



# 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.*

## George Tatque will speak February 16

Our speaker for February 16 will be George Tatque from Sarasota County Environmental Services. He will talk about how Sarasota County Environmental Services took a piece of land that was covered by invasive plants and made it into a beautiful Environmental Park which attracts many migratorial species. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church of Palmetto, 330 11th Avenue West, Palmetto.

## Reminder: Pay annual dues in January

By Lucette Wombacher, treasurer

Local dues need to be paid in January. As of January 20, only 51 percent of our members had paid. I hope most of you will send your payments to MCAS, P.O. Box 14550, Bradenton, FL 34280 within the next couple of weeks. If you intend to drop your membership, please let me know, so I can update the membership list. If you are dropping out, it would be very helpful to the board if you could tell us why by sending an email to [president@manateeaudubon.org](mailto:president@manateeaudubon.org). This organization belongs to the membership, not to the board of directors. Everyone's input is vital.

### Welcome to new members:

Judy Murphy  
Deb Yodock  
Robert and Sara Zavos  
Anne Loomer  
Evelyn R. Bergmark  
Janet and Robert Epstein  
Anthony H. Evans  
Donald H. Miller  
Janet Paisley  
Valerie Biebuyck

### Donors:

Indigo Press (Charles Sobczak)  
Charleen and Ray Cross  
Joe Chiles  
Kenneth and Connie Beukema  
Carol Webster  
Stephani Meister  
Kay Rennie  
Margaret Kelley  
Sara Werner

### President's Letter from Barbara Singer

## **We've had a great year so far!**

Wow! What a year we have had so far. Forty-two individuals, a combination of members and non-members, enjoyed the various "Magnificent Eagle" presentations held in November and December at their gathering site. Another 60 folks came out to the Celery Fields to watch the Sandhill Cranes come to roost. Ninety-two members and guests attended our January meeting to hear Suzi Fox present, "Fins and Feathers." All of this tells us we are accomplishing our goal of educating for the benefit of birds, animals, conservation and the environment. But we can't continue to grow and prosper without others being willing to give of themselves for the benefit of the organization.

As discussed at the general meeting we are in need of individuals to take on some of the tasks to keep our organization vital. We have three Board of Director positions to fill for next year along with the open position of Newsletter editor.

As an overview the Board of Directors is responsible for managing the affairs and assets of the organization. The Board has the authority to transact the necessary business and determine the policy of the organization to accomplish the chapter's mission statement.

The duties of a Board member are to attend or be available by phone for eight Board meetings per year. Serve as chair of an existing committee or propose a new committee to fulfill the chapter's needs. Depending on the committee or position this will usually take approximately two to four hours per month.

As a newsletter editor you will receive articles and pictures from various members that you would put into a newsletter template, and then email to our webmaster and the printer. As editor, you would produce nine newsletters each year, from September to May. If you are comfortable with your computer we can teach you to produce a newsletter in no time. Also the newsletter editor can be a snowbird as everything can be done via computer while they are back up north.

Not only does your volunteering help those who are trying to carry the load but it also brings new ideas and fresh inspiration to help the chapter grow.

To volunteer or ask questions contact Bunny Schneider at [JB RABBITS@aol.com](mailto:JB RABBITS@aol.com) or 792-1794.

**Give some time - win some gifts. See page 2 for details**

## We're working to root out invasives at Felts

By Tom Heitzman

Many birders and nature enthusiasts continue to visit Felts Audubon Preserve on a regular basis as well as our own members who come to enjoy and to help keep the property looking beautiful. We have lots of great volunteers who show up on the last Saturday of the month to help.

Being winter, the plants have all slowed down in their growth as they take a rest. With the plants being dormant, we can concentrate on other tasks. Many trees have lost their leaves and are ready to leaf out soon. It is winter, but it sure feels like spring, and many plants are leafing out early this year. I am sure Fred Allen enjoys the fact that he only has to mow the paths once a month or so rather than weekly as he does in the summer.

We are also working on keeping other invasives under control. These are being hand pulled and/or treated to prevent regrowth. Some of the many we have been working on are Senegal Date Palm, Java Plum, Brazilian Pepper, carrotwood, nephtytis, pothos and the newest menace, Skunk vine. Some of these are easy to spot right now as they stand out from the natives more in the winter. Many invasives can look like natives so one does need to know what the plant is before it is removed.

We are enlisting the help of an Eagle Scout with a local Boy Scout troop to create a brochure on the invasive plants at Felts. This will help our members learn to identify these plants and can be used as a tool to keep them under control in the future. Keeping the invasives in check now while they are small is much easier and less expensive than dealing with large plants or large areas.

There is still lots to see as you wander around the paths. Look for signs of an early spring as the Walters viburnum and plum trees come into bloom. It will not be long before you start seeing wild flowers in the south meadow and throughout the property. The Purple Martin houses are getting ready to go up as there have already been scouts spotted in Palmetto. Another sure sign of an early spring. Enjoy our beautiful winter often at the Felts Preserve.



*Skunk vine, above, is a smelly plant just like the animal it is named after.*

## Give some time: Win some gifts

By Barbara Singer, president

We still have some wonderful gifts remaining that were donated by Karen and Matt Holman so we are once again going to be giving away gifts each month at the general meeting.

Each time a person volunteers a minimum of three hours for Manatee Audubon they will have their name added to the drawing. Each three-hour slot will get you another entry. The entries will accumulate for volunteer hours performed from January 1 until April 19. So the more times you volunteer, the better your chances of winning.

What counts as volunteer hours? An activity that covers maintenance or improvements at Felts Preserve, leading a field trip, representing MCAS at a public event, giving a talk or photo show to advance the efforts of MCAS, being the monthly greeter at Felts, working with a children's group on behalf of MCAS, making phone calls to past members. As you see, anything that helps MCAS to grow counts.

