

# The eSkimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, Inc.

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

November 2011

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

## Prez Sez

Last summer, Gov. Scott found out how many citizens value their state parks. He tried to eliminate 53 of them, put golf courses on some, and campgrounds on others. The people of FL mobilized and all these issues were cancelled.

But there are lots of other problems from his decimation of the DCA to elimination of some authorities of the DEP and the Water Management Districts. There is a more developer/business-friendly bent to this state's government. We will have to closely watch the news.

One of the lessons of the state parks proposal reversals was that a large number of folks from across the state voiced their objections. They were people from all walks of life and from diverse environmental organizations such as Audubon, and many who do not belong to environmental organizations. But they all had one interest in common and they were all informed and they acted.

Unfortunately, it will not always be the case that issues are so universally communicated and acted upon. The fragmentation of the environmental community is such that people get information on specific issues from organizations to which they belong, but not from others. There is no over-arching environmental organization that organizes all the other organizations like Audubon, Save the Manatee, etc., and pleads the case for the environment as a whole. We are always against something whether it is a development or a store or whatever. There is no great message about "It is the environment –stupid."

Contrast that with all the slick ads on television talking about how great oil is for the economy and jobs, how natural gas is THE clean energy source and how safe fracking is. The coal folks always have the words "clean coal" on the screen at the end of their ads. They don't mention the destruction of mountain-tops and the creeks, streams and towns below them or the air and water downwind of coal-fired powerplants.

Closer to home, a group called Free Market Florida, which evolved from the pro-development group that successfully scared voters into rejecting the Florida Hometown Democracy in the last election, is painting the environmental movement as the worst of the worst job-killers, responsible for all government regulations, including those that

## 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., Nov. 16, 2011**

**Speaker- Chad Truxall**

Acting Managing Director of the Marine Discovery Center.

*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, November 19, 2011 - 7 a.m. (1)**

Ritch Grissom Memorial Wetlands at Viera  
Brevard County

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.

have nothing to do with the environment, and costing businesses 1.75 trillion dollars per year to implement these regulations. Ryan Houck, executive director of Free Market Florida says: "Federal bureaucrats alone did not foist this \$1.75 trillion burden on America's economy. Hiding behind the veneer of environmentalism, Washington relies upon well-funded special interest groups to advance their scientifically dubious regulatory agenda. Operating a multi-million-dollar litigation engine and

Prez from p. 1

backed by a legion of lawyers, self-proclaimed "public interest" groups like the Sierra Club and EarthJustice wage a seemingly endless legal battle against America's farmers, businesses and taxpayers."

You can read Ryan Houck's article at:

<http://www2.tbo.com/news/opinion/2011/oct/06/meopino2-big-green-shows-true-colors-to-detriment--ar-263033/>

Melissa Baldwin is Florida organizer for the Florida Conservation Alliance, which is the state affiliate of the League of Conservation Voters. You can read her rebuttal at:

<http://www2.tbo.com/news/opinion/2011/oct/17/meopino2-industry-groups-seek-to-frighten-florida-ar-272228/>

You can read Scott Maxwell's column on it at:

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/politics/os-scott-maxwell-attacking-sierra-100911-20111008.0.6534914.column>

What we need is a uber-environmental organization with pooled resources to promote slick ads showing how wonderful and necessary clean air and water are, and how nice it would be to be able to eat more than one fish a month, and how renewable energy sources could provide lots of jobs, and even how nice it would be to stave off global warming for a few decades.

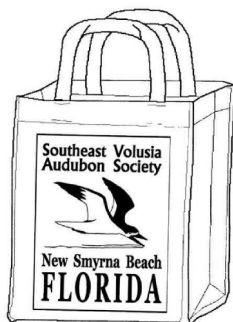
I am writing a letter to the heads of the major environmental/conservation organizations with this proposal. It will be interesting to see what they say. I will keep you posted. I will also put it on our website.

In the meantime, it is imperative that we broaden our knowledge of environmental and conservation issues by checking out the websites and subscribing to the newsletters of other like-minded organizations and take action when they ask and when we feel it right to do so. I have posted a list of the organizations to whose newsletters I subscribe in the **Of Interest** page on our website.

[http://www.sevolusiaudubon.org/of\\_interest/of\\_interest1.htm](http://www.sevolusiaudubon.org/of_interest/of_interest1.htm)

Please check them out.

