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The mission of the Seminole Audubon Society is to promote awareness and protection of the plants and animals in the St. Johns River basin in order to sustain the beneficial coexistence of nature and humans.

January – February 2015

A Publication of Seminole Audubon Society

Crooked River, GA

Our multi-day trip kicked off with a communal dinner in one of the cabins. The gathering also served as a birthday celebration for David Terwilleger and Faith Jones. The next two days we split into smaller groups to enjoy the various activities that had been arranged for us.



Photo: Sarah Donlan

Yellow-rumped Warbler

There was a very enjoyable tour of Cumberland Island that included a thirty-mile route on the island's dirt roads, a tour of Plum Orchard, and the African Baptist church where JFK, Jr., was married. There is

also a wood stork rookery and the Dungeness Ruins.



Photo: Ken Bell

See Crooked River on page 12

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Vacant	Historian	

WELCOME

NEW MEMBERS

and Members NEW to our Chapter

John Adams	Deltona
Susan Buhring	Lake Mary
Jeanine Chiovari	Lake Mary
Dennis Dulniak	Oviedo
Marlene Dunaway	Lake Mary
William & Gwyn Favenesi	Lake Mary
Christine Gillen	Lake Mary
Paul Griffin	Sanford
Denise Johnson	Lake Mary
Sue Loomis	Lake Mary
Linda Nolan	DeBary
Patricia Ronan	Lake Mary
Crystal Salvi	Sanford

New Meeting Place

We are very fortunate to have found a new meeting place in the Fellowship Hall of First Presbyterian Church, 320 S. Park Ave. in Sanford. The venue is working out and we are grateful that Peggy Stickney was able to make the arrangement for our use of the Hall.

We tried to think of something we could do to show our appreciation. On a tour of the church grounds Jim Denslow had the idea to help with their landscaping. Jim organized a group of SAS volunteers, including Bill Clapham, Joan King, Sam Kendall and Peggy Stickney. During their first workday they cleaned out planted areas and planter boxes.

Thanks to Jim's "green thumb" and crop of plants they were able to transplant some new plants to the area. As they become available, more drought-tolerant plants will be added to the plantings.



Jim Denslow Photo by Peggy Stickney

If you would like to assist with this continuing project please email seminoleaudubon@gmail.com and we will notify you of our next workday.

Crystal Lake Preserve Update



As far as we can manage it, Nature remains the primary force making things be as they are at Crystal Lake Preserve. The good crew of Bill Clapham, Sam Kendall, and I have been there faithfully on the Thursday morning after each month's SAS meeting. We've been doing the (by now) routine "follow-up" on removing any additional Cockle-burr seedlings that show up. We also have brambled into the vine-infested parts of the forest to ferret out any new *Ardesia* plants we could find, with a surprising amount of results. We did some "grunt-work" dragging aside some large treetops of Red Bay along mainly path #2, that were attacked by the Laurel Wilt Disease that is spreading southward past here. There are many of the same kind of tree that have not yet been stricken with it, so that I am hopeful that there may be enough variability about susceptibility to it, that over time the "weed-out" of the ones that come down with it, will select (by default) the more resistant ones for the future. We'll see.

We decided that if new path(s) were going to be made into the area that had none, we should get it done and the interpretive material for them worked out, BEFORE we got our Trail Guide and CLP Booklet to completeness to send off to be printed, so we are doing that currently. We have walked with Mark Leidigh along the route that Bill & I worked out, and he likes it also. This path will not be as wide or straight as the other "tractor-paths" have been, but it will be easy to follow and travel on. Mark says he has a 45-inch-wide mower that will do fine for these paths, so we are looking forward to getting the "interpretive marker station posts" put in the ground in the next few months, and then declaring the new paths "open for travel." The sheet aluminum caps for the posts are currently being made by hand as I watch TV each evening, to then be put on each post with several half-inch button-head brads around the lower edge, and then the path number and the station letter will be printed on each.

We have had a gloriously rainy fall, and the water level around the grassy lake margin is back up again. This means the natural spread like "Old Field Succession" of forest into a grassy area will be stopped by flooding/ drowning of any young trees starting there. Nature doesn't care which of us favor the grass or trees, or what kind of trees, it just

Basic Birding Course

Tues. & Thurs. Jan. 13, 15, 20, & 22

1:00 - 4:00 pm

Weekends Jan. 10, 17, 18, & 24 9 am - noon

Faith Jones and Shirley Folse once again will be instructing our 4-session beginning birding course for birders of all ages, which will be offered on Tuesday & Thursday afternoons or on weekends in January. Classes will be held at the Ed Yarborough Nature Center in the Geneva Wilderness Area, 3485 N. CR 426 in Geneva. Classes are offered in partnership with Seminole Co. Natural Lands Program. The third class (Jan 18 or 20) will be a field trip to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge.

Cost \$30.00 Pre-registration required as space is limited; members have priority.

For more information call 407-797-4636 or email: faithaudubon@gmail.com.

Bird Bits

Did you ever wonder about birds and polygamy? During our December program, Leslie Martin answered the Bird Bits question and presented us with some facts about birds that participate in this behavior. Do you have questions about birds? Email your Bird Bit questions to seminoleaudubon@gmail.com. We will answer some of the questions at each of our meetings.

