

APALACHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY



Apalachee Audubon Society Mission Statement:

Protection of the environment through education, appreciation, and conservation.

NEWSLETTER OF THE APALACHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2012

January Program - Thursday, Jan. 26, 2012

Social at 7 pm - Program at 7:30 pm
918 Railroad Avenue, Tallahassee

“Saving Wakulla Spring” with Jim Stevenson

Jim Stevenson will discuss the values of Wakulla Spring, the threats to those values, and solutions to restore the ecology of this world class spring. Wakulla is one of the largest springs in the world and creates the Wakulla River. The spring is one of the foremost wildlife observation areas in Florida and attracts up to 200,000 visitors each year. The crystal clear water of the spring was a popular set for filming movies from the 1940s to 1970s. The spring is threatened by nitrate pollution and pumping, most of which originates in Tallahassee and Leon County. We will learn of numerous projects that have been undertaken to restore the spring to its former natural condition. Tarzan would be proud of these accomplishments.



Photo by Lou Kellenberger

Jim Stevenson served as chief naturalist for Florida's State Park System for 20 years. He is the former Chairman of the Florida Springs Task Force, Director of the Governor's Florida Springs Protection Initiative, and Coordinator of the Wakulla Spring Basin Working Group. When Jim retired in 2003, after 38 years with the Department of Environmental Protection, in recognition of his longstanding stewardship of Florida's public lands, the Governor and Cabinet dedicated the Department of Environmental Protection's highest award the "Jim Stevenson Resource Manager of the Year Award" which is given annually to the most deserving state lands manager. Jim continues his springs protection work by serving on the Florida Springs Task Force and coordinating the Wakulla Spring Basin and the Ichetucknee Springs Basin working groups.

February Program - Thursday, Feb. 23, 2012

Social at 7 pm - Program at 7:30 pm
918 Railroad Avenue, Tallahassee

“Forests, Beaches, Marshes, and Shrublands: Chapter Opportunities in Important Bird Areas” with Marianne Korosy

Florida has 100 designated Important Bird Areas (IBAs) that encompass a range of natural habitats including forests, grasslands and shrublands, coastal beaches and tidal marshes, and migratory stopover habitats. Tour some of Florida's special IBAs and find out where the birds can lead us in citizen science, conservation, and outreach.

Marianne Korosy is Audubon of Florida's Important Bird Area coordinator. Her work for the past two years has focused on building chapter-based coastal bird steward programs in southwest Florida. Marianne leads a volunteer bird banding project involving Clearwater and St. Pete Audubon chapters at rooftop Least Tern colonies in Pinellas County and also conducts a volunteer-based winter sparrow banding project at Weekiwachee Preserve in Hernando County. Marianne has a master's degree in geology from FSU and is a PhD candidate in conservation biology at the University of Central Florida.



Photo by Nick Baldwin.

Speaker Series

Free and open to the public.

Social begins at 7 pm & meeting at 7:30 pm (unless otherwise noted). Located at the Historic Amtrak Station, 918 Railroad Avenue, Tallahassee. For more information: (850)322-7910 or www.apalachee.org Map: <http://tinyurl.com/3q9q77s>

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Apalachee Audubon Society, Inc.

2011 – 2012

Officers & Directors

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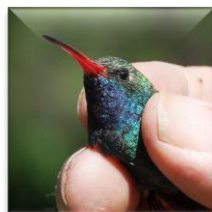
All memberships and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

This newsletter is published 6 times a year by Apalachee Audubon Society on recycled paper.

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Remember Our Winter Hummingbirds!

Just a reminder that winter in the southeast means the return of our winter hummingbirds. If you took your feeder down, hang it back up!



Broad-billed Hummingbird

And if you see a hummingbird, please contact our local certified bird bander, Fred Dietrich at 850 591-7430 or fdietrich@gmail.com. He will come out and do his best to trap and band your bird. His work, along with other banders, is helping us to understand the migratory habits of these birds.