—Don Picard



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## Conservation Notes

### AN OUTRAGEOUS PLAN



A Progress Energy nuclear power plant to be erected in Levy County is the most environmentally destructive Florida project I have ever encountered. It would destroy 765 acres of wetlands, according to the Corps of Engineers, an agency not known for exaggerating environmental damage.

As an activist I have participated in fights to save a few acres of Florida wetlands and in rare struggles over scores of such acres, but I never knew of several hundred acre threats. In protecting wetlands, activists always counted on powerful support from Florida Audubon and National Audubon.

Where do Audubon of Florida and National Audubon stand on the Levy County nuclear plant proposal? I have not heard a peep or seen anything in writing to indicate that these organizations oppose this project that would destroy 765 acres of wetlands.

Extreme wetlands destruction is not the only environment-damaging aspect of this proposed nuclear plant. After startup it would suck more than a million gallons of water per day from the aquifer for sanitary use and over five million gallons per day (gpd) at full production. Large parts of Florida suffer water shortage threats. Losing wetlands that store and cleanse runoff would worsen shortages.

In addition to using potable aquifer water, the plant would require some 122 million gpd of water to cool its reactors. The utility plans to withdraw brackish water from the Gulf section of the defunct Cross Florida Barge Canal for that essential cooling. When brackish water evaporates while cooling reactors, it releases a "salt plume" of particles that can damage or kill inland vegetation. As global temperatures rise, will the old canal waters fed by Gulf tides become too warm for safe cooling?

The nuclear plant could pollute the aquifer. Groundwater on site is near or even above the surface in some places about six months of the year. Nuclear plants are known to leak radioactive fluids, and even a small leak from the proposed plant could seriously pollute the aquifer.

The site is within the 100-year floodplain. Destructive floods of historical 100 year magnitude have been striking North America frequently in the last few years. To build on flood-prone wet land, Progress Energy expects to haul in fill dirt to raise the plant site eight feet above ground level and plans to erect a waterproof berm around the plant. I wonder if the costly site alterations would safeguard the plant from a major Gulf hurricane with a powerful, high storm surge.

Progress Energy first estimated the new plant would cost \$4 to 6 billion. That estimate has gradually risen to an

see **Conservation** p.3

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**Conservation** from p.2

astonishing \$22 billion. Most of that money would come from ratepayers and taxpayers.

No US nuclear plants would be built without the Price-Anderson Act limiting utility and bank liability in case of a meltdown like Chernobyl or Fukushima. A meltdown of the proposed Levy County plant would render parts of Florida uninhabitable, with the locations depending on wind direction.

Taxpayer and ratepayer money lavished on dangerous and costly nuclear power should be switched to clean renewables, energy storage and electric grid improvements.

—Lee Bidgood, Jr.

Lee Bidgood is Conservation chair, emeritus.  
He lives Gainesville, FL with his wife Catherine.

Rubber bands last longer when refrigerated.

—Snapple Real Fact #906

## Wandering Members

### A Tidal Bore

Beth decided to join me for my annual pilgrimage to Prince Edward Island in mid-June, her first visit there. While I attended meetings, she explored the island. She now agrees, PEI is a jewel; plus we ate lobster every evening.

The morning after my meetings, we headed for Nova Scotia. Weather was cold, windy and rainy but did clear for us to see both shores as we crossed the eight-mile long Confederation Bridge to the mainland.

We wished to visit the Bay of Fundy to see the tides. As it was the worst possible time in the moon cycle we only expected to see a moderate buildup. We learned the most spectacular places to watch tides were in feeder rivers where the "Tidal Bore" turns the flow and actually causes the river to reverse direction.

As we explored, we came to the Shubenacadie River and a sign saying that this was the site of the highest Tidal Bore ever recorded. The location and the river itself were impressive so we decided to do our watching there. We still had some time before the event so we continued on south.

We crossed a wide, marshy flat and there, sitting on several posts, were Willets. One was even sitting on the power line. No self-respecting Willet would ever sit on a post on Bethune Beach, but there was no mistaking, these were real Willets. Amazing.

We drove on a few miles to where we were past the vast mud flats and could see the famous bay. We then returned to the Shubenacadie and walked to the well-built viewing platform over the river to await the big event.