Marguerite Terwilleger

simply works the way it does. Since we need fast-growing "beginner-type trees" to re-grow cover for other shade-tolerant kinds of forest trees to grow up under, and also to suppress vines that go crazy in the sun, it makes these young pine "pioneers" valuable to us for use in these "needing" places. So we will be digging them up from the flooded grass areas, to put in a "nursery patch" for temporary holding until we can use them later where we need them to rebuild future forest canopy as quickly as possible. It should be an interesting, fun activity that is not too hard for most anyone, and be the basis of some real camaraderie among those who come out. We will enthusiastically share with you! Come join us the Thursday after each SAS meeting! **Jim Denslow**

Lyonia Preserve

When anyone mentions Scrub Jays, one always hears the oo's and ah's of anticipation on what is the expected appearance of this favorite bird. These families never disappoint and so it was on the Thursday that a small group of Seminole Audubon members met at Lyonia Preserve in Deltona to find our blue friends and discover all over again the relationships they had established among themselves. With names like Georgia and Florida the various groups making up the colonies of Scrub Jays at this particular park appeared from nowhere to give us all a thrill. Each family has its territory, its sentinel birds, each taking a turn to oversee and sound out the alarm if a predator comes near. Boundaries are well established for each family habitat and carefully adhered to.



Photo: Joan King

But--being the somewhat social bird that they are, they took their own sweet time making themselves

known to us. We walked the pathways of Lyonia (named after one of the native bushes growing there) on a beautiful fall day. The only thing blue that we saw was the sky, with white puffy clouds floating by. Our master guide and wonderful story painter from Lyonia, led us down the narrow path, through a maze, literally of bushes and small scrub trees just tall enough so we could not see over them. We came to an intersection after an hour or so of quietly anticipating, and each of us breathed a sigh of "oh well", "not today". The ranger had filled our hiking time with stories of how the park was born and what time line it took to get it to its present, quite wonderful, state.

We opted to take the path back toward the education center, disappointed that we had not seen our friends. All of a sudden, out of the green came one beautiful blue bird, at the very top of the scrub tree. And then another came, and then another. They checked us all out and decided that they would even sit on our outstretched arms. What a thrill! We were elated that they had found us, because that is what it felt like. I suspect we had to pass their inspection first.

In all, I believe, there were six to eight guarding their territory, but allowing us the thrill. Smiles all around. We'd had a successful hike! **Sarah Donlan**

Black Friday Birding

On a cold, windy 'Black Friday' morning I met Mary Yanalcanlin, a member of East Cascades Audubon Society and is from Bend, Oregon. She contacted our SAS Chapter asking if someone could take her birding on her first brief visit to Florida. It sounded like fun and turned out to be more fun than a barrel of...well, you know. I should have expected fun when she responded to my text at 6:00 am in which I apologized for our cold day, "What cold?" Being from Oregon, this was summer. But just as I was about to pick up Mary in Heathrow, I had to stop for a bear crossing right in front of me. A big bear! According to TV reports the bear had to be put down a few days later for attacking a woman.

Bend, Oregon, is smack-dab in the middle of Oregon and Mary had read about Merritt Island, so we were off to pick up Shirley Folse in Chuluota and on to the coast. Mary had many Lifers on her list ... at the top of which was the Roseate Spoonbill followed by the Wood Stork. As we sat in my truck in Veteran's Park just before the causeway, a beautifully-plumed Spoonbill parked himself right in front of us. Mary jumped out in the cold wind and got up close and personal with her camera.

We got pictures of Black Skimmers, Dunlins, Dowitchers, Yellowlegs, Laughing Gulls, Ruddy Turnstones and lots on her list. Shirley F. brought oodles of print material to pass along to Mary who is an educator, teaching home schoolers during the week, and on weekends she conducts birding classes for the children (and interested adults) in the parks of her town. Bend is home to 11 species of breeding Woodpeckers and they have a Woodpecker Festival every year. Mary offered an invitation to our members to visit her. I guarantee you'll have fun. The link to her Audubon Chapter is: <http://ecaudubon.org/Default.aspx?alias=ecaudubon.org/woodpeckers>



Great Egret **Photo by Sarah Donlan**

We had to move on to the Center to meet Bill Clapham, Joan King, Sarah Donlan and her friend Kathy. Mary saw her Alligator and another top on the list were the Painted Buntings. The Center said they had two males and two females this year. But we got photos of three males on the feeders. Black Vultures were on Mary's list, and we saw plenty of them, along with White and Brown Pelicans, Blue Herons, Gallinules, Kestrels, Anhingas, and Cormorants.

Sarah got lost in Titusville. Now you all know she is the organizer for our birding trips and gives outstanding directions to the wilds of Florida when we embark on our adventures. But Sarah is lost in Titusville. Oh, my. So we take off for Black Point with Bill and Joan following my truck and Sarah catching up whenever she's no longer lost.

Somewhere along the way Shirley F. began educating a lovely lady who carried a 200 foot-long camera after I almost backed over her. Sharon loved to photograph birds, but didn't know their names....Shirley's fodder! Soon we had Bill and Joan and Sarah (she became unlost) following us so now we added Sharon with the long camera and her husband Chris (who has to be the most patient man in the world.) Mary and Shirley and I never stopped laughing.

