A Bird’s-Eye View... from President Jim

By the time you get this Thanksgiving will be only a memory, but a good one I trust. I hope that each and everyone of you reading this enjoyed your favorite fowl, meat, vegetables or combination thereof with family and friends and enjoyed it just as much as we did at our house. Now, we can begin the countdown to Christmas in earnest. Which brings up the subject of the Christmas Bird Count, one of the oldest Citizen Science Projects in the United States. We have our very own Christmas Bird Count guru, Dick Comeau. Dick does an incredible job of organizing our pool of volunteers to cover our assigned areas to be counted. If you’ve never done a Christmas Count, you should really think hard about participating this year, and give Dick a call (941-752-1835), or better yet, sign up with him at our December meeting.

Speaking of our December meeting, our gal, Lori Roberts, has come up with a wonderful idea for giving your favorite person(s), young or old a great $20 family gift for Christmas. She has designed a gorgeous Christmas gift packette for giving a 2015 membership to Manatee Audubon. Please see her at the Christmas meeting or email her at happygal@comcast.net to start the ball rolling. She was signing up folks who loved the idea of giving a 2015 membership to Manatee Audubon at the Eagle Extravaganza.

Speaking of which, eagles outnumbered observers by more than 2 to 1 at this incredible Eagle Extravaganza event on December 2nd. At one point, we counted more than 50 perched, including many juveniles with a range of ages and saw, easily, more than 20 eagles in flight passing through the area to their favorite roosting place nearby. At the same time hundreds of gulls, ibis and other birds were flying overhead. If you like being outdoors and watching birds, it was the place to be. The perfect weather & sunlight & eagles had all of us mesmerized!

We’ll have a table again this year at the annual Manatee County Historical Society’s “A 1914 Florida Cracker Christmas” event on Sunday, Dec 14th from 11am-4pm. Experience the charm of a holiday festival with family-friendly entertainment, heritage artisans, “make and take” crafts for adults and youth, visiting arts, crafts and food vendors, seasonal exhibits, vintage silent films, and a Victorian Santa, “Father Christmas”. The entire Park will be decorated in seasonal colors and exquisite Victorian accents. Not to miss ... this special event offers plenty of old-fashioned Florida fun ... something to delight every age! If you’d like to help staff the Manatee Audubon exhibit table, contact Connie Zack (941-758-2929). Special Event Admission: Adults $5.00; Youth 12 years and under FREE.

Also, don’t forget that this is the last month to get your tax deductible donations to Manatee Audubon made for tax year 2014.
- Remember that $15.00 gives one child a seat on the “Ride to the Wild” at Felts Audubon Preserve.
- We’re looking to take the entire third grade of Manatee County School System to Felts this school year; that will take about $50,000. We’re 50% there!

Carmenza and I are going to miss the Christmas meeting, so I’ll take this opportunity to wish all of you a wonderful Holiday season and the happiest of New Years. Happy Birding!
EagleWatch Speaker at Dec. 18 Meeting

LOCATION: Hope Lutheran Church, 4635 26th Street West (2 blocks south of Cortez Rd.)
TIME: Potluck dinner starts 6:30pm (or earlier); speaker starts 7pm.
SPEAKER: Nancy Murrah, VP Tampa Audubon & EagleWatch veteran

Nancy Murrah the coordinator for Tampa Audubon’s EagleWatch program, since she has been involved with EagleWatch for years supporting the efforts of Audubon Florida’s Birds of Prey Center, monitoring eagle nests, etc. Nancy’s passion for birding can be seen through her active leadership as a VP of Tampa Audubon, plus volunteering to lead the new Junior Naturalist program offered by Tampa Audubon targeting students. She’ll update us with news about eagles, their mating & nesting behavior & population trends.

