Welcome New Members

By Lucette Wombacher

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

New Members:
David & Cherie Swaby
Michael & Madelon Givant
Ron Arrick

Donors:
Dick Comeau
Ingrid McClellan
Angela & Mike Vuchnich

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What a Memorable Year!
Reflection on 2012-2013 for Manatee Audubon

Well, the April meeting is in the can! When you read this, so will be the newsletter and the remaining field trips. The Snow Birds are winging North with the Spring Migrants. There have been huge clouds of birds spotted just off shore. As of this writing, we'll be on one more trip to Fort DeSoto in hopes that some of them have landed to take a break on the way (Migrating, not Snow Birds!). Whether they do or not, it's been a great birding year, from Razor Bills at the Rod and Reel Pier to La Sagra’s Flycatcher; life birds for many of our members.

I, for one, think it's been a pretty active and productive year. I'm not going to list all of the names again, but having been catapulted into the presidency, having to start to figure out what was going on and making it through the year would have been absolutely impossible without a lot of help from a lot of people. Our Board of Directors, Committee Chairs, Felts Land Use Committee, Felts Open House Host(esse)s, Felts Nature Walk Leaders, Trip Leaders, Ad Hoc Committee members, Felts Work Day Volunteers and presenters to the public, through presentations, presence at fetes and festivals, our website and newsletter are the best! Oh yeah (I didn't forget, it was just time for a new sentence!) let's not forget the educators, the folks scrambling to get petitions signed and the photographers adding to our ever growing library of great shots!

I do have to name a couple of names. Patti Clauser is passing on the chair of the Hospitality Committee to Betty Sartin this year. Patti has made sure that we have all had enough snacks and drinks to provide the calories needed to stay awake when the lights went down for meeting presentations. More than that, she has left the kitchen spotless and kept us in good standing with the folks at the church. Patti has also, with husband Barry hosted open houses at Felts and led really neat birding trips. Patti's so quiet, it's easy to miss just how much she does. We welcome Betty and, Patti, we'll miss you!

Dee Hanny has not only masterminded, set up and staffed every Beach Stewardship Program in my memory, but has been at the table at every event where we set up a display this year. He'll be at the Bradenton Sustainable Spring Shindig on May 5. Stop by and tell him thanks and enjoy the shindig.

Special thanks to Jeanne Dubi for her good advice on a number of topics.

I hope you all have a great summer and are looking forward to another great year of birding next year!
April 2013 Favorite Photos

Thanks to all the photographers who shared images with us for our April "favorite photos" contest. It’s challenging to simply find the species in nature, but to capture these birds so beautifully takes even more patience & skill.

The winners this month include Harry Nicholson’s Wood Duck with top honors, and Billie Knight’s Summer Tanager within just a few votes. — Keep sharing those photos! It brings the outdoors indoors for so many of us!!

Bird Migration Study at Felts by JR Audubon

By Steve Black

The April 20th meeting of Junior Audubon was at Felts Audubon Preserve. Attending the meeting was: Matthew and James Press with their parents; Jean Hickey and his father; Isaac Ceciirano with his mother; and Grayson and Kaelianna McMillan. The April lesson was Bird Migration.

We learned that the Artic Tern migrates from the Arctic to the Antarctic 11,000 miles, and the Red Knot flies from the Chesapeake Bay to Argentina nonstop a total of 60 hours. After the lesson, we toured Felts looking for migrants.

I would like to highly recommend a FREE movie on line http://gulfcrossingmovie.com on Bird Migration.

June Challenge Coming to MCAS

By Billie Knight

Our MCAS approved at their last Board Meeting Manatee County Audubon’s participation in the June Challenge. I’m sure you are saying - What is the June Challenge? For those of us who stay in Florida during the summer, this is for you! Back in 2004, Alachua County’s Becky Ennis originated the Challenge, a friendly competition designed to keep us birding through the summer heat rather than staying inside our air-conditioned homes hiding from the heat. The aim is to see as many species as possible in our county - Manatee - between June 1st and June 30th. The rules are as follows:

1. Count only birds within Manatee County. Explore your home turf. Find new birding spots.
2. Each bird on our list must be seen, not just heard.
3. Any free-flying bird is countable for the Challenge. ABA-countable and ABA non-countable species can be on your list. Example: Blue-Crowned Parakeet can be counted, but is not an acceptable ABA species so it would be listed as 110/1.

