

Flyways

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As the new ASWF president, I am pleased to be part of a dedicated Board and look forward to current and future activities and projects.

My connection to the Chapter began just over a quarter of a century ago, when it was fighting for the same conservation principles that are its priorities today.

And so it continues today, as the Chapter remains dedicated to its mission of protecting natural habitats, promoting environmental education, and fostering community involvement.

Today, several concerns demand the attention of all ASWF members, notably the Lee County Conservation 20/20 referendum (on the ballot in November), Everglades restoration, the Lee Shorebird Stewardship Program, and land-acquisition issues.

In September, we will kick off a new season of programs and field trips, and in October, ASWF will hold the 19th Annual Environmental Breakfast.

“Several concerns demand the attention of all ASWF members, notably the Lee County Conservation 20/20 referendum (on the ballot in November), Everglades restoration, the Lee Shorebird Stewardship Program, and land-acquisition issues.”

You, our Chapter members, are encouraged to get involved. You needn't be a board member or officer to serve on a committee, help out with an event or festival, or just pitch in on an occasional basis.

I look forward seeing you at the monthly programs and on field trips.

Dan VanNorman

President

2016-17 OFFICERS & DIRECTORS INSTALLED IN MAY AT ANNUAL MEETING

At ASWF's Annual Meeting on May 21, the new officers and directors were elected and installed. The event consisted of a dinner, a short business meeting, and a program presented by Dr. Bill Hammond, professor emeritus of environmental sciences at FGCU.

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, Publicity 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, Mary Lee Mann, Vince McGrath, & Maria Quasius.



Queen caterpillar

Photo: Teddy Rodenfels

WISHLIST

- wireless microphone for programs
- binoculars for kids' education
- scope with tripod for Lee Shorebird Stewardship Partnership



FOCUS: The future of the Conservation 20/20 program, which the voters of Lee County will decide on the November 2016 ballot.

Conservation 20/20 is an environmentally-sensitive land-acquisition and stewardship program in Lee County. This program preserves and protects environmentally critical land in Lee County for the benefit of present and future generations in Southwest Florida. Since adopted by voters in 1996, the 20/20 program has spent more than \$316 million to acquire, restore and conserve about 24,931 acres, which is not quite 5 percent of the county's sprawling 520,629 acreage.

Join ASWF in this opportunity to meet and network with citizens, elected officials, teachers, community leaders, and environmental organizations who value the nature of Lee County.

Free & Open to the Public

Sponsorships and donations are much appreciated.

AFTER HARSH T.S. COLIN, BEACH NESTING BIRDS MAKING A COMEBACK

T.S. Colin blew through southwest Florida in early June during a new-moon extra high tide and wiped out many of the very large beach nesting bird colonies up and down the Gulf coast, including our big colony we steward on Ft. Myers Beach. It was a sad sight to see drowned eggs everywhere. Fortunately, nature gives and takes, and the early storm still has allowed time for the Least Terns and Black Skimmers to re-nest, which they're doing with passion. We're trying our best to help them succeed.



Black Skimmer mother with chick that survived T.S. Colin in SW Florida--what resilience!
Photo: Lou Newman

Audubon of Southwest Florida's primary conservation work, in addition to advocating conservation land acquisition and restoration, is to help lead the Lee Shorebird Stewardship Partnership. Shorebird Stewardship involves training dozens of volunteers to go out on the Ft. Myers Beach colony to educate beachgoers on how to help these protected and declining least terns, snowy plovers and black skimmers fledge lots of babies. That includes not letting dogs on the beach off-leash, keeping trash and food away, and documenting what disturbs the colony (important data for research). The more volunteer stewards we have, the better the birds do--the data statewide prove it. Contact our professional Steward Coordinator, Melinda Averhart to join the team! (LeeShorebirdSteward@gmail.com).

“YES” ON CONSERVATION 20/20! KEEP CONSERVING LEE...

Lee County’s very successful land conservation program, Conservation 20/20, celebrates this year twenty years of buying, restoring and providing public recreation on 25,000 acres of valuable habitats and wetlands throughout the county. That is a fitting celebration because on November 8, 2016, all Lee voters will be voting on a non-binding referendum on whether to continue Conservation 20/20. Audubon of Southwest Florida’s Board has fully endorsed this positive vote for the future of a sustainable Lee County. The ASWF Board also encourages our members to learn more about Conservation 20/20’s accomplishments since the program was created by a similar non-binding referendum in 1996, and the vital role it must play as Lee County’s population and urban development continues to grow faster than most places in the nation.

