

The JAY

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.

March – April – May 2017

A Publication of Seminole Audubon Society

Purple Martin Houses Erected along the Sanford Waterfront

On January 9th members of the Seminole Audubon Society (SAS) erected sixteen gourds on two poles as a means of attracting Purple Martins to the Sanford waterfront. Purple Martins are small birds that live in colonies near people and water, but most importantly, they eat flying insects such as midges.

The Seminole Audubon Society became interested in attracting Purple Martins last year when a member observed numerous martins living within a street light fixture at the Sanford Marina. Knowing that martins would live in the area, SAS approached the City of Sanford about erecting



housing to attract the birds. The Parks

Department reviewed plans submitted by SAS and recommended installations at two sites. One is near the water's edge at the marina near the picnic shelters and the other is at the far east end of the Riverwalk.



Three members of SAS, Jim & Jan Peters and Faith

Jim Peters (article and photos)

See Purple Martin, page 10

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2016-2017
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WELCOME
NEW MEMBERS
and Members NEW to our Chapter

SAS History 1959-1963
4rd in a Series

Deborah Collett
Marion Crim
Ricky Hoyos
Jim Rucquoi
Donna Shumway
Faye Wall
Karen P. Weber
Jane Clough
Pamela S. Ernst

DeBary
Sanford
Lake Mary
Sanford
Sanford
Lake Mary
Lake Mary
Deltona
Lake Mary

The following is the fourth in a series of articles taken from the minutes for the above years.

In the Fall of 1959 it was reported that the government had made a ruling that no field crops, where the insecticide *heptachlor* was used, could be sold because of its detrimental effects on humans and animals. [Note: This is one of the insecticides brought to light in Rachel Carson's Silent Spring, published in 1962.]

It was reported that Florida now has twenty-three bird sanctuaries, which were either given to the Audubon Society or were leased for \$1.00.

In the Spring of 1960 the Society tried to get legislation passed in the Florida Legislature to protect all trees containing eagle nests. Gov. Leroy Collins gave his approval to this project. There was no indication in the minutes that a bill was passed during the years through 1966. At the March 1960 meeting fifty-four people were present.

In the Fall of 1960 it was reported that Hurricane Donna had done much damage to eagle nests. At the December meeting it was noted that eagles are building nests on Stone Island in Lake Monroe.

The first edition of "The Florida Jay" was given to those attending the meeting on January 23, 1961, at the School Farm Building in Sanford. It seems to have been mimeographed.

Low water levels in February 1962 caused birds like limpkins to wander. It was noted that plumage worn on hats is now mostly artificial.

At the first Fall meeting in 1962 a short review of the book Silent Spring by Rachael Carson was given. [Note: I read this book at the time and highly recommend it.]

The November 26, 1962, meeting was important because of the "Report on the Bald Eagle Campaign". There was an inventory of eagles in the Kissimmee Valley. Fifty-nine ranchers are cooperating, but nesting sites are not open to the public,

At the next meeting the new three-way membership was explained.

In the Spring of 1963 programs and field trips continued. At the May meeting a problem of boys shooting at eagles and other birds was discussed.

Myra Platel

Upcoming Programs

Bats in My Florida Backyard, March 12

Not long ago Florida was adorned with old growth forests, clean waterways, and wide expanses of connected scrublands. These habitats supported the most diverse plant and animal communities in

North America, each one closely dependent on the health of the others. Bats, one of the most significant players in these habitats, darkened the sky with their nightly emergence to hunt insects; no landscape was left untouched by these fast-flying mammals that consume half their own weight in bugs each night. These masters of the night sky kept insect populations balanced and contributed to the overall health of Florida's landscapes.



Florida is a very different place today; deforestation, agriculture, and urbanization of Florida's native landscapes has resulted in widespread chemical use and poisoned the water and land alike. Countless plants and animals have disappeared and entire ecosystems are changing rapidly, forcing the remaining flora and fauna to quickly adapt – or die.