While waiting, I noticed several birds upriver and with my binoculars soon determined that there were upwards of a dozen eagles fishing. Apparently when the river returns to normal after a tide, pools are left where fish and other waterlife are trapped. The eagles have learned this is easy picking and have run all other predators off. We saw mostly Bald Eagles but there were at least two Golden in the mix and one Bald and one Golden were on nests directly across the river from our viewing platform.

Presently the Tidal Bore arrived. It appeared as a line coming around the bend downstream and quickly moved upriver toward us. As it came closer we could see it was actually a 6-inch wave-front moving over the surface of the river. At full moon this front is apparently a couple of feet high. The flow of the river did reverse and the current became very strong as the tide covered sandbars, flowed up the little tributary near us and climbed the bridge pillars.

In the 45 minutes we watched, the river rose 8 to 10 feet under us. By the time we left, the tidal flow had slowed and the little tributary was flowing into the main channel again. We didn't wait to see the full return but, man, a Tidal Bore is some spectacle.

Please forward this [eSkimmer](#) to friends.

—Ken Gunn

## From the Field

### October Field Trip

Twelve folks, including 2 snowbirds, a member of the Halifax River AS, a member of the Lyonia chapter FNPS and Dinah Voyles Pulver of the Daytona Beach News-Journal enjoyed a glorious 74° day at Lake Woodruff NWR on Saturday, Oct 22.

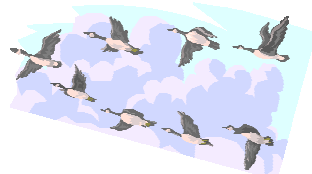
The walk started slowly as we wrestled with Marsh Wrens and Sedge Wrens but picked up as we headed around the main impoundment. We saw 60 species, including 8 warblers, 5 woodpeckers, and even a Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

—D.P.



Vultures can fly for six hours without flapping their wings.

—Snapple Real Fact #855



**Lake Woodruff NWR Sightings - Oct. 22, 2011**

Pied-billed Grebe	Eastern Phoebe
Double-crested Cormorant	White-eyed Vireo
Anhinga	Blue Jay
Great Blue Heron	American Crow
Great Egret	Fish Crow
Snowy Egret	Tree Swallow
Tricolored Heron	Tufted Titmouse
Little Blue Heron	Carolina Wren
White Ibis	Sedge Wren
Glossy Ibis	Marsh Wren
Blue-winged Teal	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Turkey Vulture	Gray Catbird
Black Vulture	Northern Mockingbird
Northern Harrier	European Starling
Red-shouldered Hawk	Northern Parula
Bald Eagle	Magnolia Warbler
Osprey	Black-throated Blue Warbler
American Kestrel	Warbler
Common Moorhen	Yellow-rumped Warbler
American Coot	Palm Warbler
Sandhill Crane	Yellow-throated Warbler
Lesser Yellowlegs	Black-and-white Warbler
Mourning Dove	Common Yellowthroat
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Northern Cardinal
Barred Owl	Indigo Bunting
Belted Kingfisher	Savannah Sparrow
Red-headed Woodpecker	Swamp Sparrow
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Red-winged Blackbird
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Common Grackle
Downy Woodpecker	Boat-tailed Grackle
Pileated Woodpecker	

On the Monkey Island Trail at De-Leon Springs, we heard the Barred Owl, Saw the Yellow-billed Cuckoo and an unidentified Thrush Species.

## Speaker

Our November speaker will be Chad Truxall, Acting Managing Director of the Marine Discovery Center.

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 will lead us through the fascinating world of marine plankton – the drifters of the sea. His presentation will cover the role of plankton in the marine food chain and will address the concepts of food webs, energy transfer, buoyancy, density and salinity.

We have had Oceanography 101. This should be a great Oceanography 102.

—K.G.

A lot of people attack the sea,  
I make love to it.

—Jacques Yves Cousteau

## Field Trip

**SATURDAY NOVEMBER 19, 2011 - 7 a.m.**

Ritch Grissom Memorial Wetlands at Viera  
Brevard County

Located between the Moccasin Island Tract of the River Lakes Conservation Area and the Brevard Zoo, the wetlands are a popular site for birders, photographers, and eco-tourists. The entire wetland system is accessible by automobile, making the site popular among those who find the rigors of hiking trails and summer temperatures daunting. Even better, viewing the site from one's automobile serves to screen visitors from birds and wildlife, enhancing the experience.

