www.seminoleaudubon.org

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

March, April, May 2023

Renewable Energy on the Move

By Sam Kendall

In 2022, installations of renewable energy were almost ¾ of all the new electrical generating capacity in the US. For the first time, new solar plants across the country provided more megawatts (MW) of power than new wind farms (Solar 9924 MW, Wind 8512 MW), followed by new fossil gas plants (also known as natural gas) at 6462 MW. Solar, wind and hydro power are now supplying 27% of all the electricity in the US. This is up from 18% in 2015. This growth will accelerate now as the Inflation Reduction Act provisions begin to move through the economy.*

French president Macron has signed a law that will take the pressure off agricultural lands competing for solar farm space. The new rule requires parking lots to install canopies of solar panels. Parking lots with 80 or more spaces will be required to start producing clean electricity by 2026. This is a solution that would be welcome here in the US. It would require some new thinking by the Pubic Service Commission but these hard-covered spaces can have dual uses just like the roofs on our houses.**



Wind turbine blades can be longer than a football field. Will our landfills be bulging with thousands of these monsters at their end of life? Danish blade maker Vestas has come up with a recycling solution. The company found a way to separate the mix of glass, carbon fibers and epoxy resin back into base materials that can be used to make new blades. The company hopes to have the technology available for industrial scale in three years.***

*https://environmentamerica.org/center/updates/how-fast-did-renewable-energy-grow-in-2022/

***End of wind power waste? Vestas unveils blade recycling technology | Reuters

^{**}https://cleantechnica.com/2023/02/09/new-law-50-solar-power-over-parking-lots-in-france/

Bird About Town

White Ibis (Ī-bĭs) (Eudocimus albus)

Text & Photos by Lynne Smith

According to Cambridge Dictionary an ibis is "a large bird with long legs and a long downward-curving beak, that walks around in water to find its food." We birders know that's not half the story.

On December 2nd at 11:30 am two mature and seven immature White Ibises strutted into my backyard. Immature White Ibises have brown and white plumage. Mature are all white except for black wing tips, which are visible only when they fly. It takes about two years before immature White Ibises have their full adult plumage. All nine ibises started rapidly poking and probing my yard with their long, curved, orange beaks



looking for bugs, grubs, worms or slugs. Suddenly two young ones got into it about something. They startled me with a loud "Squonk! Squon-o-onk!", (kind of a cross between a squawk and a honk, a sound many wetland birds make.) They jumped up and down and attacked with their feet. This went on for about 20 seconds, then the dispute was settled and they resumed poking around for food. I have a sandy yard so the flock didn't stay long. They scuttled together as a group over to my neighbor's yard where there was thicker, moister turf to poke around in.



Ibises are wetland birds. Their native habitat is along the banks of rivers, marshes, lakes and swamps, but they have adapted to human activities. You also see them around retention ponds, yards, golf courses and parks. Their diet consists of worms, insects, grubs, frogs, lizards, snails, crustaceans and newts. It is unhealthy for these birds to eat human food. They use their long, curved, orange beaks to search for food. When they feel something in the ground or muck, they pinch their beak together like tweezers and pull it out. Or they'll use their beak like a fork to stab lizards, frogs or snails.

Ibises are sociable nomads. They do not migrate. They generally travel in flocks on the ground and in the air. Occasionally I've seen a loner walking around a neighborhood. They create

colonies that live in trees, shrubs or tall grasses along rivers, marshes and swamps. During the day groups will fly up to 30 miles to hunt for food, then fly back home in the evening to rest and sleep.

Their breeding season in Florida is between February and October. Male and female Ibises work together to build their nests within the colony. The nest is a messy pile of sticks measuring about eighteen inches across. The female lays two to five eggs and the very protective male defends the nest and also helps incubate the eggs. The eggs hatch in about 20 days. The babies are helpless, unable to even hold up their heads. Thirty to forty days later the young are ready to fledge. Their parents teach them to fly by standing next to them and demonstrating take off and flying techniques. Ibises can live to be 16 years old.



