



# The eSkimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, Inc.

Issue Vol. IV- No. 3

March , 2009

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

## Prez Sez

My, my!

Where did the time go? Another season is about done and it's that time again to solicit for officers to run the club for the next season. We need YOUR help. We do not have a conservation chair, a vice-president and the secretary says she does not want the job next year. The club is long overdue for a new president. I have been in the office since 1996. It is time for a change.

Your executive board has been committed to providing the best possible experience to the membership.

We have provided:

- ♦ Meetings with great speakers, including PhD's talking about manatees, shorebird mortalities, Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, etc.
- ♦ Field trips to great locations such as Three Lakes Wild life Management Area, Orlando Wetlands Park, and St Augustine Alligator Farm.
- ♦ Citizen Science including the Christmas Bird Count, SEANET, spring and fall migratory bird counts, FWS Annual Shorebird Survey, and Great Backyard Bird Count.
- ♦ Hundreds of dollars of conservation/environmental books to local schools each year.
- ♦ Judges and prize money to the best junior and senior science projects at the Tomoka Regional Science and Engineering Fair.
- ♦ A website to keep you up-to-date on our activities.  
In addition,
- ♦ We are working with the New Smyrna Beach Middle School to build a butterfly garden at the park on Myrtle Avenue.
- ♦ We will be providing a booth and a birding tour at Smyrna Dunes Park at an event sponsored by the Friends of Smyrna Dunes Park.
- ♦ We are also working to protect the nesting and resting sites for Piping Plovers and Wilson's Plovers at the Smyrna Dunes Park.
- ♦ We want to provide Birding 101 classes for the public
- ♦ We want to provide birding tours for the public at the Smyrna Dunes Park.

## Meetings

**Next meeting is March 4, 2009 • 7p.m.**

**New Smyrna Beach Utilities Commission  
200 Canal St., New Smyrna Beach**

Entrance is through the rear door,  
take elevator to the third floor.

Plenty of parking. Public welcome.  
(Please note change of venue)

**Speaker: Debbie & Jenni Pell**

**Lindley's Nursery**

**Topic: Rain Gardens**

*See Speakers, page 3*

Programs & Field trips subject to change.

## Field Trips

Field trips begin at 8:00 A.M. unless otherwise noted. Meet in the Market Square parking lot Edgewater, Ridgewood Ave. & 442, between Dunkin Donuts & Chik-Fil-A.

There are **three (3)** Events this month

See **Field Trips** p.3

Questions? Contact Gail Domroski 428-0447

Audubon members and guests are all welcome.

We can't continue to provide you with these services without members who are willing to serve the club.

The March 4<sup>th</sup> meeting will be co-sponsored by the NSB Utilities Commission and will be held at their facility. They will advertise it and the general public will be invited. The business meeting will be conducted after the presentation. I will be asking for your help to run the club. Please volunteer.

—Don Picard

There is nothing in which the birds differ more from man than the way in which they can build and yet leave a landscape as it was before.

~Robert Lynd, *The Blue Lion and Other Essays*

## Of Interest

### *Barrier Island Citizens Resource Group*

The Barrier Island Citizens Resource Group (BIRG) is one of several volunteer groups that were created as a result of Mayor Sally MacKay's campaign initiative to involve private citizens in contributing to the mission of the City of New Smyrna Beach. The focus statement for this group reads "The unique barrier island that is part of coastal New Smyrna Beach is a finite, fragile and compromised ecosystem. The focus of this group is to preserve and protect this ever changing island while creating a sustainable beach and riverfront that will be better equipped to withstand future climatic, tidal and man-made influences."

The primary purpose of the group is to provide information/data for reasoned planning and action, although members of the group have become increasingly involved as vocal advocates for issues related to barrier island preservation. For example, over the past 2 years the group joined with other voices to successfully advocate for zoning changes that lowered the density of building on Hill Street from 1<sup>st</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> Street, i.e., no more oceanfront condominiums can be built on this area of the beachside. Thus dunes, indigenous vegetation and related coastal habitat have been preserved. An example of a current issue the group is engaged in is information and advocacy related to using alternatives to traditional seawalls ("shoreline hardening") which serve to increase beach erosion and result in the loss of the beach/dune ecosystem.