If you are interested in participating, please let me know. I am willing to compile our results - you can call me, 941-592-7622, or email me at BillieLKnight@yahoo.com. Even if you turn in your sightings to the Manatee County Group, you can still participate in the June Challenge on an individual basis. If you have any questions, please email me or give me a call.
Audubon Academy Includes “Walking Workshops”

By Lucette Wombacher

The 2013 Audubon Academy was held in Mount Dora on April 12-14. Four of your board members attended: Amy Miller, Lucette Wombacher, Dick Comeau and Deb Comeau. It provided us an opportunity to get together with representatives of local Audubon Societies from all over the state to share ideas, learn what other Audubon Societies are doing and get to know some of the Audubon Florida staff members.

"Walking workshops" enabled us to visit a nature center and a preserve and learn from those who run and manage them what has worked for them. Hearing what it takes in money and labor to turn farmland back into natural Florida habitat made me appreciate even more the effort it has taken to make Felts Audubon Preserve the wonderful place it is.

With all the cutbacks in funding in recent years state, county and water management areas need all the volunteers they can get to help with maintenance and activities. Manatee County Audubon has been partnering with Manatee County Natural Resources for several years leading bird walks on a county preserve. The board is currently working on creating additional such partnerships.

There was quite a bit of discussion about the petition for a Water and Land Conservation constitutional amendment. Signature gathering is well under way, but there is a long way to go. If you are not familiar with the proposed amendment, ask any of your board members. It will not involve any new or increased taxes, but will assure a dedicated funding source for land and water conservation that cannot be taken for other uses the way it has been done in Florida for the last three years, in which 97.5% of conservation funding has been cut. Ten states already have dedicated funding for land conservation in their constitutions. These include Florida’s neighbors, Alabama and Georgia. If you are a registered Florida voter, please consider signing the petition. (Contact any MCAS officer for a petition to sign.)

Volunteers Needed: Beach-Nesting Steward Duty at Anna Maria Island

By Dee Hanny

There is still a need for volunteers for Steward duty over the Memorial Day Weekend (May 25, 26, 27). Thanks to all who signed up during our last meeting! We still need a minimum of 8 people to cover all of the 3-hour shifts. Come spend 3 delightful hours on the beautiful beach of Anna Maria Island and help educate beachgoers about the birds. It is very gratifying! Further information will be made available as it becomes known; (the birds first have to pick a place to nest). Volunteer opportunities will be available during Fourth of July weekend also. Contact Dee Hanny at ynnahda@yahoo.com or 941-745-1553.
BUNTING BONANZA AT FELTS AUDUBON PRESERVE

I hope all of you have had a chance to visit Felts Preserve this spring. Total species seen to date in April at Felts is 68 species. We have visited Felts on several occasions in April. After a 4” rain on April 4, we decided to go over to Felts to see if any migrants might have dropped in. Well, they had! The Indigos were feeding heavily in the grasses by the blind, Oak Alley had Prairie, Prothonotary, Yellow-throated Warblers, American Redstart, Northern Parulas, and a tired Ruby-throated Hummingbird perched in the top of an oak. All of this was overseen by Mr. Owl, sitting up in the big pine by the blind. A family of Tufted Titmice were seen feeding their fledglings. Purple Martins and Bald Eagles flew overhead, with Wood and Mottled Ducks on the pond. We decided to loop the north pond and as we neared the oaks, Jerry said, “Cuckoo!” Up in the oaks was a Yellow-billed Cuckoo! While others have spotted Yellow-billed Cuckoos at Felts, it was our first at Felts! An amazing evening of birding at Felts.

We have learned:

Heavy rains + Spring = Great Birding!

The other night there were over 2 dozen Indigo Buntings feeding heavily at the feeders. There were also 3 male Painted Buntings feeding, along with 1 female. We will miss all of these little guys as they head north, but as we left Felts, our friend the Great-Crested Flycatcher has returned to Felts for the summer, along with fly-over of lovely Swallow-tailed Kites.

FELTS OPEN HOUSE — April 6th

April 6 was a gorgeous day at Felts Preserve with 24 members and visitors.

The Indigo Buntings put on quite a show while the Painted Buntings (male and female) showed their colors. Two Great Horned Owls were together in a tree and the Wood Ducks were seen by a few. There was a total of 36 species seen. Dick Comeau and Connie Zack greeted visitors; Billie and Jerry Knight led the bird walk.