The wetlands are an integral component of Brevard County's water reuse system. Providing increased water quality and savings over traditional water treatment methods, the constructed wetland system polishes reclaimed water for irrigation or overflow into the adjacent Four-mile Canal.

The wetlands consist of 200 acres divided into four cells of approximately 35 acres each, plus a central lake.

The cells were designed to maintain different depths of water, reflecting diverse wetland conditions.

The perimeter of the wetlands central lake was seeded with native wildflowers in March 2007. This project was made possible through a grant from the Florida Wildflower Foundation with funds generated through the sale of wildflower license plates. A covered gazebo serves as a visitors information center overlooking the lake. The gazebo is surrounded by a demonstration butterfly garden donated by Rockledge Gardens. More information is available at the Wetlands - Wildflowers page.

Also known as the Viera Wetlands, the Board of County Commissioners designated the sit as the Ritch Grissom Memorial Wetlands at Viera in December, 2007, in memory of Ritch Grissom, a longtime employee of Brevard County who worked at the adjacent treatment facility.

In 2008, the wetlands were included in the East Section of the Great Florida Birding Trail.

—Gail Domroski

## Backyard Naturalist

### Angry Squirrel and Other Things

As I'm sitting in the den, windows wide open, enjoying Florida (I migrated from Maryland in May, 1997) a squirrel is making that rapid squeaking screen door noise just outside the window.

I know why she's doing it. She does it every day around this time. Michael MoonCat, my very gentle, lazy outdoor housecat (long story) is on his rocking chair on the front porch yawning and enjoying Florida. When cats yawn they, without malice, reveal their teeth. A lot of ferocious looking cat photo-shots are taken of cats who are merely yawning. Of course the squirrel doesn't realize this and she, from a very safe distance 20' up in a tree, makes her threatening buzz-saw sound. After about an hour, with Michael MoonCat back to snoozing, she scoots off, certain she has dutifully put the fear of squirrel into the beast. I don't think Michael ever notices her.

Lately my backyard observing has been curtailed by an invasion of mosquitos. Now, I'm basically a bug guy. I like to observe and learn about insects, take a magnifying glass and look in on them as they go about their daily routines. One of my favorites spots is the *Monarda punctata* (Horsemint, Beebalm) which grows (ha!) freely in my yard. It's a favorite because I don't have to go too far (it's everywhere, starting not five feet from my door) and it houses a whole bunch of little creatures all of which seem to be hard at work. But my love of the six-legged is greatly compromised when it comes to those darn little things who are trying to dine on me.

So, driven inside by the tiny little insects, I fell into another hobby of mine, Googling.

And I found this link:

[http://mosquito.ifas.ufl.edu/Mosquitoes\\_of\\_Florida.htm](http://mosquito.ifas.ufl.edu/Mosquitoes_of_Florida.htm)

It was here I learned that there are 80 (yep EIGHTY) species of mosquitos in Florida (more than any other state). I am more than appreciative of the invention of the window screen in the middle 1800's.

Pecking these stories (I'm also a non-typist along with being a non-birder and a non-gardener) is like wandering down a heretofore undiscovered path. I quite honestly don't know where I'm headed but it's a lot of fun getting there.



The mosquitos reminded me of the SEVAS field trip to Lake Woodruff last Saturday. They reminded me of that field trip because they weren't there nor were any of the pesky bothersome flying pests that were put on the planet to let us know how fragile we can be. Let's face it, we can be thrown into a tither by little tiny creatures we can hardly see.

But last Saturday, the stars were in perfect alignment and bothers and woes didn't show up. It was a glorious Florida day and our nice tidy little group had a wonderful time of it.

Andrea Lux felt compelled to take her little Canon Elph out and shoot some pix. She, with a little help from Don Picard, put the Elph up to his spotting scope and digi-scoped the hawk that everyone was admiring.



Hawk digi-scoped by Andrea Lux

We had spotting scopes, we had cameras,

we had binoculars. We saw a lot of birds. We oohed and ahed and we laughed. A lot.

And to top it all off, we saw an otter. He liked being watched and he did his little otter thing for us.

All in all, I'd say it was a good day.

I'm looking forward to the next one. This coming from a guy who thinks getting up a 9 o'clock is early. Heck, I got up for this field trip and was startled to see it was still dark out.

But, it was worth it. Who knows, this may become a habit.

These field trips are a great opportunity for folks who like to spend a day out of doors, birders, novice birders and non-birders as well.

