

# Flyways

A PUBLICATION OF

FALL 2016



## IN THIS ISSUE ...

- 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Environmental Breakfast
- Campaign Kick-off for YES on Conservation 20/20
- 2016-17 Programs & Field Trips
- Solar-Energy Amendment
- And More...

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

With the beginning of the 2016-17 season, the Chapter kicks-off its line-up of monthly programs and field trips and continues its mission of promoting environmental education and supporting environmental issues, particularly those that concern Southwest Florida. I hope that, as a member of Audubon, you will participate in these activities and projects and even help out with an event or serve on a committee.

With a major election coming up, we all need to be informed about important national, state, and local environmental issues, including the critical Lee County Conservation 20/20 Referendum and the Amendment 1 Solar-energy Ballot Initiative.

Be sure to attend the upcoming 19th Annual Environmental Breakfast at 7 am, on Thursday, October 27, at the Riverside Community Center in Fort Myers. The program will be a panel discussion on the Lee County Conservation 20/20 Program, details of the November 8 referendum, and 20/20's accomplishments.

***"...we all need to be informed about important national, state, and local environmental issues, including the critical Lee County Conservation 20/20 Referendum and the Amendment 1 Solar-energy Ballot Initiative."***

At stake is whether Lee County will continue to fund the purchase, restoration, and management of natural habitats. Be informed on where the candidates stand on these vital environmental issues and then exercise your right to vote and make a difference.

Dan VanNorman

President



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

**Coffee ready at 7 am; Breakfast begins at 7:30 am; Bring your own mug!**

**Silent Auction held 7:30 to 8:15 am; Scholarship announcement**

**Free & Open to the Public**

**Panel members: Lee County Commissioner Frank Mann, Lee County Conservation Lands Manager Cathy Olson, and representatives from “Yes on Conservation 20/20”**

Background: 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.

**Sponsorships and donations are much appreciated.**

## THE CAMPAIGN IS LAUNCHED - ALL SIX LEE CITIES SUPPORT CONSERVATION 20/20

Audubon of Southwest Florida, with civic, environmental and even elected partners, held a press conference as part of the YES on Conservation 20/20 Political Committee Campaign Kickoff. Here's the NBC2 story: <http://www.nbc-2.com/story/33282575/conservation-2020-in-lee-co-meant-to-protect-undeveloped-land>. Fifty supporters listened to Lee Board of Commissioners Chair Frank Mann, Sanibel Mayor Kevin Ruane, Ft. Myers Beach Mayor Dennis Boback, Estero Councilwoman Katy Errington, and longtime islands realtor David Schuldenfrei share their diverse support for continuing the Conservation 20/20 Program.

One of the most remarkable parts of the campaign, announced at this September 29 Campaign Kickoff Press Conference at Bunche Beach Preserve, is that every one of the six municipalities of Lee County has passed a resolution of support for the Conservation 20/20 Program - ALL SIX! Not many issues get that kind of unanimity.



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](http://www.YESonConservation2020.org). For example, volunteers are needed to help place campaign signs at over 160 precincts around the county.

### 2016-17 Upcoming Programs

**October 27** -- 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Environmental Breakfast at Riverside Community Center: Lee County Commissioner Frank Mann, Lee County Conservation Lands Manager Cathy Olson, and representatives from "Yes on Conservation 20/20"

**November 17** -- Wood Stork Update from Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary: Shawn Clem, Audubon

**December 15** -- Snowy/Piping Plovers: Audrey Albrecht, Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation

**January 19:** Bird and Wildlife Viewing at Lee County Conservation 20/20 Preserves: Jason Boeckman, Lee County Parks

**February 16** -- Scrub Jays: Steven Shattler, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

**March 16** -- Sea and Shorebirds: Adam Dinuovo, Audubon

**April 20** -- Remote Island Avian Adventures: Kara Lefevre, FGCU

**May 20** - Annual Dinner: Guest speaker TBA

**UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, PROGRAMS BEGIN AT 7 PM AT THE SOUTHWEST FLORIDA MASONIC CENTER, 10868 METRO PKWY, FORT MYERS.**

## 2016 & 2017 FIELD TRIPS & OUTINGS (EMPHASIZING 20/20 PROPERTIES)

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.

### **Bunche Beach Birding - Saturday, October 15, 2016 - 7:30 am**

Experience one of the area's best birding sites. Bunche Beach is a natural tidal wetlands area indicative of the entire area before the introduction of exotic plant species -- it is "Old Florida." This is a living ecosystem that ranges from sandy beaches to mangrove forests to salt flats. It contains a wide variety of wildlife for viewing and offers great photographic opportunities of flora and fauna. This tour will be led by a Lee County Bird Patrol volunteer. Parking fee applies unless you have a parking sticker. Be prepared to get your feet wet if the tide is high.