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Climate Leadership Network

One of the Audubon workshops I look forward to attending is the Climate Leadership Network. Audubon Specialist Halle Goldstein enlists speakers on various climate-change-related topics to make presentations during the quarterly zoom call.

For the call in January, Halle recruited Savanna Barry, who is with IFAS Extension and Florida Sea Grant (www.flseagrant.org). One of Sea Grant's missions is to restore eroded areas along Florida's coasts. Rising seas and hurricanes have swallowed up miles of our sandy shores. A few years ago Savanna led a restoration project over at Cedar Key along Joe Rains Beach. Through the years, sea bulkheads, roads and revetments had diverted the natural sand supply. This brought the Gulf waters dangerously close to houses and the community park. Accumulated sand in the nearby canal was pumped back along the beach. Then the Sea Grant team and volunteers planted grasses and other vegetation. After several years of protected growth, the shoreline is now stabilized.

Savanna explained what happens when waves crash into bulkheads. Wave energy is reflected downwards in a scouring action which undermines the base of the structure. When water overflows the bulkhead the retreating flow can overturn the structure and dump it in the sea. Restored shorelines are 10 - 20 % less expensive than bulkheads and have all the natural advantages for marine organisms, birds and even some carbon storage. Savanna said if current trends continue Florida could lose 30% of natural shorelines to bulkhead armoring by the end of the century. She pointed out, however, that even living shorelines won't keep the sea from rising.

The Climate Leadership Network is open to any Audubon member concerned about the effects and mitigation efforts forced by our changing climate. Contact Phyllis, Tracey, or me and we will get you signed up for the next meeting notification.

Another way to stay informed on climate policy is to subscribe to the Audubon Florida bi-weekly Climate Roundup Newsletter. Go to Audubon Florida (https://fl.audubon.org), click on Get Involved at the top and then scroll down to Climate Change Advocacy where you can sign up. The Roundup covers news about climate warming thresholds, the campaign of misinformation, health risks, resiliency, renewables and more.



SAS Receives \$1,000 Grant from National Audubon Society

St. Richard's Episcopal Church in Winter Park (SW corner of Seminole County) has a goal of reducing their carbon footprint. They want to be a role model for their community as well as providing education to encourage their parish members and the surrounding community to use native plants to provide food and habitat for birds and to reduce watering needs. Last spring Conservation Leadership Initiative student

Tracey Comazzi did an independent study to provide a master plan for converting the large front section of the lawn from St. Augustine grass to native plants. In November, SAS applied for and received a \$1,000 grant from National Audubon Society to begin this project. One 20' x 30' section will be converted initially. The St. Augustine grass will be removed first, then this spring SAS and church volunteers will plant the native plants and add educational labels.

Conservation Delegation Meeting Jan. 11 Summary by Phyllis Hall

The purpose of this meeting was to give citizens an opportunity to advocate for legislative priorities. The delegation was composed of FL Representatives David Smith (Chair), Rachel Plankon, Doug Bankson and Susan Plasencia plus Senator Jason Brodeur. Each represents all or some portion of Seminole County. Of interest to SAS, Commission Chair Amy Lockhart presented Seminole County priorities which included Save Rural Seminole, Lake Jesup restoration, and reducing nitrogen loading from septic tanks with a pilot to replace septic with sewer. The local bill's representative asked to have contracts for Sanford Airport extended from the current limit of 50 years to 75 years which is in line with other metro areas and to have more transparency statewide with tax collector budgets. Sheriff Dennis Lemma spoke about the need for more mental health support. For the remainder of the time, organizations and individuals were given 2 or 3 minutes to advocate for their areas of concern. Gabbie Milch advocated for the St. Johns River including breaching the Rodman Dam. On behalf of SAS, I also advocated for this with the focus on how this would improve and expand the wildlife corridor for fish and manatees especially and for birds with restoration of 7,500 acres of wetland forest. Senator Brodeur has been a champion of the wildlife corridor and understands the conservation need for breaching the Rodman Dam. Other conservation speakers included representatives from Cuplet Fern Native Plant Society, Bear Warriors United, 1000 Friends of Florida, and Seminole Soil and Water Conservation Board.