Scrub Jay Survey — Volunteers Needed

The Florida Audubon needs volunteers to survey Scrub Jays at four Manatee locations.

There will be a training session at Duette Preserve (2649 Rawls Road, Duette, FL) on May 11, with the surveys in June-July. Anyone interested in participating, contact Amy Miller, 758-7478.
Our final walk of the season at Emerson Point Preserve was Tuesday, April 9. Only a few winter birds remained, and with the trees mostly leafed out, we had to work hard to spot them. Our group of sixteen birders and two leaders were able to find 29 different species, including a few spectacular Redheads on the large pond. Northern Cardinals and Ospreys were nesting on almost every platform. Thanks to Bob’s photos, we were able to confirm several sightings after the fact, including a Downy Woodpecker, a Ring-necked Duck and a Least Sandpiper. By the time the walk ended, the day had become quite warm, reminding us that this birding season was coming to an end.

Red-bellied Woodpeckers were busy and noisy, giving everyone some good views. Ospreys were nesting on almost every platform. Thanks to Bob’s photos, we were able to confirm several sightings after the fact, including a Downy Woodpecker, a Ring-necked Duck and a Least Sandpiper. By the time the walk ended, the day had become quite warm, reminding us that this birding season was coming to an end.

ABOVE: Osprey in nest
RIGHT: Ring-necked Duck with a Least Sandpiper

Photos on this page: by Bob Wombacher
Fort DeSoto Delivers Birding Delights

In an early April scouting trip to Fort DeSoto, Billie Knight reported the following…

The last several weekends, as fronts have gone thru, some beautiful spring migrants are visiting Fort DeSoto. The first front had Hooded Warblers all over East Beach area, with both Summer and Scarlet Tanagers. Prothonotary Warblers have been busy eating mulberries, and the last front brought Baltimore Orioles and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. At right, a Sandhill Crane tends her nest, while (at left) a Ruby-throated Hummingbird sits on her nest.

Rare La Sagra’s Flycatcher on Leffis Key

We got a message that there was a La Sagra’s Flycatcher out on Leffis Key on Anna Maria Island. We headed for the island, knowing about this little rare visitor, as we waited hours in the Green Cay Nature Center parking lot in Boynton Beach several months ago hoping the one reported there would show, but he never did.

John Ginaven had given us directions as to the nearabouts of this bird, so we headed into Leffis. We ran into Claire and Nancy, and as we were trying to decide where to start looking, this small brown bird buzzed by us. It was him! He gave us very cooperative looks, and didn’t seem to mind us being there at all, as we watched him feed freely. An amazing little bird! John was back out at Leffis this morning and it has been posted to Birdbrains and Sarasota Bird Alerts, so from the reports the bird is still there. (By Billie Knight)

Volunteer Recognition

Congratulations to Lori Roberts, winner of this year’s Volunteer of the Year. Lori embodies the positive spirit and enthusiastic giving of this award established as a tradition by former MCAS president, Barbara Singer. Lori joined MCAS in spring 2012; she serves as newsletter editor and is developing strategic alliances within the community to help secure funding or in-kind donations so MCAS can achieve our mission of engaging & educating citizens about birding, nature and the environment. A 2-day trip to Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary led by Jason Lauritson, sanctuary director, was awarded as this grand prize at the April MCAS meeting.

2013—2014 Standing Committees

- Beach Nesting Bird Stewardship — Dee Hanny 745-1553
- Christmas Bird Count — Dick Comeau 752-1835
- Conservation — Carole Munro 896-6102
- Education — Deb Yodock 228-1269
- Field Trips — Connie Zack 758-2929
- Felts Audubon Preserve — Tom Heitzman 737-3169
- Felts Open House — Amy Miller 758-7478
- Historian — Don Bansen 794-0255
- Hospitality — Betty Sartin
- Junior Audubon — Steve Black 376-0110
- Membership — Lucette Wombacher 776-8424
- Newsletter Editor — Lori Roberts 404-941-4365
- Newsletter Mailings — Betty Benishke 254-7662
- Programs — Jim Stephenson 301-466-1973
- Publicity — LaDonne Mayberry 795-4685
- Strategic Alliances — Lori Roberts 404-941-4365
- Ways & Means — OPEN
- Webmaster — Tami McNally 343-8267