Nancy is a huge advocate of citizen science programs, which have increased in membership and commitment over the last 12 months for Tampa Audubon. Initiatives like EagleWatch, ColonyWatch, JayWatch, Christmas Bird Count, Tampa Audubon’s Bluebird program and Adopt a Bluebird Box Program have continued to grown in numbers of committed volunteers and followers. In October at the Audubon Assembly, Nancy Murrah accepted the 2014 Best Conservation Project Award related to bird rescue on behalf of Tampa Audubon Society for "Building a Community to Edu-

Welcome New Members!

New Members
Kathleen Goerlitz
Scott Riggs
Kent Greene
Irene Sibley
Donna Gherna
David Greshem
Marieann Woodson
Marsene Pryor

Diane Strandberg
Cynthia Miner

Returning (Dues Lapsed) Members
Ann Cruikshank
Ron Arrick

Thank You Donors!!

Donors & specific financial grants are the primary source of funds used by Manatee Audubon for the maintenance & improvements at Felts Audubon Preserve. This month we say THANK YOU for your gracious donations to:
- Ann & Dave Cruikshank
- Florence Jerome
- Peggy Fischer
Until July 31, 2014 an eagle “take” permit had never been issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to a project in any industry. But after the nearly 5 years since “take” permits went into effect, to allow for the accidental harm or killing of eagles in the process of regular business, a permit was issued to a wind-power project in northern California.

Under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, eagle take permits can have a maximum term of 5 years, but in late 2013 the USFWS extended the maximum term to 30 years, which, corresponds to the operational life of most wind projects. This 30-year extension which supports a wind industry desiring a degree of certainty for its investments, not surprisingly generated opposition from several organizations, some which had even supported the five-year term.

With the previous rule, adopted in 2009, the USFWS had defended the 5-year permitting process, stating at the time that a permit of any longer duration “would be incompatible with the preservation of the Bald or Golden Eagle.” Accordingly, the increase to 30 years did not appear to be supported by any newly available information and came as a surprise to many.

The American Bird Conservancy has even filed suit in federal court in June, claiming that the 30-year policy is in violation with the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. You can find details here: www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/140807.html

Among the arguments made in defense of a shorter permitting period is the one that many factors impacting eagles and their populations (e.g., habitat loss, prey abundance, wildfires, & climate change) will surely change over a 30-year period, and the ability to plan for such changes will now become potentially more limited.

Defenders of the 30-year extension say that these newly revised permits will still require a review of the projects every 5 years, and that the projects may be required to undertake additional conservation measures. Still, there is no legal mandate to comply with the eagle guidance, and not all wind-power projects will need to obtain an eagle-take permit. Realistically however, the USFWS will likely start to issue more eagle take permits for proposed and operating wind-power projects, and an increasing number of applications will also likely be submitted in the future.

The question arises: Can wind, solar, bio-fuel, and other renewable energy sources be encouraged without putting birds, bats, and related habitats at risk? The answer should be yes, but the ways to reach those goals – including the eagle issue – are fraught with many detours and pitfalls. Given the pending review and legal challenges, it is unclear how the eagle permitting process may evolve over the next few years, and how much-needed comprehensive “smart energy” approaches will result.

Finally, for those interested, the public comment period for the issue of 30-year take permits ended on Sept 22, 2014, but you are still encouraged to make your voice heard.

Siesta Key Shorebirds

Leaders Rick Greenspun & John Ginaven led a Nov. 8th bird walk on Siesta Key.

A brisk wind may have hindered some birds, but this Siesta Key walk still produced a solid representation of local & migratory shorebirds. Thanks to Rick & John for sharing their knowledge, spotting birds & explaining details about each species… & carrying the scope!

BIRD HUMOR...

Q. — Who operates the phone lines in the North Pole?
A. — 4 calling birds, 3 French hens, 2 Turtle doves…(you know the rest…)

Eagle “Take” Permit Could Start a Trend
The Gift That Always Fits

Purchase a gift membership at our Dec. 18th monthly meeting and get it for only $20! We’ll have special gift-card type packettes ready. Any time of year, a Manatee Audubon Gift Membership is sure to delight the nature-lover in your life, especially that hard-to-shop-for person who seems to have everything.

