

The eSkimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, Inc.

Issue Vol. IV- No. 6

October, 2009

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

Prez Sez

Water, water everywhere, but nary a drop to drink?

Restoration is in the books. Farmton is almost there. The developers have won over the politicians even without demonstrating a need for the additional homes and without accounting for the necessary water to supply the developments. Governor Crist signed into law a bill basically doing away with the need for Development of Regional Impact (DRI) process. The St John's River Water Management District board approved drawing water from the St John's River for future water consumption. They also approved a rule allowing permits to be granted based on the advice of the staff, without public comment. The Central Florida counties gathered to discuss building a huge water desalination plant and pipeline to supply water to future residents of the area. It is estimated to cost about 1.2 billion dollars.

The big guys tell us that we need to conserve water for future generations. We are actually conserving for new residents they want to attract to the state. They have given up on "conservation as the next water source." Instead they want to put river water polluted with herbicides, pesticides, boat oil and gas, and other runoffs into our water supply. Alternatively, let's just build a desalination plant.

The cost of a desalination plant will of course be borne by the current residents of Florida, just as the building of new power sources for future residents will be borne by current residents.

At some point, we need to decide what the carrying capacity of this state is based on its natural resources, and tailor our growth to that carrying capacity. We need wetlands to recharge the aquifer, we need forests to capture CO2 emissions, we need natural areas so we can find ourselves and re-engage our spirits. Bears and panthers need large tracts of land to roam without encroaching on our backyards. Migrating birds need places for food and rest at both nesting grounds and wintering grounds.

We need to stop thinking that every forest would look better with a development in the middle of it.

—Don Picard

Meetings

Meetings are held the 3rd Wednesdays
Sept. thru March at 7 P.M.

Edgewater Library 103 Indian River Blvd. 7 p.m.
*Smoke-free environment. Refreshments are served.
Plenty of parking. Public welcome.*

Next meeting is Oct. 21, 2009

Speaker: **Dinah Voyles Pulver**

Environmental writer for The News-Journal

"The State Of Central Florida's Water Resources"

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. Don't forget bug-spray!

Friday, Oct. 9 - Canaveral NS 8 a.m. (2)

See In The Field p.2

Questions? Contact Gail Domroski 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.

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Type Subscribe in the subject line.

Please check out our website at
<http://sevolusiaaudubon.org>

Please forward this eSkimmer to friends.

In The Field

September Trips

Friday Sept. 18 — **Smyrna Dunes Park**

Eight of us — four members, three guests — met at the park on a delightfully pleasant morning. The tide was right, we could walk the beach from river to ocean and so was the weather. We strolled leisurely on the boards and the beaches, taking our good old time to spot birds, butterflies and an unusual plant: *Leonotis nepetifolia*, a cultivated plant that escapes occasionally. We split about 5/3 at lunch, one bunch stayed to picnic, three repaired to a local eatery.

Friday Sept. 25 — **Tomoka State**

Three people braved the *many* mosquitoes to see a few good birds. We missed a fallout at Tomoka by 2 days. On Wednesday, 9/23, Merit Wilson, who conducts mist netting at the park, heard thousands of birds overhead, many of them Thrushes. She caught a Swainson's Warbler and an Acadian Flycatcher. A Prothonotary Warbler just missed a net as it flew past her. Once the rain stopped, many Red-eyed Vireos dropped out of the sky. Friday, we visited Merit and were able to see a Veery and a Northern Waterthrush in hand and a Painted Bunting in a net.

October Trip

Friday October 9, 8 a.m. (2) This trip will be to ***Canaveral National Seashore** instead of Spruce Creek (as listed on our website), to look for migrating birds. On October 1st there were quite a few migrants including Indigo Bunting, Blue Grosbeak, Yellow-throated & Worm-eating Warblers, Both Red & White-eyed Vireos etc.

* <http://www.nps.gov/cana/index.htm>

A complete listing of all field trips for this season — 2009-2010 — may be found on our website:

http://sevolusiaaudubon.org/field_trips.htm

Information is there including links to the destinations.

Take a look. It's very thorough.

—Gail Domroski

Backyard Naturalist

Notes of a non-Birder

I prepare and edit The eSkimmer I go to the SE-VAS meetings. I go on many of the field trips, the exceptions being those real early meet-ups (before 8). I'm not an early riser which fits in nicely with being a non-birder. It's not that I don't like birds. I do. In fact I handled tropical birds, mainly parrots for twenty-some years back in the day. I hand fed them, tamed them, got bitten by them and enjoyed their company.

It's just that when I'm out and about, I tend to look at lots of things and when I'm on a birding field trip there are lots of other things to look at, including the other people on the trip who are fascinating to watch as they train their scopes and binoculars on the targets. Plus I tend to get a crick in my neck when I look up so much. I spend a great deal of time on the trips looking down. It's easier. The sun isn't shining in your eyes down there and the plants down there don't dart about and hide. Fact is, I'm lazy and usually the easy road is the one I take. But I've seen a lot of very interesting things and happenings over the years by looking down. A naturalist, I was walking through the woods with, some years ago taught me, in one easy memorable lesson, an observation technique.