One female Rufous Hummingbird banded in Tallahassee a couple of years ago was found in Alaska the following summer. Learn more at <http://hummingbirdresearch.net/>

Conservation Updates and Information

Environmental Concerns

By Elizabeth Platt

Two issues of concern to all of us as Audubon members are the following:

Water management districts: The newly-formed Florida Conservation Coalition has placed water at the top of its list of concerns. With the demise of the regional water management districts in favor of a single board, FCC is concerned with the loss of local expertise and focus, centralization of water board functions opening the door to possible politicization of water issues, and the privatizing and commodification of water, which should be available to all. For ways to get involved see www.floridaconservationcoalition.org

Impending repeal of the septic tank act: Although the Legislature passed a law mandating five year inspection of septic tanks in 2010, pressure was exerted by citizens not wanting to bear the expense. But leakage of outdated systems seriously threatens drinking water. Urge your legislator to vote 'no' regarding this repeal. For more information see <http://www.sierraclubfloridanews.org/2010/11/septic-tank-law-faces-backwash-of.html>.

Continued from page 4 - **Piney Z Lake** by Seán E. McGlynn, <http://mcglynnlabs.com/>

This separated the Sinkhole from the rest of Lake Lafayette. Today much of the water in Lake Lafayette, especially the water at the Sinkhole, is classified as bad or impaired in water quality (Total Maximum Daily Load Program, FDEP TMDL). Piney Z Lake is one of the few portions of Lake Lafayette that has good water quality.

In mid-1990's the City of Tallahassee and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission began an ambitious restoration of Piney Z Lake. First, they started a drawdown of the lake. Berming the lake had caused problems. Impounded systems, like Piney Z Lake, cause stagnation and the stabilized water levels allow uninterrupted and excessive aquatic plant growth. Problems with native species and the invasive exotic like the Water Hyacinth, *Eichhornia crassipes*, began to disrupt recreational activities. The statuesque cypress trees, which grow within Piney Z Lake, were stressed due to the lack of water level fluctuation. Fluctuating water levels create open water and increase wildlife potential. In the past, fires burned during dry periods in the lake bottom and cleared out the brush and grazing animals ate the new growth. These forces no longer operate Piney Z Lake, but through the efforts of the City of Tallahassee and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission a manmade drawdown was effective in restoring the aquatic habitat. At the end of the drawdown, the bottom of the lake was scraped, and the nutrient enriched muck, which filled the bottom of the lake, was removed and mounded into six fishing fingers and five wildlife islands.

During the past seventeen years the City of Tallahassee's Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Affairs and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission have been hard at work improving Piney Z's water quality, wildlife habitat and public access. These partners have blazed the award-winning Lafayette Heritage Trails which have become one of the most envied assets of the area. They have constructed over ten miles of marked boat trails winding through waters containing picturesque cypress trees, pickerel weed and fragrant water lilies. A dozen wood duck boxes were installed and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission put up 3 osprey platforms.

Please join us on February 11th (Feb. 25th is a back-up date) for an Apalachee Audubon workday to help out at the Piney Z Lake Least Tern Nest Site.

President's Message

By Kathleen Carr



Kathleen Carr at the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey
Photo by Mac Stone.

Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season and has enjoyed some of the many birding opportunities our region provides.

Changes: If you're wondering why Julie Wraithmell isn't writing this message, here's the story. As of January 1st, I have picked up the reins of the chapter presidency—six months ahead of schedule. Normally, the Vice-President serves for a year as President-Elect, learning the ropes before taking office as President. However, last year we ended up without a Vice-President. The role had been shared by Elizabeth Platt and Jan Bordelon to provide backup for Julie, who had graciously offered to take on the presidency when the VP resigned in 2010.

When Julie's term ended last summer, the chapter was left without an incoming President. I was willing to take on the role of VP, but didn't feel ready to be President, having been active in the chapter as newsletter editor for only a couple of years. With the blessings of our board, Julie and I agreed to split the difference. She stayed on through end of the year and I would take over in January and continue to serve through my regular term, July 2012-2013.

Gratitude: So here I am feeling not quite ready yet, but buoyed by the support and enthusiasm of our AAS Board and committees. First, I would like to thank Julie for staying on as President this past year. She works with Audubon Florida as Director of Wildlife Conservation and has been especially busy since the 2010 election as she lobbies the state legislature on behalf of Audubon and conservation issues. With more state budget cuts looming, her job is not going to be any easier this year.

I would also like to thank John Boutelle who recently retired as AAS webmaster. He's done a terrific job of keeping the web site updated and functioning for the past several years and we all appreciate his hard work and diligence. My thanks to Bob Henderson for accepting the mantle as our new webmaster.

