

Flyways

SPRING 2017

A PUBLICATION OF ...



Audubon
of Southwest Florida

Protecting Nature... For People Too.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Dan VanNorman

On April 22, 1970, the first official Earth Day celebration took place. Considered the start of the modern environmental movement, it led to the creation of the U.S. Environmental Agency (EPA) and significant environmental legislation: the Clean Air Act, the Water Quality Improvement Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Toxic Substances Control Act, the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, and further legislation at the federal and state levels.

However, many individuals, organizations, industries, and politicians challenged the necessity for those environmental protections and attempted to remove, dilute, or dismantle environmental laws and agencies.

Today such aggressive attacks have increased, with some elected officials proposing to eliminate EPA or at least cut its funding and regulatory authority. The U.S. Department of Interior and other federal and state environmental agencies also face threats.

As we celebrate the 47th annual Earth Day by participating in festivals, clean-up events, and other outdoor activities, let's recapture the spirit and enthusiasm of those earlier celebrations...let elected officials and the public know why we oppose the diluting, defunding, and dismantling of protections of our health, land, water, and air.

As we celebrate the 47th annual Earth Day by participating in festivals, clean-up events, and other outdoor activities, let's recapture the spirit and enthusiasm of those earlier celebrations. Becoming more involved and active with Audubon, especially the local chapters, is a good way to learn about current local, state, and national issues and collectively support a vital conservation and environmental education agenda.

Speak out in support of the environmental gains made since the 1970s by letting elected officials and the public know why we oppose the diluting, defunding, and dismantling of protections of our health, land, water, and air.

Happy Earth Day!

ANNUAL MEETING ON SATURDAY, JUNE 3, 2017

You are invited to the Annual Meeting on Saturday, June 3, 2017. A dinner will be served beginning at 5:30 p.m., followed by a short business meeting, which will include nominations and election of the 2017-18 board of directors (see page 4). The program begins at 7 p.m.

Our speaker this year is John Cassani, who will speak about water advocacy and related issues. He has been part of most of the region's ecologically focused nonprofits over the years: Riverwatch, the Caloosahatchee Bromeliad Society, Audubon of Southwest Florida, the Southwest Florida Amphibian Monitoring Network, and the Southwest Florida Watershed Council. John was most recently named the Calusa Waterkeeper -- a full-time advocate for the Caloosahatchee River, its tributaries, and the estuary system from Charlotte Harbor to Estero Bay.

The dinner, prepared and served by chapter volunteers, includes beverages, salad, mixed fruit, spaghetti with sauce, garlic toast, and desserts. Feel free to bring a dish to share 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 presented free of charge. Donations are appreciated.

Where? Our regular meeting place: Southwest Florida Masonic Temple at 10868 Metro Parkway, Fort Myers, 33966 (one building South of Circle-K)

Please RSVP to audubon.southwest.florida@gmail.com

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: Dan VanNorman

Vice-President & Program Chair: Melinda Averhart

Secretary & Photo Contest Chair: Cheryl Black

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

Directors: Brad Cornell, Conservation Chair; Wayne Daltry; Jayne Johnston, Membership Chair; Melinda Lynch; Carol Newcomb; 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, Mary Lee Mann, Vince McGrath, & Maria Quasius.

2017 Upcoming Programs

April 20 -- Remote Island Avian Adventures, “Exciting Prospects for Studying Bird Migration in Florida,” Kara Lefevre, FGCU

June 3 - Annual Dinner: John Cassani, water advocacy and related issues

2017 Field Trips & Outings

Members and non-members, beginner to advanced birders are welcome. Events are free, but donations are always appreciated. Depending on the nature of the outing, you might want to bring a camera, field glasses, sunscreen, water, or even a folding chair. Dress appropriately for the weather. Parking fees sometimes apply.

Sister Vesta Newcomb Preserve (Koreshan State Park & Historic Site) -Saturday, April 8 - 9:00 am

Come explore the approximate 20 acres of unspoiled pine, palmetto, and scrub oak woodland on the Estero River. \$4-5 parking fee per car to enter state park.

Powell Creek Preserve - Saturday, May 13, 2017 - 8:00 am

Powell Creek Preserve offers a diversity of natural communities for visitors to enjoy, including flatwoods, mesic hammock, and Powell Creek. See old-growth pine, buttonbush, Carolina willow, as well as dwarf live oak, netted paw-paw, and October flower.

Total Solar Eclipse - Monday, August 21, 2017 - 1:00 - 2:00 pm

While not a birding adventure, there is an upcoming total solar eclipse with the path of totality passing through several nearby states - Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, and more.

Shorebirds! - multiple dates to be determined: We'll meet at Bunche Beach with our volunteers from the Florida Shorebird Alliance to check out the shorebirds.

