

Flyways

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Audubon
of Southwest Florida

Protecting Nature... For People Too.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The challenges facing us for habitat protection and maintenance have reached a new level. In times past, the argument was a lack of money for protection and maintenance. In Lee County, we benefitted from the Citizens Initiative that led to the County Commission being willing to obligate a half mil for purchase of sensitive lands and maintenance and restoration of the land purchased.

Now we are told we will be going to referendum by Board action to determine if we should still do that. This is two years after the voters statewide, mirrored in Lee County, voted 3-1 to continue to do just that for statewide land acquisition. And yet, critical lands for protection or restoration are not even slated for purchase. Instead, entitlements are being handed out to increase the County's buildout population past the estimated 1.3 million people currently forecasted, double what exists today.

"In the next few months some critical decisions will be made to the County's land purchase program, to its rural lands, and to its density-reduction groundwater resource (DRGR) areas."

The only way to maintain or improve our Tourism and Retirement industries, and ensure we have water supplies for nature and people is to NOT expand our urban boundaries, already 70 percent of the unprotected county.

In the next few months some critical decisions will be made to the County's land purchase program, to its rural lands, and to its density-reduction groundwater resource (DRGR) areas. If we fail to act for the protections our adopted public plans have stated are in place, we will lose the future we want for the next generations. To not act is to ensure it will be lost.

Wayne Daltry
President

ANNUAL MEETING ON SATURDAY, MAY 21

You are invited to the Annual Meeting on Saturday, May 21, 2016. A dinner will be served beginning at 5 p.m., followed by a short business meeting, which will include nominations and election of the 2016-17 board of directors, and the featured program at 6 p.m.

The dinner includes beverages, salad, spaghetti with sauce, and desserts. Feel free to bring a dish for the dessert table, which is always a big hit at the annual meeting.

Both the dinner and program are open to the public and free of charge. Donations are appreciated.

Where: Southwest Florida Masonic Temple at 10868 Metro Parkway
Fort Myers, 33966

When: Saturday, May 21, beginning at 5 p.m.

Please RSVP to info@audubonSWFL.org

Call For New Board Members

ASWF encourages members in good standing to get involved by serving on the board or on a committee. Opportunities abound, whatever your main interest - conservation, field trips, programs, budget, communications, education and scholarships, or membership. For information, send an email to audubon.southwest.florida@gmail.com or a note via regular mail to P.O. Box 61041, Fort Myers, FL 33906.

Current Officers & Directors

President: Wayne Daltry

Vice-President & Program Chair: Melinda Averhart

Secretary: Cheryl Black

2nd Vice-President & Treasurer; Budget Chair; Audit Chair; Field Trip Chair: Jim Rodenfels

Directors: Brad Cornell, Conservation Chair; Jayne Johnston, Membership Chair; Pete Quasius; Gerri Reaves, Newsletter Chair; Teddy Rodenfels, Education Chair; & Carl Veaux.

Past Presidents still active in chapter: John Cassani, Don Dogett, Bill Hammond, Connie Jarvis, Sarah Larsen, Mary Lee Mann, Vince McGrath, Carol Newcomb-Jones, Maria Quasius, & Dan Van Norman.

FIELD TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

December: The Four Mile Cove Hike was led by Vince McGrath and attended by 38 people, including ASWF board members Jim, Wayne, and Carl, and four students of Julie Ross, an environmental education teacher at Lehigh Senior High School.

January: On the Kayaking with the Manatees outing, the manatees were definitely out enjoying the warm 78-degree waters from FPL's power plant discharge into the Orange River. We saw well over a hundred and had such a good time that we repeated the excursion a month later. While it was cold early in the morning, it warmed up nicely and was very enjoyable. The tannin colored water made it difficult to see below the surface, except when the sea cows came up to breathe. There was almost a "speedway" out in the river where they were hurrying to get to the warmer waters, and the kayakers were treated to several "splashing" displays.

February: Participants in the Bicycle Tour at Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge witnessed an abundance of wildlife, including an alligator sunning by the roadside. There were reports of a rare variety of white pelican, and we were busy enjoying the roseate spoonbills and other beauties.

