eye out in our bird blind, especially the feeder stocked with white millet. The Painted Bunting is actually in the Cardinal family and has similar behaviors in that it is somewhat timid and is one of the first and last birds to visit our feeders each day. Besides seed, they also feed on insects, caterpillars and even spiders.

I don't know of anyone who gets tired of seeing Painted Buntings.

Ron Mayberry presents bird program to 320 students

Renowned photographer and Manatee Audubon member Ron Mayberry did a Power Point presentation on birds to about 320 students, from kindergarten to fifth grade, at Anna Maria Elementary School on November 5. His presentation was in conjunction with a grant they have to study Birds, Butterflies and Bees. He showed pictures of Florida birds as well as other pictures he has taken on his travels around the world. The students especially loved his talking "Peedy" bird.

Bird ID Class dates and location have changed

By Nancy and Bob Dean

Dates and location have been changed for the 2011 Manatee County Audubon Society (MCAS) Beginning Bird Watching Course. The course includes four evening class sessions and two all day field trips. Class sessions will be held at Saint Stephen's School. Entrance to the classroom area will be from Manatee Avenue West at 39th Street West next to the Smoothie King. Classes start at 6:30 p.m. and end about 8:45 or 9 p.m. on Tuesday, January 18, Thursday January 20, Monday, January 24 and Thursday January 27. The two Saturday field trips begin promptly at 7 a.m. on January 22 and 29. Field trips are by car pool. Each trip lasts 7-8 hours. Fee for this course is \$40 for MCAS members and \$55 for others (includes first year local Audubon membership). Participation is limited to 36 persons. NOTE. Late requests for course inclusion could not be filled in past years. For reservations, call Nancy Dean at 941-792-9235.

Energy and Climate Change

President's Letter continued from Page 1

- Promote conservation, energy efficiency, green building standards, compact development programs and policies.
- Encourage the implementation of state renewable electricity policies through solar, wind and other energy efficient technologies as they are developed.
- Support adoption of strong vehicle emissions standards and fuel efficiency standards and oppose transportation projects that increase our dependence on passenger vehicles both from the use of fuel and the increased emissions that occur with increased vehicles.



- Above all continue to oppose drilling for oil and gas in nearshore and offshore Florida waters which would just extend our dependence on fossil fuel that contributes to climate change.

If we all implement and support these actions, we can hold our heads up and say "we made a difference." But if we are going to continue turning up those thermostats on a chilly day or jump in the car just to go get that one loaf of bread, we will have no one to blame but ourselves if our great-grandchildren never get to see a Painted Bunting.

Upcoming Events

Saturday 1/8

Myakka River State Park
Mike and Nancy Barnes
586-246-1003. Expect great
birding at this preserve. Meet
at 7:30 a.m. at Lowe's parking
lot, I-75 and SR 70
(north side of SR 70).

Tuesday 1/11

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.

Wednesday 1/12

Lettuce Lake, Ybor City and
Cockroach Bay.
Bob and Nancy Dean, 792-
9235. Reservations required.
Start at Lettuce Lake. Lunch
Ybor City and tour its museum
at your expense. Finish at
Cockroach Bay. Depart 7 a.m.
southwest corner of Walmart
parking lot, 508 U.S. 301 at
10th Street East, Palmetto.

Friday-Saturday 1/14-16

Gainesville and Alachua
County. Lucette Wombacher,
776-8424. Reservations neces-
sary. Expect wintering Sandhill
Cranes, sparrows, waders,
ducks and others during this
three-day trip.

Thursday 1/20

General Meeting
Manatee Audubon Society.
7:30 p.m.
First United Methodist Church
of Palmetto, 330 11th Ave. W.
Palmetto. Our speaker will be
Laurel Schiller, author,
educator and specialist
in native Florida plants.

Wednesday 2/2

Robinson Preserve.
Bob and Mary Kelly, 758-
9796. See waterbirds and
migrants. Meet at 8 a.m. at
the preserve, 1709 99th Street
NW, Bradenton.



Birders spot 56 species on Celery Fields trip

By Dick Comeau, trip leader

On Tuesday, November 30, after a rainy drizzly start, a small group of adventurous birders joined a Manatee County Audubon sponsored trip to the newly redesigned Celery Fields and areas in East Sarasota. The project by Sarasota County is a work in progress but the area has the real potential for becoming a birder's and photographer's paradise and could become a real showcase of what can be done in regards to our Florida wetlands. With various plantings of native marsh grasses, reeds, and so forth, along with future plans for lookouts, boardwalks and even a visitor center, which Sarasota Audubon is thinking about at this time, this area will become a major gift to our natural environment. Our birding group, after just a few hours, had a trip list of 56 species. Most of the species seen were typically specific to this type of habitat. The most uncommon bird seen on the trip was probably the female Common Goldeneye duck in a small pond off Fruitville Road near the Founders Club. We missed the female Buffleheads seen just the day before but hopefully they remain in the area. We also had Redhead and Northern Shoveler in the same pond. Black-necked Stilt, Wilson's snipe, Short-billed Dowitcher, both Yellowlegs, many Roseate Spoonbills, Caspian Tern and an adult Bald Eagle all highlighted our list.

Looking for birds on a cold day at Emerson Point

By Lucette Wombacher

The weather was against us at Emerson Point Preserve on Tuesday December 14. It was a very cold windy day, about 38 degrees. Even the people who called saying they were used to cold weather failed to show up. However two hardy souls joined Bob and me for the walk. We had to search hard for the birds in sheltered areas and only saw 20 different species. Everyone's favorite was the hawk perched right over the trail between the Portavant mound and the welcome center. It was sitting in the sun and would have been a beautiful photo if any of us had brought a camera. Hopefully January's weather will be better.

Counting birds at Christmas

By David Williamson, CBC coordinator

We had 24 volunteers for the 29th consecutive Christmas Bird Count on Anna Maria Island (known as the Gulf Circle count) and we counted more than 7,250 individual birds, slightly down from the last two counts. We saw 96 species, which is excellent, the second highest number of species we have seen before. Look for more details on this count and the Bradenton Circle count in the next newsletter.

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