



The eSkimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, Inc.

Issue Vol. III - No. 3

March, 2008

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

Prez Sez

Help chart SEVAS's future.

It is hard to imagine that it is that time again. Another year has passed and it is time to select a new board. You select the board to guide the club in some direction. Members of the board are volunteers and do their best to provide you with a set of programs and field trips to enhance your appreciation of the environment and our place in it. We also take on issues that are important to the membership.

Although most clubs have executive committee changes every year or two, the SEVAS membership has been content to let a select few manage the club over the last decade. I have been president since May 1997. Richard Domroski has been treasurer for ten years. For the club to remain vibrant, the executive should change more often than that. We have a new secretary and conservation chair since last year and that is a step in the right direction.

But now Dick has tendered his resignation as treasurer and membership chair and is not a candidate for any office. He has been treasurer for the last ten years and has done a great job. In addition, Ken Gunn (Program Chair) has his house for sale and will move to Houston as soon as it sells. For the last two years he has worked hard to find speakers that are knowledgeable and inspiring. And he even has half of the next year's speakers already lined up. In addition, the Vice-President position was not formally filled in 2007-2008. Dick actually acted in that position and carried the club in my absences.

Now it's your turn. We need a new executive. We need you to volunteer. Make yourself known at the March meeting. Help direct the SEVAS where you'd like it to go.

—Don Picard

Soon silence will have passed into legend. Man has turned his back on silence. Day after day he invents machines and devices that increase noise and distract humanity from the essence of life, contemplation, meditation... tooting, howling, screeching, booming, crashing, whistling, grinding, and trilling bolster his ego. His anxiety subsides. His inhuman void spreads monstrously like a gray vegetation.

~Jean Arp

Meetings

Next meeting is March 5

DeBarry Room, third floor of the Utilities Commission Building, 200 Canal Street, New Smyrna Beach.

Parking available in the parking lot behind the building enter through the back door take elevator to 3rd floor.

Public welcome.

Speaker: **Kevin Schweizer**

Energy Conservation

See bio. page 4

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.

Bring lunch & drinks. Don't forget bug-spray!

March 8 - Blue Heron Wetlands

See details below

Questions? Contact Gail Domroski 428-0447

Audubon members and guests are all welcome.

MARCH FIELD TRIP

Blue heron Wetlands

Our March 8th field trip will be to the Blue Heron Wetlands Treatment System. This site is West of Titusville and just South of Hwy 50. The treatment system was designed as a flow-through system that uses aquatic plants to remove nutrients from the effluent. The wetland is divided into seven cells separated by derivable earthen dikes similar to Viera. We should see the common wetland species and hope to see Purple Gallinule.

From there we can stop by Merritt Island to look for shore birds. And/or walk the new Pine Flatwoods trail and look for Scrub Jays.

Bring lunch, snacks, water etc. & bug spray.

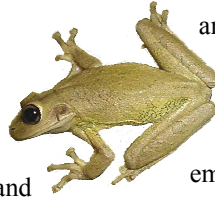
Conservation Notes

I have been very busy during the months of January and February on behalf of Audubon.

Due to being in a leadership role for SEVAS, and out of curiosity after hearing members mention the Space Coast Birding Festival, I decided to check it out myself. The kayak tour on Turkey Creek in Melbourne was pleasant but the tour leader was not an expert birder, so that was a disappointment and a lesson learned. Always find out the expertise of the tour leader before paying for a tour! The 6 hour birding by ear workshop was led by birding expert Paddy Cunningham-Pascatore. We birded in the Oak Hammock Trail across from the Merritt Island Visitor's Center. Now I *think* I can distinguish between a cardinal and a Carolina wren. After Paddy identified the vocalization of the yellow bellied sap sucker, I've been able to identify it by sound in my yard. We saw and heard—very loudly—a barred owl being attacked by a pair of red shouldered hawks and we saw a hermit thrush. Attending events at the Space Coast Birding Festival can enhance your love of birding. Ken Gunn purchased binoculars from a vendor at the festival and another couple on the field trip with us February 9th, saw some life birds while on a tour in central FL in conjunction with the festival.