Our big disappointment was not seeing our Florida Scrub Jay. They weren't coming out in the cold. Mary asks "What cold?" After a long day at Black Point, Scrub Ridge and Haulover Canal, we decided to head for Viera Wetlands. Our other members headed home, but Sharon and Chris said they would follow us wherever.



Shirley R. and Mary Photo by Sarah Donlan

If you've ever been to Viera, you know all about that crazy roundabout. Shirley kept telling me to get in left lane, but my truck can't find its way out unless I turn right for half a mile and make a "Uey" back to the roundabout. Chris followed me all the way and even shot a stop sign right behind me...patient man.

Just as we arrived at Viera, there stood Mary's Wood Stork! He posed as Mary jumped out of the truck and got close up again, much as she did with the Roseate. We made a short jaunt around the canals and just missed a photo of three Limpkins who strolled in front of us. Tried Click Pond, but they had a chain up, so drove three miles north on the new conservation area. Not much to see, but Loggerhead Shrike on a fence, so they tell me. We ended our perfect day at Cracker Barrel where we picked up another interested birder from California who had to hear about our day. Mary was excited over her 56 sightings for the day, which included a Northern Cardinal. She counted 18 lifers for her Merritt Island trip. She will plan another Florida trip and maybe our members can meet an interesting birder.

Shirley Reilly

Good News

Babcock Ranch and FPL sign agreement to power development with solar energy

After purchasing the 91,000-acre, west Florida ranch in 2006, developer Syd Kitson first sold 74,000 acres to the state for preservation. Now with this FPL agreement, commercial development on the

remaining acres will meet his stated goal to power up with solar energy.

Corps of Engineers Denies Dredging Project near Tampa Bay

Pasco County will build a new development and park, but without access through a deep-water channel. The USACE denied their dredging application because it would damage four acres of wetlands and 29 acres of sea grass, home to fish, shellfish, crustaceans and endangered manatees.

California is First State to Ban Plastic Bags

Beginning in 2015 large grocery stores and supermarkets can no longer provide customers single-use plastic bags; followed by convenience stores and pharmacies in 2016. Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Puerto Rico have similar legislation pending.

Florida Dept of Economic Opportunity delivers unfavorable report on proposed Everglades city
FDEO report says US Sugar's proposed "Sugar Hill" city at the bottom of Lake Okeechobee has no protections for natural resources. Other state agencies say it threatens Everglades restoration. U.S. Sugar has until May 1, 2015, to revise and resubmit a new plan.

Florida Panther Population

Only 20-30 panthers were still surviving in the 1970s when the species was finally listed as endangered. Conservation programs have brought the population back now to an estimated 160 – 180 adults. But habitat saturation means the big cats have likely reached their carrying capacity south of the Caloosahatchee River. USFWS is investigating suitable habitat expansion areas. Road kill is now their immediate threat.

Public Opposition to Canadian Tar Sands Pipeline Already Successful

Public opposition largely due to environmental concerns has forced three significant tar sands projects to shut down in 2014 (Shell, Statoil, Total). The closures will keep 2.8 billion tons of CO2 out of the atmosphere (equivalent to 18 new coal plants). Rail transport to move the junk crude was not available to support the projects. More mining closures are foreseeable because the high costs of tar sands production are being squeezed by lower revenues per barrel sold. Mining tar sands requires huge amounts of water and solvents, strip mining, forest clear-cutting, steam injection and other expensive processes that damage and destroy the surrounding environment.

NOAA Announces New Rules to Protect Blue Fin Tuna

Blue Fins in the Gulf of Mexico are a species of concern. Beginning in 2015, blue fins accidentally caught by long-line fishermen will count against internationally established quotas. Once fishermen

reach their yearly quota they will have to switch to alternate gear.

Latin American Countries Will Combat Climate Change by Planting Trees

At the UN 2014 Lima Climate Talks eight Latin American countries pledged to plant hundreds of millions of trees by 2020. The restoration of a natural forest area twice the size of Britain will sequester over 1 billion tons of CO2. The countries will provide grants and other incentives to farmers to plant the trees on degraded livestock land. Private funding is also forming for more shaded coffee, tea and nut orchards.

Birding Festivals

January and February are busy months for Birding Festivals in Florida. Here are the dates and links to find detailed information.

Jan 21-26: Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival

<http://www.spacecoastbirdingandwildlifefestival.org/> in Titusville.

Feb 6-8: Birds of a Feather Festival

<http://www.palmcoastgov.com/events/birding-fest> in Palm Coast. Once on the website, there is a flyer to download with more information.

Feb. 7 Lake Apopka Wildlife Festival and Birdapalooza

<http://www.birdapalooza.com/> Magnolia Park, Apopka

Upcoming Trips

Last minute changes do occur, so it is essential that you notify us in advance if you plan to participate in any of our trips. A liability release must be signed.

Trips are open to the public.

Ways to Contact Us:

1. www.meetup.com/SeminoleAudubon-com
2. E-mail: sarahdonlan42@gmail.com
3. Call: Sarah Donlan 407-687-6087
4. Sign up at Program Meetings

Jan 17 Saturday – Wiregrass Prairie Preserve

1400 acres in St John's River Valley. Uplands and wetlands, 3 hiking trails, group tour. 1751 Lopez Rd., Osteen, FL 32765

Meet: Sanford Library, 8:30 am for carpool. Limited parking; must consolidate to minimum number of cars. Admission free. Bring binoculars, camera, comfy shoes, water, hat, and jacket.