Florida's bats are fighting to survive but they are unjustly persecuted because of myth and misconception, poisoned by insecticides and pollutants, and left homeless by careless human disturbance to roosts. This program dispels

common myths, replacing them with the fascinating truth about bats. We'll explore our neighborhood bats and expose their unique lifestyles and explore the important environmental services that bats provide. Discussions will include conservation strategies and simple steps that anyone can take to help bats thrive in their own backyard. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet live Florida bats after the program.

Wekiva River Potluck and Kayaking, April 9, 10 am



Join us for food, fellowship, and kayaking during our last program of the 2016-2017 season. Bring the entire family! Bring food to share. This event replaces our monthly meeting at the library. We will meet at 164 Wekiva Park Drive, Sanford, FL 32771, near Katie's Landing. There will be kayaking at 10 am, potluck at 12 noon, and more kayaking at 1 pm. Kayaks will be available or bring your own. Thank you to the Russells for inviting us to their property for fun on the river!

Upcoming Trips

Sat March 18 Evening Bat Hike, Lower Wekiva River Preserve State Park

Shari Blissett-Clark will lead us on an evening hike to visit the Lower Wekiva River Preserve State Park. We'll make frequent stops during the hike to listen

and look for bats. We are accessing the hiking trail at the south entrance located at 8300 W. State Road 46, Sanford, FL 32771. Meet at the south entrance at 6:45 pm (sunset will be at 7:30 pm). There will also be a car pool that leaves at 6:30 pm from Jo-Ann Fabrics by the Seminole Towne Center. Please watch the local weather forecast and dress accordingly. Wear sturdy walking shoes, bring insect repellent, drinking water, and a flashlight, headlamp, or glow stick. Trail distance is 2 miles on easy ground. The hike duration will be 1 to 1.5 hours. CONTINGENCY: hike will be cancelled and rescheduled in the case of rain or if temperatures drop below 50 degrees F.

Visit <https://www.floridastateparks.org/park/Lower-Wekiva-River> to learn more about the state park.

Sat April 15 Port Orange Colony



Seminole Audubon will visit the Port Orange Colony on Saturday, April 15th. This colony is an island home to one of Volusia County's most high profile bird colonies. The tiny area is often crammed with birds: Brown Pelicans, American Oystercatchers, egrets and many species of shorebirds. The island is an impressive nesting colony for some of these species. We will scope the island for birds and also visit a few other local hot spots. We will depart from Jo-Ann Fabrics by the Seminole Towne Center at 8 am or participants can meet under the bridge at 9:15 am. Afterwards we will have lunch.

Program Notes

January: Seminole County Natural Lands

After two seasons of scrambling for locations to hold our meetings we are thankful for the decision by Seminole County to open all libraries seven days a week! Our January meeting felt like we had returned home after a long absence.

Lori Hartsock, Program Coordinator for the Seminole County Natural Lands, was our guest speaker on Sunday January 8.



Photos: Sarah Donlan

Seminole County Natural Lands Program, begun in 1990, now has thirteen properties totaling almost 7000 acres. Nine of their properties are open to the public. They are responsible for maintenance on all of these properties with a wide range of activities, including exotic animal and plant control, habitat maintenance and restoration.

Controlled (or prescribed) burns require an actual prescription to be written for the burn. Specific weather and other conditions must be met. When they think they have a day when the requirements of the prescription will be met all participants gather and each condition must be rechecked



prior to any fires being ignited.

Lori brought with her artificial skulls of various animals. She explained clues, such as size and shape of the skull, position of the eyes, and angle of the spine that can be used to identify the animal.

Lori brought several live creatures with her: a Box Turtle, a Corn Snake (or Red Rat Snake), an Eastern Hognose Snake and a Scarlet King Snake. For many this part was the highlight of her presentation. Door prize winners were Kathy Rowe, Jan & Jim Peters, and Steve Walker.