### **Hawk Watch - Sunday, October 16, 2016 - 8:00 am**

If you have never been bird-watching on Sanibel, take the trip to the lighthouse - all you need to do is take a chair and sit in the parking lot below the lighthouse and let the action begin. This, our 13<sup>th</sup> annual Hawk Watch, will once again be led by master birder Vince McGrath.

### **Lakes Park Walking Tour - Saturday, November 5, 2016 - 8:00 am**

This easy walk along clear paths offers an opportunity to see birds in native vegetation. Lakes Park is a local birding hot spot and crucial nesting area. Bring your camera for photo ops! This tour will be led by a Lee County Bird Patrol volunteer. Parking fee applies unless you have a parking sticker.

### **Wild Turkey Strand - Saturday November 26, 2016 - 8:00 am**

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.

### **Prairie Pines Preserve - Saturday, December 10, 2016 - 8:00 am**

This large preserve in North Fort Myers consists of many diverse native plant communities, including wet and mesic flatwoods, depression marshes, wet prairie, and prairie hammock. Birds and wildlife commonly observed at this preserve include wood storks, red-headed woodpeckers and marsh rabbits.

### **Christmas Bird Count at Hickey's Creek Mitigation Park - Friday, December 30, 2016**

Help us Count. For over a century, Audubon's Christmas Bird Count has been a time-honored tradition. Citizen Science data collected during the CBC have uncovered critical information for bird conservation. It's free to participate! Be prepared to walk down primitive paths surrounded by beauty.

### **National Bird Day - Thursday, January 5, 2017**

Follow us to several local birding hot-spots, including FGCU, CREW, Wild Turkey Strand, Hickey's Creek Mitigation Park, and Six-Mile Cypress Slough - all for this day of birding. National Bird Day recognizes the last day of the Christmas Bird Count, so let's go out with a hoot and see how many we can get in one day--or stop by for one of the hikes if you can't make them all. A great way to start out your year!

(continued on next page)



**Kayak with the Manatees - Saturday, January 28, 2017 - 9:00 am**

One of our favorite annual outings, we launch onto the Orange River from Manatee Park and are almost immediately surrounded by manatees. Bring your own kayak, or rent from the on-site outfitter.

**Backyard Bird Count - Friday, February 17 through Monday, February 20, 2017**

The Great Backyard Bird Count is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird-watchers of all ages to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes on one or more days of the four-day event and report sightings online. Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts. And, you can participate from your backyard or anywhere in the world.

**Bicycle Tour of Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge - Sunday, February 26, 2017 - 8:30 am**

On another annual favorite, we bicycle the 8-mile roundtrip on Wildlife Drive with incredible views of herons, egrets, ibises, storks, and spoonbills.



*Baby Aningas at Ding Darling; photo by Jayne Johnston*

**Urban Birding in Historic Downtown Fort Myers - Monday, March 13, 2017 - 6:30 pm**

Experience birding and local history on this downtown outing. Led by chapter birders, with local-history aficionado Gerri Reaves, we'll learn about the history of the town and look for birds at sunset over the Caloosahatchee River.

**Sister Vesta Newcomb Preserve (Koreshan State Park & Historic Site) - date to be determined**

Come explore the approximate 20 acres of unspoiled pine, palmetto, and scrub oak woodland on the Estero River.

(continued on next page)

**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.



*Yellow-crown night heron on Little Estero; photo by Jayne Johnston*

**2016-17 FGCU SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT**

ASWF is pleased to announce the recipient of our 2016-17 scholarship at Florida Gulf Coast University, Naajiya Bintu Raqib, an environmental studies major. Naajiya, who is from Coral Springs, FL, is entering her third year at FGCU and would like to travel the world building sustainable gardens and tiny houses to eliminate homelessness and ensure access to clean drinking water for everyone.

