

APALACHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY

Apalachee Audubon Society Mission Statement:

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



NEWSLETTER OF THE APALACHEE AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

MAY-JUNE 2012

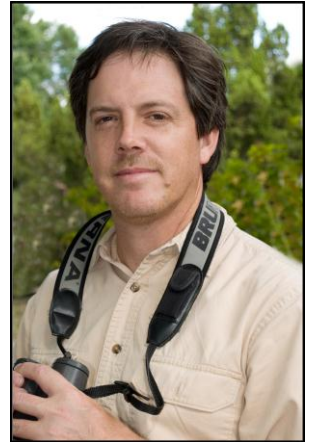
Apalachee Audubon Annual Awards Banquet Guest Speaker: Reinier Munguia - "Back to Nature"

Thursday, May 17th

Banquet begins at 6:30 pm

Lafayette Presbyterian Church
4220 Mahan Drive, Tallahassee

Dinner will be provided by our chapter chef, Tim Smith. Tickets are \$10 per person and may be purchased in advance at Wild Birds Unlimited and Native Nurseries. If you wish to buy your ticket at the dinner, please call Tim at (850) 933-5979 and make a reservation. If you need directions or have other questions, call Kathleen Carr at (850) 322-7910.



Reinier Munguia

Reinier Munguia's interest in photography started as age 16 when he received his first camera, a Maxxum 7000, as a gift from his Dad. Since then nature has been his favorite subject. His photography has been recognized for its exceptional quality and, while most people know him for his nature photos, Reinier is also an accomplished commercial photographer and graphic designer working for a number of major companies.

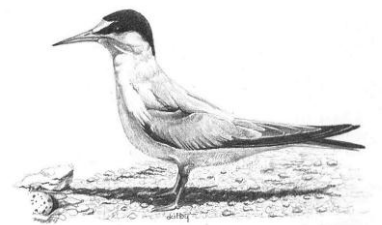
Educating people about nature is one of his most important goals. Reinier has led photography and birding trips throughout the United States, as well as other countries including Costa Rica, Ecuador and Puerto Rico. He reaches thousands of people every year through his presentations in schools and nature events. Reinier has recently expanded into filmmaking which allows him to share his conservation message by engaging the audience with action-packed nature footage.

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During the past year, Reinier has served as President of the Lake Region Audubon Society. He also serves as Advisory Board Member of the Florida Wildlife Rehabilitation Association and provides wildlife rescue services in Central Florida. To learn more about his photography and conservation efforts please visit www.wildstockphotos.com and www.lakeregionaudubon.org.

Least Tern Nest Site Project in Tallahassee By Mark and Selena Kiser

The Least Tern is the smallest member of the gull and tern family in North America. It breeds in the U.S., Mexico, northern Central America and the Caribbean during the summer, and winters primarily on the northernmost coast of South America. This diminutive species is federally endangered in California and in the interior of the U.S. On the Atlantic Coast, the Least Tern has fared better. Although it is not considered federally endangered in this region, many of the states have listed it.



Least Tern
Courtesy of artist Daniel S. Kilby

In Florida, the Least Tern is a state-threatened species that breeds primarily in coastal areas on sandy beaches. Most Least Terns arrive in March and April and depart by the end of October. Some nest along Florida's inland waterways and occasionally on gravel rooftops in developed areas. Protecting existing nest sites is of vital importance to the conservation of this imperiled species, but creating new nest sites is an idea that may help as well.

Since 2004, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) biologist Michael Hill has orchestrated a volunteer effort to attract Least Terns to a spoil island at Lafayette Heritage Trail Park in Tallahassee.

Continued on page 4

Apalachee Audubon Society, Inc.

2011 – 2012

Officers & Directors

All telephone numbers are in the 850 area code, unless otherwise noted.

President: Kathleen Carr 322-7910

Vice-President: Julie Wraithmell 425-1170

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Apalachee Audubon Society, Inc. (AAS) is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization.