CFX Concept, Feasibility, and Mobility (CF&M) Study State Road 417 (Seminole Expressway) to Orlando Sanford International Airport Connector

Phyllis Hall attended the Central Florida Expressway Authority (CFX) the first Environmental Advisory Group (EAG) virtual meeting on Wednesday, January 25, 2023, During the meeting, the CFX project study team presented information about the study. All of the attendees expressed strong opposition to the plans especially relating to the impact on designated conservation areas and wetlands and the impact to wildlife as well as the additional potential flooding and further degradation of Lake Jesup from water flow. Representatives of environmental groups included Bear Warriors, Sierra Club, Defenders of Wildlife and Friends of Lake Jesup.

The goal of this study is to evaluate the feasibility of an approximately two-mile potential expressway connection between SR 417 and the Orlando Sanford International Airport, thereby allowing for better connectivity and easing future traffic growth in the area. It also will determine if yet-to-be-identified alternatives are feasible based on engineering, economic, and environmental evaluations, and if the project is viable based on current traffic analyses. Located in Seminole County, the project study area extends from SR 417 in the vicinity of the Seminole Toll Plaza northeastward to East Lake Mary Boulevard at, or in the vicinity of, the entrance to Orlando Sanford International Airport at Red Cleveland Boulevard. All factors related to conceptual design and location of the facility, including transportation needs, social impacts, economic factors, environmental impacts, engineering analysis, and right-of-way requirements, are being considered in the study.

Public involvement and interagency coordination will be an integral part of the assessment process, and opportunities for public participation will be provided. CFX anticipates holding one public meeting in Seminole County as part of this study.

The website for the study is: https://www.cfxway.com/agency-information/plans-studies/project-studies-sr-417-to-orlando-sanford-international-airport-connector/

Seminole Forever Ordinance

Seminole Forever is the County's newest blueprint to conserve natural resources, enhance efforts to preserve and protect our environmental systems, and provide future generations increased access to natural lands. This program aims to identify, acquire, and preserve environmentally sensitive lands, water resources, forests and farmlands, and outdoor recreation lands. Without requiring any new taxes or fees, Seminole Forever would protect the County's natural lands while making an impact on the County's sensitive ecosystems. This will be voted on by county commissioners at a meeting in March. Please contact the Seminole County Commissioners to offer your support for this ordinance.

https://www.seminolecountyfl.gov/departments-services/board-of-county-commissioners/

Purple Martin Habitat at the Sanford Marina

by Cecilia Carey

January 21 was an overcast morning. Jill, Darlene, Marty, Cecilia, and John helped clean the Purple Martin Habitat at the small park behind the Sanford Marina on Lake Monroe. The goal was to remove the small bits of trash that the Purple Martins accidentally pick up when they are collecting nesting material. Palm fronds and other storm debris were also collected. The volunteers were rewarded with seeing four Purple Martins in flight – the first sighting for the season! A Bald Eagle was also spotted along with nine Lesser Scaups floating just off the seawall.



Christmas Bird Count 2022

by Leslie Martin



Roseate Spoonbill by Ken Schmidt

Once again this year, volunteers from Seminole Audubon Society spent a lovely day counting birds for the Wekiva Basin Christmas Bird Count, Zones 10 and 11. We had 13 people searching for our feathered friends

at neighborhood parks, Lake Monroe Riverwalk, Evergreen Cemetery, James Dunn Park, Liberty Park, Mayfair Country Club and many backyard feeders in Sanford and Lake Mary.

Some highlights included a Roseate Spoonbill, Eastern Bluebirds, Painted Buntings, an Orange-Crowned Warbler and a

pair of Red-tailed Hawks. It will be some time before results are compiled for the entire 17-mile circle, but our groups counted 84 species and a total of 2,226 individual birds.