Given their information and advocacy interests the Barrier Island Citizens Resource Group is a natural ally with the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society. The group usually meets on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at 6:30 pm in the parish hall of St. Peter's the Fisherman Episcopal Church on Saxon Avenue. All are welcome.

For more information contact Kay Shepard 386) 847-4543.

—Kay Shepard

### *Land Development*

The land development project, Restoration, on the west side of I-95 was approved by the Edgewater City Council by a 3 – 1 vote. This is in spite of the state Department of Community Affairs stating, among other concerns, that the city and project don't have a plan to handle the extra traffic or to meet the expanded water requirements over the next ten years. The plan will add 17,000 residents and 3.2 million square feet of commercial space to the City of Edgewater. It will conserve 68% of the property. The developers and their consultants have done considerable chest thumping about the "greenness" of this project and how it will set a new standard for future development projects in the county.

Miami Corporation's Farnton Project formally submitted its plan for development of the 60,000 acres immediately south of Restoration to the county Planning and Land Development Regulation Commission. A public hearing is scheduled for May 19.

In spite of using the same lawyers and advisors as Restoration, this plan only sets aside 50% or 30,000 acres for conservation and this includes 6000 acres already tied up under permanent conservation easements. Long term plans will result in a city of 60 – 100,000 people. This is a huge step back from even Restoration

—Ken Gunn

### *Northern Indian River Lagoon Estuarine Education and Community Stewardship Program*

The Marine Discovery Center (MDC), located at 162 North Causeway in New Smyrna Beach, recently received a \$40,000 grant from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to implement the Northern Indian River Lagoon Estuarine Education and Community Stewardship Program. The MDC is a non-profit organization that has been operating in New Smyrna Beach for 10 years with the goal of protecting and restoring the Indian River Lagoon (IRL) through education, research, and community stewardship. The new program seeks to educate 4 miles of riverfront landowners about the environmental issues within the IRL and engage them to restore their shoreline. In the past, the MDC has been involved with restoration efforts on public lands, often in conjunction with local governments. Involving private citizens in the restoration efforts will have a greater impact and increase the success of the goal to improve the habitats of the IRL. Restoration can be accomplished by removing invasive plant species such as Brazilian pepper, planting mangroves or other native shoreline vegetation, using native landscaping, and/or oyster restoration. The MDC seeks to educate landowners on a variety of important topics such as water conservation, the harmful effects of polluted runoff, the importance of limiting the use of fertilizers and pesticides, the benefits of mangroves, the negative effects of invasive species, and proper herbicide use. MDC staff will meet with landowners individually to assess their shoreline and discuss methods of restoration. MDC volunteers are also available to assist with invasive species removal, installing native plants, and/or oyster restoration.

Anyone owning riverfront property from New Smyrna Beach to Oak Hill is encouraged to participate in the program. Those not living on the water are encouraged to participate as volunteers. For more information on how to become involved, contact Stephanie Wolfe at (386)428-4828 or email at [stephanie@marinediscoverycenter.org](mailto:stephanie@marinediscoverycenter.org)

—Stephanie Wolfe

Man has been endowed with reason, with the power to create, so that he can add to what he's been given. But up to now he hasn't been a creator, only a destroyer. Forests keep disappearing, rivers dry up, wildlife's become extinct, the climate's ruined and the land grows poorer and uglier every day.

~Anton Chekhov, *Uncle Vanya*, 1897

## Field Trips

**Saturday March 7<sup>th</sup>** we will participate in the “*Celebrate The Beauty And Community Spirit Of Smyrna Dunes Park*” in place of our scheduled field trip to Orlando Wetlands.

This event is being co-sponsored by Smyrna Dunes Park and Friends of Smyrna Dunes Park. Events begin at 8 a.m. and include: Free demonstrations by local professionals, environmental education on sea turtles, birds & dune preservation, pets for adoption from the Southeast Volusia Humane Society, Marley the dog, treats and more. Southeast Volusia Audubon members will be presenting educational classes for children and at 10:00 a.m. will lead a Beach Walk.