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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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).

2012 Birdathon Help Support Audubon Adventures! By Harvey Goldman

On Sunday April 22nd our intrepid Apalachee Audubon Birdathon team hit the road, searching the skies, waters, bushes and trees for all the bird species that we could identify by sight or sound. This adventure to identify as many different species of birds as we can on our outing is our fundraiser to finance the purchase of AUDUBON ADVENTURES nature education kits for schools in local counties.

AUDUBON ADVENTURES kits are offered to 3rd - 5th grade classrooms. The kits cost us \$47.50 per classroom and last year we provided kits to teachers in Leon, Wakulla, Gadsden, Jefferson, and Franklin counties. The September 2012 edition that we hope to send out to schools the next school year is titled *Sharing Our Earth*.

You can support our nature/conservation education efforts by sending a donation to Apalachee Audubon Society, Inc. or donating a per-bird amount, for every bird species that we identified on our outing. A donation form is available on page 8 for your convenience.

If you go to our website www.apalachee.org home page, you can view a list of the 118 species we spotted. So for example, if you donate ten cents a bird, that amounts to \$11.80, at 15 cents a bird, it's \$17.70, at a quarter it's \$29.50, and at fifty cents a bird it's \$59 for the species we spotted while going to several locations including St. Mark's National Wildlife Refuge and the State Park at St. George Island.

Thank you for your support of environmental education!



2012-2013 AAS Officer Nominations

This year's nominating committee is pleased to present the following proposed slate for election:

President: Kathleen Carr
Vice-President: Seán McGlynn
Secretary: Jan Bordelon
Treasurer: Harvey Goldman

Board Members:
Past President: Julie Wraithmell

Nick Baldwin

Laurie Jones

Jim Cox

Mark Kiser

Ben Fusaro



**Kathleen Carr with “Paige”
at the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey**
Photo by Mac Stone

President’s Message Put a Spring in your Step – Go Birding!

By no one’s estimation am I an expert birder. I’m mostly a backyard and neighborhood birdwatcher, enjoying my few spare moments being amazed at what shows up at the feeders and around the ‘hood. Occasionally my husband Jim and I take trips to Wakulla Springs and St. Marks NWR to explore a more natural venue, but busy lives keep us from doing that as often as we’d like.

Thanks to my activities and association with this chapter, this year I’ve been learning that there is some pretty incredible birding to be had throughout our urban/residential areas right here in Tallahassee. Here are a few examples.

Lucky at Lake Elberta: Just south of Doak Campbell Stadium, where we plan to launch a series of Community Birding events next fall with **Andy Wraithmell** of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, you can see an amazing diversity of birds during the winter. At Lake Elberta, you can see a variety of wintering ducks, egrets, herons, and other waterfowl, as well as Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Tree Swallows, Loggerhead Shrikes, and endangered Wood Storks. One Saturday, we even spotted a Sandhill Crane cruising overhead. I spent a number of Saturday mornings over there this past winter and was amazed. This is going to provide a wonderful educational opportunity when the FWC and AAS launch this program next fall and I hope you will consider volunteering an hour or two a month to help out.

On Waverly Pond: In the Waverly neighborhood a male Common Loon—in full breeding plumage—was spotted on March 30th in Waverly Pond and reported by AAS member **Pam Flynn**. And he was there the next day, and the day after that, and the day after that. At one point, observers began to think that he might be having problems escaping the small pond and began to hatch a rescue plan to capture and, pending a vet check for injuries, relocate the bird to a larger lake where he would have more room to achieve liftoff. Whatever the reason for his being stranded at this small pond, he did finally make it out on April 6, sometime between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m., according to Pam. You can see a short online video of the bird at: <http://youtu.be/Ri4CcH4TiDY>