Jan 22 – Blue Heron River Tour, Hontoon Landing, DeLand FL

Two-hour pontoon boat tour on St John's River and Hontoon Dead River. Many wading birds, turtles, gators, etc. Reservations required. \$25 per person, cash or check. For info call Sarah at 407-687-6087. Bring jacket, binoculars, camera, water, and snack. Meet: JoAnn's Fabric Store parking lot, Seminole Towne Center, Time to be announced. You may also meet us at Hontoon Landing in DeLand.

Feb 14 Saturday – Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Titusville, FL

Our annual car trip to view migrating birds. Many species including raptors, wading and shore birds, as well as backyard birds. Education Center. 4-5 hour tour by car. Guided tour. Bring binoculars, camera, jacket, snack & water.

Meet: Sanford Library. Will pull out at 8:30 am sharp. Or meet at Merritt Island Wildlife Refuge Education Center at 9:30 am. Fee.

Feb 19-20 Thursday – Overnight Mystery Nature Trip

This is for early risers who realize it may be cold. Bunkhouse camping facility, amazing wildlife experience. Potluck dinner, bring your own breakfast, snacks, and beverages. Limited participation. Reserve spot by Jan 15. Deposit will be required. Meet at the "Mystery Park" at 2 pm. 20 miles from Sanford. Call Sarah: 407-687-6087.

Mar 14 Saturday – Crystal Lake Preserve

This is a combined trip to CLP with Cuplet Fern Chapter FNPS. Crystal Lake Preserve, Lake Mary. Guided walk through this beautiful local preserve. Meet at 8:30 am in Timacuan.

Lake Apopka Wildlife Festival and Birdapalooza

Please be sure to save the date and join your fellow outdoor enthusiasts at the **Lake Apopka Wildlife Festival** and **Birdapalooza**. This event takes place on **Saturday, February 7, 2015, at Magnolia Park in Apopka**. It is a celebration of the rich diversity of birds and other wildlife that make their home on the north shore of Lake Apopka, Florida's third largest lake. There will be a variety of vendors and sponsors present and many activities planned. Included in the activities are: free walking tours led by veteran nature experts and free bus tours of the North Shore Restoration Area. The "Hook Kids on Fishing" activity will offer 200 free fishing rods to participants. The Audubon Center for Birds of Prey, Gatorland and the Avian Reconditioning Center will provide a wide variety of live wildlife for the enjoyment of all.

The Lake Apopka Restoration Area is one of Florida's success stories when it comes to the protection of Florida's special places. Since the

purchase by the state of the farmland that had polluted Lake Apopka, a transformation has slowly taken place. Bird surveys show that more than 360 different species of birds have been identified in the Lake Apopka Restoration Area, more species than can be found at any inland site in the state. So come on out and explore this special place and join in on the fun. Please use this link for more information: www.birdapalooza.com

Trip Notes

Orlando Wetlands Park

One of the fortunate fates of Seminole Audubon is to have the most glorious weather when we do a field trip to open spaces, enclosed forests or afloat on any body of water. That was certainly the atmosphere when we met for a hike/golf cart tour of Orlando Wetlands Park on October 18. Not a sweater was in sight when we hiked along the berms of the various retention areas to watch the flocks of Ibis, blue herons, and even a roseate spoonbill, as they fed along the edges close by. Many of the 15 Audubon participants took the golf cart tour with our experienced guide as she pointed out the sometimes-far-away birds. A close-up encounter with a red-shouldered hawk as he stalked his forage fish from a palm tree to along the shoreline and a wood stork perched on a snag close to the pathway gave us opportunities for great picture taking.



Photo: Sarah Donlan

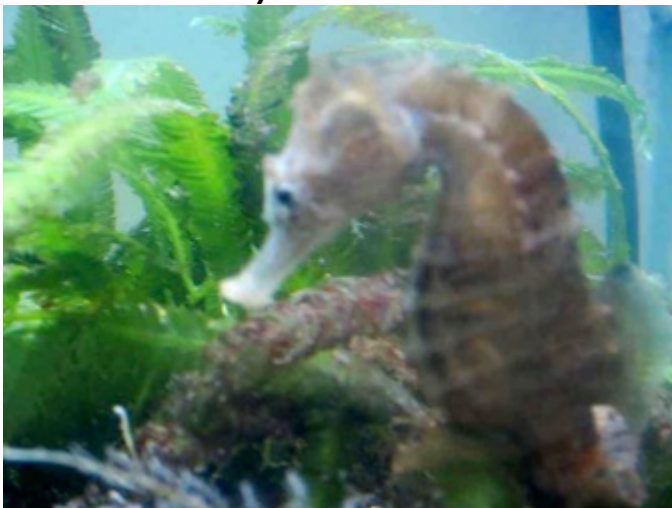
Since not every bird is easily identified on the spot, we were able to get a photo of a **gray gnatcatcher** (above) as he devoured his prey—an unlucky dragonfly-like creature with large wings. At first, it

looked like an extension of the bird's beak, but on closer examination (on a computer-enhanced screen), we could see it was a rather large, winged creature almost half as big as the bird himself.

