A Bird’s-Eye View… from President Jim

Since most of you will be reading this in the year 2015, I’ll start out with a great big HAPPY NEW YEAR! I sincerely hope that you all had the very finest holiday season & were able to celebrate with family & friends.

Because I can never do it enough, I’ll take advantage of it being year end to once again offer a gigantic Thank You to all of the volunteers that make Manatee County Audubon Society the great success that it is. I’ll not list them all by name here because that would pretty much take up the rest of the newsletter. We’ll thank them properly at the last meeting of the year! Do you remember our Great Egret Award winners (Don Bansen & the Deans) and then Nat’l Audubon Society headquarters selecting Bob & Nancy Dean as the 2014 Callison Award winners in the volunteer category?

2014 was a busy, busy year. Here are just a few of the highlights:

- Together, we took on the challenge related to many conservation battles
- Hosted the spring 2014 Audubon Academy at the Dayspring Conference Center in Parrish, FL
- Planned & hosted a variety of great field trips on different days of the week per member request
- Chimney swift tower constructed & erected at Felts Preserve
- Launched an online Manatee Audubon birders “meet-up” group to attract new mbrs.
- Made a quantum leap in our education programs, including:
  - Helped over 125 Boy Scouts earn merit badges in Environmental Science, Photography & Bird Study
  - Secured 2 large beach-nesting shorebird signs to alert folks to these nests
  - Provided the means to give over 700 third graders "A Ride to the Wild" to Felts Audubon Preserve, where Karen Fraley’s Around the Bend Tours team gives them hands-on learning.

In conservation, we were instrumental in helping to hold the line in many areas, the most notable of which was winning the Florida referendum on Amendment #1, directing our legislators to designate billions of dollars to conservation efforts over the next 20 years. And remember how we kept our eyes on Long Bar Pointe (LBP) developers? There are similar shoreline development challenges waiting for our attention to increase community awareness & activation plans for 2015. We did our first ever on the water Christmas Bird Count off LBP late 2013 and continued in 2014, which will help us provide statistical data on the hazards of shoreline development from an environmental & Audubon perspective.

As we look to the New Year, January includes a “sneak peek” weekend birding trip to the Merritt Island and Viera Wetlands, both of which are prime locations for those attending the SpaceCoast Birding Festival just a week later than our planned trip. January also is the time for our in-depth Basic Bird Identification course. If you have not registered yet, be sure to email or call Steve Black (376-0110). He’ll be joined by Mike & Nancy Barnes as the main classroom instructors, and then lots of seasoned birders will help by serving as field trip guides for the 2 days of hands-on bird identification experience. This is a great course for only $50 (MCAS member price). (NOTE: Atlanta Audubon charges $250 per person for a course that is not as in-depth as our Basic Bird ID course.)

We’ll be doing Merit Badge Day again in early February. Unfortunately, we have lost instructors since last year. If anyone can and will help out, please drop me an email at president@manateeaudubon.org.

2015 looks like an even more active conservation year than 2014, but I’ve rambled myself out of space. In the next week or two, we’ll put out a special email with the conservation issues to look forward to in 2015.

Happy Birding!

Connie Zack & Deb Comeau staff MCAS exhibit at Manatee County Historical Society’s annual 1914 Florida Cracker Christmas public event in Dec. 2014.
Renew Your Membership

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 Society 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 January 15th 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.

Questions? Call treasurer Lucette at: 941-776-8424.

The vision of Felts Audubon Preserve as a key conservation & wildlife (including birds) education venue is becoming a reality. In 2014, 770 visitors signed the guest registry in the bird blind (excludes students in the “Wild” trips). This represents a 6.3% increase in visitor traffic compared to 2013.

Additionally, Manatee Audubon’s main educational initiative for 3rd grade students (“Give a Child a Day in the Wild” program) resulted in 18 school bus trips to Felts, with 835 students enjoying their memorable first-hand, up close experience with nature, guided by the naturalists from Around the Bend Nature Tours.

We have the support of the Manatee County School System’s science curriculum specialist, Diane Erwin, where she wants ALL 3rd graders in Manatee County schools to participate in these trips to Felts Preserve. Mosaic Company provided a $20,000 grant to help with about 50% of the bus transportation & field guild leader costs, but we already need more funding for this program.