# YES ON CONSERVATION 20/20 POLITICAL COMMITTEE CAMPAIGN KICKOFF AT BUNCHE BEACH PRESERVE



*ASWF volunteer Janet Bunche is interviewed by NBC2*



*Brooke Langston & Carol Newcomb, ASWF board member*



*Invited speakers and supporters*

*Sanibel Mayor Kevin Ruane*





## SOLAR-ENERGY AMENDMENT 4 PASSES WITH BIG MARGIN...NOW ON TO DEFEATING AMENDMENT 1

BY CAROL NEWCOMB

On August 30th, a constitutional amendment (#4) intended to expand the use of solar power in Florida passed by a huge 73 % to 27 % margin. The measure needed only 60 % to win. Amendment 4 exempts solar devices and equipment from being subject to the personal tangible property tax. Businesses that currently have solar panels are now being taxed on the panels or devices in addition to their building. The new amendment will now exempt businesses with solar panels from paying higher taxes. It received unanimous bipartisan support from the Florida Legislature, which voted to put it on the ballot earlier this year.

On November 8, Sunshine State voters will have another opportunity to vote on a solar energy amendment. This amendment is fiercely opposed by environmental groups, including Audubon of Southwest Florida. Amendment 1, called "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.

Don't be misled; this is not a pro-solar measure. Instead, it is a deceptive amendment backed by the monopoly utilities, which seeks to stifle solar energy and keep Floridians as captive power consumers.

***“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.”***

Floridians should vote “NO” on Amendment 1 for three reasons:

1. Amendment 1 is funded by Florida’s big utilities to protect their monopoly markets and limit customer-owned solar. Follow the money: Florida Power & Light (FPL), Duke Energy, and other big power companies want to maintain their monopoly control on profits from electricity sales and limit customer-owned solar. In reality, utilities only support limited amounts of solar power they

(continued on next page)



own and from which they can profit. No non-utility solar company supports Amendment 1.

2. Amendment 1 paves the way for barriers that would penalize solar customers. The utility-backed Amendment 1 would add to the State Constitution the false assumption that solar customers are “subsidized” by non-solar customers and that non-solar customers are in need of additional protections.

3. Amendment 1 misleads Florida voters by promising rights and protections that Florida citizens already have. The monopoly utilities wrote Amendment 1 to sound good by promising that it would add new solar rights and consumer protections. Floridians already have the right to purchase or lease solar equipment and are already fully protected under Florida’s existing consumer protection laws. **Vote “NO” on Amendment 1 on November 8!**

## ATTEND AUDUBON ASSEMBLY IN ST. PETE BEACH - OCT 28-29

Every fall, all 45 chapters of Audubon Florida gather to share field trips, meals, learning sessions, and set the conservation agenda of Audubon throughout Florida for the coming year. This year’s Assembly is in St. Pete Beach and promises to be terrific. The theme is “One Gulf,” and the topics for investigation include:

- Advocates Needed: How To Lend Your Voice to Florida’s Coasts and Wildlife
- Restoring Florida’s Springs and Wetlands to Support a Healthy Gulf Ecosystem
- Climate Change and Sea Level Rise: The Greatest Threats to Florida’s Coastal Habitats

Come join this illuminating fun! Here is the link for registration and more information:

<http://fl.audubon.org/about-us/audubon-assembly>

### ASWF Wish List

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

### 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](http://www.audubonswfl.org)) under the Governance tab. Also available for public viewing are returns for the preceding four years.*

*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.*



Margi & Al Angell

THANK YOU!!!



Ron Vasaturo & Dan VanNorman



Keith Moore



Gail Campbell & Gaylene Vasaturo



Kathy Busick & Jim Convery



Jim Brown

## LEE COUNTY SHOREBIRD STEWARDS 2016



Jayne Johnston



Melinda Averhart



Courtney Kern



# Florida Shorebird Alliance

\*Lee and Collier County Audubon Partnership



**Mission:**

To provide information about protecting beach-nesting birds, viewing opportunities to members of the beach-going public at or near nesting sites, and collect citizen science

**CONTACT:**

MELINDA AVERHART 239 410 6971  
LEESHOREBIRDSTEWARD@GMAIL.COM

- Inform the beach-going public about the presence of nesting shorebirds/seabirds and of the steps they can take to minimize impacts.
- To educate interested members of the beach-going public about the biology and life history of nesting shorebirds.
- When the birds present the opportunity, to show members of the beach-going public the birds' natural behavior at nesting sites, using optics when possible.
- Collect data on disturbance and causes, as well as counts as possible.



### Our Chapter In History...February 1994

Field trip coordinator Don Doggett reported in *Flyways* on a Fall Birding Excursion that Vince McGrath led to Lake Okeechobee. Among the 66 bird species spotted were caracara, Everglades kites, bald eagles, sandhill cranes, scrub jays, peregrine falcons, and bluebirds.

### 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; 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.

### Become 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](http://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](mailto: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.**