The Night-Heron

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Great Egret

Photographer: Steve Schuenke
Well it's not often that I get the opportunity to write “the last president's letter of the year” twice. I'm not sure what I was thinking when I wrote the April letter. At any rate, it's time to start looking forward to the 2014–2015 Manatee Audubon year. All in all this year was a great year for Manatee Audubon. About the only item that was subpar was attendance at Felts work days. I think Lucette Wombacher summed it up very well when she wrote me the following email.

"Here are some interesting statistics about our Felts Preserve visitors. I think the word is definitely out about this very special place, even without recognition on the Florida Birding Trail.

- From October 2013 through April 25, 2014, we have had 740 visitors sign the visitors' log in the bird blind; we know not everyone signs in.
- For the same time period in 2012-2013, we had 718, and for 2011-2012 there were 664. So every year we get more visitors.
- During this last year we have had visitors from 23 different Florida cities, 27 other states and six other countries.
- In addition, over the past three years, our Open House visitors have more than doubled from 132 to 289, and about 350 school students have visited Felts Preserve on field trips this school year.

All of this is very, very good. However, on the down side, we have had only 3 or 4 people show up for each of the last several work days. Without more help, Felts is going to become overgrown and much less wildlife friendly. It takes work to keep invasive plants and feral cats under control, trails groomed, trash removed, signs readable, benches clean enough to be used, the fountain working, nest boxes usable and feeders filled. All of this and much more is done by very few volunteers. The Barbara Singer Memorial Endowment Fund will (we hope) eventually generate enough money to maintain Felts Audubon Preserve, but that day is still far in the future. In the meantime, the Preserve needs more volunteers."

So let's all, please, rethink your role regarding Felts Preserve. Remember, you don’t need to be capable of doing heavy work to be an effective volunteer. We also need people to stay in the parking lot and direct others for the work that needs to be done.

Next year we will focus even more than this year on Education and Conservation. We'll be keeping a close eye on the County Commission and the State Legislature. There are some really interesting and exciting possibilities to be explored in a partnership with Holmes Beach on the development of the Grassy Point Preserve. We'll be discussing ideas with Marvin Grossman and other officials over the summer. We'll continue to rebuild the Jr. Audubon program, and, of course, take even more children on a 'Ride to the Wild' to Felts preserve.

Don't forget that we're planning the event calendar for next fall and spring right now. If there is a trip you would like to lead or take, just email me at president@manateeaudubon.org. We're also planning the meeting calendar. Same drill there. Remember that we'll be meeting at a new venue next year, Hope Lutheran Church, 4635 26th Street West, Bradenton. There'll be lots of advance notice on that as we get closer.

Mega congratulations to Nancy and Bob Dean, winners of National Audubon's Callison Award, as well as the Great Egret Award, and to Don Bansen, for his much deserved Great Egret Award.

Above all, have a truly great summer!
The Great Egret Award was presented to Don Bansen in recognition of more than 20 years of service to the National Audubon Society and Manatee County Audubon Society at the April end-of-season monthly general membership meeting.

In presenting the award, president Jim Stephenson (on right) thanked Don for the breadth of work generously given to Manatee Audubon. By 1987, Don was already serving as Vice President. He has, in fact, served in every office and capacity except Web Master! He has led the organization, raised funds, seen MCAS through declines in membership, the growing pains of maintaining Felts Preserve and changes in philosophy and direction. His work as historian, preserving our heritage is invaluable.

Don, each and every member of Manatee Audubon thanks you for what you have given, freely, of yourself these many years!

And there’s more BREAKING NEWS!!

See next page...

Thank You to all the donors! MCAS raised over $2,600 in the 2014 Giving Challenge event!
The National Audubon Society has honored Bob & Nancy Dean from Manatee County Audubon Society as the 2014 Charles H. Callison Award winners in the volunteer category. This prestigious national award will be presented in Seattle on May 16th at the National Audubon Society board of directors meeting.

Now in their 20th year, the Charles H. Callison Award was established to give special recognition to an individual or group whose continued diligence has accomplished sound environmental legislative policy achievement at the local, state, or federal level. Nominees need to have achieved significant success in environmental policy, creativity, coalition-building, education and/or outreach. Two awards are presented, one in each category: Volunteer and Professional.

This award selection was not known at the time the Deans were presented with Audubon's Great Egret Award during the April 2014 MCAS general membership meeting.