Eagle Optics also enabled the discounted purchase of $5,000 (a 50% savings over their normal price) of binoculars for these students to use during their trips to Felts Preserve.

We need your financial help for this amazing venue to deliver enhanced experiences via new trail signs (with interactive QR codes for tech savvy students), as well as funding for these day trips by students to continue in the spring of 2015. So we’re looking to raise another $35,000 to fund these initiatives.

LOCATION: Hope Lutheran Church, 4635 26th Street West (2 blocks south of Cortez Rd.)

TIME: Social fellowship at 6:30pm; speaker starts at 7pm.

SPEAKER: Wildlife photographer, Ron Mayberry

At our January 17th monthly meeting, Ron Mayberry will dazzle us with captivating stories and photo travelogs from his “way down under” birding trek to Antarctica & the Falkland Islands. For those who likewise share a passion for nature & wildlife photography, Ron is eager to share facts about the gear, latest photography techniques, etc..

His presentation will include comments on how he achieved some of these incredible moments. As Ron often says, “I hope you enjoy these images as much as I enjoyed shooting them! “ — and notice how Ron is standing in knee-deep water!!

Birding Antarctica & the Falkland Islands... Jan. 15th

“Through the Lens” with Ron Mayberry

LOCATION: Hope Lutheran Church, 4635 26th Street West (2 blocks south of Cortez Rd.)

TIME: Social fellowship at 6:30pm; speaker starts at 7pm.

SPEAKER: Wildlife photographer, Ron Mayberry

Bird ID Class - what makes an animal a bird? Hands-on bird parts including feathers and feet make this activity relevant to students.
Nine people participated in the Terra Ceia sector of the Bradenton Circle Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, Dec. 20th, with a total of 108 species seen. Many species of ducks and warblers were seen, with the best being a Black-throated Green and seeing the Painted Buntings in the wild was a treat. Those participating: Kathy Doddridge, Peg Beeman, Susan Balsley, Chris Beaton, Mary Foster, Tom Johnson, Jerry & Billie Knight, and Tracy Telatycki. Special thanks to Tracy, local Environmental specialist, joining us on our adventure!

(Photo by Jerry Knight; article by Billie Knight)

Before the rise of the conservation movement, hunters participated in a Christmas day tradition known as a "side hunt," during which teams would compete to see who could kill the most birds. In 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman, an officer in the fledgling Audubon Society, proposed a new Christmas tradition in which birds would be counted, not killed. And so the Christmas Bird Count was born.

Of note, chairman Dick Comeau reported in the 2014 Bradenton Circle CBC results: Numbers of Redhead Ducks was down. Seeing 7 Canvasbacks was neat in this area. 658 Black-bellied Whistling Ducks was notable. This was the 3rd year in a row for a Male Cinnamon Teal. 2 Parula Warblers is good for a CBC. The Terra Ceia Team ended up with 108 species in their sector which is terrific! Thanks to the 59 participants made this "citizen science" possible!

Here are 6 ways this count has evolved in the last century.

1. It’s one of the longest running citizen science projects in the world.
The CBC is considered the gold standard in citizen science. A video narrated by venerable citizen scientist Chan Robbins outlines the history and importance of the CBC. Using his 60-year-old binoculars, the nonagenarian has participated in more than 400 counts.

2. It’s shown that climate change could impact North American birds.
The CBC was an integral part of Audubon’s Bird and Climate Change Report, which examines changes in the ranges of birds in your neighborhood due to climate change. Many local favorites will become scarce; some state birds may not even return to their states.

3. It can track long-term trends in bird populations.
Analysis of more than a century’s worth of data can reveal the decline of some species, and the recovery of others, providing a deeper understanding of conservation measures that can help birds. For example, CBC counts have exposed the plummeting numbers of the American Black Duck, leading to restrictions on the hunting of the species. The recovery of the Bald Eagle from use of DDT can also be traced in CBC data.

4. It can also track dramatic short-term changes.
The CBC was used to monitor the Snowy Owl irruption of 2013, the biggest surge in the bird’s population in close to a century.