March: CREW's Bird Rookery Swamp has become one of our favorite excursions. Located off Immokalee Road, this site has everything – bears, birds, butterflies, snakes, gators, and lots of flora and fauna. It is well worth the trip!

IMPROMPTU KAYAKING

In addition to our annual "Kayaking with the Manatees," we now hold various impromptu kayaking trips throughout the year. All are done on short notice and only those expressing an interest are notified. So, if you are interested, be sure to send us an e-mail to add to our list of kayakers.



Bunche Beach Walk with master birder Vince McGrath

IT'S SPRING -- TIME FOR AUDUBONERS' THOUGHTS TO TURN TO NESTING SHOREBIRDS

Least Terns, Black Skimmers, Snowy and Wilson's Plovers are all preparing to nest in remarkable numbers on and near Marco Island, Second Chance Sandbar Critical Wildlife Area (designated just this fall), and Ft. Myers Beach southern end. To help these imperiled species, Audubon of the Western Everglades, Audubon of Southwest Florida, and Audubon Florida team up every spring and summer, with allies Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Rookery Bay Reserve, and several others. We train new volunteer Stewards and share updates with returning Stewards at the end of April, and then head out to the nesting sites each weekend to share positive information with beachgoers and boaters on protecting this annual coastal nature spectacle.



Shorebird Stewards on the job!



Wilson's Plover adult and chick (photo: Jean Hall)

The threats are many - predators like crows and gulls attracted by trash and wildlife feeding (bread, Cheetos, etc.), dogs, fireworks, storms, and unintentional beachgoer disturbances. This is important wildlife and habitat protection work that needs even more involvement from volunteers. It is rewarding, hot, flexible, and offers opportunities to learn, have fun, and make a big difference.

Please come join us. To inquire or sign up for volunteering, send an email to Collier Stewardship Site Coordinator Jayne Johnston at CollierShorebirdStewards@gmail.com or to Lee Stewardship Site Coordinator, Melinda Averhart at LeeShorebirdSteward@gmail.com.

2016 OUTINGS & FIELD TRIPS

Dates to be determined, so check AudubonSWFL.org periodically.

Labelle Birding with a trip to Patty's Blueberry Patch - April or May, date to be determined

On this field trip north of Labelle we hope to discover some new birding areas. We will follow up the trip to Patty's Blueberry Patch off Hog Wallow Lane where we will u-pick blueberries and take some home for pies, etc.

Cape Coral's Burrowing Owls - April or May, date to be determined

This urban birding experience will feature the burrowing owls of Cape Coral, the only owl living underground. We will visit a few sites for observation and photography opportunities.

Wild Turkey Strand - June, date to be determined

We'll close the season by going to Wild Turkey Strand Preserve south of Lehigh Acres. The preserve includes flatwoods, cypress strand swamps, cypress dome swamps, freshwater marshes, wet prairies, and abandoned agricultural pasture. There is a 1.8 mile trail with boardwalks and interpretive signage. At 3,137 acres, Wild Turkey Strand Preserve is Conservation 20/20's second-largest conservation area, as well as one of three preserves that contain remnant elements of a WWII gunnery training school.

APRIL 21 PROGRAM

"Talks on Falconry" with Mark Faircloth

7 p.m., following board meeting

In his near half-century as a falconer, Faircloth has trained and flown peregrines, kestrels, hawks, owls, and eagles. He will share his knowledge and expertise in hunting, trapping and caring for these majestic creatures.

Falconry equipment and photos will be on display.

Location: Southwest Florida Masonic Center, 10868 Metro Pkwy, Fort Myers

NEWS & NOTES

And the winners are...The winners of the 2016 Audubon of Southwest Florida Photo Context will be announced by April 8, and prizes will be awarded at the April 21 membership meeting.

The recent lawsuit against Lee County for approving Corkscrew Farms six miles east of I-75 on Corkscrew Road would set the precedent for all development in the Density-Reduction Groundwater Recharge (DRGR) area of Lee County. The DRGR is an important area of Lee County. Reducing developments on thousands of acres of property in the DRGR will save the water for all of us in Lee County. It is land that should be set aside for wildlife as well. The DRGR on Corkscrew Road needs to be acquired with 20/20 dollars or made into a Federal Wildlife Refuge. Contact your elected officials about this important issue.