In 1987, Bob and Nancy Dean joined the Manatee County Audubon Society. Declining office, they preferred to make their contributions in other ways. During Felts Preserve cleanup, who was up to their waists in muck pulling tires from the ponds? The Deans!. Who cleaned up trash from ditches bordering the preserve? The Deans! Who led great field trips and wrote procedures for many activities? The Deans. Who taught the Basic Bird Identification Course for 12 years bringing new members annually? The Deans. Who collected and organized our huge library of digital bird photographs? Nancy Dean! Who year after year donated so generously? The Deans!

Thank you Deans, so much, for all you’ve done!

You are and will remain a legacy in Manatee Audubon!

PAST CALLISON AWARD WINNERS — Volunteer Category

2004  Dr. Marcy Brown-Marsden, Audubon Dallas
2005  Warren King, Otter Creek Audubon Society and Audubon Vermont
2006  Benjamin Olewine, IV, Audubon Connecticut and Audubon Pennsylvania
2008  Dr. Paul A. Johnsgard, Audubon Nebraska
2009  S. Joyce King, Santa Fe Audubon Society, St. Petersburg Audubon Society and Audubon of Florida
2010  Margaret Copeland, Audubon Mississippi
2011  Richard Baker, Pelican Island Audubon Society, Florida
2012  Tom Jarvis, Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society and Audubon New Mexico
2013  Lowell Young, Yosemite Area Audubon Society
The Cornell Lab of Ornithology announced their selection of the 2014 Young Birder’s Event to be held July 10 – 13, 2014 in Ithaca, NY. Only 16 students across America are selected for this program, and Matthew Press is among these elite!! If you’ve ever been on a bird walk or field trip with Matthew, he knows birds!

The Young Birders Event aims to bring together teenagers (students who will be sophomores, juniors and seniors) with a passion for birds who are interested in pursuing a career with birds. The participants will meet people who have successful careers that involve birds in a variety of ways from ornithological researchers to tour leaders, to audio specialists and computer scientists.

Each student fills out an application form with questions about why they want to participate and what they love about birds. Cornell asks about their interests to be able to tailor the weekend to the things that interest most members of the group. Here is a link to the page with the application http://ebird.org/content/ebird/news/yb2014/

Money cannot buy a ticket to this exclusive experience. One of the main objectives is to connect young people who have a passion for birds with other like minded students so that these new friendships can last a long time. These students have the benefit of electronic communications —the people they meet they can keep closely in touch with and share their enthusiasm.

In addition to time in the field birding, participants also spend a good deal of time listening to presentations in a seminar-type setting. They get to hear about scientific research from the students and scientists who are conducting it. We’ve had several Young Birders go on summer field expeditions with people they met at this event. We created the weekend with the needs of young birders in mind and we continually ask how we can make it more useful to them as they look for colleges and think about future careers. One of the things we know from asking is that many of these participants are trying to figure out if they can turn their passion for birds into a career. After spending several days with us they can see how an interest in birds can also lead to graphic design, computer programming, science education and other careers in addition to being a scientific researcher.

Over the years Cornell University has had a number of the participants apply to Cornell and other great schools for birders. Ultimately, many of the young birders go on to do field work and think about grad school in the sciences. After several years of working with young birders, we partnered with Black Swamp Bird Observatory to create the www.YoungBirdersNetwork.net which serves as an online meeting place for young birders and a way to communicate with them about opportunities for them to get involved.

Congratulations Matthew on this honor! We’re so glad your participation in Jr Audubon years ago & your offer to lead several Manatee Audubon field trips contributed to your successful selection by Cornell. Glad to have you on our team of great birders!!
Lucette Wombacher & Scott Niblick assisted in setting up the display table for MCAS. Below right: Charlie Hunsacker gave a presentation on Coastal Manatee County Conservation & Restoration.

Everyone attending the Academy was invited to daily Happy Hours hosted by MCAS. Good job Deb & Dick!
Carmenza Stephenson and Marvin Grossman, Holmes Beach Commissioner, admire the pictures hanging in the Holmes Beach City Hall. These pictures were donated by Manatee Audubon. Patty Petruff, our diligent secretary, noticed that Holmes Beach was about to change the pictures on the wall in the City Hall Commissioners meeting room. She suggested that we donate our contest winning photos to display them there.

Lucette Wombacher bought frames, printed the photos and framed them. She added some of Ron Mayberry’s fabulous photographs to fill out the collection. Displayed are pictures by; Julie Heisman, Ron Mayberry, Scott Niblick, Billie Knight, Charles Warner, Mattie Watson, and Deb Yodock.

While we were visiting City Hall, we discussed Marvin’s plans for the Bat Box he’s acquiring for Grassy Point Preserve and some great new ideas for using a partnership with Holmes Beach and the preserve to extend our educational outreach to school children.

Welcome a New Member... & Thank You to Donors!