2011 Audubon Assembly: Last October, it was my privilege to attend this meeting for the first time. Every year, Audubon Assembly gathers conservation-minded people from around Florida to celebrate accomplishments and to set a conservation agenda for the next year. Held in Lake Mary, the theme for the 2011 Assembly was *Take Action for Florida's Special Places*. The event started with the Flyaway Fiesta, a reception held at the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey in Maitland. We got a behind-the-scenes tour of the facility, enjoyed a presentation by our own Julie Wraithmell, and also got to meet many of the birds up close and personal, an exhilarating experience; I saw my first Mississippi Kite and Snail Kite! If you've never been to this remarkable facility, I encourage you to make the trip.

The first day of the conference, I participated in a mentoring program with the Conservation Leadership Initiative. I was teamed up with a law student from Stetson and we went on a field trip where we discussed her aspirations to go into environmental law. At lunch, I had the privilege of meeting Senator Bill Nelson after he received the Theodore Roosevelt award for his environmental advocacy.

There were many, MANY good workshops and talks that afternoon. I focused on social media and citizen science, topics I'll be bringing up this year as we look for ways to engage our membership. Here's a link to the program: <http://tinyurl.com/dye68wu>. If you find the topics engaging, consider attending Audubon Assembly 2012 and energizing yourself as an Audubon member.

Operation Migration Update - Good News!

By Kathleen Carr

As of this writing (December 30th) the OM team is in Northern Alabama. Poor flying conditions (for the ultralight aircraft, not the Whooping Cranes) have kept the crew and birds spending a fair amount of time on the ground. But, with luck, they'll be staging a St. Marks flyover in early to mid-January, a good bit later than last year's December 15th flyover.

Remember the "fly-away" crane mentioned in the last issue? This member (#2-11) of the Class of 2011 decided to head out on her own, much to the dismay of the OM crew. Good news! Flying with a group of Sandhill Cranes, she migrated south and ended up in Florida in early December, weeks ahead of her flock-mates. Billy Brooks of the US Fish & Wildlife Service sighted her in Lake County. The OM web site has a photo of her flying over Chatsworth, GA in formation with the Sandhills. Check it out in the November 11, 2011 entry of the Field Journal.

The OM team needs your financial support. You can help by sponsoring a mile, or a portion of a mile, or through the Give a WHOOP! campaign, where you can donate in \$10 increments. For information and to donate, please visit: <http://www.operationmigration.org>



Least Tern Nest Site Project on Piney Z Lake By Mark and Selena Kiser

Would you like to help Least Terns? A project is underway to create a new and improved nesting area for these diminutive shorebirds at Lafayette Heritage Trail Park in Tallahassee. Volunteers are needed in February for one or more workdays.

For many years, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) biologist Michael Hill has led a volunteer effort to attract Least Terns to a spoil island in Piney Z Lake. Previously, as part of an Eagle Scout service project, a small area on one end of the tree-covered island was cleared and a nesting zone was established. Least Terns do not build a nest, but they do create a small depression or “scrape” where the adult females lay their eggs.



Photo by David Moynahan/FWC.

Despite several rounds of improvements and additional tactics (including the use of wooden decoys and recordings) over the years, no terns have ever nested at the artificial nesting site. Michael, Liz Sparks (also with FWC), Chuck Goodheart (City of Tallahassee), the authors and others within the volunteer brain trust deduced that the nesting area needed to be larger, and in 2011 a scheme was hatched to roll out the red carpet for the terns by making the entire island a nesting site.

In early December 2011, the City of Tallahassee made a tremendous contribution to the project by providing an all-terrain, amphibious excavator and labor to clear the 1/2-acre island of trees and other vegetation. The next step will be to transport a mixture of sand, gravel, and shell to the island to provide a suitable nesting substrate.

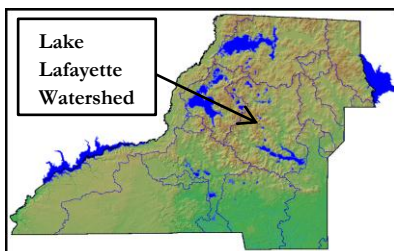
The final step is where additional help is needed. A workday is planned for February 11 (the 25th is a back-up date, if needed) to remove any remaining vegetation (if necessary) and to spread the sand and other materials across the surface. Boats will be provided for transport to the island, which is a short distance from the improved boat launch. However, if you have your own kayak or canoe, please feel free to bring it.

