



# The eSkimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, Inc.

[www.sevolusiaaudubon.org](http://www.sevolusiaaudubon.org)

December 2011

The Southeast Volusia Audubon Society promotes the protection of birds, other wildlife and their habitat through education and activism.

## Prez Sez

“An extensive new study by the Avian Ecology Program of the Archbold Biological Station on the health of the Florida Scrub-Jay, the only bird endemic to the state of Florida, has found that despite significant efforts to protect the species, populations have dropped significantly in the last 18 years. In managed study areas, populations have fallen by as much as 25%, but it is likely that the total species’ population throughout the state may have dropped as much as 35 – 40 percent.”

So begins a story on <http://focusingonwildlife.com> posted by the American Bird Conservancy. As we all know, the Scrub Jay’s oak scrub habitat is totally dependent on naturally-occurring wildfires. And no one is allowing those anymore. In some cases, wildfires have been replaced by controlled burns. The study included the results of 178 actively managed sites in 1992-1993 and again in 2009-2010. They found that the number of groups of jays decreased in 95 of those sites. Surprisingly, the site with the worst decline was Merritt Island NWR, which lost 109 groups during the decade.

The report concluded that fire suppression was a greater threat to the Scrub Jay population than habitat loss. The authors cited trends from the Lake Wales Ridge where populations are increasing at sites where fire is being managed appropriately but declining at sites where fire management is insufficient.

I am writing a letter to the manager of the Refuge to see whether or not they will be doing more management to regain some of the lost groups.

Recently, a large number of Blackpoll Warblers and other birds were killed in collisions with wind turbines operated by AES Wind Generation in West Virginia. It caught the attention of the birding public. National Audubon contacted the company to get more info and to see what the company was going to do about the problem. The company’s reaction? According to the Audubon report:

“AES representatives told Audubon they have taken immediate corrective actions to curtail excessive night lighting, replace equipment with preferable downward-shielded lighting fixtures, and will modify other site specifications. They will increase monitoring and take

## Meetings

Meetings are held the 3rd Wednesdays  
Oct. thru April at 7 P.M.  
Edgewater Library 103 Indian River Blvd.

*Smoke-free environment. Refreshments are served.  
Plenty of parking. Public welcome.*

**Next meeting is Wed., Dec. 21, 2011**

**Speaker- Dave Hartgrove**

Halifax River Audubon.

*See Speaker page 4*

Programs & Field trips subject to change.

## Field Trips

Meet in the Market Square parking lot Edgewater,  
Ridgewood Ave. & 442 *between Dunkin Donuts & Chik-Fil-A.*  
(Meeting time listed with trip)

Bring lunch & drinks.

Saturday, **December 17, 2011 - 6 a.m. (1)**

Lake Apopka Restoration Area

See **Field Trip** p. 4

*A complete list of field trips is available on the SEVAS website.*

[http://www.sevolusiaaudubon.org/field\\_trips.htm](http://www.sevolusiaaudubon.org/field_trips.htm)

Questions? Contact Gail Domroski 386-428-0447  
Numbers in parentheses indicate degree of difficulty.

- (1) Easy or no walking. (2) Walking less than one mile.
- (3) One plus mile walking and/or uneven terrain.

Field Trips are free.

Audubon members and guests are all welcome.

additional steps to reduce or eliminate lighting the facility during migration seasons to avert future bird kills of this type.”

How about that! A company understands the impact of its activities on the environment and takes appropriate action without being forced. Thank you AES.

Recently, the news was abuzz with the birth of the 7 billionth person. It almost seemed like a celebration. While I certainly wish that person a happy birthday, I wonder if the earth celebrated.

—Don Picard

## Conservation Notes

### *America's future is renewable*

Amid our gloomy jobs situation, hope is shining from solar power.

The U.S. solar power industry doubled in 2010, and will probably double again this year. Solar provides more than 100,000 jobs, with a 12 months net gain of more than 6,700 new jobs, despite Solyndra and Evergreen job losses. Inefficient enterprises are normally weeded-out in rapidly growing industries.

