



The Night Heron

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

Volume P, Number 8

APRIL 2012

Welcome New Members

By Barbara Singer, president

We are always happy to welcome new members to the Manatee County Audubon Society.

New Members:

George W. Case
John K. Ilko
Deb Maloney
Nancy Wentink

Donors:

Ingrid McClellan
Phillip Price
Michael Sabadoz

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Annual Potluck & Installation of Officers

The Manatee County Audubon Society program on **April 19th** will be our last meeting of the season, as well as our Annual Potluck dinner and installation of officers. Bring an item to share with 6 others, your plate, utensils and cup. This year we thought it would be nice to also bring some can goods to add to the church's food basket.

We will begin at **6:30pm** (a half-hour early) and have a slide show as we enjoy dinner.

President's Letter for Barbara Singer

Spring is upon us and Migration is only steps behind!

Wow! What a day, this first day of Spring. I listen out the window at the love that's in the air. The **Cardinals** are courting, the Mockingbird is starting to defend his territory, and the Woodpecker is tapping out his call announcing his presence.

This is the time of year that we birders wait for just like the anticipation of a child at Christmas. The other day I went to the Celery Fields late in the day to enjoy hundreds of birds just having their last meal of the day and I asked myself where are all the birders? Don't they know what they are missing? There is nothing more enjoyable than having a quite moment just enjoying nature.

If you haven't been to Felts in the last week or so, get out there the **Indigo's** and **Painted Buntings** won't be there much longer and who knows if they will be back next year. The Preserve is seeing the beginning signs of migration. Last week a **Louisiana Waterthrush** and a possible **White-crowned Sparrow** were seen.

We have a few good field trips remaining so join the group or just go out on your own and catch these migrants as they wander through our area. Before long they will once again be just a memory and hopefully you had seen your share.

39 Species Spotted at Emerson Point Walk

By Lucette & Bob Wombacher

We had a very large group on March 13 for the Emerson Point Preserve bird walk. 25 people joined Bob and me. We had some very special sightings. A pair of



Wood Ducks let everyone get a good look. Everyone also got to see a **Reddish Egret**, a bird not often seen. We were

fortunate to have in the group **Bob and Nancy Dean**, who teach the Mana-

tee County Audubon bird watching course, along with their spotting scope. Thanks to them we were able to identify two birds that are



not on the Emerson Point bird list, a female

Hooded Merganser, and a **Semipalmated Plover**. Most of the group were able to get a good look at each through the



scope. It was a beautiful spring day except for the biting insects. We saw a total of 39 bird species, and heard a few we never saw, such as the ever elusive **Northern Parula**.





In January, the students teamed up with the MCAS for experience in birding.



Anna Maria Elementary School — Environmental Education Project

By Christine Callahan, Master Gardener Volunteer



This year's Environmental Education Project is centered on expanding the pilot Environmental Education Project I initiated at Anna Maria Elementary School last year. I am using the Audubon Society's "**Wildlife on the Move**" curriculum that you provided for all third through fifth grade students, a first for Manatee County. The Audubon's Adventures curriculum is comprehensive and the Media Specialist **Lynne McDonough** has easily navigated the first three units to present material about migrating wildlife during Media class time.

Unit two is an exploration of the Monarch Butterfly's amazing migration from Canada to Mexico. Habitat for these migrating Monarch butterfly as well as native butterfly species will be expanded at the school. Students are actively engaged in real-world, real-time, scientific inquiry as they are logging on to Monarch Watch and Journey North, two opportunities for our students to participate in Citizen Science. Students are recreating butterfly roosts by drawing a Monarch butterfly at rest and attaching them to our "tree" in the Media Center.

"Thank you for your support of Environmental Education at Anna Maria Elementary School."