Come on out to Apalachee Audubon’s meeting on January 26th (*page 1*) where Michael will give a short presentation about the project before our program by Jim Stevenson. If all goes well, the island will be ready for nesting by the time the Least Terns return in spring! One dozen or more terns were observed hanging out at the lake last spring; 2012 could be the year! We hope to see you at the workday.



Boat Trail, Lower Lake Lafayette

Below: *Watershed Maps* by Greg Mauldin, Tallahassee-Leon County GIS



Piney Z Lake, in the Middle

Surface Area: 193 acres, Drainage Basin: 1000 acres

By Seán E. McGlynn, Ph.D.

The surf of the Gulf of Mexico once broke at the Cody Scarp where Lake Lafayette is located today. This lake was actually a complex Pleistocene river delta. Water levels receded in the last Ice Age and the coast moved farther south of the site which became a river valley and eventual a tributary of the St. Marks River. Dissolution processes culminated in the formation of a large basin, 8,925 acres, which drains into a major sinkhole seven miles west of the St. Marks River.

Lake Lafayette is a prime Native American site. Native Americans lived and ate from the lake’s bounty in numerous settlements along the lakeshore including the Swift Creek Village and the Hernando de Soto Camp where the first European Christmas in the New World is thought to have been celebrated. The lake is surrounded by more than 40 Native American Burial Mounds and one is displayed in a panorama at the Florida Museum of Natural History in Tallahassee.

The Lafayette Basin was originally a temporary or ephemeral lake, similar to Lakes Jackson, Miccosukee, and Iamonia. There was frequent water interchange between Lake Lafayette and the St. Marks River through a series of connecting sloughs (Chaires Crossroads). During dry periods, Lake Lafayette drained into the aquifer. With ample rainfall, Lake Lafayette refilled. The early settlers called Lake Lafayette ‘Prairie Lake’. This descriptive name tells a lot about how Lake Lafayette originally looked. In 1825 the Marquis de Lafayette was given land for service in the American Revolution near his friend, Richard Keith Call’s plantation in Tallahassee; this became known as the Lafayette Land Grant, and ‘Prairie Lake’ became known as Lake Lafayette.

In 1948, the owners of Piney Z Plantation modified the central portion of Lake Lafayette into a Plantation Pond (probably to improve hunting). The central portion of Lake Lafayette was separated from the northern and southern reaches by earthen dams. The westernmost dike extended from a large Native American midden mound already existing within the lake. This created Piney Z Lake in the center of Lake Lafayette, altering the natural flow of water. *Cont. on page 2*

Announcing the 5th Annual Apalachee Audubon

Wildlife-Friendly Yards Tour

Saturday, February 18th - 10 to 4 pm

By Pam Flynn

It's that time of year again for the 5th Annual Wildlife-Friendly Yards Tour sponsored by Apalachee Audubon and it is an important fundraiser for our chapter. If you haven't done this tour before, those who have will tell you it's one of the best \$10 you can spend for an activity here in Tallahassee. This year we have chosen seven hosts for their environmentally friendly yards and for the great ideas they have come up with to attract local and migrant birds and wildlife. With this tour happening in the middle of winter, it is not your typical spring time garden tour. It's a chance to see the 'bones' of the yard and catch a glimpse of some fabulous winter birds. Winter is planting time so you can take notes then go home and start that yard project you've always wanted to do and then welcome the birds of spring to nest in your yard.



A 2011 Wildlife-Friendly Backyard

This year our event takes place on Saturday, February 18th from 10 am – 4 pm. Tickets will be available, starting January 23rd at Native Nurseries (1661 Centerville Rd.) and Wild Birds Unlimited (1505-2 Governor's Square Blvd.) and will be available through the day of the tour. The tour takes place rain or shine. Birds are very active when it's stormy, so don't let that stop you.

Once you purchase your ticket, you will be given all the information you need for the tour. The final slate of hosts includes Tammy Brown, Kelly and Laurie Dozier, Joan Morris, Barbara and Frank Leonard, Warren and Rita May, Amy and Alain Rodgers, and Elsie Burton. It's shaping up to be another spectacular year not to be missed!