Orlando Wetlands is never disappointing and to uphold its pledge, we also, with the assistance of our guide, Laura, were able to pick out and photograph a Vermillion Flycatcher. Squint and look as far, far away as you could and there he was: a little red dot among the bright green branches of the cypress tree. Again, photography and enhancement brought him in ever so clearly. What a thrill, since this little bird is very rare in Florida and has been at OWP only for the past two or three years with his mate. They must truly have a longing for a better life to be pioneers in this beautiful spot for the winter. We hope to see more of them each year we go back.

On our tour we encountered people from other countries and other states with powerful lenses on their cameras to take back the important memories of what we can see here in our backyard almost any time. It's our fortunate fate. **Sarah Donlan**

Marine Discovery Center



Our Seminole Audubon group met at Marine Discovery Center in New Smyrna on a lovely November morning. You almost trip over this center just east of the North Causeway. The center was bustling with activity Saturday, November 15th. Many young folks gathered in their outdoor workshop and were making oyster mats. They weave and tie empty shells together to form mats, which are then placed on the ocean floor to attract live oysters to gather. Another group was "bagging" oyster shells to restore the oyster beds in the Indian River Lagoon. These bags of shells are heavier than the mats and work better in deep water. We boarded the pontoon boat just across from the

center for our two-hour tour of the Intracoastal Waterway. As many times as I've crossed the bridges to reach the beach, I never realized how much wildlife lived in this intricate system of marshland. We spotted many coastal birds. Brown Pelicans were diving all around. We captured pictures of the dolphins bobbing up and down. Our guide told us often they will play ball with each other. We did not see any Manatees.



Photo: Sarah Donlan

Recently volunteers planted a myriad of native plants such as blanket flower, dune sunflower and others in the saltwater marsh behind the center. Our guide pointed out a line in the water at one point where the salt water and fresh water meet. The center has many displays and the most popular is the seahorse aquarium, where the male had just birthed about a hundred babies. They are fun to watch, but the seahorse is threatened. They are collected for use in traditional medicine, private aquariums and as dried trinkets. It was a beautiful day in the marshes, as Mr. Rogers might say.

Shirley Reilly

Program Notes

We adjusted well to our new meeting location in the Fellowship Hall of the First Presbyterian Church in Sanford. We are grateful for the use of this spacious meeting room.

Life of Birds, our November 9th program, was informative and entertaining. Reinier Munguia, wildlife photographer and naturalist, is a seasoned speaker. His presentation was filled with beautiful images of birds and other wildlife. It was also packed with interesting facts, like only female white ibis have gular sacs; males do not. The indent on a bird of prey's upper mandible is an adaptation used to break bones. Owls can see up to one mile.

Sungrebes, a bird of Central America, can tuck their chicks under their wing and actually fly with them. This is a handy adaptation as they nest along rivers and streams that often flood during nesting season. This is just a sample of the amazing material including in Renier's presentation.

Congratulations to our five door prize winners and thanks to those who brought refreshments.

On December 14 **Feathered Ghosts: Passenger Pigeons** was the topic for our meeting. Martha, the very last passenger pigeon, died on September 1, 1914, at the Cincinnati Zoo. This is a well-documented extinction of the species that was probably the most abundant on the planet only a century prior. Faith Jones' presentation included the physical characteristics of passenger pigeons and many of their behavioral traits. We learned passenger pigeons nested in huge colonies and they all laid their eggs on the same day! This and other information was interspersed between excerpts of *From Billions to None: The Passenger Pigeon's Flight to Extinction*.



The Lost Bird Project program concluded with Sam Kendall's helping all in attendance "Fold the Flock" to make an origami image of Martha.

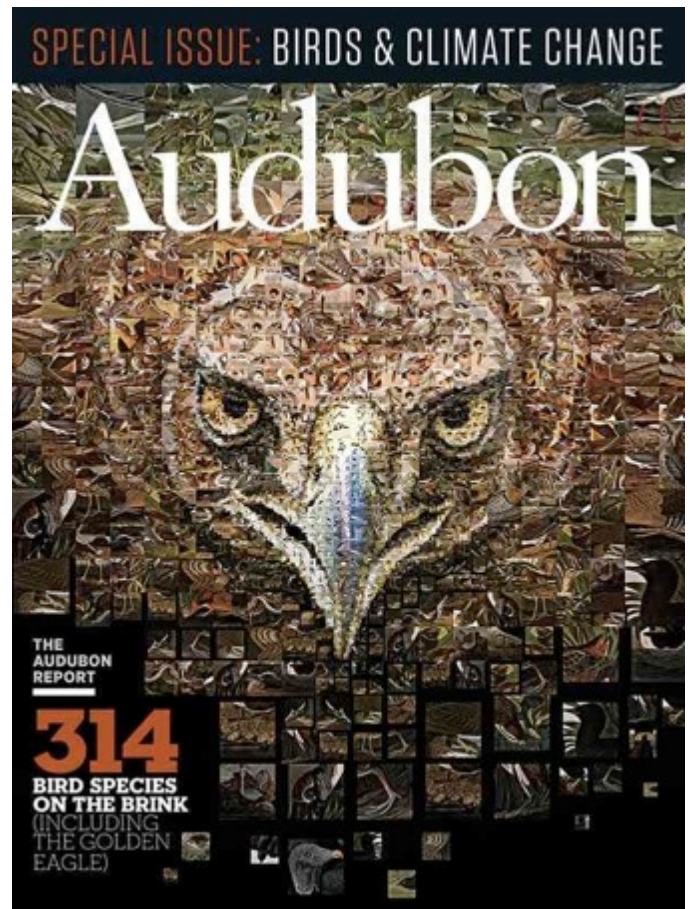
Thanks to those who provided refreshments and congratulations to door prize winners! **Faith Jones**

