



The Night Heron

www.manateeaudubon.org
Volume P Number 1 September 2011

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

Nancy Dean creates DVD of 800 bird and animal images

Using contributions from more than two dozen photographers, Nancy Dean has created a DVD with approximately 800 digital images of birds (mostly Florida species) and other animals as well as Florida habitats. "This was a personal project of mine," explained Nancy, co-director of the Bird ID Course with husband Bob Dean.

The DVD will be played prior to 2011-12 meetings of the Manatee County Audubon Society. Digital images from the collection will also replace slides in the 2012 Bird ID Course beginning in January.

Photographers who contributed images included in the DVD are: Rick Greenspun, John R. Young, Ron Mayberry, Billie Knight, Kathy Storm, Priscilla Ridall, Pat Lantz, Chuck Warner, Bob Wombacher, Connie Zack, Don Bansen, Gailard Hall, Bob Flatt, Pat Bohlinger, Bobbi Benson, Joanna Trescott, Mike Barnes, William Shumacher, Bill Ford, Nancy Pataño, Judy Bryant, Rosemary Harris, Pete Gross, Cheryl J. Dean, Andrea R. Dean and Robert V. Dean

When you see any of the contributing photographers, please thank them for generously donating some of their best work to help promote MCAS educational, conservation, and recruitment goals.

Junior Auduboners meet September 17



Our Junior Audubon group for ages 6 to 12 will meet at 9 a.m. Saturday September 17 at Felts Audubon Preserve. Steve Black will lead the meeting, which will focus on wildflowers, especially those at the preserve.

President's Letter from Barbara Singer

Excitement is in the air!

Here we are once again at one of the most exciting times of year. The Board has been working diligently all summer to make this upcoming season fun, educational and enlightening for all our members. Our two new board members have already made a great impact on our mission. Jim Stephenson has been spearheading a partnership with the Manatee County Boy Scouts to develop a program that will introduce and provide the tools for the scouts to acquire a number of environmental badges. Bob Flatt is developing an Eagle educational program along with helping me with our scheduled field trips. Our other Board members have been creating budgets, planning our programs and workshops, scheduling interesting speakers, keeping Felts Preserve operational and tending to normal business.

Once again we ask for your support both with your pocketbook and your time. It is only through members willing to give of themselves that Manatee Audubon can claim success.

This next year we have a few new programs and a few we would like to expand. The Beach Nesting Steward Program has been both successful and fun. Why not get involved? Working with the kids is rewarding for all. Why not get involved? Helping maintain Felts gives you self satisfaction. Why not get involved? Offer to be a Bluebird Trail Monitor. You get the point! We need your help!

I do want to thank all those members who have volunteered to lead field trips, give educational classes, provide hospitality snacks, greet the public at Felts Open Houses and spend sweaty hours making Felts a wonderful preserve. Lastly none of this would be possible if it weren't for those who make a financial commitment to support Manatee Audubon and our programs. Thank You All!

Recent Donors

Ruth Erlandson
Thomas Farrell
Paul Wills
Lucy Pace
Al Semago
James Leitten
Carol Smith

Felts beginning to stir after “dog days of summer”



By Fred Allen

Well, we are in the dog days of summer and everything is moving pretty slowly at Felts Audubon Preserve. I had nothing much to report until last weekend.

On Saturday August 6 at Open House a couple of birders spotted a pair of Northern Parulas, and on Sunday the Butterfly Garden had some activity with a Giant Swallowtail laying eggs on the Lime Eufala, Fiery and Longtail Skippers were feeding, along with a well-worn Monarch.

The feeders had a pair of Tufted Titmouse, Doves and a female Cardinal.

The northwest wildflower garden is full of Horsemint and Wild Sunflower. The ponds are filling up with the rains we had last week. I saw about six Wood Ducks in the north pond on Sunday. That’s it for now.

Photos by Fred Allen depict four different kinds of butterflies, including the Giant Swallowtail, Dorantes Longtail Skipper, Monarch and Fiery Skipper.



Thanks to hosts at Felts Audubon Preserve

By Carol Webster

March 5: Lucette and Bob Wombacher hosted 25 visitors. Twelve of them were newcomers. Many visitors came to observe the Painted Buntings and they were not disappointed. Forty-four species were spotted on this day, including a pair of Purple Martins who chased a Red-shouldered Hawk away from the “Martin Gourds.”

April 2: No host as it was “Nature Day” and a good time was had by all.

May 7: Lucy Pace hosted five visitors on this day. No bird record kept but visitors seemed to enjoy the surroundings in spite of a very warm day.

July 2: Hosting was canceled due to the holiday weekend and the heat.

Bird of the Month

American Kestrels often hunt in family units

*This Bird of the Month article is
the latest in a series
by Dick Comeau*

By Dick Comeau

The American Kestrel is our smallest North American Falcon (about the same size as our thrushes). They are considered by many of us as the “cutest” or the most colorful raptor we have. There is a difference between sexes. The male has blue-grey wings with black spots. The tail is rufous (reddish orange color) on back with a broad black subterminal band and a white or rufous tip. The back and rump are orange to rufous with a variable amount of black barring. The falcon crown or helmet is blue-gray with small amounts of orange. The female, on the other hand, has rufous wings which have some black barring. The tail is somewhat rufous with dark barring and the head has a grey crown.



Female Kestrel



Male Kestrel

Kestrels feed mainly by hovering in the air with rapid wing beats or scanning the ground, perched on a tree branch, or often locally from a high tension power line. Their diet consists of crickets, grasshoppers, mice, voles, small lizards, and sometimes small snakes. When the prey is spotted, the Kestrel will plunge down to catch it. When they have young birds which are practicing their hunting skills, Kestrels will often hunt in family units.