Spread the word and bring your friends. Help us make this tour the most successful yet. We thank the hosts, both past and present, who have volunteered their yards and time, and the long list of volunteers who have helped make this event so special. A special thanks to Ann Bruce and Elizabeth Platt for organizing volunteers for the tour and making it all run smoothly.

And speaking of volunteering - If you would be interested in helping out this year as a greeter at one of the homes for a 2, 4 or 6 hour shift, please contact Ann Bruce. Email: annbruce7@gmail.com, Phone: Home—(850) 224-4760 or Cell—(850) 766-3061. No experience is required and you don't have to be an expert birder. This is just to give the hosts a hand during the tour. After your shift, you can do the tour for free. For additional information about the event, go to www.apalachee.org or contact Pam Flynn at tallypfly57@yahoo.com or (850)322-6287.

The Great Backyard Bird Count

By Fran Rutkovsky

The 15th annual Great Backyard Bird Count is coming up February 17th – 20th, 2012. This event provides a "winter snapshot" of birds across the United States and Canada. Observe and count the birds you see at a given location and enter the results at www.birdcount.org. At this website you can watch the tallies grow all weekend, with thousands of observations reported.

The counts can be conducted anywhere, though a separate checklist must be made for each location. During the weekend, the online data is updated many times a day, and you can keep up with what birds are being reported and where (click on "Explore Data"). Check out the Top Ten lists to see what's happening in our location or any other area. **In 2010 Florida was in the top ten in six categories!** Within the state, Tallahassee was #1 in both Number of Species (139) and Number of Checklists (484). Nationally, Tallahassee ranked #3 for Most Checklists and #4 for Most Species.

Another part of the event is the GBBC Photo Contest. Check out the Photo Gallery on the web site for past photos and winners. The GBBC is a joint project of the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology with Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada. It also receives support from Wild Birds Unlimited. For more information: <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>



Photo by Glenda Simmons

Please Join Us!

Great Backyard Bird Count Event

Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park

Sunday, February 19, 2012

8 am - 2 pm

Come count birds with Apalachee Audubon at Maclay Gardens in Tallahassee. We will split into four groups and count as many birds as is humanly possible in 4 hours!

After the counting fun ends we will flock to the picnic pavilion for a potluck luncheon. *Volunteers are needed to show off their culinary skills!*

All ages and skill levels are welcome to participate. We will have loaner optics available.

Please contact Field Trip coordinator Andy Wraithmell at (850) 459-4306 if you want to contribute food to the potluck luncheon or if you want further information.



Photo by Nick Baldwin

Mr. Lucky – A Happy New Year!

By Nick Baldwin

Most people would regard what you do on December 31st as the last of the old year; you have a good time and then forget about it. I took a somewhat different approach and was fondly thinking back a bit, as well as of the future, when I released Mr. Lucky down by the new headquarters of ANERR (Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve) that sunny, windy New Year's Eve day.

You see Mr. Lucky was a survivor and I have a soft spot for survivors since I too am one. I survived prostate cancer in '09 while Mr. Lucky survived being found in the middle of a very busy Hwy. 98 in downtown Eastpoint at 6 pm on Wednesday, the 8th of December.

It was a simple task really; first avoid traffic, which was greatly facilitated by the kind lady who had already stopped one lane. Then just gently wrap my soft LL Bean vest around him; next find a box-using only one hand- in the dumpster behind the nearby minute market; get someone to reassemble the flattened box into a usable one; transfer bird and vest to box, within the safety of said minute market, under the watchful eyes of clerk and customers; extract vest and borrow some tape from a sympathetic Wakulla deputy, who was watching my car back on the side of 98, and thus secure the box.

Besides I recently had some experience in the matter; only 1/2 hour earlier and maybe 20 miles further west, on 30a, I had rescued my first Barred Owl under similar circumstances! He had been in the road and hopped to the verge dragging his injured wing along. I snapped a photo; then, using vest and my hat, rescued him from the edge of the woods. Then I had a predicament. How do I transport an injured Barred Owl back home to Tallahassee and then to St. Francis? My car, as usual, was full of photo gear and my overnight stuff from a 2 day sojourn at the St. Joseph Bay State Buffer Preserve, but nothing really suitable for owl containment. I managed to secure a Publix grocery bag by simply dumping its contents on the front floorboards. This worked until I got to Apalachicola and the grocery store. Here I begged a banana box and managed my first bird-in-bag to box exercise. Now to somehow find room for this rather cumbersome box. Simple solution; more stuff had to ride on the seats, front and back. That brought me to East Point and Mr. Lucky...I almost did not believe my eyes when I saw owl # 2 in the middle of the street. You now know the first act of the tale.