Faith Jones

February: A Kaleidoscope of Birds



What a treat Seminole Audubon Society had on Sunday February 12th! Our program, *A Kaleidoscope of Birds*, included photos and information on trips taken to Alaska, Panama, and the Amazon. The meeting room was filled.

Joy Rector, with the assistance of her sister Margaret Ziegler, and Peggy Stickney, told us about their travels to Alaska. This was a Seminole Audubon Society-sponsored trip arranged by Holbrook Travels. It was helpful to view a map and follow the steps of their journey. Some of the birds they saw included the Black-billed Magpie, Common Redpoll, Parakeet Auklet, and of course the all-time favorites: the Horned Puffin and Tufted Puffin. It was a surprise to learn that no vultures are there! While traveling, they enjoyed approximately 22 hours of sunlight each day – no wonder they saw so many birds! We also viewed images of flowers and whales.

Jimye Kaye Russell shared photographs of her and her husband John's trip to Panama where they visited and toured with their friends, Brad and Karen. Her photographs rival those taken by any professional! Hummingbirds abound in Panama. Jimye Kaye showed us photos of the tiny Scintillant

Hummingbird, which measures about three inches, as well as the Purple-throated Mountain-gem, another colorful hummingbird. We were also treated to images of a Roadside Hawk, Collared Redstart, several species of tanagers, and also a Green Violet Ear. Along with birds there were photographs of Gato Negro (the black cat), a 3-toed sloth and a poison dart frog. Many giggles erupted over the story of the precarious positions John got in while photographing some of the birds.

Faith Jones shared stories and photographs from her trip to the Amazon region of Brazil. The slide show began with a beautiful view of the *Meeting of the Waters*, the point where the two largest tributaries of the Amazon River converge but do not mix for over four miles. Faith also shared the image and history of Teatro Amazonas, the neoclassical opera house built during the area's economic "rubber" boom (1879-1912). The road by the opera house was originally paved with rubber, so that the carriages of any late-arriving patrons would not make noise to disturb the performance. There were eight folks in Faith's group and each day they would take canoes out from the main boat in the morning, afternoon, and evening. Some birds seen were the Great Tinamou, the 'true' species of the Muscovy Duck, Razor-billed Curassow, Green Ibis, Pied Puffbird, and the Hoatzin with his weird digestive system. Hoatzins are zoological curiosities, having a lot in common with cows and sheep. They are the only leaf-eating bird; they chew leaves before swallowing, and have two fermentation chambers before their stomach. The group enjoyed some Piranha fishing and made a meal of their catch. We were treated to the sound of Howler monkeys and songs and calls of some of the birds. What a surprise to learn there is a bird-eating spider that grows to the size of a dinner plate!

This program left us all wanting to venture to Alaska, Panama, and the Amazon! Steve Walker, Bettye Leidigh, and Michelle Vaughn were the door prize winners.
Marguerite Terwilleger

Trip Notes

January: Lake Harney

Seminole Audubon Society enjoyed a wonderful field trip on January 14th to the Lake Harney Wilderness Area. The lakeshore revealed White



Pelicans, a Northern Harrier, a Roseate Spoonbill and loads of other birds.



Photos: Lewis Gray

The group was able to enjoy the view from the new observation tower and 53 species were recorded. It was a treat to get a peek at two Bald Eagle nests! The Lake Harney Wilderness Area is one of nine properties open to the public that are in the Seminole County Natural Lands program.

If you haven't been there yet---head out and see what is going on. You won't be disappointed!

Pam Meharg

January Overnight Trip: Jonathan Dickinson State Park and Blowing Rock

Scrub-jays, night herons, and migrating birds were in abundance when Seminole Audubon members visited Jonathan Dickinson State Park in Hobe Sound, Florida on Jan. 24-25-26. Overnight cabin and campsite accommodations made the stay a very real experience, putting us in the middle of the action.



Many of us stopped at Viera Wetlands on the way down and again on the way back. Just the beginning of the nesting season brought together a variety of herons, anhingas, many White Pelicans, Forester Terns, and Osprey. We also photographed and observed a Smooth-billed Ani, a rare bird to Florida.



