



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.

Volunteer help Needed for Christmas Bird Count

By David Williamson

Hi everyone! It's that time of year again.

Manatee County Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Counts are right around the corner and we always need more volunteers than we get. I have heard from some of you already. If you haven't confirmed your participation, please email me to let me know if you can 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 help. We need drivers, spotters, and volunteers to write down what we see. Everyone's help is welcome and needed.

• *Saturday December 17 is the Bradenton Circle count, which is centered in downtown Bradenton and extends from the bay to Lakewood Ranch Boulevard and from the Sarasota County line to I-275.*

• *Tuesday December 27 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 Audubon's count is Saturday, December 31. Contact Glynnis Withrington at glynnis.withrington@btinternet.com.

Charles Sobczak to speak November 17



Charles Sobczak

Our speaker for November 17 will be Charles Sobczak, a well known naturalist writer from Sanibel Island. He will talk about his book, "The Living Gulf Coast." This book is a nature guide to Southwest Florida and has 600 color photographs. It covers our 162 parks as well as their inhabitants, which include 291 species of resident and migratory birds and 88 species of reptiles and animals. He will have this book available for purchase. You don't want to miss this meeting, which begins at 7 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church of Palmetto, 330 11th Avenue, Palmetto.

President's Letter from Barbara Singer

Audubon of Florida looks forward

During this past month I attended Audubon Assembly as a representative of the Gulf Coast Region. This annual meeting is held to adopt the state policy and regional conservation plans set out by the 44 chapters with the guidance of Audubon of Florida staff. The theme of the meeting was "Take Action for Florida's Special Places." I will discuss the Florida's Special Places campaign in depth next month. For now I would like to share with you those policy items and conservation goals adopted by our region. Outlining how I see them impacting Manatee County Audubon Society.

Our region covers Citrus County to our north down to northern Charlotte County and includes 10 Audubon chapters. These Gulf coastal areas include a rich diversity of essential habitats that are used by an also diverse species of birds, fish and wildlife. However, much of our Central Gulf Coast is now altered, fragmented and dominated by human use and those birds, fish and wildlife are at immediate risk.

Audubon of Florida, with the help of chapters, has identified more than 25 coastal Important Bird Areas in Florida. These are sites where birds gather in numbers to nest, forge, and rest during migration and over winter. One of these areas is right here in Manatee County.

Currently political and economic pressures have led to decreased funding for conservation and increased challenges to land protection threatening habitat and species of concern. Audubon of Florida, with the input from the 10 Audubon chapters, has identified eight issues to adopt over this next year in an effort to protect threatened habitat and species. *Continued on page 3*



Photo by Molly McCartney

Rare Rufous Hummingbird spotted at Felts



By Fred Allen

On Friday October 21, John Ginaven spotted a male Rufous Hummingbird near the south pond at Felts Audubon Preserve. This is the first recorded sighting of the Rufous in Manatee County. The call went out and many birders showed up to see this rare bird.

On Saturday things had quieted down quite a bit and the Rufous was not seen.

The last part of September was all butterflies and not many birds. October started out the same until the 5th. After filling the fountain, I decided to fill the cage feeder. Ten minutes after filling it, a female Painted Bunting showed up. Next four Indigo Buntings came by, not to eat but to play. This is the earliest we have seen the Buntings at Felts.

A windy cool front from the northwest came through on the 19th bringing a lot of migrant birds and luckily Felts was a stop off point for some of them. Thursday and Friday, October 20 and 21, were banner days for birders lucky enough to see the birds here.

There were many different Warblers -- Tennessee, Chestnut-sided, Yellow-throated, Bay-breasted -- and large flocks of both Indigo Buntings and Red-winged Blackbirds. Our feeders were quite active with our usual Indigo Buntings, female Painted Buntings, Tufted Titmouse, and Cardinals. Also seen were a male Summer Tanager, two Kestrels, and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Also on that Friday Dee Hanny and I spotted a Phaon Crescent Butterfly. It is the first one I have seen at Felts.