The Solar Energy Industries Association claims that falling costs have helped solar power become the fastest-growing U.S. industry. Since 1998, the average installed cost of a solar photovoltaic (PV) electric system has dropped about 50 percent.

U.S. grid-connected solar power capacity now totals 2,100 megawatts (MW). That's a fine beginning, but far below cloudy Germany's 17,000 MWs.

German leadership stems from their innovative Feed-in-Tariff (FIT) system rewarding renewable energy producers. In FIT systems, utilities buy renewables-generated electricity from businesses or homeowners at prices well above retail electric rates. Utilities offset costs by raising base rates. All customers share the costs, but enjoy cleaner, healthier air and reduced climate change threats.

In March 2009, our local municipal utility, Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU) launched an immediately successful FIT program, which continues growing rapidly.

Humans are changing the global climate faster than most scientists expected. Global greenhouse gas emissions rose about 6 percent last year, far higher than anticipated. Scientists warn that climate cataclysms may strike earlier than climate models have predicted.

It is abundantly clear how the climate is changing. Record-breaking, lethal weather extremes have become commonplace globally and will doubtless worsen. Violence will spread as more people compete for food, water and habitable land.

Cutting greenhouse emissions is especially critical in Florida, with our 6,000 miles of heavily developed waterfront property along seacoasts, tidal rivers, lagoons and canals. A three- or four-foot sea level rise plus our usual storm surges would damage or destroy most of that waterfront property.

A nine-foot rise has become more likely this century, as greenhouse gas emissions surge far higher than expected. Such higher seas would eliminate Florida as a fiscally-viable state.

Our governor, Legislature and Congress should wake up! Our state and nation could lead cooperative efforts to halt man-made climate changes, but we stall and dim hopes for global cooperation.

Twenty years ago, climate change science was clear.



Most Americans accepted solid scientific evidence. Then, fossil fuel interests, fearing their obscenely high profits and pay might be reduced, hired climate change deniers and belittlers. These science foggers confused us. We have lost two decades for curbing probably the most severe threat mankind has ever faced.

There is hope. Solar is not the only promising renewable energy. Wind provides more U.S. power than solar, and continues growing substantially, though not as rapidly as solar. Iowa leads our nation by generating 20 percent of its electricity from wind. No wonder Republican candidates praised wind power while convening in Iowa!

Geothermal energy has almost unlimited possibilities. The Geothermal Energy Association reported last March that 146 geothermal projects were underway in 15 states. A small liquor store in Rhode Island, of all places, has installed a geothermal system providing heating, cooling and refrigeration. The store uses 60 percent less electricity than its goal.

Hydropower in both fresh and saltwater is expanding with new technology. A combination of wind, solar, geothermal and hydropower along with improved energy efficiency, storage and a better grid is urgently needed.

America can provide the technology and ingenuity needed for switching to renewables. We must make the sacrifices necessary to do so swiftly. Otherwise our reckless consumption of fossil fuels and deforestation may destroy civilization and possibly Homo sapiens, the self-named "wise ones."

If we fail to halt climate changes, we risk cutting short mankind's 200,000-year existence. Humans would join the endless passing parade of species that once thrived between evolution and extinction on this bountiful planet.

We can, and we must, abandon fossil fuels and switch rapidly to clean renewables.

—Lee Bidgood, Jr.

This article was first published The Gainesville Sun, November 21, 2011

*Lee Bidgood is Conservation chair, emeritus.*

*He lives Gainesville, FL with his wife Catherine.*

"I myself feel that our country, for whose Constitution I fought in a just war, might as well have been invaded by Martians and body snatchers. Sometimes I wish it had been. What has happened, though, is that it has been taken over by means of the sleaziest, low-comedy, Keystone Cops-style coup d'etat imaginable. And those now in charge of the federal government are upper-crust C-students who know no history or geography, plus not-so-closeted white supremacists, aka 'Christians,' and plus, most frighteningly, psychopathic personalities, or 'PPs.'"