Eleven members met at Blowing Rocks Preserve, a Nature Conservancy Preserve, and spent the day on the beach enjoying the low tide access to the Anastasia Limestone rock formations. Of course, the weather was near perfect for the hike down the beach.



An evening get together with a potato bar dinner, everyone bringing their favorite toppings, gave everyone the opportunity to discuss the days adventure and to meet new members.

Included in the next day's events was the pontoon boat tour at the Park, which took us to Trader Nelson's Island for an historical tour. We also enjoyed touring the Loxahatchee River with its amazing mangrove islands. Jonathan Dickinson State Park is known for its Scrub-jay colony and we were not disappointed. We observed and photographed at least 8 birds in their scrub habitat, coming out to greet us as sentinels of their group. Red-headed Woodpeckers were a first sighting for many people, including myself. Wood ducks, European Starlings, Chipping Sparrows, Great Blue Herons, and an occasional Raccoon, were close by in the woods and rivers.



The experience was enlightening. Jonathan Dickinson has been renovated over the past few years with a new Education Center, bathrooms, and other facilities. It will be a huge plus in the Florida State Park system in the future.

Sarah Donlan (article and photos)

Seminole Audubon Society Sponsors Eco-camper



Seminole Audubon was thrilled to be able to sponsor Grant Brady for the winter Eco-camp at Geneva Wilderness area. Campers have fun while learning about the environment and the animals in the Nature Center.

Seminole Co. Natural Lands Bird Survey



Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Black Bear Wilderness Area will be the location of the SAS bird surveys again this year. Although the surveys commence at sunrise, due to the length of the loop trail, it is after 12 noon before we reach the last survey point. To obtain more comprehensive results the survey team made the decision to survey Black Bear Wilderness Area for a second year traveling the loop trail in the opposite direction. Our January survey was rained out, but we conducted what turned out to be one of our best surveys in February.

The February survey documented 53 species. Three species were added to our list for this property. We saw two Hooded Mergansers, two Orange-crowned Warblers, and most exciting of all was a Snail Kite seen over the St. Johns River.

We appreciate all the volunteer hours contributed by Connie Dolan, Lewis Gray, Faith Jones, Pam Meharg, and Nini Toro for these surveys.

Faith Jones

Wekiva CBC Report

December 2016 marked the 117th year for the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) and the 26th year for the Wekiva count circle. The 63 participants this year documented 133 species, the highest species count for this circle.

Unusual birds this year included three firsts for the count: Fulvous Whistling Duck, Snail Kite and Orchard Oriole. Other unusual birds for our count circle included Northern Shoveler, Common Goldeneye, Least Bittern, Short-tailed Hawk, Virginia

Rail, White-winged Dove and Yellow-throated Vireo - these species have been observed no more than one or two counts in the past.

We had unusually low numbers for a few species. Most notably we observed only five northern bobwhites, two greater yellowlegs and zero eastern meadowlarks.

The number of Bald Eagles observed has grown substantially during the 26 years of the count. Only three individuals were observed 22 years ago and we had a high of 56 in last year's (2015) count. This year we observed 38 bald eagles.

Thanks to all who participated in the 2016 Wekiva CBC. Mark your calendar! December 16, 2017, will be the day for the next Wekiva CBC.

Faith Jones

If You Find a Baby Bird...

Spring is breeding and nesting season for many species. It is also the time when our local wildlife rehabilitators are busy 24/7 and appreciate volunteers. There is a great deal of information and instruction available online, including a section on our website, SeminoleAudubon.org.



According to the Florida Wildlife Conservation Commission, "When finding a baby animal it is generally best to leave it alone. Often the animal is not orphaned and the parent may be out getting food for the animal, or watching the baby from a distance. Never pick up baby animals and remove them from their natural environment!"