Impromptu Kayaking - Join the Fun: In addition to our annual “Kayaking with the Manatees,” we hold 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, send us an e-mail to add to our list of kayakers.

Be informed about Southwest Florida's environmental news by subscribing to EcoVoice. Our chapter is proud to be one of its founding sponsors. 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.

Our April 20th Program



Photo by: Yves Aubry

Exciting Prospects for Studying Bird Migration in Florida

Presented by:

Dr. Kara Lefevre, FGCU

Annual Meeting Election Info

The following slate of nominees has been proposed for our annual meeting which is scheduled for June 3, 2017. Nominations from the floor will also be accepted.

Directors are elected by the membership. A director with two-year terms expiring this coming May is Melinda Averhart, nominated to be re-elected to a two-year term

Courtney Kern is a new addition to the board and is nominated for a two-year term.

Officers are elected by the Board of Directors. Officer positions expiring at the annual meeting are Vice-President Melinda Averhart, nominated for a two-year term and Secretary Gerri Reaves, nominated for a two-year term.

Current officers and directors not mentioned continue in their terms.

Carol Newcomb, Gerri Reaves, Carl Veaux, Pete Quasius, and Wayne Daltry serve at their pleasure as past presidents.

Conservation Report by Brad Cornell

As you may have heard, our wonderful Lee Shorebird Stewardship Coordinator, Melinda Averhart, has been hired by Audubon Louisiana to do biological monitoring and stewardship with beach nesting birds in Louisiana this nesting season. Their gain is our big loss, and we all wish her well as she departs for this exciting field work! It is great to see our own people grow in enthusiasm and skills, as Melinda has, and “graduate” to bigger things--and for Melinda, a career as a biologist.

That means, of course, that we must find someone to replace her. As it happens, Audubon Florida has offered to lend us a half-time seasonal “Anchor Steward” position for Lee County and Ft. Myers Beach’s Little Estero Island Critical Wildlife Area and the Carlos Pointe large beach colony site. This is a new strategy that is being implemented up and down the Gulf Coast and in NE Florida where the Anchor Steward recruits, trains, and manages all of us stewards and assures we all are effectively reaching out to the public and keeping track of the status and threats to the nesting birds. They will also enter the data for this site into the Florida Shorebird Database.

Here is the link to the Audubon job - please check it out and share with anyone who may be interested:

<https://careers-audubon.icims.com/jobs/3169/anchor-steward%2c-fort-myers-beach/job>

Finally, our training sessions for this nesting season are scheduled, so please mark Sunday, April 23 at 9 am in your calendar for the Lee training. (See training dates on page 7.) We will again be hosted by Lovers Key State Park and their new manager, Bob Steiger. This will also be our opportunity to meet our new Audubon Anchor Steward. This looks like a great season and the Snowy Plovers and Wilson’s Plovers are already out there, with Least Terns arriving now. Don’t forget to share the Anchor Steward job link and the 2017 Training schedule. Let’s have some fun and do good work!



Off to Louisiana....ASWF VP & Lee Shorebird Stewardship Coordinator Melinda Averhart has been hired by Audubon Louisiana to do biological monitoring and stewardship with beach-nesting birds this nesting season. Photo by Jean Hall

THE SHOREBIRD STEWARDSHIP EXPERIENCE



Melinda with fellow stewards; photo by Jean Hall



Black Skimmer feeding chick



Rookery Bay class with Dave Graf, 2017; photo by Jean Hall

Our Chapter In History...November 1990

The chapter's Bluebird and Wood Duck Nest Box Project was beginning its third year. The effort was intended to help provide nesting cavities for birds whose natural nesting sites had been destroyed by development and logging. Members interested in scouting locations, constructing boxes, or monitoring bluebird nests were asked to contact Buck Ward. Members interested in building and installing wood-duck nesting boxes were asked to contact Roger Clark.

OUT & ABOUT

Subscribe to “Wings Over Florida” bulletins from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to receive quarterly bulletin of seasonal highlights. Those bulletins will encourage you to head outdoors and to enjoy Florida’s the birds and wildlife. Go to <http://floridabirdingtrail.com/wof/> for more info.

Get involved with Jay Watch, a citizen-science program coordinated by Audubon Florida. The program trains and supports volunteers to conduct scientific surveys that measure annual nesting success and count the total number of Florida Scrub-Jays at more than 50 sites in 19 counties. Half-day training sessions will be held in Lee County on Wed., May 24 at Hickey’s Creek Mitigation Park and Caloosahatchee Regional Park. For more information, go to <http://fl.audubon.org/get-involved/jay-watch>.