5. It comes up with larger numbers each year.
More birders, more locations, more species—more birds, period. In the original Christmas Bird Count, 25 surveys took place in locations ranging from Ontario to California. The 27 birders counted around 89 species—roughly 18,500 birds all told. Last year, close to 72,000 birders recorded 2,403 species, for a whopping total of more than 66 million birds.

6. It inspired other citizen science projects.
The success of the CBC has inspired citizen science projects reaching as far as the heavens. Other Audubon projects, as well as projects studying frogs, butterflies, and even stars use similar crowdsourcing models.

Check out our website for our 2014 CBC results!
Our first Emerson Point Preserve bird walk of the season was December 9. We had fourteen people, with a nice mix of newcomers and past participants.

The weather was not at all pleasant, very windy, cool and overcast, so we had to work hard to find any birds, except along the shore where Brown Pelicans, Forster’s Terns and Dolphins were having a feast. Thanks to persistence, lots of walking and some sharp eyes, we eventually found 25 different species.

No Spoonbills, but we did see some White Pelicans, three different kinds of Woodpeckers and one gorgeous Hooded Merganser. Our next walk will be Tuesday, January 13, 2015. Hopefully the weather will be nicer and the birds will not all be hiding.

Article by Lucette Wombacher

Are you new to birding in Florida and wondering where to begin? Join some of Florida’s foremost birders (Steve Black, Mike & Nancy Barnes) and insightful trainers as they introduce the art and science of bird watching as no one else can. Learn bird identification, choosing and using binoculars and field guides, and much more. Instruction takes place in a series of 5 classroom sessions, as well as 2 full day field trips with additional field guides to the best birding spots in the central Gulf Coast area. Learn to develop a practiced eye and ear. Meet new friends and change the way you spend time outdoors. Be forewarned: this class has hooked hundreds on the lifelong adventure of bird watching!

Classroom sessions held at Hope Lutheran Church (4635 26th St West, just a few blocks south of Cortez Rd. in Bradenton). The updated schedule for these evening classroom sessions starts at 6:30 pm and ends approximately 8:30 pm on the following dates:

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

Be sure to bring a notepad and pen / pencil.

REGISTRATION:
Cost: $50 for Manatee Audubon members. $70 for non-members. (The $20 higher fee 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.
Sixteen people from Manatee County Audubon went on the Terra Ceia Field Trip on Thursday, Dec. 11th. It was a beautiful day for birding, with a target of 75 species. The group saw 80 species in 3 hours, with four energetic souls continuing the field trip down to the Celery Fields. A total of 94 species were seen….awesome day of birding with some awesome folks! (Article & photo by Billie Knight)

Eight people attended the field trip on Tuesday, Dec. 16th to Circle B Bar Reserve. What started out as a very foggy morning turned into a beautiful day of birding! Among the highlights were a male Painted Bunting in the wild, as well as a Wilson’s Snipe “hiding” from our camera’s lens.

Thank you again to the special folks who so graciously made financial donations to Manatee County Audubon Society this past month. Five of these were donations were in memory of past Manatee Audubon presidents: Charlie Pead (totaling $145) and Barbara Singer ($80).

We’d also like to welcome new members to our Manatee Audubon family, as well as those who reinstated their memberships.

Without the help from all our volunteers, the success of our non-profit organization would not be possible. We seek to deliver key educational & experiential initiatives focused on conservation & environmental insights for Manatee County students, residents & visitors. Thank you again for all you do to help!

Donors:
Jim Stephenson
Ruth Erlandson
Robert and Nancy Dean
Robert Winston
Mary Hatton
Betty & Bill Bashaw
Ed & Lee Fain
Lucette Wombacher
Smithy McGinnis
Kathy Dodridge
Charles & Judy Warner

New Members:
Diane & Robert Fair
Mary & Ralph Gerner
Patricia Mosher
Diane Lane
Joy Bishop
Sharon Wood

Reinstated Members:
Richard Beaupre
Faye Rafferty
Judith Tremaine
Tina & Dave Clark
Mac McKinley
James H. Brenner

Karin Noyer
Mac McKinley
Michele Corso
While vacationing in Manatee County, British birder Bruce phoned the Manatee Audubon office with enthusiasm to report the **Ovenbird** he and another birder just saw from the bird blind at Felts Audubon Preserve in Palmetto. Bruce returned the following day to witness the pair of Ovenbirds, part of the Wood Warbler family.