If you have not been out to Felts to see the native flowers and grasses in bloom you are missing a spectacular sight.



Pictured top left is the Rufous Hummingbird photographed by Rick Greenspun at Felts Audubon Preserve on October 21. Below the Rufous is a Tennessee Warbler, also by Rick Greenspun. At right is Rick's photo of a Chestnut-sided Warbler. According to Wikipedia, the rare Rufous Hummingbird is about three inches long with a very long, straight and very slender bill. The female is slightly larger than the male. They feed on nectar from flowers using a long extendible tongue or catch insects on the wing. These birds require frequent feeding while active during the day and become torpid at night to conserve energy.



Bird of the Month

Black-necked Stilt expands its habitat To drainage ditches and sewage ponds

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

By Dick Comeau

"Old bubble-gum legs" was how I was introduced by a friend to this large black backed shore bird. The leg coloring is unique and certainly is descriptive of what I remember as the color of our favorite childhood bubble gum. The long legs in comparison with their body proportions are second only to the flamingo. The sexes are similar but the female has more of a brownish back when observed closely.

Black-necked Stilts like both shallow salt and fresh water marshes. They feed on insects, crustaceans (crayfish and shrimp), worms, fish, and even floating seeds. They have webbed feet so they can even swim in deeper waters. Black-necked Stilts breed along both coasts and can be observed locally sometimes at the Sarasota Celery Fields or even at Myakka State Park. The chicks within only 24 hours after their down dries can be observed running around and even swimming. In fact the chicks can spend some of the night in deeper water to avoid predators such as foxes, skunks, gulls, and birds of prey in the local marshes.

This common shorebird is found along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts as well as the Gulf Coast. It sometimes ranges inland to states such as Idaho, Kansas, or in the Rocky Mountains. The Black-necked Stilt winters in Brazil, Peru, the West Indies, and southern parts of the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, and summers on the Gulf Coast. Because they will use man-made structures such as drainage ditches and sewage ponds for habitat, the range of Black-necked Stilts is expanding.

Hopefully, when out birding our local marshes, you will be treated to the wonderful sights and sounds of this unique shore bird which visits our area on a regular basis.



Black-necked Stilt

Junior Auduboners study Bald Eagles and their mating habits

By Steve Black

In attendance at our second Junior Audubon meeting on October 15 were Mathew and James Press, Kaelianna and Grayson McMillan, Eric, Nicholas, and Brook Martinez. Several parents also participated in the meeting. We are studying Audubon Adventures species that are making comebacks. This month we studied the Bald Eagle, which has made a remarkable comeback in Manatee County and Sarasota County with around 54 nesting pairs that are being monitored.

We learned that Bald Eagles mate for life. And after finding a Bald Eagle next to a Catholic Church, one next to a Methodist Church, and one next to a Lutheran Church, we began to wonder if there is a religious aspect to the Eagles that might account for their monogamy.

The kids really enjoyed seeing the nests and they were amazed at how big the nests were. They also were excited to see the male and female at the Catholic Church.



Audubon of Florida looks forward

Continued from President's Letter on page 1

Three of these issues are critical for Manatee Audubon to work on:

- Collaborate with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Department of Environmental Protection, and other partners to advance coastal habitat protection, strengthen programs of beach-nesting bird stewardship, and the monitoring and conservation of shorebird habitat.
- Oppose offshore drilling closer to the Florida shoreline than is currently permitted.
- Adopt local Special Places and Important Bird Areas and build advocacy and support conservation actions for those places through regional partnerships.

Hopefully you are asking how are we can accomplish this. The answer is -- only with your help! When asked to join the Beachnesting Bird Stewardship program, when asked to contact political officials about offshore drilling, when asked to protect local Special Places and Important Bird Areas -- and you will be asked -- **just say yes.**

Upcoming Events

Saturday 11/5

8 a.m. - 12 noon

Open House Felts Preserve.
Everyone invited.