"Look under the leaves," he said as we passed a shrub. With that he turned over a leaf (not dead, living and attached). Nothing. He turned another and a small insect was going about its insect routine. I've been looking under leaves ever since. And under rocks — be careful here. And logs — here too.

Now in my golden years, still lazy (lazier) I've developed some practical observation habits. In the morning I sit perched at a counter in the kitchen sipping juice or green tea, ticking away at my kitchen laptop, reading my email, surfing, and after a bit, stopping and looking through the big window to my right. It faces southwest and gives me a decent view of the gardens my wife prepared and the bay beyond. Now I spend a half hour or so observing from my comfortable perch.

From this perch in the morning, I have seen in the past few weeks: a Ruby-throated Hummingbird who visits the Firebush each morning, a young Osprey who likes the Slash Pine branch to perch on while he converses with a friend who's sitting on a Slash Pine (I've discovered) a block away, an Armadillo up way past its bedtime, Egrets and Herons on the dock rail, Anoles on the window screen observing me, a beautiful Southern Black Racer whom I at first thought was a branch on the shrub below the window sill, and my regular butterfly visitors: Zebra Longwings, Gulf Fritillaries, Swallowtails. And birds: Blue Jays, Cardinals, Warblers. . .uh oh. I see a problem. I've brought the Sibley Guide to the counter. And binoculars.

Could it be Birders' Syndrome?

Stay tuned.

—Gil Miller



photo — Gil Miller

Being insects, Dragonflies have 3 pairs of legs, but they cannot walk. They use their legs to rest on twigs, etc. and to scoop up their prey in flight.

Wandering Members

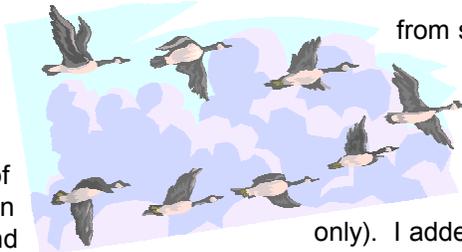
The Murphys in Trinidad and Tobago.

In April, Sheldon and I visited one of the greatest bird watching destinations in the Western Hemisphere-Trinidad and Tobago. Our tour, led by Bob Schutsky of BirdTreks, was based for 7 days in Trinidad at the Asa Wright Nature Center, followed by three days on Tobago at the Blue Waters Inn in Speyside.

Asa Wright provided expert local drivers, guides, and security for all on-site and field trips during our stay. The center offers comfortable accommodations, wonderful food, and breathtaking views offered with high-British manners by a large, very accommodating staff. A former coffee plantation, the main house is framed by a second-story covered veranda where you can enjoy morning coffee while spotting 20 or so life-birds visiting feeder trays on the grounds below. Most afternoons, White-necked Jacobins joined Tufted Coquettes and Copper-rumped Hummingbirds sipping nectar from feeders hanging right above our heads as we sipped high tea! Even on field trips, rum punch and tea cakes were served mid-afternoon, and full buffet dinners complete with rum punch, appeared from the back of the van.

The grounds of the Center offer unique birding, including trails to a cave housing one of the world's last Oilbird colonies. Other trails lead to golden-headed and white-bearded manikin leks and Bellbird hang-outs. Field trips included a boat ride through Caroni Marsh, where thousands of scarlet ibis fly in to roost each evening. I've never forgotten seeing that bird for the first time as a youth at Disney World, so imagine my delight when Scarlet Ibis turned out to be my 700th life bird! Other field trips included Nariva Swamp, where the highlight was a flock of hundreds of Yellow-hooded Blackbirds that burst out of the high grass as our van approached. A visit to Matura Beach under the full moon revealed loggerhead sea turtles coming ashore to nest. On Easter Sunday morning, our "sunrise service" was spent on a hilltop tracking down the rare and elusive Trinidad Piping-Guan.

Tobago, we had beachside accommodations where snorkels joined binocs as magic windows to the natural world. A Kemp-Ridley sea turtle swam right by the dock as we disembarked after a morning of snorkeling in challenging seas. We were taken by glass-bottom boat to Little Tobago Island, a rookery for Brown Booby, Red-footed Booby, and Red-tailed Tropicbird. Tobago is home to Gilpin Trace, the oldest continuously protected rainforest park in the world. At the entrance, local entrepreneurs rent Wellingtons and rain ponchos; it is wise to support the local economy, as this is truly a "rain forest." Our guide carried a large umbrella with curved wooden handle, which he used alternately as a walking stick, protection



from sudden rainfalls, and as a handy pointer to lead our eyes to White-tailed sabrewing, Yellow-legged Thrush, and Blue-backed Manakins.

Our trip total for 11 days was 197 species (6 of which were heard-only). I added 123 life birds, and fulfilled a long-held dream of visiting Asa Wright. It was all I had hoped for, and more!