Whooping Cranes Where?: This winter’s worst or best kept secret, depending on your point of view, was that two Whooping Cranes—a male and female—from the Operation Migration Class of 2009 decided to spend the season on private property in Leon County. Although they may have spent time foraging at St. Marks on occasion, every evening they roosted in one of two ponds on the Leon County property. The location was not broadcast widely in the interest of keeping the birds safe from harm and over-exposure to humans, and out of consideration to the people living nearby. Many evenings, small flocks of birders lined a nearby road with binoculars, spotting scopes, and cameras—including yours truly, recording video. One short video montage, including a dance scene, is available on YouTube at: <http://youtu.be/45dSQuPEUxc>. We’ll track down some other photos online and post links to those on our web site.

Last but not Least (Tern): As you can see in this issue, the Least Tern nesting project on Lake Piney Z has been completed and, as of this writing, is awaiting the arrival of the terns. That promises to be a potentially great in-town birding experience at Lake Lafayette Heritage Park this summer. Swing by the park when you get a chance and if you’re interested in volunteering to observe the terns, please contact FWC’s Liz Sparks: Liz.Sparks@myfwc.com.

We’ll post updates to our Facebook page and Twitter account about the terns and anything else of interest, so check them out for updates. There are now links to both sites on our web site homepage, and even if you’re not a member of Facebook, you can still view our Audubon page. And if you know about some great in-town birding opportunities, whether it’s in Tallahassee or another town in the area, and would like to share them with our chapter members, please let us know via social networking or email me at kathleencarr@nettally.com.

We Need Your \$\$\$ Help

I would like to congratulate our Birdathon team on their amazing birding expedition—118 bird species in one day! The goal of Birdathon is to raise funds that will purchase AUDUBON ADVENTURE classroom kits for local schools. I’m donating \$1 per species, but any donation is welcome, a flat amount or per species donation. Please support the team's efforts. If you prefer to donate online, we expect to be set up to accept donations through PayPal by mid-May. Look for the 'Donate' button on our home page. - Kathleen

The story actually began one year earlier, however. As part of an Eagle Scout service project, a 12 x 20-foot area on one end of the tree-covered, half-acre island in Piney Z Lake was cleared, and a nesting pad with gravel, sand and shell was constructed. Least Terns do not actually build a nest per se, but they do create a small depression or “scrape” in which the adult females lay their clutch of two to three eggs. Despite improvements and additional tactics (including wooden decoys and recordings) over the years, no terns had ever nested on the island. So in 2011, Michael Hill (FWC), Liz Sparks (FWC), Chuck Goodheart (City of Tallahassee), the authors and other volunteers began working on a scheme to enlarge the nesting area to better impress the terns.

The project would not have been possible without support from the City of Tallahassee’s Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Affairs (PRNA) and the FWC’s Division of Habitat and Species Conservation. In December 2011, the city cleared the island of trees and other vegetation with an all-terrain, amphibious excavator. Nancy Douglass, a shorebird biologist with the FWC, provided crucial funding and additional guidance for the project. While the original goal was to turn the entire island into a nesting site, this proved to be too daunting a task given the resources available and the logistics involved. An approximately 8,000 square foot-area was eventually selected and marked off. The greatest challenge, though, would be transporting three truckloads (52 cubic yards) of sand to the island to provide a suitable nesting substrate.

The solution required volunteers, dozens of them, armed with wheelbarrows, shovels and rakes. Volunteers came from the FWC, the Apalachee Audubon Society, Lincoln High School’s ROTC program, Florida State University and the USDA; numerous other dedicated individuals participated as well. Four workdays were held in February and March. Temporary docks made from timbers and plywood constructed at the park’s canoe launch and the island permitted wheelbarrows to be loaded and offloaded. A barge provided by the FWC carried materials, workers and up to eight wheelbarrows per trip to the island. Robbie Poe and Chuck Goodheart from the city’s PRNA filled the wheelbarrows with a front-end loader, while island crews shoveled and raked the sand to a depth of two to four inches across the area, one section at a time.

