

The eSkimmer

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, Inc.

www.sevolusiaaudubon.org

October 2011

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

Prez Sez

Train Act

The Republican-led House of Representatives just passed a bill called the TRAIN ACT to gut the ability of the EPA to enforce standards including those to combat global warming and mercury pollution which could cause tens of thousands of deaths. The bill would also require a new interagency committee to analyze the financial impact of several EPA rules next year. In other words, the EPA would be required to concern themselves first with the cost of implementation before the life-saving benefit of the rules. Combine this with

the vociferousness of the global warming deniers, we need to take a serious part in the debate.

The EPA was created from smaller departments of different federal organizations by executive order from President Richard Nixon in 1970. It was charged with protecting human health and the environment, by writing and enforcing regulations based on laws passed by Congress. From asbestos to lead paint, clean air and water, oil pollution, pesticides and the regulation of the disposal of hazardous waste, the EPA regulations probably saved hundreds of thousands of American lives. Many rivers, lakes and streams have been cleaned up allowing fishing and swimming to be enjoyed by the public. But there are still plenty of bodies of water that are too polluted to allow these activities, even here in FL.

According to the EPA website, "Nutrient pollution can damage drinking water sources; increase exposure to harmful algal blooms which are made of toxic microbes that can cause damage to the nervous system or even death; and form byproducts in drinking water from disinfection chemicals, some of which have been linked with serious human illnesses like bladder cancer.

Nutrient problems can happen locally or much further downstream, leading to degraded lakes, reservoirs, and estuaries, and to hypoxic "dead" zones where aquatic life can no longer survive. High amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus in surface water result in harmful algal blooms, dead fish, reduced mating grounds and nursery habitats for fish."

Somewhere along the line, some of our representatives in Congress, who tout the Constitution, have inter-

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., Oct. 19, 2011

Speaker- Charlie DuToit

The Seasons of the Tomoka Marsh

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, October 22, 2011, 7 a.m. (3)
Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge

See **From the Field** p. 3

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.

preted the phrase "to promote the general welfare" to mean the general welfare of the top two percent.

The EPA's budget for 2011 is about \$8.7 billion, a drop in the bucket for the deficit problem, but a huge pain for people wanting to deregulate polluting corporations.

I encourage all or readers to sign up for action alerts from The National Audubon Society, Audubon of Florida and the Sierra Club (links below). Then, when you get action alerts, take action. Email the EPA administrator

See **Prez** p. 2

Prez from p. 1

and members of Congress and tell them we should keep the EPA's focus on protecting human health and the environment as envisaged by President Nixon and not on the financial costs to the polluters.

—Don Picard

<http://policy.audubon.org/take-action>

http://fl.audubonaction.org/site/PageServer?pagename=fl_homepage

http://action.sierraclub.org/site/PageServer?pagename=TakeAction&s_src=610ZSCAC01

Conservation Notes

A survival Issue



Climate change is probably a civilization survival issue and may even risk human extinction. It's clear that we have already destabilized the relatively dependable, mild climate of the last 10 or 12 thousand years that fostered our meteoric rise to global dominance.

Deadly destructive storms, downpours, floods, heat waves, blizzards, droughts and wildfires have been striking with record-breaking intensity and frequency worldwide, as scientists predicted several decades ago. The question is how bad the wild weather must become before people cooperate in making the necessary sacrifices to slash greenhouse gas emissions.

Time may be running out for cutting greenhouse emissions successfully. A sudden release of methane gas frozen under warming, shallow Arctic sea beds and in thawing permafrost could make extreme global heating and rising seas irreversible. Methane has more than 20 times the heat-trapping power of carbon dioxide.

Our nation should lead in measures that cut greenhouse gases quickly and severely. Sadly our government ignores the seriousness and urgency of this survival issue.

There are evidently several principal reasons for US inaction on climate change:

- Severe recession, unemployment, health care needs, education concerns and the federal deficit are highly demanding distractions.
- Our bloated military-industrial complex profits from endless futile conflicts contributing to the huge federal deficit. Washington steadfastly rejects a war tax to slim the deficit.
- Incredibly powerful fossil fuel profiteers have funded skillful propagandists who deny and belittle climate change very successfully.
- Many US citizens reject science in favor of dogma, as if praying for rain would quell record-breaking drought and wildfires.

US inaction is the principal reason that international conferences to curtail climate change have floundered

around with no effective measures so far.

As climate change worsens, food production is being seriously reduced by droughts, fires, storms and floods. Carbon dioxide is acidifying the seas, which along with higher temperatures threatens to wipe out most seafood that feeds countless humans. Essential freshwater supplies are being eliminated by the changing climate.