—Fern Murphy

The Gunns in Alberta

For those wondering where our summer cabin is and have access to Google Earth or equivalent, coordinates are: 51°16'57.05"N and 114°48'13.03"W. We are on the Ghost River about 50 miles west of Calgary, Alberta and about the same east of Banff and at an altitude of 4080 feet.

It has been an interesting fall over all the northern Great Plains. It was the warmest September on record. Temperatures some days were in the eighties and we didn't have our first hard freeze until the twenty-eighth of the month. I am writing this on October 4, and we have now had two days of intermittent snow and rain although it is only white on the higher hills. All this has affected some of the wildlife and not others.

Alberta has had a very successful nest box program for Mountain Bluebirds for a number of years. There were three families with about four fledglings each in the valley just above our cabin. The warm weather enticed them to stay much later than I can remember seeing them before. The frost, however, reminded them that winter was coming. They were here on the twenty-seventh and disappeared by the twenty-ninth (I thought). On my way through a heavy flurry to church this morning, I flushed one lone bluebird who obviously didn't get the memo.

Most other passerines seemed to disappear about on schedule and crows and blackbirds gathered into flocks and moved out as I remember from other years. Again, I did see a small diehard flock of Brewer's Blackbirds on the flatlands east of Calgary last Friday.

Most of the local raptors – Red-tailed and Swainson's Hawks - appear to have left but they have been replaced by a new crowd of Red-tailed and last week I saw both a male and a female Northern Harrier. No Goshawks or Rough-legged Hawks as yet nor no Golden Eagles.

We are west of the migration route for ducks and geese so don't know if they have arrived from the north yet or not. The Trumpeter Swans that usually show up on the local sloughs in the fall have not arrived yet. On my trip east of Calgary, the sloughs there still have most of the summer-resident ducks and coots and I saw several shorebirds.

See Alberta p.4

Alberta from p.3

Friday I saw a weasel still in full tan summer colors. On the other hand, local deer, including the fawns, have had their winter, grayer coats for a couple of weeks.

In only marginally related news, the weather may have fooled some of the birds and wild animals but it sure didn't fool the cows. I pass several summer pastures in my travels around the area and starting right about September 1, the old cows that have made the trip many times, had their herds by the south gates and were waiting for them to be opened so they could go home for the winter.

Me too. I plan to be on the road October 13.

—Ken Gunn

Speakers
October

Our October speaker will be Dinah Voyles Pulver of the Daytona Beach News-Journal.

As an environment writer for The News-Journal, Dinah has counted alligators at midnight, kayaked through a flooded home, posed for photos with blood-thirsty mosquitoes and written about the sex lives of fireflies and whales. A sixth-generation native Floridian, she has worked for The News-Journal for 18 years. She writes about preservation of wildlife and conservation lands, water issues and the St. Johns River, as well as weather, hurricane science and natural disasters.

For her five-part series in December 2008 on Florida's water woes, called "Got Water," she received a Gold Medal for Public Service and a first place in explanatory reporting from the Florida Society of News Editors, as well as a Sunshine State Award from the South Florida Society of Professional Journalists. She was recognized by the Florida Wildlife Federation in June with its Biff Lampton Communicator of the Year Award. She is a two-time recipient of the Waldo Proffitt Award for Excellence in Environmental Journalism, Florida's highest award for environment writing. In addition to state awards in 2008, she received national recognition for her "Natural Treasures" series, winning an award of special merit from the Grantham Prize for Excellence in Reporting on the Environment.

She has written two books, both biographies for Florida entrepreneurs. When not roaming the wilds for work, she enjoys kayaking and cooking and serves on the board of the women's organization at her church. Married for 28.5 years, she and her husband have three children and two grandchildren.

Dinah will discuss the state of Central Florida's water resources. Come and bring a friend.

—K.G.

Field Trip Sightings

NSB Dunes Park

- Northern Gannet
- Brown Pelican
- Great Egret
- Snowy Egret
- Black-crowned Night Heron
- Turkey Vulture
- Osprey
- Wilson's Plover
- Semipalmated Plover
- Piping Plover
- Ruddy Turnstone
- Sanderling
- Western Sandpiper
- Laughing Gull (pictured)
- Herring Gull
- Forster's Tern

Tomoka State Park

- Great Blue Heron
- Great Egret
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Pileated Woodpecker
- Downy Woodpecker
- White-eyed Vireo
- Red-eyed Vireo
- Blue Jay
- Fish Crow
- Barn Swallow
- Tufted Titmouse
- Carolina Wren
- Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
- Black-throated Blue Warbler
- American Redstart
- Royal Tern
- Morning Dove
- Common Ground Dove
- Loggerhead Shrike
- Northern Mockingbird
- Brown Thrasher
- Northern Cardinal



photo — Gil Miller

Of Interest

Link to our SEVAS website **Of Interest** page
http://sevolusiaaudubon.org/of_interest/of_interest1.htm

Includes:

Volusia County hikes, Events

Donnadine Miller Memorial 5k

Suggested Reading

More added weekly.

We plan to keep this page active and timely.

Please Bookmark us and check back frequently.

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