The volunteers also removed additional vegetation, laid down weed-block fabric and positioned silt fence and hay bales around the perimeter of the nesting area. Michael and Liz spent considerable time between workdays performing these and other assorted tasks, and the authors also helped treat fire ant colonies on the island, which pose a threat to tern chicks. Although the island is less than 100 yards from the canoe launch, the barge racked up more than four miles of travel each day! No one counted the number of wheelbarrow trips required to move all that sand, but there were lots of sore muscles at the end of each day.

After the last workday, some additional work remained. Michael and others gathered seashells and spread them across the surface to provide a more “authentic” appearance. The city provided some additional hay bales to ring the perimeter of the nesting area and encroaching vegetation was treated. Signs cautioning paddlers to stay back from the island during nesting season are being installed.

As of early April, Least Terns have not yet been spotted on Piney Z Lake, although they have been seen further south along the coast. At least one dozen Least Terns were observed at Piney Z Lake in years past, and we are hopeful that Tallahassee’s newest “beach” will convince the terns to stay!



*Aerial photos of the Least Tern project site by Michael Hill/FWC
Photo of work site below by Mark Kiser/FWC*



2011-2012 Winter Hummingbird Banding Season

By Fred Dietrich

Time for my final update of the 2011-2012 winter hummingbird banding season and what a season it was. I banded 65 birds of 7 different species this season and had 13 birds that returned for their 2nd through 8th winter. Totals were: 32 Rufous, 18 Ruby-throated, 8 Black-chinned, 3 Calliope, 2 Allen's, 1 Broad-billed and 1 Buff-bellied. It was interesting that 84% of the male birds were young birds and 44% of the females were young. Of the 118 male Rufous that Fred Bassett and I banded, only one was an adult bird. Six of the 13 previously banded birds were back for their 3rd or more winter, including the oldest recorded male Ruby-throated in Lakeland, back for his 8th winter.



Young male Calliope starting to get his long gorget feather.

Other highlights of the year include a bird banded at John Armstrong's house in Indianhead Acres being recaptured 2 months later in Baton Rouge, LA; a bird I recaptured in San Luis Ridge that had been banded 3 weeks earlier in Metairie, LA; the first bird of the season, a male Broad-billed hummingbird I banded in Eastpoint, FL was just the 4th one ever sighted in the state; 5 species of hummers were banded at Cheryl Griffin's home near Carrabelle, FL in a 10 day span.

The 408 birds banded in south Alabama and Florida by Fred Bassett and me this season was the highest number ever. In the next highest year of 2002-2003 the total was 253 birds and for the past 8 years the average number has been around 170 birds. It's too early to tell why there was such a jump or what will happen next year, but there should be a bumper crop of return birds next year and for years to come as this large crop of birds return on their migrations in the coming years. Several of the 2002-03 class made it back for 9 years so get ready, we could be making history with our return data.

I spent the last week of February and first three weeks of March chasing birds that proved to be very elusive but there were some very worthwhile results. On February 15th I went to Tommy Warren's home where I banded a second year male Rufous. It had been ten years since he had had a hummer banded in his yard and it was great to go back and band a bird there. This was the third Rufous I banded this season in his neighborhood. There are a lot of great yards in the neighborhood so it is no wonder they have lots of winter birds.

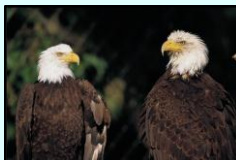
The next week I went back up to Jim Yarbrough's home in Ashburn, Georgia where he had several more winter hummers. I banded a female Rufous there, the 3rd bird I banded there in addition to two that Fred Bassett had banded previously. Jim has lots of hummer plants in his yard and they really bring in the birds. Back in Tallahassee, I banded a young female Ruby-throated at Joan Morris's home in Betton Hills. Joan's yard was on the Audubon's Tour of Wildlife Friendly Yards this year and she has done a complete remake of her yard to make it even more nature friendly. It looks like it is already paying off, for her and the birds.