Kestrels are cavity nesters and will nest in a wooden man-made box. They generally use natural cavities, i.e. holes in trees, cacti, river banks, canyon walls, etc. Females lay four to six egg. The eggs are incubated for about 28 days and the young birds fledge or leave the nest in another 28 days. I have seen Kestrels in the Felts Audubon Preserve area and hopefully some will decide to nest.

It's still possible to register for Bird ID Class starting in January

By Nancy and Bob Dean

Often Bird Course participants reserve placement in the next year's course immediately after course completion, meaning that many of the 36 available slots are already taken. The 2012 course will use digital images of birds to demonstrate bird ID features, as well as, the usual review of field trip target birds.

Course content is similar, but has been reorganized to improve content distribution and increase focus on bird ID. Nancy and Bob Dean will teach the 2012 course on January 23, 26, 30 and February 2 (Mondays and Thursdays) from 6:30 to 8:45 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church of Palmetto, 330 11th Ave, West, Palmetto.

This course includes two full-day field trips, which begin at 7 a.m. Saturday January 28 and February 4. The fee is \$50 for MCAS members. Nonmembers pay \$50 plus the current MCAS membership fee. Reservations are always first come first served and must be re-confirmed by January 20. To participate, contact Nancy Dean at 941-792-9235 or nancybobdean@juno.com (best choice).

Here are details for December 8 field trip

By Nancy and Bob Dean

This trip to Sarasota Celery Fields Wetland Restoration Area and Boat Tour of the Lower Myakka, a Wild and Scenic River, begins at 7 a.m. in Lowe's parking lot, located at the northwest corner of I-75 and SR 70. From there we will carpool to the Celery Fields, beginning at Ackerman Lake (no fees or reservations required for this portion of trip). We will leave in time to arrive at Snook Haven by 10:45 a.m. for a restaurant lunch (no picnicking allowed) and Banjo Band entertainment (11 a.m. - 1:20 p.m.).

At 1:30 p.m. we take the one-hour boat tour of the Myakka River. This trip is somewhat handicap friendly. Lunch at own expense. The boat has 32 seats. Boat fee prepayment and reservations required for river tour must be made with Nancy R. Dean at 941-792-9235 or nancybobdean@juno.com by November 17 and will be honored on a first come, first serve basis.



Three white Ibis fly through the early morning fog over Sarasota's Celery Fields in this dramatic photograph by Charles (Chuck) Warner. Photo provided by Nancy Dean.

Upcoming Events

Saturday 9/3

8 a.m. - 12 noon

Open House Felts Preserve.
Everyone invited.
Bring the kids for a walk on
the wild side to see birds and
other animals
on our 27-acre preserve.

Saturday 9/17

9 a.m.

Junior Audubon
for ages 6 to 12
Felts Audubon Preserve

Saturday 9/24

Work day Felts Preserve
8 - 12 noon

All hands are needed
so please join us .

Saturday 10/1

Honeymoon Island State Park
and Dunedin Hammock City
Park. Steve Black 376-0110.
Bring bag lunch. This barrier
island has shorebirds, nature
trails and observation areas.
\$8 fee per car. Meet 7 a.m. at
Cracker Barrel, SR 64 at I-75.

Wednesday 10/19

Robinson Preserve.

John Ginaven 383-5133.

Meet at 8 a.m. in parking lot
at Robinson, 1709 99th Street,
Bradenton. Bring bag lunch.

Volunteers needed to help at meetings

The Manatee Audubon Society
is looking for volunteers to help
with the set up of drinks and
snacks at our monthly meet-
ings. Two people per month are
needed to oversee this activity.
Audubon supplies the paper
products and drinks. A sign up
sheet will be at our first meet-
ing in October.

Beach Nesting Birds on holiday



Photo of Black Skimmers by Robert Flatt

By Dee A. Hanny, Program Coordinator

Memorial Day Weekend -- Twenty-three volunteers covered 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. shifts for three days. A total of 228 visitors stopped by to ask questions about the birds and to look through the scope that was set up on a nesting Black Skimmer pair. Approximately 200-plus Skimmers were counted. Only the Black Skimmers had established a nesting area.

Fourth of July Weekend -- 18 volunteers from Manatee County Audubon and six from Anna Maria Island Turtle Watch covered the 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. shifts for the three days. A total of 447 visitors stopped by our setup. One of the visitors probably set the record for the farthest distance traveled as she was from Chile. The number of birds in the nesting area increased to about 500 birds although not all were nesting. Many were probably last year's chicks that followed their parents back this year but were not nesting. A major disruption occurred on the Fourth around 7 p.m. when a large beach umbrella blew into the nesting area, scattering the adults and causing the chicks to run out of the roped-off nesting area. The chicks were "herded" back into the nesting area by the people on duty with no apparent casualties and the parent birds returned all O.K. The fireworks display at the Sand Bar Restaurant did not disturb the birds, however fireworks by private individuals on the beach between the nesting area and the Sand Bar did disturb the birds greatly because they were much closer.

Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped make this year's program a success and a special Thank You to our partners of the AMITW who provided invaluable help this year.

Welcome New Members:

C. Cross, John Y. and Nancy Hanson, Lloyd and Betty Sartin, Bob Opfergelt, Peter Church



Bird Stewards' picture by Suzi Fox of Anna Maria Island Turtle Watch. Shown here are visitors with volunteers Amy Miller in orange vest and Belinda Alexander, mostly hidden by Amy.

**Send your items for The Night Heron to newsletter editor Molly McCartney
at mccartney106@gmail.com or call 778-3228**