Safely home I put both boxed birds into a safe room and the next day, after a brief detour to Northwood Animal Hospital to find out where St. Francis Wildlife Association was, I journeyed into the lovely Gadsden County countryside and sought safe haven for my avian wards.

On New Year's Eve morning I again made the meandering trip to St. Francis to find a very active owl, just begging to be turned loose. I took some photos and christened him "Mr. Lucky." I can't say enough about the dedication and hard work of everyone at St. Francis, particularly Ms. Teresa Stevenson the Wildlife Rehabilitator who helped save Mr. Lucky and thus give real purpose to my trip that day.

A Native American legend has it that an Owl possesses love medicine and a magic love flute, while another says that owls bring luck to those who can look them in the eye and survive the stare. I guess I will go with the "lucky" legend.



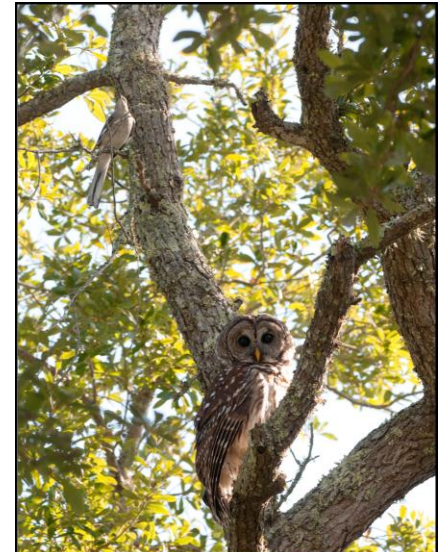
**THANK YOU for
helping injured eagles
by saving your
used postage stamps!**

Yes, it's true! All you have to do is cut postage stamps from your mail, leaving at least 1/4 inch of paper all around the stamp. (Or just bring the envelope and I will trim them.) Any postage stamp is useful—big, small, U.S., or foreign! The Audubon Center for Injured Birds of Prey in Maitland, FL collects used postage stamps and sells them to wholesalers for sale to collectors all over the world. *There will be a box to collect them at Audubon meetings.* If you have questions or want to arrange for a pickup, please call Eileen Boutelle at (850) 656-3346. We appreciate your help.

As I released Mr. Lucky, I was feeling fortunate, yet somehow humbled, that I had the privilege to be able to participate in this and just maybe shape a tiny piece of the future. I know I had been truly mesmerized by those wondrous orbs. Perhaps Mr. Lucky's gaze, was magic after all, and he was reminding me that my survival had a purpose beyond just me; that I was granted an opportunity to be more helpful to others in my future and he was just the first step, a lucky omen indeed!

Photo by Nick Baldwin.

<http://nickbaldwinphotography.com/>





Field Trip Information January & February 2012

Pre-registration **REQUIRED** for
ALL AAS field trips.

To register, find out more information, and/or to join our field trip email group, please email our Field Trip Coordinator at apalachee_audubon_tours@hotmail.com

Field Trips in January and February

- January 7th Fort Walton Beach with Alan Knothe
January 14th St Marks NWR with Don Morrow
February 12th Learn to Digiscope with Tara Tanaka and Andy Wraithmell
February 19th GBBC event at Maclay Gardens
Registration for field trips is required, except GBBC event.

Monthly Socials

- January 21st Lake Elberta
Lake Bradford Rd, Tallahassee
February 25th J R Alford Greenway, Tallahassee
Registration is not required for the monthly socials.

Invite your Facebook friends and family to become an Apalachee Audubon Society Facebook fan or just simply become a fan of our Facebook page if you already aren't. Here is the link:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Apalachee-Audubon-Society/159503480763379>

Drawing of Tricolored Heron courtesy of artist Daniel S. Kilby

Big Birding Festival On the Southwest Shores of Lake Okeechobee

Where: Registration Roost: Port LaBelle Inn, 1563 Oxbow Drive, LaBelle, FL 33935

When: Wed., March 28, 2012 – Sat., March 31, 2012

For more information, see www.BigOBirdingFestival.com, call (863) 675-5264, or email: bigobirding2012@gmail.com

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Habitat Hints for Migrating Birds

By Kay Charter



It is a sad truth that too many conservationists, even those engaged in teaching about habitat, have no idea that native plants are an important key to help stem the decline of our declining bird populations. A perfect example of this disconnect occurred several years ago, while I was attending an International Wildlife Conference in Columbus. I was engaged in a conversation with the educational director of a state Audubon Society and mentioned the fact that only native plants host the insects that support our migratory birds. The educational director, a biologist, challenged my statement. He asked if we really know that is true.