On February 28th I went up to Valdosta where I banded a female Rufous at Brad Bergstrom's house. This was my 3rd trip there and the first time that I had seen a bird so I was very happy to have a chance to band his bird. The next day, back in Tallahassee I banded a female Ruby-throated at Rick Wolfarth's home out off of Buck Lake Road.

Continued on page 6

Please Help 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. THANK YOU for helping injured eagles!



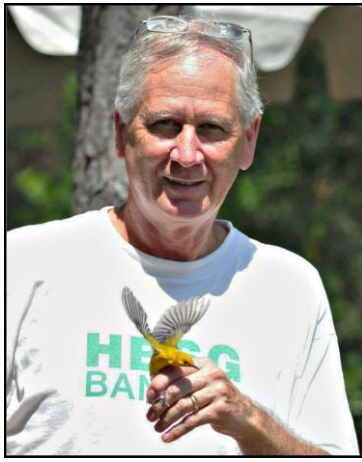
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Fred Dietrich & Friend

Continued from page 5 - 2011-2012 Winter Hummingbird Banding Season by Fred Dietrich

On the way back into town I decided to drop by Amy Rodger's home on Britt Street to see if her hummingbird was still around. Amy's yard was also on the Audubon Yard tour and her hummingbird was very cooperative, perching in a front yard tree and visiting her feeder regularly. As I drove up to her house, I noticed a hummer sitting on a feeder two doors up the street from her. I went ahead and set up my trap while we tried to contact her neighbor to see if they would take down their feeder while I tried to catch Amy's bird. Before we could contact them, Amy's bird came up and went in the trap. At first glance it looked to be a young Ruby-throated, but when I got a good look at the gorget feathers, I knew that her bird was actually a young male Calliope. Great bird, and all those people that visited Amy's yard during Apalachee Audubon's Wildlife-Friendly Backyards Tour had actually been watching a Calliope while they were there. I caught three Calliopes in town this year, the first ones in three years, so it is really special to have one in your yard.

To end the day, and as it turned out, the season, I went to the great yard of Jody Elliott and Claudia Mason in Killearn, where they had been seeing several birds. After watching several birds come to the trap, only to be run off by another bird time after time, I finally was able to catch and band a young male Rufous. This was the 8th bird I banded in their yard this year, in addition to a 2nd year return female Ruby-throated I banded there in December 2010.

The returning Ruby-throats have almost all gone through our area now, moving north about a month ahead of their normal schedule. Most people are only seeing a few visitors at their feeders, and those are almost all males. For the next two months the females will be busy raising their young by feeding them a rich mixture of bugs and nectar. By July 4th, the young and first of the southbound migrants will begin making their way through the area, peaking in August and September. The young birds will have white tipped tail feathers, just like the adult females and by September the males will begin to sport a few new ruby colored feathers on their throats. By mid-October these migrants will have all left for the tropics to spend the winter and prepare for another year in the life of a hummingbird.

All of the latest news and Hummer Updates can be found at the Hummingbird Research Inc., www.hummingbirdresearch.net. You can track the migration progress of the Ruby-throats at: <http://www.hummingbirds.net/map.html>. Also be sure to visit the Hummer/Bird Study Group site: www.hummingbirdsplus.org.

I thank all of you who let me band birds in their yards this season and I am looking forward to hearing from you that your bird has returned next fall. It just keeps getting more and more interesting.

Fred Dietrich/fdietrich@gmail.com/850 591-7430

Wood Stork Watch at Birdsong Nature Center

Saturdays, May 19 & June 9 at 9:30 am

Birdsong Nature Center Executive Director Kathleen Brady will escort you to the Listening Place where you can observe the activities of four pairs of Wood Storks nesting in the Big Bay Swamp at Birdsong Nature Center. The Wood Stork is an endangered species and records dating from 1939 indicate Wood Storks have not been seen nesting at Birdsong for a long, long time.