The last Sunday of January, I toured the scrub habitat by the Edgewater YMCA with Adam Kent, the Scrub Jay Habitat and Species Conservation Coordinator from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission. He has taken an unofficial interest in this property—unofficial because the FWC is not a party to the mitigation contract b/w the City of Edgewater and Army Corp and USFW. His focus is on how public lands can be better managed, thus the YMCA scrub habitat is a prime example of what not to do. Drawing from information given at the Saturday scrub jay workshop Don and I attended the weekend before, Adam reiterated that the small size of the scrub habitat makes it unsuitable for a family of scrub jays to survive long term and we discussed the fact that even in Lyonia Preserve, numbers of jays are declining, indicating the birds do not have enough territory. The County is undertaking a vigorous restoration of some of the poorer habitat, and that has made some habitat temporarily unavailable. Adam agreed with SEVAS that the habitat is over-mown and overgrown. He agreed it has great educational potential with or without scrub jays. He said it is still an unknown as to whether scrub jays use small habitats as stepping stones on their way to larger territories. If good management was practiced in the habitat, it would save the City money due to less need for employees mowing and the City Fire Dept would get a perfect test burn area on which to periodically practice, and Mr. Corder could take all the credit. Adam said we should constantly remind the City that this habitat is a rare ecosystem in that it is a unique ecosystem native only to Florida, and it is one of the very few public protected habitats remaining in Volusia County. (I have made our City officials aware of the situation.) He also suggested giving tours for and also making video presentations to, schools, colleges and groups.

In that vein, as part of our efforts to encourage preservation



and restoration of the scrub habitat, we have obtained approval from Volusia County School System to host field studies for 4th & 5th graders at the habitat. The first training session for field study volunteer educators catalogued educational opportunities available in the habitat for elementary age children and also for adults. I would appreciate suggestions from members about groups you think might be interested in field trips of the scrub habitat.

February 2nd, I attended an Audubon Regional Conservation Committee Meeting at the Audubon Bird of Prey Center in Maitland. This RCC encompasses the counties of Orange, Lake, Seminole, Osceola, Marion, Volusia and Brevard. Representatives of these counties reviewed the State Audubon's goals for 2008 (which you can find at audubonoffl.org) and then discussed regional issues. Charles Lee, Director of Advocacy, stated that conservation measures need to be taken first before drawing water from the St. John's River. He said the SJWMD should change the regional plan to prohibit lawns entirely and only allow drought tolerant plants in new developments so that no irrigation is needed. As older homes are sold, new owners would be required to have inspections for water leaks and soil moisture sensors and low flow toilets installed before water would be turned on to the residence. The SJWMD has the authority to make these mandates without legislative approval. Americans use more water to irrigate lawns that is used in growing crops for food. Fifty percent of Florida's potable water is used to water lawns. A lot of potable water is used when flushing toilets. These are obviously unnecessary uses of water. On the other hand, a valid question continues to be, why should current residents have to conserve water so that more residents can move in? If growth continues, eventually water conservation will not be enough and alternative means to procure fresh water will be necessary. The reverse osmosis plant in Tampa is still not functional so we are a long way from finding a solution to Florida's impending water shortage.

Audubon members in Volusia County are encouraged to *discourage* our County Council from using Map A to plan conservation areas because Map A does not take into account recommendations by the Nature Conservancy and the Environmental Planning Council. Charles Lee suggested we contact Council members Bruno and Northey who are more conservation minded. Their contact information is found @ volusia.org/countycouncil link.

An interesting finding after the recent CBC was that many water birds are dispersing from their traditional prime habitats into retention ponds where they can still find food. They are adapting by necessity to loss of habitat and water.

