

The eSkimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, Inc.

Issue Vol. VI- No. 1

January 2011

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

Prez Sez

Happy New Year

Your executive hopes you had a great holiday season and we wish you all the best for 2011.

Many thanks to all the folks who participated in the 111th Christmas Bird Count on January 2nd. It was a great day to be outdoors. I took the sunrise photo from the south causeway a few minutes before meeting at the Brannon Center. The overall species count was 137, a record for our count. The other photo, taken at the Dunes Park



CBC Sunrise

Don Picard



Dunes Park Beach

Don Picard

shows how concentrated the birds were. Look for a complete report on our website in the near future.

In the political arena, Governor Scott was sworn in during a gala event and said his mission is job creation (see link below). Obviously, that is a necessity in this economic climate. However, Governor Scott said his first act will be to create a state office to review all proposed and existing regulations to determine their impact on job creation. It is well-known that he believes the Department of Community Affairs is a "job-killer", and other permit-type agencies such as the water management districts will probably get the same attitude. So all the rules and regulations and agencies that protect the rest of us may be dumped in favor of his business and development cronies.

It should be an interesting year or two.

—Don Picard

Meetings

Meetings are held the 3rd Wednesdays
Sept. 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 January 19, 2011

Speaker - Dr. Kirsten Work

Aquatic biologist - Associate Professor, Stetson University

How Land Use Changes Adversely Affect . . .

see January Speaker p. 2

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.

Fri, Jan 7, 2011 (1) Merritt Island NWR - 7 a.m.

Sat. Jan. 22, 2011 (1) Lake Apopka Restoration Area - 6am.
A complete list of field trips is available on the SEVAS website.

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.

The earth we abuse and the living things we kill
will, in the end, take their revenge; for in exploiting
their presence we are diminishing our future.

~Marya Mannes, *More in Anger*, 1958

From the Field



Field Trip to Spruce Creek Park and. . .

The Christmas Bird Count or How I was down in the dumps.

Spruce Creek

Well, it was a beautiful day in the neighborhood. It was the day after my birthday and it was a treat to start a new year on my trip around the sun with good people in a lovely expanse of wetlands and woods.

A handful of SEVAS members and friends wandered about the park on the marked (sort of) trails and spent some time on the long boardwalk that juts out into the marsh affording a terrific view and good birding.

The pace was slow and easy and we stopped to admire the varied plants probably as much as we craned our necks to peer through binoculars or more comfortably peek into the two scopes brought along by members.

Mid December can be balmy in New Smyrna Beach, FL— or not. Sometimes our coastal weather can be chilly or down right mean. Our day in the park was perfect. Not too hot, no bugs and plenty of sunshine in a great big Florida sky. The kind of day that reminded me why I live here.

There's something about being outdoors in a park setting, away from buildings, cars and the other intrusions that never fails to soothe the soul.

Oh, and we saw thirty-eight species. The list is on the right.

CBC at the Volusia County Landfill

Another beautiful day weather-wise (and otherwise). I had so much fun last year doing the CBC at the landfill that I volunteered to do it again this year as long as the bona fide birders, Jeff Reinhart and Roger Cutler were along to do the actual counting. We were joined by Cheryl Johnson who did the tally sheet.



Trashescape

Gil Miller

I, being the bona fide non-birder, sat up front in the truck with our guide, Landfill staff member Danny McCormick, and squinted at the scene through my Canon DSLR viewfinder.

Danny took us over hill and dale, as did Jeff Jones, our guide at last year's CBC.

It's great having guys like Danny and Jeff drive CBC counters around. They know all of the spots where the birds are—there are plenty of spots other than the obvious, spots where the general public can't visit—and they give us the skinny on the workings of the landfill which is a story all its own.

We talked about birds, trash and the impact people have on the environment and we learned (again) that a whole lot goes on after you take your trash can to the street on pick-up days.