Terns, Skimmers and Plovers Have Started Nesting -- Shorebird Stewards Needed

Every year, thousands of Least Terns, Black Skimmers, Wilson’s Plovers and Snowy Plovers put on their finest feathers and return from their winter sanctuaries to nest on Southwest Florida beaches. Two of the most important beach nesting colonies in all of Florida are protected and stewarded by Audubon of the Western Everglades and Audubon of Southwest Florida volunteer stewards - on Marco Island at Sand Dollar and the south end of Ft. Myers Beach, next to Big Carlos Pass. They are already protected by Critical Wildlife Areas, but there is a critical need on weekends to educate and intervene where boats, beachgoers, and often dogs end up in unintentional conflict with these big nesting colonies. We are also collecting data on what disturbs these imperiled birds - in addition to humans, kiteboards and dogs, there are crows, storms, feral cats and raccoons. These data help us plan better to protect the colonies.

Please consider getting trained and joining our volunteer Shorebird Stewardship crew! Training will include updates on our nesting colony locations, beach-nesting bird biology from Audubon Florida’s coastal bird biologist, Adam DiNuovo, outreach strategies and practice, and meeting our two new Anchor Stewards just hired by Audubon Florida, Collier biologist Alli Smith and a Lee biologist yet to be named. Join us for a not-to-be-missed fun and vital nesting season!

Please consider getting trained and joining our volunteer Shorebird Stewardship crew at one of the following training sessions:

Sat, April 22, 9 - 11am: Tigertail Beach County Park at the Boardwalk Benches Kiosk area.

Sun, April 23, 9 - 11am: Lovers Key State Park at the Gazebo picnic table area, via shuttle.

For more info and signup, RSVP to Alli Smith, Audubon Anchor Steward - ASmith@audubon.org

The Save the Manatee Club will provide free public-awareness waterway dock signs--“Manatee Zone”--to Florida shoreline property owners. Other available items are also free. Contact the club at education@savethemanatee.org or 1-800-432-5646 for more info. The Club encourages the reporting of **violations of the idle speed zone** to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) staff to hear from residents in the area. Call 1-888-404-FWCC (3992), #FWC or *FWC on your cell phone, send a text message to Tip@MyFWC.com , or use VHF Channel 16 on your marine radio. Documenting the violation with photos or recording the vessel registration number will help law enforcement.

ALERT!! - Save Rookery Bay!

Audubon of Southwest Florida members and friends are urgently asked to contact our Congressional representatives and senators to request they refuse to make the Administration-proposed cuts to federal coastal zone programs that fund the major portions of Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) and the other 28 NERR's around the nation. Such Fiscal Year 2017 and 2018 cuts would eliminate research, education, professional training, watershed protection, and elected officials briefing on estuarine policy.

The 110,000 acre Rookery Bay Reserve was protected 45 years ago by all of us in Southwest Florida, led by National Audubon Society and the Conservancy of Southwest Florida. We understand the value of pristine estuaries to our water, our fishing and tourism economy, and our quality of life. We have also witnessed the unfortunate consequences of NOT taking care of these estuaries in Florida Bay, the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie Rivers, and even Naples Bay and Estero Bay.

Before April 15, **help assure Congress fully funds the ongoing work of Rookery Bay Reserve**, which more than pays for its costs in economic and ecological returns. Contact our Southwest Florida congressional delegation contacts:

- Senator Marco Rubio -- lauren_reamy@Rubio.Senate.gov
- Senator Bill Nelson -- caitlin_hart@BillNelson.Senate.gov
- Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart -- sarah.hodgkins@mail.houses.gov
- Congressman Francis Rooney -- corey.schrodt@mail.house.gov

Points to consider in your email:

- Rookery Bay is one of the few remaining pristine estuaries in the nation, providing for recreational boating and sport fishing, and an essential refuge for wildlife.
- Rookery Bay supports thousands of local jobs and generates millions of dollars through tourism, recreational boating and sport fishing.
- Loss of federal funds will eliminate staff and close facilities - “pennywise and pound foolish” in economic terms.
- With increasing sea levels, storms, and coastal erosion, federal coastal programs like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA - Rookery Bay’s federal agency) must be funded for fundamental national security.

Are You a Chapter Member Too?

You may not be aware that 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 hope that you will consider joining our local chapter if you are not currently a member or that you will renew your current annual membership. Annual calendar-year memberships may be renewed either on-line at our website. 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." Please send us your e-mail address. That way you can be sure to 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.

The mission of Audubon of Southwest Florida 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 (E33) of the National Audubon Society and Audubon of Florida.

A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE (800-435-7352) WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.

THE FLORIDA REGISTRATION NUMBER FOR AUDUBON OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA IS CH30193.