Audubon members are also encouraged to sign up for legislative action updates @ audubonoffl.org. Important tip: when sending an e-mail regarding legislative action, state what action you want taken or not, in the subject line. The content of the e-mails are not read; only the subject line.

John Ogden, an ornithologist, has been hired to answer any birding questions we have.

Hometown Democracy Amendment was apparently short

Cont'd p. 3

Conservation Notes from p.2

some votes so it will be tried again for 2010. It did however, pass a Supreme Court challenge.

Also in February, I had meetings with government officials about the problems of dogs and humans encroaching into migratory bird habitat at Smyrna Dunes Park, and members have been gathering documentation to substantiate that the Park was originally set aside to protect shorebirds and their habitat. It is clear that Smyrna Dunes Park was never intended to be a “dog park”.

My thanks to those of you who are volunteering for the conservation projects at the scrub jay habitat and Smyrna Dunes Park.

—Kathy Booth

Guest Editorial**Lee Bidgood Conservation Chair, emeritus**

Serious disagreements between Florida Sierra Club Executive Committee members and Florida Sierra Chapter leaders have apparently caused the National Sierra organization to consider suspending its Florida Club.

The situation is further complicated by conflict between the national organization and the Florida Club over a recent environmental issue and policy.

Unfortunately it comes at a time when environmentalists need united efforts to restrain some of the most menacing environmental abuses that threaten many living species, including humans.

The Palm Beach Post on Feb. 7 quoted portions of a recent letter by Sierra Club President Robbie Fox, as follows:

“....The Board now believes the level of distrust among Florida

Chapter Executive Committee members and other Florida chapter volunteer leaders is so high that neither the current Executive Committee nor any successors elected in this climate can govern effectively...”

Disagreement between national Sierra and its Florida chapters and the Florida Chapter Executive Committee has been fueled by a recent Clorox Company partnership with national Sierra. Under the agreement, a new line of Clorox “eco-friendly” cleaners will bear the Sierra Club’s logo on the packages. Labels on the packages will express support for Sierra, and according to some press reports, Clorox will pay Sierra an undisclosed fee.

Florida Sierra’s Executive Committee denounced Clorox as a major Polluter and urged national Sierra to cancel the deal. One Florida Sierra Club activist called the agreement “a deal with the devil”. A month before the Sierra deal was announced, the US EPA fined the Clorox Co. \$95,000 for distributing illegal disinfectants to Los Angeles area charities.

Clorox has admitted that it has \$23 million in liabilities for Superfund clean-ups included in “certain environmental matters”.

Native & Nice**Helianthus Debilis**

Looking forward to Spring? It’s creeping up fast, almost as fast as the native Beach Sunflower, *Helianthus Debilis*. Like bright yellow rays of sunshine, the flowers of the beach sunflower, will be sure to warm up your garden all year round. Also known as dune sunflower or dune daisies, this spreading perennial is actually related to the huge upright annual sunflower, *Helianthus Annuus* and like its cousin, it can reseed by old flower heads.



Beach Sunflowers are great for that particularly tough area in your garden and certainly not just for beach side landscapes. They are extremely tolerant of sun, drought, poor soils, and salt spray. These hardy beauties make an effective mass planting, ground cover, and can even be used for dune stabilization. In mass plantings, the dune sunflower is a great nectar source for butterflies. As a ground cover, it is known to outgrow grass and other plantings. If planted on a slope or bank, it is effective against soil erosion.

Varying in size, beach sunflowers can spread to over four square feet, and about eighteen inches tall. However, suggested spacing for planting is every two-three square feet. They have been known to get four feet tall! If that is too big for your garden, do not be afraid to prune them. Yes, you will have to sacrifice some blossoms, but over all the plant will be more compact and sturdy. It is better to prune a little, more often; than one hard pruning. This is a good general rule for most plants too! Happy Spring!

—Lauren Pell

Let’s hope that the differences in Sierra can be ironed out. The club’s environmental efforts are badly needed in these uncertain times.

Friction arises between intelligent, energetic citizens who are strongly motivated to fight against major environmental threats: climate disruption; biodiversity loss; water issues.