We do. Those who question that assertion will gain a lot by reading Doug Tallamy's fine book, *Bringing Nature Home*, wherein Tallamy documents the importance of native plants, and the insect abundance hosted by those plants, to a healthy bird population.

If you want to be a part of the solution in turning around declining numbers for our wonderful migrating birds, create a rich haven in your yard by picking up a flat of wildflowers, or half a dozen berry-bearing shrubs that are native to your region. Add some native trees. Plant them on your property. Next year do the same thing. Packing your yard with native plants will create habitat by hosting life-giving insects. Then watch for Red-eyed Vireos or Gray Catbirds to come and nest there...even if you live in an urban area. Keep an eye out in spring for spectacular songbirds returning from the Tropics, which will land in the oasis you have offered for rest and refueling.

There are other things we also can do: Keep our cats indoors, which is not only better for birds, it's also better for kitty. Estimates of birds taken by free roaming pet and feral cats range up to a billion individuals a year. Protect birds from plate glass windows. Dr. Daniel Klem, the leading expert on bird window kills says that up to a billion birds a year die in collisions with plate glass windows. Avoid using pesticides, which kill the insects birds need, and can kill the birds outright. Drink bird friendly coffee, which will protect wintering habitat.

Imagine what our bird populations would look like if everyone took the above actions. So join us. Plant natives in your yard, act on the other issues, and then revel in the results.

Guest columnist Kay Charter is Executive Director of *Saving Birds Thru Habitat* (<http://savingbirds.org/>), an organization dedicated to educating people about the decline of our migrating bird populations and how to improve those numbers. She is also co-owner of *Charter Sanctuary*, a private effort on behalf of migrating and nesting songbirds.



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Your membership expiration date is shown above your name at top right. For information about your membership call the National Audubon Society at 1-800-274-4201 or go to the 'Member Center' at <http://www.audubon.org/>. For questions about mailings, contact Pam Flynn at pflynn@us.ibm.com.

See this newsletter IN COLOR plus much more at Apalachee Audubon's website: <http://apalachee.org/>

For timely updates about fieldtrips and other events, please subscribe to the AAS notification email list via our website: www.apalachee.org/List_Serving.html or here: www.groups.google.com/group/apalachee-audubon

Calendar ~ Save the Dates!

Speaker Series

Social from 7 pm & meeting at 7:30 pm

“Saving Wakulla Spring” with Jim Stevenson

Thursday, January 26, 2012

“Chapter Opportunities in Important Bird Areas”

with Marianne Korosy

Thursday, February 23, 2012

Least Tern Nest Site Workday at Piney Z Lake

Saturday, February 11, 2012 *(Please see page 4 for more details.)*

Wildlife-Friendly Yards Tour

Saturday, February 18th – 10 am to 4 pm

Great Backyard Bird Count Event

Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park

Sunday, February 19th – 8 am until 2 pm

Please see page 7 for Field Trip & Social Information

You can join National Audubon Society and Apalachee Audubon for just \$20 a year!

Membership includes *Audubon*, our bimonthly flagship publication. Each issue of this award-winning publication features beautiful photography and engaging journalism. Our Apalachee Audubon chapter newsletter will keep you informed of local and statewide Audubon and other nature-related events and will share birding and conservation information and news.

You can pay for membership using a credit card by calling Audubon's toll free membership number, 1-800-274-4201. *(Please mention our chapter ID, E19, for AAS to get full credit for a new membership).*

If you prefer to pay by check for an annual membership, send your \$20 check made payable to National Audubon Society *(please add Apalachee Audubon's chapter ID, E19)* and mail to:

National Audubon Society

PO Box 422246

Palm Coast, FL 32142-2246

Allow 4-6 weeks for the arrival of your first issue of *Audubon*. The cost of membership is tax deductible except for \$7.50 (which is allocated to *Audubon* magazine).