~Kurt Vonnegut

## Wandering Members

### Late Fall In Alberta



I returned to Alberta the day after our October meeting. It's been an interesting six weeks. Our cabin is west of the main flyways but we have local ducks and geese and get the odd small flock of migrating northerners.

On my first weekend I checked the sloughs around Cochrane for swans. These are magnificent, elegant birds and well worth looking for. Local ducks and coots were still on many of the puddles, standing on ice or busily swimming around to keep the water open. I checked eight sloughs and saw a lot of Mallards, some of them migrants, small numbers of Shovelers, Pintails, American Wigeon, Gadwall and Hooded Mergansers, a pair of Ruddy Ducks and several American Coots. Finally I found one pond with eight beautiful Trumpeter Swans, dunking in open water, just a few yards from the road. I spent a quarter hour just ogling! I did see several more Trumpeters during my stay but I didn't identify any Tundra Swans.

That first weekend I also saw my first two Snow Buntings of the year and was treated to a close-up of a female Rough-legged Hawk hovering just 50 yards from my car. Rough-legged Hawks winter here and over the last few weeks I have seen about a dozen but no others as close.

I was surprised to see large numbers of European Starling and Ring-billed Gulls. They had gathered into flocks but were still hanging on. They finally left ahead of a cold snap about mid-November, I also saw two different Northern Harriers. This is by far the latest I have ever seen any of these species in Alberta and is no doubt an example of adaptations to global warming.

Later in my stay I saw a beautiful Ferruginous Hawk, with his conspicuous bronze tail, near the side of the road. He was also outside of his range, which may be another result of global warming.

The short way to town from our cabin is on a paved secondary road then down a highway. There is another route which is gravel and passes over a range called the Wildcat Hills. I saw a Grizzly Bear sow and very young cub on that road eighteen months ago so often travel it in hopes of seeing them again. I have also seen moose and elk along that route.

One November day, going the hill route to town, I noticed a fresh deer carcass in the ditch, probably from a vehicle collision. There were only magpies and ravens there but I decided to return home the same way for another look. As I neared the body an adult Golden Eagle, with a magnificent blond hood, flew up only yards in front of me. By the time I stopped and got out of the car it had disappeared over the trees but that one look was a keeper.

I returned the next morning and, to my surprise, the carcass was gone! Either a cougar happened by or the grizzly and her now yearling cub are still around. I keep looking!

Last week, I saw a first – Common Ravens snow bathing. About ten of them had found deep soft snow, leaside of some tall grass. They were having a ball, wiggling down in then fluffing the snow up into their feathers and causing little snow clouds, the way sparrows will have a dust bath. Amazing!

The deer have learned to rear up and knock the seeds out of my feeders so I have resorted to suet packs. Daily feeders are a pair of Downy Woodpeckers; a family of Gray Jays and one of Blue Jays; Chickadees, both Mountain and Black-capped, always together; one very determined Black-billed Magpie and our resident pair of Red-breasted Nuthatches with their first successfully fledged pair of young. I also had a Brown Creeper but the nuthatches drove him off.

It's been a good fall.

—Ken Gunn

## From the Field

### Viera Wetlands Field Trip Report

Eleven of us, including two new folks we met at the November meeting, gathered for a relaxing day at Viera Wetlands. The day was mostly cloudy and the high temp was about 80 degrees. The wind was up, probably about 10-15 mph. Great weather for birding.

We hadn't heard anything about the Masked Duck that had been frequenting the place for the last couple of winters, so we didn't expect it. But we had hoped to see the Crested Caracara. No joy! Somewhat disappointing. But we did have two really good sightings, a group of Horned Grebes and a Peregrine Falcon.

In all, we saw 62 species. To see the full list as well as some photos, check out our blog at <http://blog.sevolutiaaudubon.org>.