I have often seen disagreements between Audubon chapters and Florida or National Audubon, but that has not prevented unified efforts toward accomplishing our key missions. Sierra needs to heal its internal disputes and continue as a strong voice of environmentalism.

—Lee Bidgood

We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive.

~Albert Einstein

Eco-Spun™ Bags

Our popular bags are back!

Two years ago, we introduced these bags as an environmentally sensible way of toting goods home from the store. We sold out two orders and figured that was that, we had reached everyone we were going to reach. Wrong. A chapter member, Marita Buchy, called and encouraged us to order some more. We did.

Our chapter's logo looks great in black on these off-white bags. Eco-Spun™ is fabric made from recycled plastic bottles. It's bright, soft and very durable. Leave them in your car so they'll be handy whenever you go shopping. We use ours for a weekly shopping trip to the supermarket.

We'll have them at every meeting. . . or you can contact Bill Cox billmarsha@pshift.com to order one...or several.

We think they're a good deal at \$10 ea.

About EcoSpun®

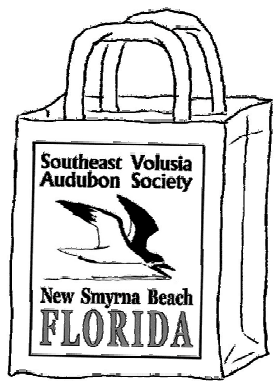
Our bag is made from post-consumer, recycled soda bottles made into fiber developed by Wellman, Inc. and each comes tagged with the certification of Scientific Certification Systems (the U.S. leader in evaluating environmental claims) as the standard by which all other recycled fibers will be judged. Wellman collects used plastic soda bottles, shreds them, then melts the chips and spins the result into a fiber which is then woven into cloth.

The Cloth Bag Co. takes this material (which is 5 times as expensive as cotton) and sews it into bags, creating an opportunity for you to help reduce overflowing landfills by making the ecologically correct choice to use a EcoSpun® bag whenever you shop. These naturally white bags are machine washable with no shrinkage.

EcoSpun® is a registered trademark of Wellman, Inc

EcoSpun® Facts

- EcoSpun® Bag is 12" wide, 15" tall with 5" sides.
- Each EcoSpun® bag keeps five 2-liter plastic bottles from ending up in a landfill.
- 8 billion bottles were kept out of landfills in just 2 years of recycling by Wellman, saving 1.3 million barrels of oil and eliminating 749,000 tons of harmful emissions.
- Just 1 year's worth of these recycled bottles represents enough energy to power a city the size of Pasadena, CA for an entire year.
- Help the environment by carrying a bag made from trashed soda bottles which would otherwise end up in a landfill.



March Speaker

Our March speaker will be Kevin Schweizer of the firm Schweizer-Waldroff Architects, Inc of New Smyrna Beach. Using the Snowden residence in New Smyrna Beach which he designed, Kevin will demonstrate energy production and conservation as well as water reuse and preservation. He will also discuss availability of state and federal assistance for solar power.

Kevin is a second generation architect following his father into the profession. He was awarded a Bachelor Degree in Design by the University of Florida in 1981 and a Masters Degree in Architecture by California Polytechnic State University in 1984. He is a recipient of the Henry Adams Award for his thesis work.

Kevin began his career with his father's firm, Schweizer Incorporated, as an intern while in university then as an architect after graduation. In 1988 he and two siblings formed Integrated Design Group. Kevin was later joined by Scott Waldroff to form their present firm.

Kevin is the author of "The Ocean Resource Center" (copyright 1984) a floating research and recreation facility using OTEC, Ocean Thermal Energy Conservation, as the power source to sustain and build the project. Kevin's work has been featured in the Orlando Sentinel, New Smyrna Beach News Journal, Orlando Metro Home Magazine and Home Digest Magazine. His own home in New Smyrna Beach was displayed on the 1994 Images Tour of Homes.