In most cases, baby birds you encounter will have feathers. This means they are fledglings who have left the nest, but their parents are still feeding them. They may be hopping on the ground, fluttering their wings, etc. If this is the case, the parents are likely

hiding nearby waiting until it is safe to feed their offspring. As long as the bird is safe from cats, dogs and people, you should leave the area. If the bird is threatened you should put the bird in a nearby bush or tree limb then watch from a distance to determine if the parents are close. If after 20-30 minutes there is no sign of the parents call a licensed wildlife rehabilitator.

If the bird is injured you should contact an FWC-licensed wildlife rehabilitator for instructions. A list by county is available on their website: myfwc.com. **Faith Jones**

January 2017 Birding Basics Classes



Photo: Cat Bird by Shirley Reilly

The January classes of our Birding Basics Course were once again filled to capacity! In addition to the three sessions at the Nature Center in Geneva Wilderness Area and the trip to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, these two classes had a special treat. Thanks to Rosi Mullholland, St. Johns River Water Mgt. District's Land Mgt. Specialist Lake Apopka North Shore, this year's students had a private tour of the Lake Apopka North Shore Wildlife Drive. The morning with the wildlife drive open just for us proved to be a wonderful learning experience for the new birders.

It was rewarding to see the students identify by sight many of the birds we had studied during the course. It was even more gratifying to see them successfully identify others with the use their field guides.



Photo: Mud Snake by Faith Jones



Photo: Wood Stork by Shirley Reilly

Faith Jones

In addition to birds, we observed a very cold mud snake. Rosi showed us the upper and beautiful underside of the snake and shared some facts about the species.

Springtime Splendor

We are entering an active time of year. It is breeding time for many species. The neo-tropical migrants will return during the next few months. Some of these birds will merely fly over one night. Others, who are able to find the food sources (plants) they need to replenish their fat reserves required for completion of their trip, will stay for a few days to bulk up. Still others will stay locally for the spring and summer to nest. It is also nesting season for many of our resident birds. Here are a

few things you can do to help wildlife and also what to look for during the next few months.

In your garden, it is time to plant coral honeysuckle, coral bean and other wildflowers to attract hummingbirds. The **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** that winter to our south will begin to arrive. Some are just passing through on their way to breed to our north while others will stay to breed locally.

March also brings the return of **Swallow-tailed Kites** from their wintering areas in South America. Look for these magnificent black and white birds soaring over Central Florida as they feed and look for nesting locations.

Listen for the newly returned **Chuck-Will's-Widow** calling after sunset. Listen closely as you may be fortunate to find a **Whip-Poor-Will** that has stopped to rest during migration to its breeding areas north of Florida.

Other birds that will be returning to nest in our area include **Least Terns, Great-Crested Flycatchers, Eastern Kingbirds, Purple Martins, Red-Eyed Vireos, Northern Parulas, and Indigo Buntings**. Be sure to look and listen for these birds.

Some of our resident birds that will exhibit courtship behavior during the next few months include **Carolina Wrens** who will build nests almost anywhere including a gourd, an open basket under eaves, or even the wreath on your front door. **Brown Thrashers** begin singing to mark their territory and attract a mate. **Great Blue Herons** may be seen on their nests, which are sometimes in colonies, but are often single nests high in pine trees near water. **Wood Storks, Wild Turkeys, and Northern Bobwhites** begin courtship and nesting. During the next few months you will find **Florida Scrub-Jays** beginning to mate and build nests in scrub oaks of Central Florida.

Not to ignore our non-avian species, as the weather warms **Florida Black Bear** will become active and more visible. **Green Anoles** breed during these months. **American Alligators** move about seeking new territories and mates; their courtship rituals begin in May. The loud, resounding bellows of the males can definitely fill the air. Some of those bull frogs you think you are hearing may actually be alligators.