Upcoming Programs

Reminder: New location

Seminole Audubon Society's monthly meetings are held the second Sunday of the month at 2:00 pm in the **Fellowship Hall of First Presbyterian Church, 320 S. Park Ave, Sanford.**

Helping Birds in a Changing Climate
Sunday January 11



Jacqui Sulek, Chapter Conservation Manager for Audubon Florida, will be our guest speaker, sharing information from the National Audubon Society's new Campaign, Audubon's Birds and Climate Change Report. This is a comprehensive, first-of-its-kind study that predicts how climate change could affect the ranges of 588 North American birds. Every bird species has adapted to the places it currently lives. But climate change is altering the availability of food and suitable nesting and wintering grounds, and if those shifts are too extreme, birds will be forced to seek out habitat and/or food supplies elsewhere. To determine how bird ranges will be affected, Audubon scientists used sophisticated climate models that combined decades of avian observations with seventeen climate variables. The models forecast the "climate envelopes" or ranges, where future conditions are expected to support each species' historical climatic needs. Jacqui will explain the findings, and how some of our local birds may be affected. Her program will also include the six actions each of us can take to help protect birds.

Atlantic Puffins

Sunday February 8

Faith Jones will share her passion for these "sea parrots" or "clowns" of the North Atlantic. No matter what you call them, Atlantic puffins are adorable birds. When Europeans arrived on this

continent, puffins and other seabirds were plentiful along the New England coast. After years of hunting and habitat destruction, by 1901 there was only one pair south of the Canadian border. The presentation will feature the story of how this species, primarily through the efforts of one man (Stephen Kress), has gone from the brink of extinction to being a model for species preservation.

Birds that Breed in Central Florida Sunday March 8

This program will feature the nesting habits and requirements of our local breeding birds. Did you ever wonder which species actually nest here and when? Who uses nest boxes and who builds their own nests? You will learn this and much more in this program about our local nesting birds. The program will also include information on the Florida Breeding Bird Atlas II project and how you can help.

Eagles Nesting in my back yard (September through December 2014)

Early September, one typical morning with first cup of coffee in hand and Cub Scout field glasses in the other, I surveyed the top platform of a cell tower looming above the development at the back margins of Black Hammock Preserve. In the spring, the osprey female would be screeching to the male for breakfast awakening the family of humans sharing the nearest space below them. What a beautiful alarm clock.

But this morning, a very large dark bird was perched on the edge of this communal nest—larger than the usual vultures who frequent the lower structures. I took a walk around the block to get a closer view—to confirm the distinctive white head. And then flipping through Sibley's, my heart took a leap. A bald eagle couple would be starting their *nestorations* soon, I thought.

The wisps of branches remaining from the previous osprey pair were still undisturbed. As he appeared to be alone, I guessed he was waiting for his sweetheart as eagles and ospreys are monogamous. Osprey females usually arrive first and wait and wait and wait. Some homework needed. For eagles, who arrives first? When do *nestorations* begin? How long before the breeding and the arrival of the first egg?

A week later, two were positioned closer to each other but with a large enough gap to wonder if this

was a visitor or his committed sweetheart. The very next day they were cuddling, leaning into each other, sharing the warmth of intermingled feathers. Thereafter, the two appeared friendlier with each visit—early morning and late afternoon. He'd preen, she'd bend submissively, gaze up adoringly as he realigned his feathers for her. Please excuse the anthropomorphizing; I just can't help myself!

This ritual continued for several weeks—side by side probably now into the decision making process of whether this spot would be the best one. So far, there were not any obvious signs of actual nesting activity. Shirley Folse, our Audubon resource, shared that when the nesting activity begins, which is the "commitment," it stimulates an increase in hormones and gets these two cuddling even more. No such behaviors were observed—just together, surveying, discussing possibilities.



Into October, for a week or so, the nest was a flurry of other birds, some lined up as if staging a coup to establish their own residences. Another week passed and with each morning check, the nest top remained undecorated, no large bird silhouettes. Then in November and now into December, only one has arrived and so far remains solitary. Too many possibilities. Maybe January will shed some new light?

I've learned that Florida has the largest number of nesting paired bald eagles. Several cams have been set up to follow the breeding/nesting behaviors. If you have an interest in following eagle breeding patterns, the sites listed below will provide history of many of the nests in Florida. To view many other bird nesting behaviors, Cornell Lab of Ornithology has cams set up across the country. Try www.birds.cornell.edu or www.allaboutbirds.org or do a search for EagleWatch and Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

The American Eagle Foundation (AEF) offers three high-definition cams for viewing an eagles' nest in NE Florida. The eagles, Romeo and Juliet, are progressing nicely, taking turns on the nest where Juliet laid the first egg on 11/16 and the second on 11/19. Go to:

Top Shelf

***A Feathered River Across the Sky...The Passenger Pigeon's Flight to Extinction* Joel Greenberg**

Joel Greenberg has written a powerful reference work and historical record of the extinction of a species at the hand of man. A considerable effort was required to hunt down and read the historical documents as well as many anecdotal papers. I can only imagine the emotional toll it must have taken on Mr. Greenberg as he worked on this premier chronicle of the passenger pigeon.