In the first unit we headed to the beaches to study the migration of whales and turtles. The Gulf Beaches located just beyond our front door are known for the turtle nesting. Turtles are endangered in part because they must compete with tourists, businesses and coastal residents to use the beach. Since our students are familiar with the Anna Maria Turtle Watch patrolling the beach and monitoring the turtle nests, this presented an opportunity to learn more about conservation from this organization. Fifth graders were invited to observe a sea turtle nest excavation. **Suzi Fox** and members of the AMI Turtle Watch dug up the nest and explained the importance of counting the hatched as well as un-hatched eggs. In addition, the group made a presentation to all students about the importance of protecting the sea turtles. In the classroom, students researched the seven sea turtle species and created life size drawings that are on display outside the Media Center. Older students created slideshows about the turtles that were viewed by all students during the morning show.

In January we teamed up with Manatee County Audubon Society member **John Ginaven** to study the migrating shorebirds the topic of our final unit. Our Estuary Trail is ideal for studying birds. Many of Florida's beach-nesting shorebirds and seabirds have experienced declines as a result of habitat loss and excessive disturbance at nests and colonies. In response, FWC and a growing network of partners including the **Manatee County Audubon Society** are working to improve protection and management of important nesting locations throughout Florida. Students created watercolor journals to chronicle their bird watching adventure.

Our series will end with an Earth Day Planting during the last week of April.

The program is well received by students and staff alike.

Thank you for your support of Environmental Education at Anna Maria Elementary School.



A "butterfly tree" was created by the students at Anna Maria Elementary School.

President's Comments about this program

By Barb Singer

Volunteer extraordinaire, Christine Callahan has gone that extra mile to make sure the students of Anna Maria Elementary have a special program yearly that deals with various aspects of the environment and conservation. Christine has developed each year's program and then goes out to find grants to cover the program cost. In the past they have bought binoculars for the students, planted a butterfly garden, hung bird feeders.

This past year MCAS was happy to provide Audubon Adventures as the lesson plan for the program that has proven so successful. We have committed to once again provide Audubon Adventures for the 2012-2013 school year.

Christine Thank You for all you do!

“Swift Mud” Hearings Result in Positive Changes

Bob and I represented MCAS at the 7 March **Swift Mud** hearing in Sarasota, where a sub-committee considered the sale of **SWFWMD** (Southwest Florida Water Management District, commonly referred to as “Swift Mud”).



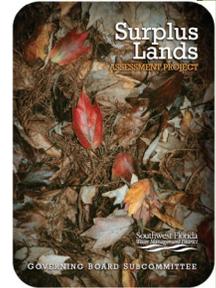
Properties in Manatee and Sarasota Counties. I am proud to say that representatives from FL Audubon, SAS, Sierra Club, Native Plant Society, **Karen Fraley** of **Around the Bend Nature Tours** and other organizations, dedicated to natural systems were present, as well. After the 2011 state legislature severely cut all water management district budgets, district members and possibly these legislators thought that adequate function could be maintained by land sale. Possibly, a land sell off was deemed vital to both reduce expense and to generate needed income.

I gather that the first public meeting about possible public land sales generated overflow crowds of angry tax payers, who treasure these lands and feared enormous reductions in wildlife preservation efforts. Concern felt by the local birding community caused leaders to ask **SWFWMD** if Audubon could assist in defining and determining what might be actual excess land by taking inventories at all of the two-county **SWFWMD** sites. This project was spearheaded by **Stu Wilson**, who recently joined our birding community from Austin, TX. Stu is an excellent birder with equal analytical skills. He took on the task of finding volunteers to survey three **SWFWMD** land tracts in Sarasota County and four tracts in Manatee County. I know that the following **MCAS** members helped with surveys in both Sarasota and Manatee: **Nancy & Mike Barnes** (3-4 surveys), **Dick Comeau & Debra Hutchinson** (2-3 surveys), **Nancy** (3 surveys) & **Bob Dean** (one survey). In addition, the Barnes brought along friends **JoAnn and Andy Andersen** to help with the Frog Creek survey in Manatee County and two other Manatee sites. Also participating in the Manatee surveys were: **Tom Heitzman, Matt Wiley** and **Dan Irizarry**.