How do you volunteer? Show up at Felts on the last Saturday of the month or email [president@manateeaudubon.org](mailto:president@manateeaudubon.org) or call 729-2222 and leave a message that you want to volunteer and what you would like to do. It's that easy.

Once you have volunteered, email [president@manateeaudubon.org](mailto:president@manateeaudubon.org) with your name, what your volunteer task was, and when and you will be entered.

As an added incentive we have a special gift that has been donated to MCAS valued at \$400 that will be awarded to one of the lucky volunteers at the April 19 General Meeting. So the more you volunteer, the better your chances are to win the grand prize.

## Bird of the Month

# Pied-billed Grebe escapes danger By becoming miniature submarine

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

By Dick Comeau

The Pied-billed Grebe is a fairly common small, stocky bodied grebe which inhabits the vegetated, fresh water ponds and lakes in our area. At a distance they may appear to be a small duck but when checking closely they have the definite profile of their species. The adults have a horned-colored bill with a striking black stripe. You can sometimes spot their "powder-puff" of fluffy feathers at the rear end. The juveniles have black and white stripes on the sides of their head during breeding season. The sexes are similar. The legs and feet are at the rear end and dangle behind when they rarely fly. When danger is about, the Pied-billed Grebe escapes by becoming a miniature submarine. It releases air from its body, slowly submersing and uses his head as a periscope.



*Pied-billed Grebe*

Pied-billed Grebes feed on invertebrate, i.e. small fish, tadpoles, and frogs. They have even been known to eat some of their own feathers which apparently aids in digestion of small bones. The nest of a Pied-billed Grebe is nothing more than a bunch of floating vegetation which forms a platform that rides the waves. It is usually attached to a cattail to keep it secure. This bird also covers the eggs with vegetation causing staining of the eggs whose coloration hides them from predators.

The Least Grebe is a similar smaller species resembling the Pied-billed but besides being much smaller it has darker plumage and yellow colored eyes. It is only locally common in southern Texas. The Pied-billed Grebe is locally common, and besides being entertaining to watch, is truly a fascinating member of the grebe family. We are lucky to have such a large population frequenting our local Florida ponds for our enjoyment.

## Great Backyard Bird Count

### Asking for your help February 17-20

By Lucette Wombacher

The 15th annual Great Backyard Bird Count is coming up February 17-20, 2012. People of all ages and skill levels are needed to count birds in their yards, neighborhoods, or other locations across the United States and Canada. Simply tally birds for at least 15 minutes on any day of the count, then go to [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org) and enter the highest number of each species seen at any one time.

*Photo by Billie Knight of feeder at Felts Audubon Preserve*



## Junior Auduboners learn how animals adapt to city living

By Steve Black

At the January 21 meeting of Junior Audubon at Felts Audubon Preserve, we had in attendance: Matthew and James Press and both their parents, Kaelianna and Grayson McMillan, as well as Erik and Nicholas Martinez as well as their parents and sister Brooke. In addition, we had a reporter from the Bradenton Herald doing an article on Junior Audubon.

The Audubon Adventure article was on animals that have adapted to living in city habitats such as Opossums, Racoons as well Peregrine Falcons and Coopers Hawks. Everybody contributed to the discussions as well as the parents and even the reporter. After the discussions, we went to the bird blind where we saw male and female Painted Buntings as well as Indigo Buntings. The kids are getting much better at identifying the birds as well as taking a much bigger interest in them. I am looking forward to reading the article when it comes out in the Bradenton Herald.



*Opossum has adapted to city habitats*

## Upcoming Events

### Saturday 2/4

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.

### Sunday 2/5

Robinson Preserve.

Bob and Mary Kelly 758-9796. Manatee's most popular preserve for birding and recreation is located at 1709 99th Street NW, West Bradenton. Meet at 8 a.m. in parking lot.

### Friday-Saturday 2/10-11

Wakodahatchee, Green Cay and Okeehetee in Palm Beach County. Reserve with Nancy and Bob Dean 792-9235. We car pool to these wetlands, which have boardwalks and birds within easy viewing. \$20 per person. See flyer or website for details.

### Tuesday 2/14

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

### Thursday 2/16

General meeting MCAS 7 p.m. at First United Methodist Church of Palmetto, 330 11th Avenue West, Palmetto. George Tatgue will discuss environmental parks.

### Saturday 2/18

Got the Picture...Now What? Jim Stephenson 301-466-1973 will present workshop covering what to do after you have taken the perfect shot. How to edit, enhance and save the picture. See website for details.

### Tuesday 2/28

Myakka River State Park. Dick Comeau 752-1835. Expect great birding at this popular park. Meet at 7:45 a.m. at Lowe's at SR 70 and I-75.

## **24 birders take January walk at Emerson Point Preserve**



*Birders, above, spot Yellow-crowned Night Heron, left, and White-eyed Vireo, below left, on walk through Emerson Point Preserve. Photos by Bob Wombacher*



*By Lucette Wombacher*

**Twenty-four people** joined us for our January 10 bird walk at Emerson Point Preserve. The weather was ideal, but the birds were elusive. We all got a good look at an immature Yellow-crowned Night Heron perched next to the trail and most of the group saw the seldom seen White-eyed Vireo. With lots of eyes and a lot of walking, we were able to identify 31 different species. Our next bird walk at Emerson Point will be on Valentine's Day, 8:30-10:30 a.m.

## Manatee Audubon Society offers up to two scholarships

*By Bunny Schneider*

**Manatee County** Audubon Society is offering up to 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. 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.



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