Beset by floods or droughts with food and water shortages, increasing millions of climate refugees have almost no place to go. Violence will likely increase.

In less than two centuries, North Americans exterminated an estimated 5 billion passenger pigeons, probably the most numerous bird species on earth. Will our next extinction be ourselves?

There are hopeful signs at the grassroots, despite politicians' indifference. Distinguished climate scientists, writers and movie stars have been willingly arrested, jailed and fined for non-violent demonstrations urging our President to veto a Canadian tar sands pipeline that would vastly increase greenhouse gas emissions.

Even the Pentagon has recognized the climate change threat and is beginning to use renewable energy. Several leading religious organizations, including the Vatican and Presbyterians for Earth Care have endorsed strong measures to restrain climate.

I hope our grassroots efforts are successful and we don't act too late. Otherwise the next intelligent species to dominate this earth might remember us not as *Homo sapiens* the self-named wise ones, but as the smart-ass idiots who ignored science and exterminated themselves.

—Lee Bidgood, Jr.

Opinions expressed in this essay are those of the author and not necessarily those of SEVAS.

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

A link from Lee Bidgood.

Solar is the "Fastest Growing Industry in America" and Made Record Cost Reductions in 2010

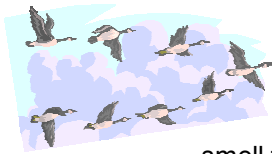
<http://thinkprogress.org/romm/2011/09/16/321131/solar-fastest-growing-industry-in-america-and-made-record-cost-reductions/>

A human being is part of the whole, called by us "Universe," a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest - a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole [of] nature in its beauty.

~Albert Einstein, 1950

Wandering Members

Alberta In Autumn



During the week after Labor Day, I had occasion to travel across the province of Alberta, a distance of about 300 miles. Going over, I was hurrying to make an appointment, but returning I was able to stop and smell the roses.

The hay fields were cut and baled, usually in six-foot diameter round bales. Every field had from two to six hawks, usually Red-tailed but sometimes Swainson's, sitting atop a bale, waiting for a mouse to try to make it from one to another. I also saw a couple of Northern Harriers soaring low over the fields. It's been a good year for raptors and they can be seen on power poles, fence posts, trees, occasionally on the ground, often circling high above and on bales and sheds.

The canola crops were almost all swathed and lying in fluffy, pale green to dirty gray colored windrows. The cereal grain was mostly still standing but was the golden yellow or pale blond hue which indicates that its time has come. Indeed, several fields were on their first few rounds with the swather. Flocks of northern ducks had not yet arrived and the local Canada Geese were not numerous enough to do much harm. There was hope that harvest would be accomplished without undue bird damage. I also fear the days are long gone when flocks of greenheads would cover an entire wheat field and sometimes part of the one next to it.

I pulled off the highway onto a side road which ran through a large poplar bush. By luck, I had chosen one where several families of Cedar Waxwings were gathering for migration. I saw dozens of first fall immatures but did not catch sight of one adult. With lack of adult supervision these made a busy, noisy bunch.

Crows were also gathering for their trip south and I saw flocks of 30 to 40 birds each. Magpies also gather into flocks of two to ten families at this time of year, even though they do not migrate and are in pairs or groups of three to four by Christmas.

It was a wet year so there was water in most of the low spots but only the larger seemed to have much birdlife. I stopped at one where I spotted a number of Wilson's Phalaropes on the water. Identification was a challenge as some birds were already in winter plumage, there were a number of immatures and some birds' plumage was badly worn. I therefore probably missed some and misidentified others but, between two adjoining sloughs, I think I saw:

Mallard Ducks	Blue-winged Teal	American Avocet
Northern Pintail	Ruddy Duck	Greater Yellowlegs
Northern Shoveler	Lesser Scaup	Lesser Yellowlegs
Canvasback Duck	American Coot	Killdeer
American Widgeon	Horned Grebe	Bonaparte's Gull

It was a great trip and as I neared home I was reminded that the local nest-box program also had a banner year. I counted at least six family groups of six to seven Mountain Bluebirds.

—Ken Gunn

Please forward this  to friends.

From the Field

October Field Trip

SEVAS will be going to Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday October 22nd, 2011.

We'll meet at the usual spot—Market Square parking lot Edgewater, Ridgewood Ave. & 442 between Dunkin Donuts & Chik-Fil-A. at 7 a.m.

This trip is rated (3) One plus mile walking and/or uneven terrain.

Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1964 to provide habitat for migrating and wintering birds.