Stu compiled a spread sheet making the value of area SWIFT MUD holdings abundantly clear. This spread sheet is now a part of the official record, making future ill-considered disposition of these public lands less likely. At the hearing, **Charles Lee of Florida Audubon** and **Jeanne Dubi of SAS** spoke, as did several representatives of Sierra Club and Native Plant Society. With all of the public concern and input provided prior to the hearing, the **SWFWMD** sub-committee appeared to take great

thought regarding their several land use purposes with a narrower view as to that which might be unneeded land. The only sale to be recommended is a 5-7 acre parcel from one part of the eastern Frog Creek tract in Manatee County. **Charles Lee** supported this sale, also considered to be of little value by tract survey leader **Nancy Dean**. The Frog Creek tract is divided into two sections, one of which is largely underwater and was never considered for sale as it is slated to be merged into the Terra Ceia State Park. It was not surveyed. The eastern section of about 30 acres was surveyed and it is from this section that a 5-7 acre sale is proposed. As this section is adjacent to the NE corner of the I-275 and US 41 interchange, the proposed sale site would be good for a hotel. As it stands, the rest of the site is not friendly to wildlife, despite presence of same. Water results from borrow pits created to build the interchange.

The good news is that restoration of this site with creation of a fresh water marsh is in the current **SWFWMD** budget and should start within the year. Such restoration when complete might make another good local birding site (hikers were using it on the day of the survey). In addition, this upland marsh will improve Frog Creek and the estuary area it feeds near Terra Ceia Bay. Two of the other Manatee sites were named for former County Commissioner Ed Chance and can only be accessed via private roads. Those who have lived in Manatee County for 20 or more years will remember that these tracts were acquired to protect the watershed into Lake Manatee, the primary reservoir for county drinking water. Fortunately, this vital purpose should protect these sites from sale. In fact, the overall tone of the 7 March 2012 hearing was that the value of public land is recognized. Subcommittee members indicated that some tracts with unnecessary land had been purchased in Hillsborough because the former owners were unwilling to sell partial pieces of land. I hope that other counties emulate the local effort to ensure that any land sold really is extraneous to water management district legal responsibilities.



Turtle Watch team delights Junior Manatee Audubon

By Steve Black



Junior Manatee Audubon was privileged to have Turtle Watch put on a special program for them on March 17th at Holmes Beach. In attendance were Matthew and James Press with their parents. Kaelianna and Grayson McMillan with their mother and a guest and an older brother. Eric and Nicholas Martinez with their sister Brooke and their parents. Glen and Claudia Wisneman of Turtle Watch put on a fantastic and comprehensive show about nesting sea turtles. They had Turtle Shells to see and touch as well as a mock nest with eggs. They discussed the type of Sea Turtles as well as the dangers the baby turtles face. After the presentation was over, we took a long hike up the beach looking for shorebirds. The afternoon concluded with the families enjoying the beach.



Manatee County Audubon Society

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President — Barbara Singer
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376-0110
Secretary — Patty Petruff
747-1789
Treasurer — Lucette Wombacher
776-8424

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Dick Comeau 752-1835
Dee Hanny 745-1553
Bob Flatt 794-0153
Jim Stephenson 301-466-1973
LaDonne Mayberry 795-4685
Bunny Schneider 792-1794
Jack Schneider 792-1794
Carol Webster 747-7295
Paul Wills 747-3670

Manatee Chapter Board meetings are on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at the Manatee County Library, Downtown Bradenton Branch.

INJURED BIRD HELP:

Call 778-6324 for what to do. Someone will call you back.

Manatee County Audubon Society is a chapter of National Audubon Society Inc.

Upcoming Events

Wednesday April 4, 2012 - SHAMROCK PARK AND VENICE ROOKERY (L)

If you haven't seen a Florida scrub jay, don't miss this trip! Also see and photograph nesting birds in the rookery.

Coordinator(s) - Jim Stephenson
301-466-1973

Depart - Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Lowe's at SR 70 and I-75.