An Audubon member will lead a bird walk at 9:30 a.m. so bring your binoculars and view the activity on our 27-acre preserve.

Saturday 11/12

The Magnificent Eagle.

Steve Black will review facts about our national bird at the location where many Eagles gather prior to roosting for the night. See the interaction of various aged Eagles at this location: Take SR 64 to Lena Rd. (about one mile east of I-75). Go south about one mile to the event. Meet at 4:30 p.m. and bring lawn chairs and binoculars. 729-2222

Wednesday 11/16

Laurel Landfill.

Dick Comeau 752-1835. We will bird by car to check out this very birdy landfill. Meet at 7:45 a.m. at Lowe's at SR 70 and I-75.

Thursday 11/17

General meeting MCAS

7 p.m. at First United Methodist Church of Palmetto, 330 11th Avenue West, Palmetto. Naturalist writer Charles Sobczak will talk about his book, "The Living Gulf Coast."

Sunday 11/20

The Magnificent Eagle.

Steve Black will review facts about our national bird at the location where many Eagles gather prior to roosting for the night. See the interaction of various aged Eagles at this location: Take SR 64 to Lena Rd. (about one mile east of I-75). Go south about one mile to the event. Meet at 4:30 p.m. and bring lawn chairs and binoculars. 729-2222

Saturday 11/26

Work day Felts Preserve

Reserve now for February trip to Palm Beach

By Nancy Dean

To take the February 10-11 overnight trip to Palm Beach County, reserve your room for the night of February 10 at the Clarion Inn /Turnpike, by calling 561-968-5000 extension 2451 or by email: gm.fl223@choicehotels.com. Please remember to ask for MCAS group rate. Also, you may mention contract holder, Nancy Dean. In addition, notify Nancy Dean at 941-792-9235 or nancybobdean@juno.com, as we need to track participants.

January 1 is the last date to receive the discounted room rate of \$119 plus tax for single or double. Reservations after this date may not be possible as it is tourist season. If desired, please try to obtain your own roommates. Car pooling will be encouraged/organized. There are no picnic facilities, so be prepared to buy lunch at any available fast food restaurant.

The official trip begins at 1 p.m. at the entrance of the Green Cay Nature Center (allow 3.5 hours driving time). Wakodahatchee visit will conclude day one. A pre-visit to Loxahatchee NWR will be led by the Deans for those who wish to leave Bradenton at 6 a.m. Day two includes visits to Okeehatchee Nature Center and the Wellington Recreation Department. Maps for a self-guided post-trip visit to Corkscrew Swamp, as well as, maps, addresses and telephone numbers for all venues will be available from the Deans at the January 19 meeting. Participants are responsible for all fees and meals, as well as, lodging cost.



It's time to pay your annual dues

By Barbara Singer, president

As you know MCAS annual dues are due January 1 of each year. We count on and need your support if we are going to continue providing a newsletter, monthly programs, field trips and various birding trips. We need your financial backing if we are going to partner with other groups that share an interest in birds, other wildlife, the environment and conservation.

Without you, we can't contribute to important environmental education programs, such as Junior Audubon Adventures for elementary school children or scholarships for outstanding high school seniors pursuing the environment.

The dues payment is still \$15 per household. Yes, a bargain for a household of two or more. Your dues can be paid at the November or December meeting or by sending your donation to:

Manatee County Audubon Society
P.O. Box 14550
Bradenton, FL 34280

Please include your name, address, phone number and email address so we can make sure our records are up to date. As our Chapter by-laws require us to drop anyone who is more than six months past due, some of our long standing members who may have forgotten to pay their dues were removed from our membership list. If you did not receive our annual brochure and are not receiving the monthly newsletter our records indicate we did not receive your 2011 dues. If we are in error or your information has changed please contact Lucette Wombacher at 813-760-4959.

*Send your items for The Night Heron to newsletter editor Molly McCartney
at mcartney106@gmail.com or call 778-3228*