—Don Picard

1492. As children we were taught to memorize this year with pride and joy as the year people began living full and imaginative lives on the continent of North America. Actually, people had been living full and imaginative lives on the continent of North America for hundreds of years before that. 1492 was simply the year sea pirates began to rob, cheat, and kill them.

~Kurt Vonnegut, *Breakfast of Champions*

## Field Trip

### Lake Apopka Restoration Area

**Sat. December 17, 2011- 6 am. (1)**

Lake Apopka is in the headwaters of the Ocklawaha River and was targeted for cleanup under the Surface Water Improvement and Management Act of 1987. Major activities include marsh and floodplain restoration and the creation of a marsh flow-way system that filters Lake Apopka's waters by circulating lake water through restored wetlands. In 1996, the Florida Legislature passed Chapter 96-207, Florida Statutes, furthering its previous mandate to clean up the lake by providing funds to buy additional agricultural lands north of the lake. Restoration of these farmlands to functioning wetlands is expediting cleanup efforts.

A 1998 Christmas bird count (CBC) identified 174 species of birds, the highest species total for an inland count in the 100-year history of the annual CBC. Bird diversity is extraordinary in this area, and the bird list, which continues to grow, now includes more than 270 species.

#### The 112th Christmas Bird Count:

<http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>

Ponce Inlet Christmas Bird Count

**Monday January 2, 2012.**

Please call Gail @ (386) 428-0447 to help in this important annual event.

From December 14 through January 5 tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas take part in an adventure that has become a family tradition among generations. Families and students, birders and scientists, armed with binoculars, bird guides and checklists go out on an annual mission - often before dawn. For over one hundred years, the desire to both make a difference and to experience the beauty of nature has driven dedicated people to leave the comfort of a warm house during the Holiday season.

Each of the citizen scientists who annually braves snow, wind, or rain, to take part in the Christmas Bird Count makes an enormous contribution to conservation. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this longest-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations - and to help guide conservation action.

**Fri. Jan. 20, 2012 (2)**

Gull Fly-In at Daytona Beach Shores.

Michael Brothers of the Marine Science Center will lead our group to the gull fly-in at Daytona beach Shores. We will meet him at **FRANK RENDON PARK, 2705 S. Atlantic Ave. Daytona beach Shores** (about two miles north of Dunlawton Boulevard) at **4:00 p.m.**

A complete list of field trips is available on the SEVAS website.

[http://www.sevolusiaaudubon.org/field\\_trips.htm](http://www.sevolusiaaudubon.org/field_trips.htm)

Questions? Contact Gail Domroski 386-428-0447

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(3) One plus mile walking and/or uneven terrain.

Field Trips are free.

Audubon members and guests are all welcome.

—Gail Domroski

Just because some of us can read and write and do a little math, that doesn't mean we deserve to conquer the Universe.

~Kurt Vonnegut, Novel 'Hocus Pocus' 1990

## Speaker

Our December speaker will be Mr. David Hartgrove, a highly knowledgeable birder from Halifax River Audubon.

Mr. Hartgrove was born in High Point, North Carolina in 1947 but grew up in Miami and attended school there, graduating from Hialeah High School in 1965. In August of that year he went to work for Florida Power & Light Company. By 1972 he had served a tour in Vietnam with the US Navy Seabees, risen through the ranks of FPL to become a lineman, was a divorced father of two children and had just returned to Miami after a year in Titusville.

His birding epiphany came in 1973 when he saw a small bird dispatch and consume an even smaller bird in order to feed its nestlings. The bird on the menu was a House Sparrow and the consumer was a Loggerhead Shrike. In 1986 he became a volunteer with the Florida Breeding Bird Atlas Project and during the next six years spent a substantial amount of time in the field with some of the most experienced birders in Florida. This activity was the impetus for what could now rightly be called an obsession to observe birds whenever possible. In 1994 he became the Volusia County Compiler for the North American Migration Count, & has served in that capacity to the present. In 1996 he reestablished the Daytona Beach Christmas Bird Count & continues as it's compiler. Since 1987 he has been the Conservation Chair for Halifax River Audubon in Daytona Beach. He has led many field trips for Audubon, The Nature Conservancy, the Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival & other groups.