Painted Bunting

Photo by Ken Schmidt

Program Notes

ST. JOHNS RIVERKEEPER®

January 8, 2023

The St. Johns River is the longest river in Florida and its most significant one for commercial and recreational use. At 310 miles long, it flows north and winds through or borders twelve counties. Numerous lakes are formed by the river including Lake Monroe and Lake Jesup. The mission of the Riverkeeper is to defend the river and advocate for its protection through outreach and education especially with children. There is saltwater intrusion into the river caused from sea level rise and overuse of aquifers. Lisa explained the benefits of the initiative to breech part of the Rodman Dam. The dam was created as part of the barge canal project. It serves no purpose now and is impacting the flow of the river causing significant pollution. With partial restoration and reimagining the remainder of the dam to be a recreation hub, the



Presenters were Lisa Rinaman, St. Johns Riverkeeper, and Gabbie Milch, Middle Basin Coordinator.

area could reap economic benefits of increased regional eco-tourism visitation and improved fishing. Water flow would be restored, 100 miles of river estuary sustained, 56 miles of wildlife habitat from Silver Springs to the St. Johns River would be enhanced and 17,500+ acres of floodplain forest would be restored.

Gabbie Milch focuses on the St. Johns Middle Basin from Orange County to Lake George. Her role is to engage volunteers and members of the community to participate in activities such as clean ups, river-friendly landscape projects and riparian habitat restorations, riverfront hikes and other social learning activities. The focus areas for 2023 include: inland flooding related to climate change, increase in algae blooms, human health criteria for drinking water quality, wastewater discharges from septic tanks, biosolids with PFAS and other chemicals, loss of wetlands with loss of habitat, biofiltering and lowering springs flows. Gabbie was also recently appointed to be the Seminole County Soil and Water Conservation District 4 Supervisor.

February 12: Crested Caracara

Brendon Quinton is a senior scientist with Environmental Science Associates (ESA). He conducts surveys of caracara along with other projects. ESA also manages the Scrub Jay habitat at Yankee Lake Treatment Center. ESA has 21 offices across California, the Pacific Northwest and the Southeast. Southeast offices include Atlanta, Pensacola, Tampa, Orlando, Sarasota and Delray Beach. They have a multifaceted team including water quality and restoration experts, engineers, wetland scientists, and wildlife biologists.

The Caracara (Caracara cheriway) is in the falcon family. They are listed as a threatened species. Populations have increased

6% between 1966 and 2019. The small population in Florida is especially vulnerable since their habitat includes wet prairies with open grassy areas like pastures which are also attractive for developers. They are opportunistic feeders most often seen feeding on carrion but they also



Caracaras continued from previous page

but they also eat fruit, bugs, fish, turtles and small mammals. They have a symbiotic feeding relationship with vultures often spotting food on the ground which alerts vultures to its location. Their nests are well hidden in cabbage palms. Nesting season is January through April. One to four eggs hatch after about a month of incubation and the young fledge after about 6-8 weeks. ESA conducts surveys of the caracara in the US Fish and Wildlife consultation area which includes the lower half of the state. Seminole County is on the upper northern border. Survey areas are divided into blocks. Surveys must start before January 10th and continue through April 30th. Each block is surveyed every two weeks beginning 15 minutes prior to sunrise and lasting 3 hours. If a caracara is encountered, the number, developmental stage, behavior, and flight path are documented. If construction is planned in the block areas, less work would be performed within the primary and secondary zones during nesting season and nests would be monitored prior to and during construction. A productivity survey of the area is done prior to construction and after nesting season.

Trip Notes Lighthouse Point Park



by Cecilia Carey

Ten hardy souls braved a cold and windy morning to bird at Lighthouse Point Park in Ponce Inlet, on January 14th. They were rewarded by seeing 18 species including four Bald Eagles, Royal Terns, Sandwich Terns, Ring-billed Gulls, Laughing Gulls, and Herring Gulls.

The highlight of the morning was watching a flock of 150 – 200 Black Skimmers flying in formation along the surface of the Intracoastal Waterway as they hunted for food. Two additional stops along the Intracoastal were made on the way home. At the first stop, a group of Brown Pelicans was

spotted sheltering from the wind in some mangroves. At the second stop, two Oystercatchers were found on a sandbar just north of the Dunlawton Bridge. They were mixed in with some Double-crested Cormorants and a Ring-billed Gull.