Conservation 20/20 is funded from existing ad valorem taxes out of the General Fund. It’s important to know that voting “yes” to continue Conservation 20/20 will not raise your taxes, but will keep the program in place. However, voting “no” won’t lower your taxes and likely will end the program.

Is a “yes” vote a tax increase?

THE CONSERVATION 20/20 BALLOT REFERENDUM HAS NO DIRECT IMPACT ONE WAY OR THE OTHER ON THE COUNTY’S MILLAGE RATE.

While much has been accomplished, there is much to be done: complete the protection and restoration of the Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed (CREW) Project, buy the 4,000 acre Edison Farms land in

CREW, protect the Density Reduction/Groundwater Resource Area (DR/GR) and Estero Bay Watershed, restore the Imperial River and Spring Creek Watersheds in Bonita Springs and protect vital coastal habitats and beaches on the islands.

To learn more about the campaign to Keep Conserving Lee and voting YES on Conservation 20/20, and to see how you can help, go to the campaign website: www.YESonConservation2020.org.



Yes 20/20
Keep Conserving Lee

Public Documents

A copy of ASWF’s IRS Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax (Form 990-EZ), along with Schedule O and Schedule A for our tax year ended May 31, 2016, has been posted on our web site (www.audubonswfl.org) under the Governance tab. Also available for public viewing are returns for the preceding four years.

OUT & ABOUT



FIELD TRIP
SNAPSHOT
AT LOVERS
KEY STATE
PARK

Photo: Teddy
Rodenfels)

PAST PRESIDENT
WAYNE DALTRY
(RT) & ASWF
MEMBER JIM
BROCK AT
CYPRESS COVE
CONSERVANCY'S
PLANET DAY IN
MAY AT
KORESHAN STATE
HISTORIC SITE



LOOKING AHEAD

Field Trip to Buckingham Trails Preserve, September 29, 8 -10 am, led by Jayne Johnston

Field Trip to Hickey Creek Mitigation Park (a Conservation 20/20 acquisition), October, led by Jayne Johnston

&

Audubon's Christmas Bird Count, multiple locations

SOLAR-ENERGY AMENDMENTS - YOU DECIDE

BY CAROL NEWCOMB

There's a fierce battle being waged in Florida over access to one of our state's greatest resources: the sun. With the effects of climate change ever more obvious, solar is a scorching-hot policy topic, and there is a lot of activity around two competing solar ballot initiatives in Florida – one backed by solar advocates and the other by utility companies.

Amendment 1: "Consumers for Smart Solar" is funded by the big utilities. To put it plainly, if voters approve this amendment they will enshrine in our state constitution Florida's decidedly mediocre solar-energy policy. Masquerading as a pro-solar energy initiative, this proposed constitutional amendment, supported by some of Florida's major investor-owned electric utility companies, actually seeks to constitutionalize the status quo. The biggest problem with the proposed amendment lies not with what the [ballot] summary says, but rather, with what it does not say. So, solar energy **Amendment 1 on the November ballot** is far more inspired by the interests of utility companies than the future of solar energy in this state.

“More people could have access to renewable energy – which could be good for our wallets as well as our environment. And Florida's energy sector could start to catch up to tourism when it comes to marketing our sunshine.”

Amendment 4: Will make it easier for companies other than the big utilities to lease solar panels to homeowners and sell the power those panels generate. This will disrupt the utilities' regulated monopolies on providing electricity in this state. Voters can do something to help push more solar energy in this state. **They can vote "yes" on Amendment 4 in the August 30 primary.** Amendment 4 will give tax breaks to property owners who install solar panels as well as to companies that lease panels to homeowners. It's all about moving the price of home solar panels down so that more people can use them. Amendment 4 would also help out big utilities because it would reduce their tax liability on solar panels and other renewable energy equipment. The tax breaks, if approved by voters, would be up to lawmakers to put into place next year and would last for at least 20 years.

More people could have access to renewable energy – which could be good for our wallets as well as our environment. And Florida's energy sector could start to catch up to tourism when it comes to marketing our sunshine.

Our Chapter In History...May 1997

At the Annual Meeting, ASWF presented four Conservation Education Fund Awards: to Lee County Parks & Recreation for bluebird-box building materials for high-school students; to the Calusa Nature Center for materials for a barred owl enclosure; to the ECOSWF website; and to Educator of the Year Carol Murphy for class supplies.



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.

Are You a Chapter Member Too?

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.