The biological diversity of the wetlands provides nesting, overwintering and stopover habitat during migration for neotropical songbirds, migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds and raptors (215 bird species have been counted).

Other Federally endangered or threatened species which are known to inhabit the refuge include the Eastern indigo snake, American Alligator, Wood Stork, and the Snail Kite, which is a very specialized raptor feeding only on Apple Snails. Like the Limpkin, wading birds occur on the refuge in unusually abundant numbers.

<http://www.fws.gov/lakewoodruff/>

Remember, SEVAS Field trips are free and open to the public. Join us and bring a friend(s). These field trips are enjoyable educational opportunities for young people.

Fall Migration Count

Many thanks to all who helped with the Fall Migration Count.

Participants were Mary Bradshaw, Gail & Dick Domroski, Andrea Lux & Roger Peterson, Ken Park, Joe Montpelier, Fern & Sheldon Murphy and Maurene & Don Picard. This year we saw **84 species** and **5626 individuals**. The area total tally sheet will be available at the October meeting for anyone who wants to see it and it will be posted on the chapter website.

—Gail Domroski

Take nothing but pictures.
Leave nothing but footprints.
Kill nothing but time.

~Motto of the Baltimore Grotto, a caving society

Backyard Naturalist

Birding 101

I've confessed time and time again, in this column, that I'm a non-birder. Always have been. In fact I wear the sobriquet proudly. Lazy people, such as I, frequently adapt subterfuge to mask our laziness. We wear labels of a more positive nature. Hence, instead of saying I know nothing at all about _____, I simply, with a slight bit of smugness, declare that I'm a *non*-_____.

I'm seriously thinking of having tee shirts made.

There are variants, of course. I know plenty about the dangers of smoking therefore I'm a non-smoker. Frequently I'm nonplussed.

But back to my point. Years ago (15) my late wife, Donnadine, encouraged me to go on a birding field trip with her. Hating the hour (6 a.m.) but wanting to please her, I agreed. Admittedly, it was good fun. I got to look at faraway birds through high-tech binoculars and a cheerful guide identified everything in sight. But, to me, the highlight of the day was lunch. Donnadine knew how to balance equations.

That was in Maryland. We moved to Florida in 1997 and we sought out the local environmental groups, several of which we joined, including SEVAS.

And we went on field trips. Lunch out, in a restaurant, was always included.

I had fun. Donnadine had fun. She learned a whole lot about birds. I learned the difference between a Great Egret and a White Heron (white morph of Great Blue) and I think I can pick a Ring-billed Gull out of the crowd on the beach.

Now comes the shameless segue: On the next page, following this babble, is a blurb about a forthcoming SEVAS event-Birding 101.

Don Picard, the president of SEVAS, has put a lot of work into a program that novice (I won't say *non*) birders of all ages will not only benefit from, they'll enjoy, the morning spent with Don.



A small group of us was asked to preview the program and I must say, I learned a lot in a short period of time.

And I was motivated to go to the beach and see the birds.

Whoa. . . big difference when they're not labeled.

I'll need a little more Birding 101 but, I'm motivated.

Big first step.



—Gil Miller

[Note: To avoid getting hooted off the beach by Birders, never call a Gull a Seagull.]

Speaker

Our October speaker will be Mr. Charlie DuToit, a recently retired biologist from Tomoka State Park.

Charlie is originally from the New England area. He came to Florida in 1976 and attended University of Florida where he earned an MS in plant ecology in 1979. His research project was "Recreational Carrying Capacity of Ichetucknee Springs."

After graduation, he took a position as a field biologist with Florida State Parks where he worked at different parks and preserves, in different areas of the state, for 30 years, retiring in 2009. His primary interests were in wetlands. He started at Ichetucknee, where he mostly worked underwater. He then waded through the Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve for five years - habitat for the Florida Panther and tropical orchids. In the later years of his career, he worked on the restoration of disturbed tidal marshes in the Tomoka Basin State Park in northeast Volusia County. This was a multi-year project, supported by SJR Water Management and US-FWS and afforded him the opportunity to know the salt-marsh in flood and in drought, in summer heat and in winter cold.

After retirement from the state, Charlie put together a PowerPoint program titled "**The Seasons of the Tomoka Marsh**" to share his experiences in this interesting and beautiful natural habitat. It is this program that he will present at our October meeting.

Come and bring a friend. Free cookies!

—K.G.

Of Interest

Links



Conservation Lands Outreach Outdoor Learning Adventures - Bonnie Cary

Bring the family outdoors for adventures led by experts on diverse subjects. Teacher certification points awarded for participation.