The scene of Herons, Ibises, even the majestic Bald Eagle picking through garbage is a grim reminder of the role humans play in the intricate and fragile ecology of our planet. We're all trying to be survivors: plants, birds, bugs, beasts, fish and humans. But, we're the one species that can do the most damage. We'd better be careful that we're not the straw that breaks the proverbial Camel's back.

—Gil Miller

Species Spotted at Spruce Creek

American White Pelican
Brown Pelican
Double-crested Cormorant
Anhinga
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Little Blue Heron
Tricolored Heron
White Ibis
Wood Stork
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Hooded Merganser
Osprey
Bald Eagle
Northern Harrier
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Red-shouldered Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Clapper Rail
Ring-billed Gull
Belted Kingfisher
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Pileated Woodpecker
Fish Crow
Tree Swallow
Tufted Titmouse
Carolina Wren
Northern Mockingbird
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Yellow-throated Warbler
Pine Warbler
Palm Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
Northern Cardinal
Boat-tailed Grackle

So bleak is the picture... that the bulldozer and not the atomic bomb may turn out to be the most destructive invention of the 20th century.

~Philip Shabecoff, *New York Times Magazine*, 4 June 1978

Please forward this

eSkimmer

to friends.

January Speaker

Dr. Kirsten Work

Our January speaker will be Dr. Kirsten Work, Associate Professor at Stetson University.

Dr. Work has been an aquatic biologist at Stetson University for the ten years. She received her initial aquatic training on Wisconsin and Alaskan zooplankton and fish at the Universities of Wisconsin and Washington. From there, she traveled south to study an exotic zooplankton species in Oklahoma and finally ended up working on Lake Okeechobee for South Florida Water Management District as a postdoc. Since her arrival in Central Florida, she has worked on algal, invertebrate and fish ecology in local springs and lakes. Currently, she is studying an exotic armored catfish in Volusia Blue Spring and zooplankton diets in local lakes.

The number and diversity of aquatic organisms, and a significant proportion of terrestrial organisms, is based on bacterial and algal production. Bacteria and algae use available nutrients to grow and divide, providing cells on which more complex species can graze. These bacteria and algae may occur floating in the water as plankton, where they are grazed primarily by zooplankton, or they may occur in rich communities attached to aquatic plants and other structure. These attached cells may be grazed by a wide variety of invertebrates, such as microscopic crustaceans, microscopic worms, insect larvae, and snails, or by herbivorous fish. These grazers, in turn, are consumed by larger vertebrates, such as larger fish, turtles, snakes, and birds. Therefore, even terrestrial birds, such as hawks, that may only feed at wetlands, rivers, lakes opportunistically are supported by the countless tiny bacteria and algae that proliferate in these bodies of water.

Land use changes can affect the architecture of nesting, roosting, and feeding sites for all birds. However, land use changes also can affect the nutrient content and, in turn, the bacterial and algal density and diversity, of bodies of water. Changes in bacterial and algal populations can affect the density and diversity of the fish on which many wading, swimming, and diving birds feed.

Come and bring a friend.

—Ken Gunn

When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.

~John Muir

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Native 'n' Nice

Wild Coffee, Psychotria nervosa

If you have walked through local wooded coastal areas such as the proposed Saxon Park, you have probably seen *Psychotria nervosa*, better known as wild coffee. Its favorite location is at the base of larger trees where it is protected from the intense sun. At 6-8 feet tall, wild coffee makes a good under story plant in backyard landscapes, as well.

More a shrub than a tree, wild coffee is very attractive. Its dark, glossy evergreen leaves are deeply veined, much like its relative the gardenia. Clusters of small white blossoms give way to maroon berries which resemble coffee beans. Not for human consumption, the berries are favored by blue jays, cardinals, and catbirds. Wild coffee is as adaptable as it is attractive. It prefers a somewhat moist, alkaline soil, but will adjust to some variation. It is also somewhat salt tolerant.

The wild coffee plants in my yard came from Full Moon Natives nursery in Port Orange and continue to be a stock item there. However, self-sown seedlings pop up near the parent plant, so I am watching mine for signs of a new generation.