Where else can you get a holiday gift that includes:
- 27 acres of land for birding enjoyment
- Over a mile of maintained hiking trails at Felts Audubon Preserve
- Views of 2 different types of ponds with the unique birds & wildlife they attract...and several benches to encourage habitat observation
- Wide variety of habitats: forested area, prairie area, etc.
- Comfortable bird blind for observation & photography...including the signature bird of Felts Preserve, the Painted Bunting!
- And lots of walks and talks with friends and family as you explore our great outdoors on field trips, at monthly meetings with guest speakers, and during birding events in Manatee County.

All in one “green” package!

Manatee Audubon can send a gift email to the lucky gift recipient. Simply ask & provide us with their email address and contact information.

As you know, memberships in Manatee Audubon are based on calendar year, so everyone needs to renew their membership before January 1st, 2015 to be able to stay on the official membership roster...and show your support of the key role Manatee Audubon plays in our community.

Dues are $20 per year per household, which is an incredible value for the fun, educational and social benefits of membership. In addition, as a member you are demonstrating your support of our active “Give a Child a Day in the Wild” initiative to get all 3rd grade students in Manatee County School System to Felts Audubon Preserve each year so they can experience a real Audubon adventure while learning about the environment, birds, wildlife habitats, etc..

Make checks payable to: Manatee County Audubon Society.

Checks can be mailed to: PO Box 14550, Bradenton, FL 34280-4550, or bring them with you to our December 18th membership meeting. (Cash can also be accepted at that meeting.)

Thanks again for your support!! Manatee Audubon is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization.

The V.I.P. field trip to the upscale Streamsong Resort proved the restoration of wildlife to this former Mosaic mining site. Over 30 species were seen on a cloudy, misty day that took us to the bass fishing lake and another wetland area where folks enjoyed seeing the American Bittern “hiding” behind a scrub shrub and a “not shy” hawk who posed for Deb Yodock. After time at Streamsong, we caravanned to Mosaic Peace River Park. This established location on the Great Florida Birding Trail didn’t produce the anticipated number of birds, but the boardwalk made our hike easy.

Thanks to Jackie Barron, our primary contact at Mosaic, in addition to our Mosaic guides Bill & Grant, our friends at Streamsong for providing a hot breakfast buffet, & Mosaic for the wonderful lunch sandwiches and insightful guides to share information about Mosaic and the process used before, during & after site excavation. This was a great trip!
Recently Seen at Felts Preserve...

John Ginaven reporting that Kathryn Young had spotted a flyover Caspian Tern at Felts Preserve. This was confirmed by John and Jeanne Dubi, and I believe is a first for Felts Preserve.

Then Wendy Meehan posted a bird she was not sure of the ID, thinking at first it was a Yellow-throated Vireo. In checking her bird book, she realized that was not correct. Attached are two pictures of her Yellow-breasted Chat that she saw on the bridge by the Bird Blind today, confirmed by many. Wendy has been birding Felts quite a bit lately and the Chat was a lifer for her. Despite its bright yellow chest, loud song, and conspicuous display flights, the Yellow-breasted Chat is easily overlooked because of its skulking nature and the denseness of its brushy haunts.

Chats munch on small invertebrates & fruits. They nest in shrubs & have a clutch size of 1-6 eggs which are white or off-white color covered in dark speckles. Now we have even more to “chat about” when talking about Felts Preserve!

Register Now for Basic Bird ID Course

BASIC BIRD IDENTIFICATION COURSE — Living in Florida is a natural way to become a “birder” and enjoy an activity that can be shared with the family. You’ll learn from master birders who love to share tips on how to identify different types of birds, habits and their habitats. Both classroom & field trips included in this course.