Mr. Schweizer is the second of the two environmental programs made available to Southeast Volusia Audubon as part of the New Smyrna Beach Utilities Commission Customer Outreach Program. The presentation will be given in the **DeBarry Room on the third floor of the Utilities Commission Building, 200 Canal Street in New Smyrna Beach.** Parking will be available in the parking lot behind the building and entry will be through the back door and up the elevator. We are grateful to Ellen Mahle for making these events happen and for arranging the use of the Utilities Commission facility.

NOTE THE VENUE.

Environmentalists have long been fond of saying that the sun is the only safe nuclear reactor, situated as it is some ninety-three million miles away.

~Stephanie Mills, ed., *In Praise of Nature*, 1990

Viera Wetlands

- Mottled Duck
- Blue-winged Teal
- Ring-necked Duck
- Greater Scaup
- Lesser Scaup
- Hooded Merganser
- Masked Duck
- Pied-billed Grebe
- Double-crested Cormorant
- Great Blue Heron
- Great Egret
- Snowy Egret
- Little Blue Heron
- Tricolored Heron
- Cattle Egret
- Green Heron
- Black-crowned Night-Heron
- White Ibis
- Glossy Ibis
- Wood Stork
- Turkey Vulture
- Osprey
- Bald Eagle
- Northern Harrier
- Red-shouldered Hawk
- Short-tailed Hawk
- Crested Caracara
- American Kestrel
- Common Moorhen
- American Coot
- Limpkin
- Sandhill Crane
- Killdeer
- Greater Yellowlegs
- Marbled Godwit
- Ring-billed Gull
- Caspian Tern
- Forster's Tern
- Mourning Dove
- Belted Kingfisher
- Eastern Phoebe
- Loggerhead Shrike
- Tree Swallow
- American Robin
- Northern Mockingbird
- European Starling
- Yellow-rumped Warbler

February Field Trip

Viera Wetlands

Dick and Gail Domroski had family commitments so Ken Gunn led the trip. Fortunately Bill and Heather Curry, two excellent local birders, joined the group and helped make up for the loss of Dick and Gail's spotting and identifying skills. Eighteen members and guests made the trip. The weather started off being quite chilly but after a few raindrops at noon, cleared up and the afternoon was very pleasant.

Viera is always a great place to bird and this trip was no exception. We stopped at the retention pond just east of the plant entrance and identified 21 species before we even got inside the gate. Inside we were treated to the usual array of waders and water birds but almost no ducks. The highlight here was a close-up view of a hunting display by a juvenile Crested Caracara.

After eating lunch in our cars because of the light rain, we visited the retention ponds north of the plant. The first power pole out of the plant was occupied by a raptor which we later identified as a Short-tailed Hawk. At our first stop at the north ponds, Bill spotted a female Masked Duck. Everybody eventually had a good look at both through one or other of the scopes. Here we saw a few ducks but again not the number we would normally have expected.

We separated for the trip home but two cars ended up together again, hunting the Scrub Jays at the corner of Highway 1 and the Scotsdale feeder to I-95. The six of us continued on together to Mosquito Lagoon east of Oak Hill to look at White Pelicans and other water birds.

Including the nine species which we saw after leaving Viera, we identified a total of 63 species for the day.

- Palm Warbler
- Song Sparrow
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Eastern Meadowlark
- Common Grackle
- Boat-tailed Grackle
- House Sparrow
- After Viera**
- Red-breasted Merganser
- Common Loon
- American White Pelican
- Brown Pelican
- Black Vulture
- Laughing Gull
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Florida Scrub Jay
- Fish Crow

- CORRECTIONS TO JANUARY BIRD LIST**
- Green-backed Heron to Green Heron*
 - Common Snipe to Wilson's Snipe*
 - Rock Dove to Rock Pigeon*

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, wild life's become extinct, the climate's ruined and the land grows poorer and uglier every day.

~Anton Chekhov, *Uncle Vanya*, 1897

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