The title evokes such a strong image for me that it alone was enough to make me want to read the book, but I found much more than I expected. Of course, I have always known of the extinction, but was amazed at how much I did not know about the life of the species. The images came to life as I read the accounts of the flights, which enabled me to see the great river in the sky, hear the sound like thunder and feel the downdraft of wings as it passed overhead.

"... like some great river, ever varying in hue; and as the mighty stream, sweeping on at sixty miles an hour, reached some deep valley, it would pour its living mass headlong down hundreds of feet, sounding as though a whirlwind was abroad in the land."

Chief Pokagon, the last chief of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians.

The book also affords the reader an historical perspective on the continent's landscape as well as early American living. Archaeological digs have shown that the pigeons were an important component of the earliest inhabitants right up to the time of European settlement. Samuel de Champlain has the dubious honor of being the first European to kill passenger pigeons. July of 1605 in Goosefare Bay off southern Maine afforded his party an opportunity to restore provisions and he records that "upon these islands grow so many red currants that one can hardly see anything else; and there are also countless numbers of pigeons, whereof we take a goodly quantity." Subsequent generations would take ever more goodly amounts.

There are many examples of methods for killing pigeons that our ancestors devised, so many in fact that it sickened me. The most egregious to me was the invasion of their nesting sites to take the squabs

just as they were ready to fledge, which both Indians and Americans did. The Indians, however, would not disturb the breeding birds, but the Americans raided the adult breeding sites with impunity. They were so sure the pigeons would always be here. But, of course, they were not and the species population plummeted from vast numbers in the 1860s to virtually none by 1900 as *Homo sapiens* went about the relentless and methodical slaughter.

Out of this event some good and far-reaching laws were enacted ...

"It is late. It is too late as to the wild pigeon. The buffalo is almost a thing of the past, but there still remains much to preserve, and we must act earnestly if we would accomplish good things." Representative John Fletcher Lacey, on the floor of the House of Representatives on April 30, 1900, introducing what would become the first federal bird-protection law.

The book includes many photographs, drawings, paintings and maps that lend a context to this sad and somewhat shameful period in human history. Perhaps it also affords an opportunity for the reader to look at some of the activities of today that will be considered by future generations just as shameful, and hopefully take corrective action before it is too late.

I recommend this book and the many references that Mr. Greenberg has provided, especially passengerpigeon.org Project Passenger Pigeon, Lessons from the Past for A Sustainable Future.

DonnaLea Needham

Carbon Footprint and Cash Flow

I've read that residential solar systems can range in cost anywhere from \$8,000 to \$20,000, after the 30% federal tax credit, which is scheduled to expire at the end of 2016. The size and cost of your system depend on the overall efficiency of your home, the number of kilowatt hours you require, and the number of certified installers available to offer competitive bids.

High upfront costs often make us shy away from a decision that can be good for the environment and our wallets. Let's assume our average electric bill is \$100.00 and after a solar installation suppose our electric bill drops to \$15. Let's also assume we borrow the money for the solar system and the monthly payment is \$80. Our positive cash flow (monthly savings) would be \$5.

Low monthly payments require a longer payment term. But many lenders will extend personal loans

only for five years. Now the government has made it possible to extend credit for solar or other energy conservation projects out as far as the useful life of the improvement.

It's called Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE). Started in California, other states have picked up on the idea, including Florida. PACE allows you to pay for an energy conservation improvement on your annual tax bill. The term of the loan can be the useful life of the improvement, which, in the case of solar, is 20 to 25 years. Florida Statute 163.08 is the enabling legislation. Miami-Dade and St. Lucie Counties have programs for both homeowners and businesses. The City of Kissimmee and Flagler County have also initiated a PACE funding program. Seminole County, however, is not yet participating. Solar systems also qualify for tax exclusion on property assessment and are exempt from Florida's sales tax.

If high up-front costs are holding you back from a solar system you may want to explore options for long-term financing. Photovoltaic prices have come down a lot in the last five years, making them affordable for more people. You can reduce your carbon footprint and save money at the same time! To get a good approximation of what it would cost to put solar on your rooftop, visit <http://costofsolar.com/> **Sam Kendall**

Seminole Audubon Thrilled to Offer Scholarships for Eco-Camp

Seminole Audubon is happy to announce we have granted one full-tuition scholarship for the Winter Eco-Camp held at the Ed Yarborough Nature Center during winter break 2014. We also granted two half-scholarships for two other campers to attend (the other half being covered by Seminole County.) Three very excited and worthy applicants will be attending. How exciting to think we have three potential future conservation and environmental leaders! **Marguerite Terwilleger**

Amendment One – is a 'YES'

Amendment One passed in November with an overwhelming 75% of voters approving its addition to the Florida Constitution. Thank you again to all of you who gathered petitions, helped get out the vote, and voted for the amendment. Your efforts were critical in sending a message to our elected representatives that we care about protecting our natural resources in Florida.