**Thursday March 12<sup>th</sup>** we will drive the Shilo Marsh Road between US1 and Patillo Creek Rd. at the North end of Merritt Island National Wildlife refuge. This is a Dike Road similar to Black Point Wildlife Drive and is approximately 10 miles long. There are **NO** facilities on this drive.

Meet at **8 a.m.** in the Market Square parking lot in Edgewater between Dunkin Donuts and Chick-Fil-A. Bring a lunch, water etc.

**Friday March 20<sup>th</sup>** we will travel to Orlando Wetlands Park near Christmas Fl. This facility removes excess nutrients from treated wastewater by filtering the water through many Ponds. We can walk part of or all of the 2 1/2 mile Birding Trail around the ponds that offer excellent birding for water-birds year-round.

There are restroom and picnic facilities available.

Meet at **8 a.m.** in the Market Square parking lot in Edgewater between Dunkin Donuts and Chick-Fil-A. Bring a lunch, water etc.

—Gail Domroski

## Holy Mackerel!

We’ve all had those moments when we looked at something from a different perspective and an entirely new world opened up in front of us. It happened to me in December. I got a new Digital Single Lens Reflex camera for Christmas. Actually, it was the weekend after Black Friday. But I couldn’t wait until Christmas to try it out. I had to be proficient in its use in time for taking all those holiday pictures of the grandchildren. So where better than the beach to try it out? Maureen and I do a three-mile walk several times a week from 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue going south and it would be a great opportunity to take lots of pictures of birds. Not wanting to change lenses in the saltwater environment, I decided to take only the 70-200 mm zoom lens on the first day. I shot pictures of every bird in sight (and there were lots of them). There were Herring and Great and Lesser Black-backed and Ring-billed gulls, and Forster’s and Caspian and Royal and Sandwich Terns and the usual Willets, Sanderlings and Ruddy Turnstones. Tons of birds!

## Speakers

Our March 4 meeting will be the second this year to be presented in partnership with the Utilities Commission of New Smyrna Beach. As such it will be held in the UCNSB Building at 200 Canal Street in New Smyrna Beach. Entry is through the rear door and up the elevator to the third floor.

Speakers for the event will be Debbie Pell and her daughter Jenni of Lindley’s Nursery and Garden Center. They will use a Power Point presentation to describe and explain Rain Gardens. This technique conserves up to 30% more water than conventional lawns, improve the quality of water soaking into the aquifer, reduces flooding and drainage problems, is a magnet for wildlife and adds to the beauty of your yard.

Debbie is originally from Chicago and took her schooling there. She is now in her 29<sup>th</sup> year in Volusia County and has learned the nursery/gardening business through a hands on approach. Jenni is a native Volusian, who graduated from Deltona High School. She has just completed her degree from the University of Florida in Landscape Nursery Management. They own, manage and operate Lindley’s Nursery and Garden Center on Canal Street in New Smyrna Beach.

Both will be available for one-on-one gardening/plant questions during the social time after the meeting. Come and find out how to make your yard more bird-friendly.

—Ken Gunn

On the first day, I took all my shots in Automatic mode. On the second day I took them all in Aperture Preferred mode with a 7- 9 f/stop. These were almost all individual birds. On the third day, I took the 18-55mm lens and got lots of group shots. Then I started playing with white balance and all the other esoteric settings that my point-and-shoot might have had but were so buried in the menus I never used them.

It was when I got these hundreds of photos on my computer (remember these are 1’s and 0’s. . . there is no \$.30 every time the shutter release is pressed) that the holy mackerel moment hit me. I had all sorts of pictures of birds I recognized but there were so many variations. It occurred to me to look in my Sibley’s Guide to Birds to see what I could discover. It turns out that I had almost all the yearly variations of almost all the birds that spend their winter on our little piece of seashore. With all the questions we get like: “What kind of bird was it?”, I intend to make my own visual aid showing these birds in all their yearly variations. But I can’t promise when it will occur.