There are a lot of patient knowledgeable people along who are eager to help and explain things to anyone at any level or any age.

Join us. No charge.

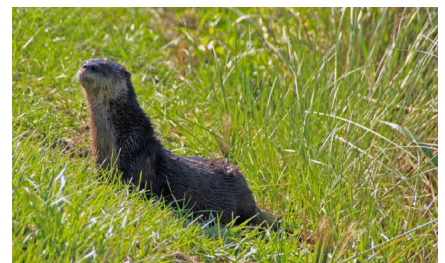
—Gil Miller



Gil & Joe discuss lenses photo by Andrea Lux



Observers photo by Andrea Lux



Otter photo by Gil Miller

It is good to realize that if love and peace can prevail on earth, and if we can teach our children to honor nature's gifts, the joys and beauties of the outdoors will be here forever.

—Jimmy Carter

## Ed Garland Talks on Water

*River Provides Multifaceted Benefits - Pt. 2*

Please see The eSkimmer Oct. 2011 for Pt. 1 of this article. [http://sevolusiaudubon.org/skimmer/eSkimmer\\_Oct2011.pdf](http://sevolusiaudubon.org/skimmer/eSkimmer_Oct2011.pdf)

The areas' ancillary benefits include fishing and boating. One of the basin's most popular recreational areas is the St. Johns Water Management Area, known by locals as the Stick Marsh or Stick Marsh/Farm 13.

Constructed in 1987, the 6,500-acre water management area increased the amount of water stored in the upper basin during wet seasons while improving water quality by isolating and treating stormwater runoff from Sun-Ag Farms, a large corporate-owned citrus farm east of the river's headwaters. The water management area acts like a filter, capturing phosphorus and other nutrients that would otherwise reach the river's natural flow and degrade its water quality.

The north end of the Stick Marsh was formerly pasture, rife with brush and cabbage palms and lined with canals and levees. Farm 13, to the immediate south of the Stick Marsh, was former farmland used to raise row crops. A levee system was constructed around the two areas and the impoundment was allowed to fill with water. Together, they form the St. Johns Water Management Area.

As the demand for drinking water increases, the project has come to play a role in storing more water within the project area during the wet season and releasing it downstream at a steady rate during the dry season, Herrera notes.

"We also reduce the dependency on groundwater for agricultural irrigation by providing surface water as an alternative source," he adds.

Farmers can recycle water from the water management area for irrigation during dry times or flood their citrus groves to protect the trees during hard freezes. It's a cooperative relationship that has worked well for farmers and water managers.

But most people are interested in the Stick Marsh as a fishery. It has exceeded the expectations of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), the agency responsible for managing the impoundment's catch-and-release program.

"The Stick Marsh is considered one of the top bass lakes in Florida," says Bob Eisenhauer, an FWC fisheries biologist. "We've had a great relationship with the District in working to provide an excellent source of public recreation there."

### History

In the early 1900s, steam shovels opened Florida's watery interior in an effort to "claim" marshlands for agricultural production and private development. The widely held theory of the time was that marshes had no intrinsic

value, but the nutrient-rich marsh bottom offered prime soil for growing citrus and row crops and raising cattle.

The Fellsmere Grade and Fellsmere Main Canal were constructed across the marsh to link the hamlet of Fellsmere with the small town of Kenansville, and to provide for drainage improvements. Other private canals followed, diverting large volumes of freshwater from the St. Johns River to the Indian River Lagoon.

A series of hurricanes in the 1920s and 1940s resulted in devastating floods in the central and southern regions of Florida, prompting the establishment of modern flood control projects in 1948. By the 1950s, the Corps and the Central and Southern Florida Flood Control District began designing a large flood control project in the upper basin. Construction started in 1966.

Portions of this flood control project, including Canal 54, were constructed by 1973, when project construction was halted by President Richard Nixon due to an Environmental Impact Statement that found that the project had unacceptable impacts on the environment.

During the late 1980s, this project was transformed. While "semi-structural," the project includes more than 100 miles of flood protection levees, six major gated spillway structures and at least 15 smaller water control structures, culverts and weirs. During flood conditions, the project may contain more than 550,000 acre-feet of water — an amount that could cover an 86-square-mile area, 10 feet deep.

—Ed Garland

*Part 3 (Conclusion) of this article will be in the*  
The eSkimmer Dec. 2011

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

## Officers & Chairs



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