**Description** -- In shady woods, this odd warbler walks with deliberate steps on the forest floor, holding its short tail cocked up higher than its back. Although it is not especially shy, its choice of habitat often makes it hard to observe; its ringing chant of teacher, teacher is heard far more often than the bird is seen. The name "Ovenbird" is a reference to the bird’s nest, a domed structure with the entrance on the side, like an old-fashioned oven.

**Habitat** -- Near ground in leafy woods; in migration, thickets. Needs large tracts of mature deciduous or mixed forest for successful breeding. Will nest in a wide variety of forest types, as long as they have a closed canopy cover, large trees, and little ground cover. In winter (mostly in tropics), lives in forests and thickets, from dry lowlands to wet forests in the foothills.

**Feeding Diet** -- Mostly insects. During summer, feeds adult beetles and their larvae, ants, caterpillars, flies, true bugs, worms, spiders, snails. Winter diet not well known, but reportedly includes seeds and other vegetable matter.

**Feeding Behavior** -- Takes insects from leaf litter while walking on ground and rotting logs. (Young Ovenbirds pass through a stage of hopping while they forage.) Sometimes probes among leaf litter, hovers to take insects from foliage, or catches them in mid-air. Individuals probably defend feeding territories in winter.

**Nesting** -- Male sings to attract female to nesting territory, and sings only sporadically during actual courtship. Male threatens rival males by tilting tail upward, drooping wings, and kneading with feet. Nest: Placed on the ground where ground cover is sparse, especially near trails or roads. Female chooses site, builds domed nest from dead leaves, grass, bark, twigs; lines it with animal hair.

**Eggs** — Normally 4-5. White with gray and brown spots. Incubation by female only, fed sometimes by male. Cowbirds parasitize many nests, but Ovenbird nestlings often survive even when sharing the nest with young cowbirds. Young: Both parents feed nestlings. Young leave the nest after 7-10 days, can only hop and flutter at this stage; fed by adults for another 10-20 days.

**Range** -- Migrates mostly at night. Ovenbirds nesting east of the Appalachians may go to the Caribbean for the winter, while those from west of the Appalachians are likely to migrate to Mexico or Central America.

So when you’re visiting Felts in the next few weeks, be sure to watch the ground for the Ovenbirds!
In an effort to bring to everyone’s attention more of the great folks who work quietly behind the scenes to rescue & rehabilitate injured or abandoned wildlife, including birds in Manatee County, here’s a peek at Wildlife Education & Rehabilitation Center based in Manatee County. Wildlife Education and Rehabilitation Center Inc. is a nonprofit organization for the rehabilitation of injured and orphaned wildlife for return to the wild. Founded in 1988, they treated over 3,000 birds, mammals, and reptiles in 1997, more than twice as many as in 1995. By year 2000 the number has grown to over 4,000, and continues to increase over the last decade.

They have provided a wish list; these are items we need on a regular basis, as a not for profit subsisting on donations, anything you can donate is more than welcome and greatly appreciated!

- Property (land) in a central location in Manatee county for a new rehabilitation center and conservation.
- Small motor for Zodiac boat.
- Gift certificate to Come See Come Save, Publix, Walmart, etc (Food/supplies for animals).
- Home Depot or Lowe’s gift certificates (for bldg supplies)
- Stainless steel exam tables.
- Gas gift cards (for volunteers who do rescues).
- First Class stamps
- Electric pool heater
- Paper towels
- Heating pads
- Bleach
- Nuts in shell and out.
- Bird seed
- Acorns (they must not be wet or moldy).
- Generator (New or in good condition).
- Large fish nets (4ft-6ft long handles).
- Large aquariums (With top)(New or in good condition).
- Large chest freezer (New or like new please).
- Refrigerator (New or like new please).
- Cash/Checks are always welcome made out to Wildlife,Inc.