Mr. Hartgrove will present slides and discussion on Gull and Tern ID. This will provide another perspective and an excellent follow up to our beach field trip with Mike Brothers. Slides "hold still" much better than the birds on the beach.

—Ken Gunn

## Secretary's Minutes . . . and seconds

### Minutes of SEVAS Meeting, Nov 16, 2011

Approximately 20 attendees, including 6 newcomers, were welcomed by President Don Picard.

#### Secretary's report:

Minutes of all meetings are available for viewing on the SEVAS website.

#### Treasurer's report:

Our treasurer is travelling overseas. We wish him well and look forward to a treasurer's report upon his return.

#### Field trip report:

The October trip to Lake Woodruff NWR yielded over 60 species, including a Yellow Billed Cuckoo, and several warbler species.

The November trip to Viera Wetlands promises to be a great day.

#### Books to Schools:

Nancy has graciously agreed to take care of selecting a school to receive \$350 from our chapter.

#### SEVAS Blog:

Don has expanded the blog; he is putting more stories from the news or other sources. Subject matter will still only cover birding. Orlando Sentinel story on Ospreys killed during migration is on the blog.

#### Annual recertification:

Every year, all clubs submit a report to National Audubon informing them of our activities the previous year. National Audubon notified us that we are recertified for the year and they deposited some money into our bank account.

#### Tomoka Science Fair:

Takes place in Feb, 2012. All 3 Volusia County chapters cooperate in this endeavor. Our chapter will donate \$100 toward prize money. David Hargrove from Halifax Audubon will administer this year.

#### Aventuras Naturales:

This is a private tour company planning a plant and city trip to Nicaragua, Jan 14 for 10 days, \$3300. Info at <http://www.aventurasnaturales.org/>

#### Guest speaker:

Chad Truxall, Managing Director of the Marine Discovery Center. The Center is now located at the site of the former New Beach High School, but the boat is still located at the former site on the river near the North Causeway boatramp.

Mr. Truxall is a native Floridian and earned a B.S.A., Wildlife Ecology and Conservation with a specialization in Aquatic Sciences, from the University of Florida in 1998. He has more than eleven years experience as a biologist and educator. Prior to joining the staff of the Marine Discovery Center, Chad taught environmental and marine

science courses at New Smyrna Beach High School and coached the JV soccer team there. In his previous position as Director of Education at MDC, he developed and implemented a Marine Biology education program that serves over 4,000 students annually. He is also a Florida Master Naturalist Instructor, a Volusia County Marine Mammal Stranding Team Designee Responder and a Board Member for the Volusia/Flagler Surf Rider Foundation.

Mr. Truxall entitles his talk Plethora of Plankton. Using the Indian River Lagoon as a study point and with slides of microscopic organisms, he led us through the fascinating world of marine plankton – the drifters of the sea. His presentation covered the role of plankton in the marine food chain and addressed the concepts of food webs, energy transfer, buoyancy, density and salinity. We have had Oceanography 101. This was a great Oceanography 102.

### The 15<sup>th</sup> annual Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival takes place Jan 25-30, 2012.

Information is available on line at <http://www.spacecoastbirdingandwildlifefestival.org/> or contact Neta Harris by phone: 321-268-5224, or 1-800-460-2664.

#### Epcot request:

*From Jacqui Sulek*

*Chapter Conservation Manager*

*Audubon of Florida*

*Hello All - I have been asked to reach out to you folks in Central Florida. Please discuss this with your folks. National Audubon has been invited by Epcot to participate in their annual Garden Festival. Should we accept the invite they will build a display per our recommendations. The theme will be Audubon at Home.*

Don Picard asked if there would be interest in participating in the Disney event. Six people volunteered to cover weekends, so Don will proceed with arranging our participation.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned by Don. A time of fellowship and refreshment followed.

Respectfully submitted,

"You want to know something? We are still in the Dark Ages. The Dark Ages--they haven't ended yet."