Saturday April 7, 2012 - FELTS OPEN HOUSE

Open house from 8 a.m. to noon. Bring the kids for a walk on the wild side to see birds and other animals on our 27-acre preserve.

Coordinator(s) - TBD

Notes - Reservations are not required

Tuesday April 10, 2012 - EMERSON POINT PALMETTO

Two-hour walk with Lucette Wombacher and Manatee Natural Resources Department.

Coordinator(s) - Lucette Wombacher 776-8424

Depart - Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Welcome Center.

Saturday April 14, 2012 - FORT DE SOTO PARK (L)

Search for migrants at this hottest migration birding spot on the West Coast.

Coordinator(s) - Steve Black
376-0110

Depart - Meet at 8 a.m. at the first rest area after the tollbooth on the Sunshine Skyway Bridge.

Tuesday April 17, 2012 - CAREFREE LEARNER

Join us for a private boat ride to the Roberts Bay Rookery to see and photograph breeding birds. Reservations required. \$20 per person. Optional lunch at O'Leary's Tiki Restaurant at 1 p.m. at your expense.

Coordinator(s) - Barbara Singer 504-0228

Depart - Meet at 10:45 a.m. Tuesday April 17 next to La Barge at Marina Jacks on U.S. 41 at Sarasota bayfront.

Thursday April 19, 2012 - GENERAL MEETING MCAS

6:30 p.m. First United Methodist Church of Palmetto, 330 11th Avenue West, Palmetto. Annual

potluck dinner & installation of officers.

Monday April 23, 2012 - FORT DE SOTO PARK (L)

Search for migrants at this hottest migration birding spot on the West Coast.

Coordinator(s) - John Ginaven
383-5133

Depart - Meet at 8 a.m. at the first rest area after the tollbooth on the Sunshine Skyway Bridge.

Saturday Apr. 28, 2012 - FELTS WORKDAY

Workday hours are from 8:00 a.m. until noon. Come help to maintain your Preserve. We have volunteer opportunities for most physical levels and ages. Come out and learn more about plants and wildlife habitats. You do not need to stay the entire time; volunteer for as long as you are comfortable.

Coordinator(s) - Manatee Audubon member

Notes - Reservations are not required. Meet at Felts Audubon Preserve.

"JIZZ Method" to Identify at Shorebirds Class

By Jim Stephenson

Saturday, March 10, 2012, **John Ginaven** and **Rick Greenspan** conducted a shorebird identification class at Anna Maria Island. The group met at 8:30 in the morning in the parking lot (which the Sandbar restaurant graciously offered to let us use) where **John Ginaven** discussed field guides and the relative merits of several of the more popular guides.



After a small amount of initial confusion as to the actual meeting place, 33 eager students embarked on a bird walk along the beach. **Rick and John** discussed with the class the birds that we were most likely to spot in the area where we were walking and, as a bird was sighted, discussed the characteristics that would help in making future identifications. Their knowledge of winter, summer and breeding plumages as well as the identification of juveniles was particularly helpful.

Both leaders were conversant with and discussed the use of the **Jizz** method to describe the overall impression or appearance of a bird garnered from such features as shape, posture, flying style or other habitual movements, size and coloration combined with voice, habitat and location. **Sean Dooley** has described jizz as "the indefinable quality of a particular species, the 'vibe' it gives off" and notes that although it is "dismissed by many as some kind of birding alchemy, there is some physical basis to the idea of jizz." There's a theory it comes from the World War II acronym GISS for "General Impression of Size and Shape (of an aircraft)"

The entire group was surprised and delighted to find that a snowy plover was already on the nest. In spite of the bird's incredible camouflage our leaders were able to line their scopes up on the bird. Many pictures were taken and everyone got a good look. Many of the group got their first good look at a Red Knot and a Ruddy Turnstone. All but 2 of the birds that were expected to be seen were spotted. Several of the participants convened at a local café for a post-walk breakfast and a hot cup of coffee.