In December, Elizabeth Clough surprised Manatee Audubon with the donation of her mother’s set of 4 fine art sculptures (castings). Her mother, Gertrude Landis McCracken & father, Rev. Kenneth Warriston McCracken (at far right), were strong supporters of the National Audubon Society. They purchased these 75th Anniversary collectible works of art which were commissioned by The National Audubon Society to world reknown wildlife artist Glen Loates who actually designed & oversaw the actual castings. This “Surviving Wildlife” sculpture collection is planned to be displayed at the main Manatee County Public Library when the building renovation is completed in 2015. Manatee Audubon plans to establish a collection of bird & birding books in that Collection Room at the main library, with these castings displayed adjacent to that avian / Audubon books area.

Thank you for this incredible donation!
Our good friend and past president of Manatee Audubon, Charles "Charlie" Myers Pead of Bradenton, passed on November 25, 2014. Charlie was born on February 26, 1922 in North Adams, Massachusetts; he served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, graduated from Springfield College, was a collegiate volleyball All American, and a career YMCA program director. Throughout his life he was active in community service: U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Elder Palma Sola Presbyterian Church, past President of Manatee County Audubon Society, C.B. Willis Chapter, and Gulf Coast Volleyball Association. He led the Audubon’s Christmas Bird Count for years. Charles was loved by many and will be dearly missed by all friends and family.

The Pead family honored Charlie and his passion for birding by asking that memorial donations be given to Manatee County Audubon Society. We are so touched by this loving expression of the Pead family.

Photos were graciously provided by the Pead family. Read more about Charlie at:
http://www.never-gone.com/memorials/Mediaton.aspx?m=pyw4owZtBGCJHAygDA8t1A%3d%3d&i=moH9MhilooyY8W%2bb41/02A%3d%3d
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 2014-2015
President — Jim Stephenson 301-466-1973
Vice Pres. — Deb Comeau 752-1835
Secretary — Patty Petrucci 747-1789
Treasurer — Lucette Wombacher 776-8424

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Dee Hanny 745-1553  Deb Yodock 794-1269
Amy Miller 758-7478  Connie Zack 758-2929
Scott Niblick 757-613-3948

INJURED BIRD HELP:
- Call our friends at Wildlife, Inc., ph: 941-778-6324 for what to do. Someone will call you back.
- For more tips, or to make a donation, visit http://wildlifeinc.org

Wildlife, Inc.
Education & Rehabilitation
A Non Profit Organization
(941) 778-6324
Serving the Manatee and Sarasota County area since 1988

SpaceCoast Birding Festival—Jan 21-26, 2015

Important Schedule Change
Junior Audubon / “Audubon Adventures” has moved their monthly meetings from the 3rd Saturday of each month to the 2nd Saturday of each month.
Contact Steve Black (ph: 376-0110) if you know of any kids (grades 3-5) who would enjoy these adventures.

Manatee County Audubon Events

Saturday, January 3, 2015
8:00am OPEN HOUSE at Felts Audubon Preserve

Saturday, January 10, 2015
8:00am Junior Audubon

Tuesday, January 13, 2015
8:30am Emerson Point Bird Walk - Vistor's Center Parking Lot

Thursday, January 15, 2015
6:30pm Monthly Membership Meeting - Manatee Audubon

Friday, January 16, 2015 to Sunday, January 18, 2015
Overnight to Merritt Island Lori Roberts 404 9414365 happygal@comcast.net

Monday, January 19, 2015
6:30pm Basic Bird Identification Course - classroom session #1

Wednesday, January 21, 2015
6:30pm Basic Bird Identification Course - classroom session #2

Thursday, January 22, 2015
6:30pm Basic Bird Identification Course - classroom session #3

Saturday, January 24, 2015
Basic Bird Identification Course - field trip #1
8:00am Work Day, Felts Preserve 728-2222

Wednesday, January 28, 2015
6:30pm Basic Bird Identification Course - classroom session #4

Thursday, January 29, 2015
6:30pm Basic Bird Identification Course - classroom session #5

Saturday, January 31, 2015
Basic Bird Identification Course - field trip #2

2014-2015 STANDING COMMITTEES
Beach Nesting Bird Stewardship …….. Dee Hanny 745-1553
Christmas Bird Count ................. Dick Comeau 752-1835
Conservation .......................... Open 729-2222
Education .............................. Deb Comeau 752-1835
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Manatee County Audubon Society is a chapter of National Audubon Society Inc.