—Donnadine Miller

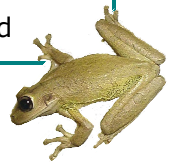
Donnadine Miller was an active member of SEVAS and wrote this column for years for *The Skimmer*.

She passed away April 7, 2008.

This archived article is from *The Skimmer*, Jan. 2006

Understanding the laws of nature does not mean that we are immune to their operations.

~David Gerrold



Conservation Notes

Lee Bidgood's Article In The Gainesville Sun

Our Conservation Chair, Emeritus, Lee Bidgood is a frequent contributor to the Gainesville Sun.

Here is a link to an article of his which appeared in the Gainesville Sun on December 13, 2010.

<http://www.gainesville.com/article/20101213/OPINION03/101209590>

Lee Bidgood is Conservation Chair, emeritus.

He writes from Gainesville, FL where he lives with his wife Catherine.

Please forward this **eSkimmer** to friends.

Backyard Naturalist

Almost a Twitcher

I can see how one can become a twitcher. Even I, certified non-birder that I am, almost, in fact did, succumb to the allure of the drop-everything-and-chase-the-bird attitude, lifestyle really, of the *twitcher*.

It went like this: George Sibley, friend, birder, filmmaker and a level headed fellow called me on Tuesday and suggested we go to Lake Woodruff.

"When?" I asked.

"Right now, today", he replied with no sense of urgency. George never has a sense of urgency about him. He's a reasonable and competent kind of guy but, you can tell when he really wants to do something, go somewhere or pick a restaurant.

"Someone from Halifax (Audubon) said that they heard that there were Snow Geese at Lake Woodruff. Let's go over and see. I'll take my scope and you can take your camera", he went on.

I had this newsletter to deal with and some other chores but I'm easily convinced to let work slide and go on an adventure so, of course, I said it sounded great to me.

I worked a little more while waiting for George and ruminated on the fact that I was entering into the drop-everything world of the twitcher! Wow!

By the time we got to Lake Woodruff (about 40 min. from here), the promised sunny day had turned overcast. No threat of rain but an even flat light that photographers have mixed feelings about. In this case, the light worked to our advantage. It gave the wetlands that mysterious ethereal feel that I love for my images.



Glossy Ibis Gil Miller

Walking under the short canopy of trees from the parking lot gives a feeling of walking through a time-tunnel into another world. There before us lay the flat, seemingly never ending marsh with just enough birds, some soaring, some on the water to let us know know that there was life, fascinating life, on this planet we'd time-traveled to.

A little period of adjustment takes place in time-travel like this. For awhile, we just walked. And

looked. No talking. And as we got used to the fact that this was real, we chatted, urged one another to look this way or that. Every now and then a person would enter the



Great Blue Heron Gil Miller

scene, or a small group. One young man was there with his two very young and very small sons. They were there to fish and to enjoy the setting. Everybody was smiling. Everybody was friendly. Does being away from the madding crowd, being in such a natural setting do that to us?



Killdeer Gil Miller

We walked on the berm around the main body of water, the one nearest the entrance, stopping every few yards to peer through the scope or snap a digital image. Every now and then the sun would peek through, low in the sky now and give that muted radiance, that light that photographers and poets dream about.

By the time we got to the Audubon viewing tower, we realized we had walked for a couple of hours, walked past lunchtime. We upped our pace and reflected on what we had seen: a Glossy Ibis, a little Blue Heron, a Great Blue Heron, a Killdeer (who seemed to be following us, posing frequently), a Snowy Egret, the ubiquitous resident Black Vultures, little groups of whom would lazily hip-hop away from us as we walked by, a little brown snake who was taking a bit of warmth from the sun right on the path, and that jarring reminder that we had time traveled 200 million years to the past—the American Alligator.



American Alligator Gil Miller

Although I had become a twitcher for a day, the Snow Geese were nowhere in sight.

—Gil Miller

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Thanks to Fern Murphy for proofing this issue (in fact, every issue).