With joy, Manatee Audubon welcomes another new member into our family: Heather Ruth Todd.

And we’re also so thankful for the donations by these folks prior to The Giving Challenge event: Nancy West Jim Stephenson Carol Webster

During The Giving Challenge, there were 25 donors. Thank you to each of you!!
Starting with our fall monthly meetings, Manatee Audubon will meet in the Fellowship Hall at Hope Lutheran Church. Address: 4635 26th Street West, Bradenton 34207.

Located about 2.5 blocks south of Cortez Road, WEST of Hwy 41 on 26th Street West.

Our new monthly meeting space is smaller, more like Sarasota Audubon’s monthly meeting space. We can configure the room as needed to accommodate the welcome table, general seating, refreshment buffet and display needs.
It’s about that season when we find beach-nesting shorebirds attracted to our Gulf shores. Typically we find the birds on Anna Maria Island, where we’re able to inform & educate sun worshippers on major holiday weekends about these beach-nesting shorebirds.

If there are nesting birds that we will monitor, the dates will be May 24, 25, 26 (Fri-Mon of Memorial Day weekend). The schedule for the Stewards will be from 8AM to 8PM each day. There will be four 3 hour shifts each day: 8A-11A, 11A-2P, 2P-5P, 5P-8P. A minimum of two persons per shift.

This is all predicated on having enough volunteers and that there are nesting birds to Steward. I will be sending out a group email asking for volunteers in early May. Persons wishing to volunteer may contact Dee Hanny via email (preferred) or by phone. Email: ynnahda@yahoo.com Tel: 941-745-1553. First volunteers are awarded their choice of time/day whenever possible.
May - Bird & Felts Preserve Events

May 10: International Migratory Bird Day! For info, see www.birdday.org and map of events near you.
May 13 – 19: Shorebird monitoring - statewide count; FL Shorebird Alliance (Breeding Bird Protocol).
May 16 – 18: Wild Amelia Nature Festival @ Amelia Island. Includes nature tours, photography workshops, a green business expo, children’s activities, animal exhibits, and more. See www.wildamelia.com for details or call Jody Hetchka (904-251-0016).

May 16 – 18: Spring meeting of the Florida Ornithological Society. All events @ the Wilderness RV Park Estates Social Hall (2771 NE 102nd Ave Rd., Silver Springs, Florida) unless otherwise noted. For info, see: http://fosbirds.org/content/fos-spring-meeting-2014.

May 24-26: Beach-nesting Stewardship (probably on Anna Maria Island). Volunteers needed to educate beach visitors about the nesting birds. Contact Dee Hanny: ynnahda@yahoo.com or 941-745-1553.


Leadership Changes for 2014-2015 Season

Manatee Audubon announces changes to the Board of Directors for the 2014-2015 year. Thanks to those members who served during 2013-2014, but are not able to continue as Board members: Carole Munro, LaDonne Mayberry and Don Bansen. New to the Board of Directors are: Scott Niblick, Jack Schneider (officially returning from prior years of BOD service), and Deb Yodock. THANK YOU for serving to make Manatee Audubon a strong chapter!

CONTACTS — Manatee Chapter Board meetings are on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 5:30 in the main Manatee County Library building.

CHAPTER OFFICERS 2013-2014
President — Jim Stephenson 301-466-1973
Vice Pres — Deb Comeau 752-1835
Secretary — Patty Petruff 747-1789
Treasurer — Lucette Wombacher 776-8424

2014-2015 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Steve Black 376-0110
Dick Comeau 752-1835
Dee Hanny 745-1553
LaDonne Mayberry 795-4685
Amy Miller 758-7478
Scott Niblick 757-613-3948
Lori Roberts 404-941-4365
Jack Schneider 792-1794
Deb Yodock 794-1269

2014-2015 STANDING COMMITTEES

Beach Nesting Bird Stewardship ……… Dee Hanny 745-1553
Christmas Bird Count ………………… Dick Comeau 752-1835
Conservation ……………………….. Open 729-2222
Education …………………………… Dick Comeau 752-1835
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 747-0908
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 …………………………… Lori Roberts 404-941-4365
Strategic Alliances ………………….. Lori Roberts 404-941-4365
Webmaster …………………………. Collaborative 343-8267

PHOTO CREDITS:
Cover: Great Egret. Photographer: Steve Schuenke. With Great Egret Award winners, this had to be our May front cover species!

INJURED BIRD HELP:
Call 778-6324 for what to do. Someone will call you back.

Manatee County Audubon Society
P.O. Box 14550, Bradenton, FL 34280
Ph: 941-729-2222 www.ManateeAudubon.org

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