~Kurt Vonnegut (in Deadeye Dick)

Editor's Note: Kurt Vonnegut, whose quotes I've used in this issue, was an American novelist (and incidentally my all time favorite author).

He was born on November 11, 1922.

He left the planet on April 11, 2007

~Gil Miller

## Ed Garland Talks on Water

*River Provides Multifaceted Benefits - Pt. 3*

This is the conclusion of the 3 part article

### *Project benefits recognized*

While the goal of the project was to provide regional flood protection to Indian River and Brevard counties, the project provided benefits "that we didn't count on," says District Governing Board member Doug Bournique, who is also executive vice president of the Indian River Citrus League.

"The upper basin project has saved hundreds of jobs and protected the agricultural base here," Bournique says. "For agriculture, this project has been phenomenal. I don't think any of us in the citrus industry felt that the project would provide so many benefits."

Water from nearby citrus groves and livestock pastures discharged into water management areas not only isolates agricultural runoff from water that recharges the marsh, the runoff water can be reused for farm irrigation and freeze protection. Prior to the creation of the upper basin project, Indian River County growers were as susceptible to hard freezes as growers in other counties.

The vast marshes and water management areas literally raise the air temperature in the surrounding groves.

"It's been hard on growers," Bournique says. "We contend with canker and freezes. The availability of water for irrigation and freeze protection gives us more assurance that our investments will pay off. Water is the game changer."

Entering the final stretch

More than two decades after the initial project plans were laid out, the river's headwaters are once again a broad, marshy expanse.

The last leg of the upper basin project is located just west of Palm Bay — the 13,737-acre Three Forks Marsh Conservation Area. The Corps has completed most of the work there.

Meanwhile, farther south, work continues at the Fellsmere Water Management Area where a 10,000-acre tract of former citrus groves and pastureland is being transformed to a mosaic of open water and wetlands. The project will augment dry season flows to the St. Johns River, increasing water storage in the Blue Cypress Lake watershed, and virtually eliminating the need for freshwater discharges to Canal 54 and, ultimately, the Indian River Lagoon.

"The headwaters of the St. Johns River are alive again," Herrera says. "The upper basin project will be one of the greatest legacies of the District, the Corps and the various state environmental agencies and interest groups that worked to make this possible."

—Ed Garland

*Ed Garland is a Communications Specialist with the Office of Communications and Govt. Affairs - SJRWMD*

## Backyard Naturalist

*That's All Folks*

It's appropriate to subhead this final Backyard Naturalist column with a very recognizable (for us over 60) Woody Woodpecker quote.



The eSkimmer has evolved over the years from the early versions typed by Catherine Bidgood through Gail & Dick Domroski's editorship, from hard copies bulk mailed to this emailed pdf version you're now reading.

And now another step into cyberspace.

Don Picard, prez of SEVAS, is somewhat of a wizard at computer technology. He actually understands what makes these things tick. And he's an avid birder. He's put together a dandy website with blog, which is where we hope to park The eSkimmer starting with the January 2012 issue.

I've had a sneak peek at the online version and Don's done a nice job with it. I think it's a step in the right direction.

In 1983 I set a magic number for myself (or maybe it was set for me). Eleven. In numerology '83 was an eleven (8+3) and here we are in another 11 and I just realized I'm typing this on an 11/11/11 date (2+9). Spooky stuff.

Well, the date is fast approaching. I'll be an 11 myself in a few weeks .

I set no goals for this date. In fact, I imagined just the opposite. I figured when the magic number arrived, I'd take Joseph Campbell's advice and "Follow my bliss."

I've got my little Beetle, I've got my cameras, I've got my recorder, my Kindle and my good old drawing pad. I'm off to follow my bliss.

Let me say goodbye with one of my favorite Kurt Vonnegut quotes:

"Keep your hat on Buster. We may wind up miles from here." from *Slapstick: or Lonesome No More!*

—Gil Miller



## Officers & Chairs

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
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