We are now entering Phase 3 of the campaign: implementation. It is critical that we remind our elected representatives that Amendment One funding be spent on land conservation and management, the Everglades and coastal and water resource protection. We will let you know soon how you can help with this phase of the campaign to protect the Florida we all love. Thanks again for all your efforts. **Pam Meharg**

Check Out New Posts

Check out the recent photos on Facebook from our December program on the extinction of Passenger Pigeons, presented by Faith Jones. You will see the Folded Flock origami (thanks to the help of Sam Kendall).



Follow us on Twitter for photos and reminders of what SAS is busy doing. Follow us at: Seminole Audubon@AudubonSeminole.

Marguerite Terwilleger

Scan the QR Code below with your mobile device to go to our web site.



Crooked River, from page 1

While Audubon members were staying in the cabins at Crooked River State Park, a group of 6 members also set up camp in the park campground.



Wood Stork

Photo by Ken Bell

The park provided many amenities; those in the motor homes and trailers enjoyed the very private, wooded setup, sharing dinners and stories about

past camping experiences in true Audubon fashion. Close by was a trail and small lake in easy access to the camp. The lake was a treasure trove of wildlife, with grasses and reeds bringing in many bird species. Redwing blackbirds, warblers, anhinga and ducks stopped by on a regular basis. Early in the morning, we were able to make our way there quietly where deer roamed in the nearby woods. Bicycles are the major vehicle in-park transportation, and the trails down to the Crooked River banks were easily traversed. A boat launch, education center and accommodating rangers made it a memorable trip. The river was home to white ibis, great egrets, and little blue herons, all creeping among the reeds to find their favorite treats. For me the surprise that awaited us on the tour of the site of the former Gilman paper mill were the roseate spoonbills roosting in the trees of the inland retention ponds. A ranger on a tractor mowed an overgrown road as we walked along. This produced many fly-up birds that all seemed to have arrived there in secret to share the pond with an assortment of other species. This property had not been accessed since August of 2013; what a treat! Again, weather was perfect, park was perfect, hosts were perfect, wildlife abundant. This was truly a trip to talk about!

Sarah Donlan/Faith Jones



Photo: Ken Bell

Calendar, from page 14

BIRDING INSTRUCTION

Basic Birding Course - \$30. Must pre-register at 407-797-4636 or seminoleaudubon@gmail.com.

Thurs. & Tues. Jan. 13, 15, 20, and 22

1:00 – 4:00 pm.

Weekends Jan. 10, 17, 18, and 24 9:00 – noon

Crystal Lake Preserve, Lake Mary. Work mornings.

Thurs. Jan. 15 & Feb. 12. Time and meeting location 407-323-4506 or bdenslow@cfl.rr.com

OTHER EVENTS

Jan. 21-26 Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival,

Titusville.

Feb. 6-8 Birds of a Feather Festival, Palm Coast.

Feb. 7 Lake Apopka Wildlife Festival and Birdapalooza, Apopka

Membership Application

For New Audubon Members Only

JOIN for the special rate of
\$20.00 for 1 year - that's \$15 off the regular
membership dues!

When you join Seminole Audubon Society you also become a member of Audubon of Florida and the National Audubon Society. Your membership benefits include our newsletter *The JAY*, *Audubon Magazine*, and the *Florida Naturalist*. Most importantly, your membership will help us work for better preservation of the environment for the benefit of all species, including mankind.

Make checks payable to:
National Audubon Society,
and mail with this form to:
Seminole Audubon Society
P.O. Box 2977
Sanford FL 32772-2977

Name

Address

City

State _____ Zip _____

Phone and e-mail

If you join elsewhere, please use our Chapter Code:
C5ZE310Z

Seminole Associate Membership

\$10.00 / year

Available to Audubon Society members assigned to other chapters. Make check payable to Seminole Audubon Society.

Memberships are good gifts!

The JAY

Seminole Audubon Society
PO Box 2977
Sanford FL 32772-2977

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Calendar of Events

www.seminoleaudubon.org

PROGRAM MEETINGS are held at 2:00 pm on Sunday afternoons in the **Fellowship Hall** of the **First Presbyterian Church** located at **320 S. Park Ave.**, near downtown **Sanford**. Call 407-797-4636 for details.

Sun Jan. 11 Helping Birds in a Changing Climate. **Jacqui Sulek, Audubon Florida, will be our guest speaker presenting info on The Audubon Birds & Climate Change Report.**

Sun Feb. 8 Atlantic Puffins. Faith Jones will share her passion for these “clowns” of the North Atlantic. Once on the brink of extinction, they are now a model for species preservation.

Sun March 8 Birds that Breed in Central Florida. This program will feature the nesting habits and requirements of our local breeding birds along with the Florida Breeding Bird Atlas II.

FIELD TRIPS Details and registration information for all of these trips are in this issue of The JAY and on www.meetup.com/seminoleaudubon-com, sarahdonlan42@gmail.com, or 407-687-6087.

Sat. Jan. 17 Wiregrass Prairie Preserve, Osteen

Thu. Jan 22 Blue Heron River Tour, DeLand

Sat. Feb. 14 Merritt Island Nat'l Wildlife Refuge, Titusville

Feb. 19-20 Overnight Mystery Trip

Sat. Mar. 14 Crystal Lake Preserve, Lake Mary

See Calendar, page 13