We are not sure if there will be young in the nests by the May observation day, but these birds are fascinating to watch regardless and there is also lots of other nesting



Photo by Brigette Haram

activity going on: Great Egrets, Great Blue Herons, and Anhingas are all nesting in the same area and many already have fledglings.

Bring binoculars, spotting scopes, insect repellent, a lawn chair, and cameras with a telephoto lens, if possible. Stay as long as you like.

Free to members of Birdsong Nature Center, \$5 for non-members, half-price for children ages 4-12. See www.birdsongnaturecenter.org for more information about Birdsong Nature Center and other great programs. Please register by emailing birdsong@birdsongnaturecenter.org or by calling 1 (800) 953-BIRD.



Plants for Native Pollinating Bees

By Donna Legare

You may have read that honeybees are decreasing in number and that farmers and gardeners are worried about decreasing yields in fruits and vegetables. We are dependent on European honeybees as well as native bees and other insect pollinators for their pollination services. They move pollen between flowers causing the production of seeds and fruits.

Did you know that there is something that you can do to increase the population of native bees in our community? All you need to do, whether in city, suburb or rural area, is to plant patches of flowers that are attractive to native bees. For yards that are large enough, plant native trees and shrubs that attract bees.

In my own yard, I know that cabbage palm, blueberry bushes and our Chickasaw plum tree attract lots of pollinators. I have also watched large numbers of bees work the flowers of holly, saw palmetto and little silverbell. In the butterfly and herb garden, the bee magnets are African blue basil, garlic chives, 'Blue Fortune' hyssop, native penstemon, purple coneflower, native sunflower and Mexican sunflower. Bumblebees seem to love blue rosemary flowers.

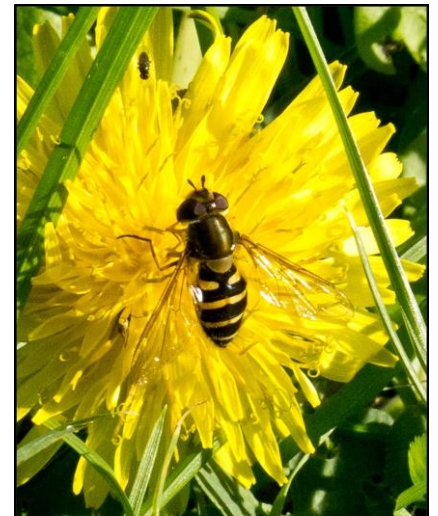
It is also important to support the work of conservation organizations such as Birdsong Nature Center, St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge and state parks where large acreages of wildflowers are managed for the benefit of native bees and other wildlife. We can also get involved in the management of neighborhood parks and other in-town locations to encourage bee-friendly plants.

The Xerces Society, a non-profit association that promotes invertebrate ecology, makes five recommendations for choosing flowers to encourage native bees:

- use local native plants, though heirloom garden varieties of herbs and perennials also provide good foraging
- choose several colors of flowers – bees are particularly attracted to blue, purple, violet, white and yellow
- plant flowers in clusters, if possible
- include flowers of different shapes since bees are all different sizes and have different tongue lengths
- include a diversity of plants that flower all season to support a range of bees that fly at different times of the year

For more information on pollinator conservation, go to www.xerces.org and peruse their fact sheets on Plants for Native Bees.

Donna Legare is co-owner of Native Nurseries, www.nativenurseries.com



Photos by Nick Baldwin
www.nickbaldwinphotography.com



Apalachee Audubon's St. Marks NWR Monarch Butterfly-Pollinator Garden

We need your help!
If you would like to help with the
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Monarch Butterfly Pollinator Garden,
please contact Park Ranger David Moody
at 850 925-6121 or
david_moody@fws.gov





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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

Apalachee Audubon Society Birdathon Donation Form



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more information*

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