So maybe next time you go for a walk on the beach, check them out. It’s not all that difficult to discern between a first, second and mature Ring-billed Gull or first, second, third and mature Herring Gull: or, an immature Herring Gull versus Great Black-backed Gull. It’s just a matter of discovering the difference in a way that makes you say: “Holy Mackerel!”

Happy birding. Happy discovering.

—Don Picard

## Volusia / Flagler Science Fair

The three Volusia County Audubon chapters combined to fund awards at the off-again-on-again county science fair. Awards of \$100 and \$50 were given in both the Senior (high school) and Junior (middle school) Divisions for excellence in environmental oriented projects. Since Don Picard was away, I had the privilege of judging along with John Eggert of West Volusia and Marion Monaghan of Halifax River. This is the third time in the last five years that I have participated at the fair. This year's entries were a quantum leap above five years ago and much better even than two years ago when I was last there.

The confidence expressed by the young ladies and gentlemen who have participated previously was very impressive and shows why FCAT should not be the sole focus of learning in our schools. Generally the "veteran" presenters look you squarely in the eye, firmly shake your hand and continuing eye contact, explain their project. Interruptions and/or questions seldom faze them and often lead to off the cuff additional discussion. I'm sure that some of them received parental assistance but, in my opinion, that does little to degrade the work and understanding by the student. Several times I was told by a young scientist that the observations didn't yield a satisfactory result so they did more research on the internet, made adjustments and achieved a superior outcome. These people have learned to think!

The winners were:

Senior Division:

**1st Place:** Halei Benefield - The Future of Feces: A Second Year Study of Microbial Fuel Cells

**2nd Place:** Alexander Agard - The Battle Between Acheta Domesticas (crickets) and Insecticides

Junior Division:

**First Place:** Edward O'Neill - An Alternative Friend Is Blowing In the Wind

**2nd Place:** Patrick Windham - Do Buildings and Walls Have an Effect On Beaches From Inland Wind Sand Erosion?

The poised young woman who won the Senior Division has been working on her project for two years and was allotted her own space at the water treatment plant. She has now been accepted at Duke School of Engineering for the fall.

The extremely professional young man who won the Junior Division built a wind tunnel last year and used much of the same equipment this year for his study of windmills. Between the two projects he literally has a garage full of equipment and has photographs of himself welding it together.

I wish some of our legislators and the School Superintendent had been there to see them.

—Ken Gunn

## February 6, 2009 Shorebird Survey Species List

Northern Gannet	33	Laughing Gull	1055
Brown Pelican	130	Ring-billed Gull	445
Double-crested Cormorant	6	Herring Gull	85
Great Blue Heron	3	Lesser Black-backed Gull	3
Snowy Egret	8	Great Black-backed Gull	6
Osprey	12	Royal Tern	860
American Kestrel	1	Forster's Tern	68
Black-bellied Plover	37	Black Skimmer	2
Wilson's Plover	2	Sandwich Tern	48
Piping Plover	8	Glaucous Gull	1
Killdeer	2	Rock Pigeon	35
Greater Yellowlegs	1	Boat-tailed Grackle	2
Willet	5	Fish & other Crows	9
Ruddy Turnstone	215	Turket Vulture	11
Red Knot	29	Black Vulture	7
Sandtelling	258	Cattle Egret	2
Western Sandpiper	4	Palm Warbler	3

## Wandering Members

I went on a birding trip based in Paisley, FL in the middle week of February with some folks from various parts of the country, twenty-two, I believe the count was and only six were from Florida. We went here and there in Central FL for five days, shooting pictures and peering through scopes and binoculars.

In the middle of the week, we spent the day at Smyrna Dunes Park! We also visited Alexander Springs, Lake Woodruff and a few other familiar spots.

This image of an American Bittern was taken at Lake Apopka by Jim Messerly of Stow, OH, who was on the trip with his wife Mary.

G.M.



## Officers & Chairs



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Please forward this  to friends.