Classroom sessions held at Hope Lutheran Church (4635 26th St West, just a few blocks south of Cortez Rd. in Bradenton). These 5 evening classroom sessions start at 6:30pm on the following dates:

- Monday, January 19th
- Wednesday, January 21st
- Thursday, January 22nd
- Wednesday, January 28th
- Thursday, January 29th.

Be sure to bring a notepad and pen / pencil.

REGISTRATION:
Cost: $50 for Manatee Audubon members who have already paid their 2015 membership dues.
$70 for non-members (which includes your 2015 Manatee Audubon membership dues).

Because of the popularity of this course, we highly recommend securing your seat by emailing program chairman & former Manatee Audubon president, Steve Black (sblack4823@gmail.com) AND providing payment weeks before the start of this popular course. Registrations without payment are not complete. (Make checks payable to: Manatee County Audubon Society; note this is for the “Bird ID Course”.)

Questions should be directed to Steve Black. You can reach him by email or phone: 941-376-0110.
Species Close-Up: Magellanic Penguins

With so many penguins popular in greeting cards, holiday décor and even movie theaters this time of year, what a fun bird to feature on the newsletter cover this month.

Magellanic penguins are only found around the Falkland Islands and South America, but they are extremely numerous within these regions. The Falklands has a population well in excess of 100,000 breeding pairs, but this is small compared to populations in South America, which number around 900,000 breeding pairs in Argentina (Centro Nacional Patagónico) and 800,000 pairs in Chile (Environmental Research Unit). Breeding colonies range from the Golfo San Matías in Argentina, southwards around the islands of Tierra del Fuego, and northwards up the Pacific coast of Chile as far as Puerto Montt.

The Magellanic penguin is around 27” long, and has an average weight of just under 9 lbs. The head and upper parts are black apart from two broad white stripes beneath the throat; one running up behind the cheeks and above the eye to join the pinkish gape, the second running adjacent to the white underparts with which they merge above the legs. Females are slightly smaller than the males, but have similar plumage.

Penguins of the Genus *Spheniscus*, to which Magellanic, Humboldt and Galapagos penguins all belong, are much more loosely colonial than other penguins. They generally nest in burrows when soil conditions permit, and are consequently spaced much further apart than surface-nesting penguins. Magellanic penguin colonies in particular often extend over several miles of coastline.

Magellanic penguins are widely distributed throughout the region. They particularly like offshore islands with tussock grass or small shrubs, which are in abundance around the Falkland Islands, Tierra del Fuego and the Pacific coast of Chile. Such islands offer deep layers of soil for burrowing into, and dense vegetation offering protection from aerial predators. The Atlantic coast of Argentina is much drier, has less vegetation cover, but it is still home to around 650,000 breeding pairs. Magellanic Penguins prefer to nest in burrows, but when soil conditions are unsuitable for burrowing, they will nest on the surface using whatever protection they can find.

Adults arrive at the nest sites to breed in September, and after a period of burrow excavation and repair, begin egg laying around mid-October. Two equally sized eggs are laid 4 days apart. Incubation takes around 40 days, with the female incubating the eggs for the first shift, while the male feeds at sea. He forages at distances of up to 300 miles away from the breeding site, before returning to relieve the female some 15 - 20 days later. She then goes to sea for a similar period, and when she returns, the two birds change over at regular intervals until the eggs hatch.

Both parents continue to brood the chicks in turn on a daily basis, for a period of about 30 days. Chicks are fed daily, with adults leaving the colony in early morning, and returning with food later the same day. Magellanic penguins mostly forage within 11 miles of the nest site during chick-rearing, except in the Falklands where longer foraging trips are forced by conflict with commercial fishing.

By the end of 30 days the chicks have developed their mesoptile plumage, and are able to venture out of the burrows. At this stage they look very different from the adults, being a browny grey above, and creamy white below. Living in burrows, chicks have good protection from both predators and cold weather while both parents are away feeding, and consequently they do not form creches in the way that most surface-breeding species do.