Outdoor Learning Adventures are held on Volusia County conservation lands and include hiking and exploration of the site. Adults and families are welcome. Participants should wear walking or hiking shoes, dress for the weather, and bring a camera and drinking water—and a sense of adventure!

Register early because space is limited.

For more information or to register:

386-736-5276

Here's the schedule:

<http://www.volusia.org/growth/learning.htm>

Please forward this eSkimmer to friends.

Birding 101

The Birds of the Seashore and the Indian River Lagoon.



Do you wonder what kinds of birds you see on the beach or in the Indian River Lagoon? Or, why you see some birds at some times but not at others?

Do you wonder where they go when they are not here?

Don Picard, President of the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society will present a program of bird identification and anecdotes about the birds you most often see near the water.

If you have binoculars or field guides and are unsure how to best use them, bring them along. If you have pictures of birds you would like us to identify, bring them also.

Saturday, October 8, 2011

10 a.m. - 12 noon

Auditorium B

New Smyrna Beach Branch

Volusia County Public Library

Open To The Public-No Charge

<http://volusialibrary.org/VCPLbranches-nsb.html#NSB>



Ed Garland Talks on Water

River Provides Multifaceted Benefits - Pt. 1

Restored wetlands in St. Johns River's headwaters provide flood protection, irrigation for crops, habitat for wildlife and endless scenic views.

The airboat winds through a serpentine corridor of swaying sawgrass, the vegetation so tall and dense that every blind curve on the watery trail promises surprise. It might be a scattering of juvenile alligators, their torsos a blur of black and yellow or an explosion of egrets taking flight at the sound of the airboat's throbbing motor.

The reedy tangle eventually yields to a fisheye lens vista of marsh and sky. When the motor is silenced, the boat glides to a stop. The glassy water mirrors cobalt skies and shifting cumulus clouds. A cover of coots squawk an ancient language somewhere along the fringes. A pair of osprey feed their young in a nest crowning a long-dead cypress tree.

The concept of time becomes hazy in the headwaters of the St. Johns River. Hours are measured by the sun's arc instead of clocks, seasons by temperatures instead of calendars.

Only a few decades earlier, this very marsh — now known as the Blue Cypress Water Management Area — had been drained and used to grow vegetables, primarily tomatoes. In fact, by the early 1970s, 62 percent of the entire marsh of the Upper St. Johns River Basin had been drained for agriculture. A grid of canals constructed then diverted floodwaters from the basin east to the Indian River Lagoon.

Draining off the headwaters of the 310-mile-long St. Johns River may have been a boon for agriculture, but the benefits came at a cost to the very life of the river: loss of water storage areas, diminished water quality, excessive freshwater going into the lagoon, and significant decreases in fish and wildlife populations. The marsh that remained was further degraded by hydrologic alterations and nutrients in agricultural runoff.

"Many of the people who visit this marsh to boat and fish might not realize this same area was once farmed," says Hector Herrera, upper basin project manager for the St. Johns River Water Management District. "Although the marsh may never be exactly as it once was, our goal is to mimic the natural hydrology of the river as closely as possible."

After 10 years of planning and almost 20 years under construction, the Upper St. Johns River Basin Project — now in the final stages of completion—balances environmental sustainability with the need for reliable flood protection in Brevard and Indian River counties.

The 247-square-mile project, extending from the Florida Turnpike in Indian River County northward to Lake Washington in central Brevard County, is one of the most ambitious wetland restoration projects of its kind in the

world. The project is co-sponsored by the District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, with the District purchasing vast tracts of former agricultural land for restoration and the Corps constructing levees, water control structures and related plumbing necessary to protect Indian River and Brevard counties from floods.

"The upper basin project is an innovative approach to managing water," Herrera says. "Instead of relying heavily on structures to control water movement, we worked with the Corps toward a 'semi-structural' concept, balancing flood control with significant environmental habitat restoration and water quality protection benefits."

The project is divided into marsh conservation areas and water management areas. Marsh conservation areas temporarily retain flood water, provide long-term water conservation storage, and restore and preserve flood-plain wetlands.

Water management areas, by contrast, retain flood water from adjacent areas but also segregate nutrient-rich agricultural discharges from the marsh conservation areas, provide water quality improvement prior to discharge downstream and provide water for farm irrigation.

The areas' ancillary benefits include fishing and boating.

Part 2 -next month

—Ed Garland

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



The Bags are Back!

- 100% unbleached cotton
- Made in the U.S.A.
- We'll have them for sale at meetings.

\$7 ea.

Standard Bag

\$8 ea.

Shoulder Bag

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