Yankee Lake Treatment Facility: Florida Scrub-Jays

Staff from Environmental Science Associates, the management company for this habitat, provided a guided tour in their trucks. They provided narration using walkie-talkies as we traveled, pointing out where management has been done over the years. The habitat needs constant monitoring and maintenance.

Commissioner Bob Dallari was able to join us on this trip. Seminole High School students recently came to a commission meeting to advocate to have the Florida Scrub-Jay be officially named the Seminole County bird. This was approved by the commissioners. The students are also meeting with other state legislators to advocate for the Florida Scrub-Jay to be the official state bird (instead of the Northern Mockingbird). The students did a separate field trip to the property on February 2nd.

Continued on next page



Florida Scrub-Jay by Lewis Gray

Scrub-Jays Continued from previous page

Yankee Lake Treatment Facility is the only habitat in Seminole County for Florida Scrub-Jays. Along with Audubon Florida, SAS was instrumental in getting this habitat preserved in 1993 when the treatment facility was being planned, so we visit this property each year. Sadly, one of the oldest jays on the property died this past year so now there are just 6 birds in 2 families. Everyone is keeping fingers crossed that new babies will be successful in fledging this spring.



Lewis Gray kept an eBird list. Other bird species seen included: Pileated Woodpecker, Cedar Waxwing, American Robin, American Crow, Eastern Towhee, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Tree Swallows.

Upcoming Programs

Program Meetings are held on the second Sunday at 2 pm except the April meeting will be on the third Sunday in 2023. Meeting **Location**:

IFAS Extension Education Building University of Florida/IFAS Extension Seminole County 250 W. County Home Rd. (off 17/92) Sanford, FL 32773

March 12: Orlando Wetlands (Don't forget the time change – "Spring Forward")

Rachel Kessler is the Public Outreach Coordinator for Orlando Wetlands Park. The Park is 1,650 acres of man-made wetlands designed to provide advanced treatment for reclaimed water

from the City of Orlando and other local cities. Rachel will explain how Park staff manage the wetlands for the treatment of reclaimed water while maintaining a healthy balance among flora, fauna, and biogeochemical processes. She will also highlight some of the birds and other animals observed there.



April 16: Florida Owls and Baby Bird Rescue at the Center for Birds of Prey

Note the change of date to the 3rd Sunday this year.

Daisy Fiore is the Sr. Coordinator for Education at the Center for Birds of Prey in Maitland. She previously worked in education at SeaWorld Orlando, Brandywine Zoo in Delaware, and served in multiple roles at Disney. Daisy will provide interesting facts about the various owls seen in Florida. She will also explain what to do if you find a baby bird and how the Center manages all those baby bird rescues.



Upcoming Trips

Field Trip March 18: Orlando Wetlands Park

Join us for birding on the new boardwalk! This is a premier birding area where 220 bird species have been documented. Meet at the parking lot at 8:00 am at 25155 Wheeler Road, Christmas, FL 32709, Moderate walking over uneven terrain to the boardwalk. All levels and ages of birders are welcome. Restrooms are available. Limited to 15 people. Reservations required. Contact Cecilia Carey at cacarey@cfl.rr.com.







Play Bio-Bingo with Seminole Audubon Society at Gemini Springs Park, DeBary. Meet at the park at 8:00 am. We'll visit Gemini Springs, one of Florida's Special Places, for a rousing game of Bio-Bingo! It's a biology treasure hunt meets Bingo. Explore the park to find the flora and fauna on the Bio-Bingo card. Play on your own or form a team of the best butterfly, bird, bug and plant people you know!

Moderate walking over uneven terrain on the trails. Concrete sidewalk pathways. All levels and ages of birders are welcome. Address: 37 Dirksen Dr., DeBary, FL 32713

Restroom available. No reservations required.

Upcoming Events

Backyard Birds Saturday March 4 from 9:00 am - noon

Ed Yarborough Nature Center Open House in Geneva Wilderness Area located at 3485 SR 426 in Geneva.

Seminole County Natural Lands is partnering with SAS for an open house event at the nature center with the theme of "Backyard Birds". Activities will include short guided hikes to the fishing pier, arts and crafts activities for children., and more.