Despite the 2 eggs being of roughly equal size, adults give feeding priority to the first chick to hatch, resulting in a higher rate of mortality among second chicks. Nevertheless Magellanic penguins often rear two chicks successfully when sufficient food can be caught.

Fledging occurs at 9-17 weeks of age, depending on food. Fledglings look similar to the adults, except for being greyer and lacking the clearly defined banding of the adults. Freedom from parental responsibilities allows the adults to spend a period of time at sea, feeding up in preparation for their annual moult in March. Moulting takes 3-4 weeks, after which the adults leave the breeding site, and remain at sea until the following breeding season. Magellanic penguins can live to about 20 years of age.

Source: [http://www.penguins.cl/magellanic-penguins.htm](http://www.penguins.cl/magellanic-penguins.htm)
The Manatee County Audubon sponsored Bradenton Circle Christmas Bird Count (“CBC”) will be held on December 20th, 2014. Last year we had over 60 participants in our own CBC count.

It is a lot of fun and you certainly don’t have to be an “expert birder” to join us. At the December monthly meetings Dick Comeau, CBC chairman, will have signup sheets, maps of the different sectors, and contact leaders list available if you wish to participate.

- You can help by being a spotter, recorder, photographer, or be just plain good company.

It is always neat to find new birding areas or places you never knew existed. Think about joining us.

Junior Audubon Expanded into Audubon Adventurer Program

Building on momentum started with Felts Audubon Spring Break Camps in 2009 and 2010, Around the Bend Nature Tours will work with Steve Black to bring the Audubon Adventurer Program to a new level starting in January 2015.

Steve has done a fantastic job with the program under the Junior Audubon banner. Around the Bend Nature Tours will use the new program provided by AudubonAdventures.org as a thematic guide and bring Felts Preserve to life for new Adventurers. The program will meet monthly on the 2nd Saturday from 9am-noon. Professional quality binoculars in the bird-blind, hands-on activities and fort-building will be the window through which the Adventurers will explore Felts Preserve. Have the kids in your life join them in January! Contact karen@aroundbend.com to register.

December Birding Buffet

Mark you calendars, and confirm your participation by contacting the trip leaders for this month’s excellent menu of birding trips from Manatee Audubon.

- Lucette Wombacher has so much experience leading bird walks at Emerson Point, the birds practically show up as our feathered celebrities when she comes to show them off to bird walk participants the first Tuesday of each month (Dec—April). Meet at the Visitor Center parking lot by 8:30am.

- Later that week, you’ll want to join Jerry & Billie Knight on their Terra Ceia (& other secret birding hotspots) outing. They’re excellent guides; so humble & fun! Meet at Felts Preserve for 8am departure.

- As if that’s not enough on our “birding buffet”, on Tues, Dec 16th jump on the tram at Circle B Bar Reserve with Deb Yodock (794-1269) & friends to see an assortment of bird species without a lot of physical exertion. Spots are limited on this last trip, so be sure to check with Deb to confirm your slot. Departure is at 7am promptly from the Walmart parking lot on SR 64 just west of I-75. We’ll pass the hat to thank our hosts at Circle B Bar Reserve, so bring a few dollars if possible to cover any tolls, parking by your carpool driver and this special gesture of appreciation for Circle B.
IMPORTANT — Departure Location Change for Circle B Bar Reserve Trip.

The meeting place for the Circle B Bar trip on Dec. 16th has been changed to the Walmart on SR 64 at I-75. Meet at 6:50 with departure at 7AM sharp. Bring a lunch & bottled water. Check the event calendar on our Manatee Audubon website for details.

LAST CALL for participants heading to Merritt Island & the Viera Wetlands trip, Jan. 16-18, 2015.

Email Lori Roberts by Dec. 10th (ManateeAudubon@gmail.com) if you plan to attend but have not told us.