There is an ecological crisis in the Lake Okeechobee watershed. To learn about Audubon's recommendation for comprehensive long-term solutions, read Jonathan Webber's "Lake Okeechobee and the Northern Estuaries: The High Cost of High Water" at fl.audubon.org/news/lake-okeechobee-and-northern-estuaries-high-cost-high-water.

Volunteers for the burrowing owl survey in Cape Coral are needed for the last weekend and Monday in May. A minimum of 30 people are asked to sign up for the activity conducted in conjunction with FGCU. It should require about four hours. Email Carl Veaux at cgveaux@aol.com to be briefed on how to conduct the survey and be assigned an area to cover.

Stay in the loop with EcoVoice, an excellent daily source of environmental news in Southwest Florida. Our chapter is proud to be a founding sponsor of EcoVoice. A word from Paul Holmes, founder and moderator of EcoVoice:

The objective of Eco-voice is to provide a practical method of communication between environmentalists in South Florida. Each morning we send one e-mail, the "Daily Digest," a summary of local environmental news and events to over 3,000 subscribers. An individual or organization can reach thousands of readers by sending a single e-mail to ecovoice moderator@msn.com, thus enabling many voices and organizations to speak with one powerful voice. Joining Eco-voice is free. Donations are always welcome! For more information or to sign up to receive the 'Daily Digest' go to Eco-voice.org.

NOVEMBER REFERENDUM...CONTINUE CONSERVATION LAND BUYING IN LEE COUNTY!

Lee County has run a phenomenally successful conservation land-buying and management program called Conservation 20/20 since 1996. It has bought almost 25,000 acres all over the County, never paying more than appraised value. Conservation 20/20 has provided invaluable assets for Southwest Florida citizens, including passive recreation lands, trails, tourism destinations, wildlife habitat for wading birds, panther, bears and eagles. The program has also protected and increased clean drinking water sources and flood protection naturally. It also has reduced Lee County flood-insurance rates significantly.

There is much still to do: finish the CREW Project acquisitions (Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed - Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary is the heart of CREW), buy the 4,000 acre Edison Farms, 2,000 acres of Babcock Ranch addition, Lehigh Acres, North Ft. Myers and Cape Coral conservation, and protect coastal habitats.

Lee County voters will be asked whether they support continuing Conservation 20/20 this November on the same ballot as the presidential election. Audubon members, there is much to support in this program - please vote!



Audubon Tourism at Bunche Beach, a 20/20 Preserve

Our Chapter In History...October 1963

At the members meeting, color slides of field trips were shown by field-trip leader Brad Patton. Members were asked to bring six of their best slides to share, and those included bird photos of Anna Haag's trip to New Zealand and some by Leo Boulris. Information about the upcoming outing to the Collier County Scenic Drive was also discussed. The chapter met at the First National Bank in downtown Fort Myers.

The mission of Audubon of Southwest Florida, Inc. is to protect plants, animals, and their habitats and to promote environmental education and a greater community involvement with the natural world. ASWF is an affiliated chapter of the National Audubon Society and Audubon of Florida.

Your Chapter Membership Makes A Difference!

You may not be aware Audubon of Southwest Florida, while an affiliated chapter of the National Audubon Society, is, like all other local chapters, a **separate organization** (chapter code E33). We are including you in our annual mailing in the hope that you will consider joining our local chapter if you are not currently a member, or renewing your current annual membership. Annual calendar-year memberships may be renewed either on-line at our website, or by using the enclosed envelope. We appreciate your support; it enables us to continue the good work our chapter does to protect our local resources.

How to reach us: We invite you to stay in touch through our website, www.audubonswfl.org/ or on Facebook. Just search under "Audubon of Southwest Florida." And, please send us your e-mail address. That way you can be sure you receive advance notification of any upcoming events, programs, field trips, etc., and also receive our e-newsletter. Just send a note to audubon.southwest.florida@gmail.com If you prefer, you may mail us at P.O. Box 61041, Fort Myers, FL 33906.

CHECK-OUT THE ACTIVITIES OF ALL AREA CHAPTERS ON FACEBOOK BY SEARCHING FOR AUDUBON-CHAPTERS-OF-SOUTHWEST-FLORIDA OR FL.AUDUBON.ORG.