Marine Discovery Center Winter Birding Tours March 15 & April 26, 9 am to noon.

To make reservations, call the Marine Discovery Center at 386-428-4828 or visit www.marinediscoverycenter.org. These tours give an opportunity to observe migratory birds and learn more about these species from naturalists and local Audubon chapter members. The tours offer both beginning and avid birders transportation to Disappearing Island onboard MDC's Discovery boat. The Discovery boat will leave from the dock at 116 North Causeway in New Smyrna Beach to Disappearing Island. Guests will disembark at Disappearing Island at Ponce Inlet and walk the shoreline to view a variety of species seen in this area only during the winter months. Cost for the three-hour tour will be \$40 for adults; \$37 for seniors (62+) and students. Guests are encouraged to bring binoculars, viewing scopes, water and snacks, and to wear comfortable, water-tolerant shoes to walk along the shoreline. Stairs will be provided for guests to disembark at Disappearing Island.











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2022-2023 Board of Directors & Committee Chairs (eff. 7/1/22)

SeminoleAudubon@gmail.com

Term	Name	Office/Committee
2022/2024	Phyllis Hall	President, Website, History
2021/2023	Leslie Martin	V.P., Ornithology, SAS Premiums
2021/2023	Jan Peters	Treasurer
2022/2024	Peggy Stickney	Sec., Publicity, Release Keeper
	C.Carey P. Hall, L. Martin	Programs & Field Trips
2021/2023	Lewis Gray	At Large, Jane Isle Survey
2021/2023	Nat Harrison	At Large, CLI Liaison

Committee Chairs	Committee
Marty Shepherd	Membership
Margaret Loring	New Member Welcome Letter
Marguerite Terwilleger	Past President, Big Sit data, Scholarships,
Cecilia Carey	Meetings PowerPoint, Monthly Reminders on
	Meet Up, Facebook
Jim Peters	Purple Martin Project
Connie Dolan	Crystal Lake Preserve Liaison
Sam Kendall	Energy
Faith Jones	Newsletter Compiler
Corrinne Wertz	Publications

Eagle Watch: Michelle Vaughn, Sarah Donlan **Jay Watch:** Chuck Honaker, Marty Shepherd

Jane Isle Survey: Lewis Gray (Chair), Marguerite Terwilleger, Leslie Martin

Conservation: Phyllis Hall (Chair), Sam Kendall, Faith Jones, Cecilia & John Carey, Mindy Hellman, Marguerite

Terwilleger, Sarah Donlan

<u>SAS is represented on these community committees:</u> Wekiva Wild and Scenic River Advisory Committee, Wekiva River Basin Commission, Central FL Audubon Regional Conservation Committee. In addition, Seminole Planning and Development agendas are reviewed weekly.

Outreach: Phyllis Hall (Chair), Marty Shepherd, Leslie Martin, Cecilia Carey

Events: Seminole Garden Expo – February, Altamonte Springs/Lake Lotus Festival – around Earth Week, Casselberry EarthFest - Earth Week, Seminole State College Earth Week, Altamonte Springs Family Festival Cranes Roost

MailChimp, Facebook & Meet Up: Cecilia Carey (Backup: Phyllis Hall)
PO Box Mail Pickup: Michelle Vaughn (Backup: Marguerite Terwilleger)

Lake Monroe Purple Martin Nests: Jim Peters. Helpers: Jim & Cecilia Carey, Phyllis Hall, Richard Hagen

Lake Jesup Park Clean Up: Leslie Martin, (Chair), Marguerite Terwilleger

Scholarships: Marguerite Terwilleger (Chair), Corrinne Wertz, Joy Rector, Michelle Vaughn

School/Eco-Camp Connections: Eco Camp-Ed Yarborough Nature Center: Marguerite Terwilleger for scholarships.

Using Audubon Adventures & SAS speakers for camps

Bentley Elementary– Sanford: Joy Rector Central FL Zoo Camp: Michelle Vaughn Goldsboro Elementary - Sanford: Joy Rector TW Lawton Elementary - Oviedo: Phyllis Hall

Walden Community School – Winter Park: Phyllis Hall

Seminole State College - Phyllis Hall