Some of the information in this article was obtained from Florida Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Faith Jones

Seminole Audubon's "Snack before You Snip"

On January 12th, a small but enthusiastic group showed up for Seminole Audubon's first "Snack before You Snip" event at Crystal Lake Preserve. It was a chance to help out while enjoying snacks and fellowship. There was a lot of work to be done by hand, so everyone was thrilled that Mark Leidigh volunteered to do some clearing with equipment that could remove the vines, which were smothering the lower growth. Jim Denslow also dug and pulled up 200 - 300 of the remaining invasive and undesirable plants, only to see there are many more to remove. The cleared area is 100 -150 feet long and now needs to be filled with saplings of native or other desirable trees. Anyone wishing to help please contact Jim at 407-323-4506 or by email: bdenslow@cfl.rr.com as soon as possible. We can't leave the ground bare for long!

Purple Martin from page 1

Jones, installed foundations for the poles and gourds in early January. They were assisted by Amos Sparrow from Sanford's Parks Department. The two concrete foundations were allowed to cure for about a week and on Monday, January 9, 2017, the two poles with eight gourds on each pole were installed.

Seminole Audubon Society hopes that the gourds were put up early enough in January to attract Purple Martin scouts. If the scouting birds find the gourds they will let other martins know of their availability. Colonies of purple martins will help control the insect population along the Sanford waterfront and provide entertainment for people watching them come and go from the gourds.

Find Us!

If you have a Facebook account, please take a few minutes to 'like us' and invite your friends to like us as well. If you have bird photos or information of interest to members, please email it to seminoleaudubon@gmail.com.



Follow us on Twitter at: Seminole Audubon @AudubonSeminole.

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



Inside a Bluebird nest box: follow the activity inside this breeding season at the live stream link on the Florida Bluebird Society website at FloridaBluebirdSociety.org.

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!

Joining Seminole Audubon Society makes you also a member of Audubon of Florida and the National Audubon Society. Membership benefits include our newsletter *The JAY*, *Audubon Magazine*, and the *Florida Naturalist*. 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:
C7ZE310Z

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
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Calendar of Events

www.seminoleaudubon.org

Program Meetings are held at 2:00 pm on Sunday afternoons in the Meeting Room of the Seminole County Public Library, North Branch, located at 150 N. Palmetto Ave., Sanford. Call (407) 797-4636 for details.

Sun. March 12 **Bats in My Florida Backyard.** Shari Blissett Clark, Florida Bat Conservancy, will dispel common myths & replace them with fascinating truths. Some bats will join us.

Sun. April 9 **Wekiva River potluck & kayaking. Location Change:** Food, Fellowship, Kayaking. 10 am. 164 Wekiva Park Dr., Sanford, FL 32771

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. Email seminoleaudubon@gmail.com with questions

Sat Mar 18 **Evening Bat Hike.** 6:45 pm. Lower Wekiva River Preserve State Park

Sat April 15 **Port Orange Colony.**

Crystal Lake Preserve, Lake Mary. Work morning.

Tues. March 14 – for time and meeting location, call 407-323-4506 or bdenslow@cfl.rr.com

Seminole County Natural Lands Guided Hikes. Pre-registration required

April 8 **Night Hike. Nocturnal Animals.** 7:30 - 9:30 pm Lake Proctor Wilderness Area

April 22 **Swamp Walk** 8 – 10 am Spring Hammock Preserve

May 20 **Morning Trail Trek** 8 – 11 am Black Bear Wilderness Area

June 3 **Night Hike. Herp (Reptiles) Hike** 7:30 – 9:30 pm Geneva Wilderness Area

Seminole County Natural Lands Nature Classes

March 18 **Owl Class.** 6:30 – 9:30 pm Geneva Wilderness Area, Faith Jones, presenter

April 29 **Parent/Child Eco-Crafts** 9 – 11 am Geneva Wilderness Area

May 14 **Snakes of Florida** 9 am – 12 pm Geneva Wilderness Area

Other Events

Sat. April 22 **Earthfest Festival - Altamonte.** 10 am – 2 pm

Sat. April 29

Earthfest Festival - Casselberry. 12 – 5 pm