



EVERGLADE KITE

NEWSLETTER OF THE
AUDUBON SOCIETY OF THE EVERGLADES

Serving Palm Beach County, Florida

Volume 49, Number 3

December 2008

CALENDAR

Tuesday, December 2, 7:30 p.m.

General Meeting and HOLIDAY POT LUCK DINNER. FAU Pine Jog Environmental Education Center, West Palm Beach.

Wednesday, Dec. 10, 7:30 a.m.

Bird walk, Okeethee Park, 7715 Forest Hill Blvd., West Palm Beach. Meet at the Nature Center. Leader: Ethel Kujanpaa.

Saturday, Dec. 13, 2008, 8 a.m.

Bird walk, Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge. Meet at Marsh Trail. \$5 per car for refuge entry. Leader: Andy Furman.

Saturday, Dec. 13, 2008, 8 a.m.

Young Naturalists program at Green Cay Nature Center, Boynton Beach. Reptiles & Amphibians program followed by guided walk. \$3 per person. Call Linda at 561-742-7791 to register.

Saturday, Dec. 20, 8 a.m.

Nature walk: Yamato Scrub, Bocar Raton. Entrance on Clint Moore Road, between Congress Ave. and I-95. Leader: Ben Kolstad.

Saturday, Jan. 3

Christmas Bird Count. Coordinator: Chuck Weber.

Tuesday, December 2, 2008

Annual Holiday Pot Luck Dinner, 6:30 p.m.

Guest Speaker: *Dr. Richard Raid, UF/IFAS*

Barn Owls and Other Birds of the Everglades Agricultural Area

Our speaker for the December meeting is Dr. Richard Raid, of the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. Dr. Raid is currently a Professor of Plant Pathology at the Everglades Research and Education Center in Belle Glade. Since joining the University of Florida faculty in 1986, he has worked on vegetable crops and performed research on diseases of rice and sugarcane.

Since 1994, Dr. Raid has worked with a program utilizing barn owls for sustainable rodent control in the Everglades Agricultural Area of south Florida. Using the program as an outreach and education program, Dr. Raid has enlisted the support of hundreds of student volunteers to enhance barn owl populations in the Glades by building and erecting nesting boxes. Annually, the UF Barn Owl Program donates thousands of owl pellets to schools and nature centers throughout the nation for hands-on lessons in predator/prey relationships.

Dr. Raid has also created a school garden program called Students SOAR, for Sharing Our Agricultural Roots. Designed to promote agricultural awareness, the SOAR program utilizes school gardens to provide hands-on lessons to students of all backgrounds and grade levels. The "hands-on" nature and the use of all five senses make lessons learned in the garden fun, greatly improving their retention. The SOAR program has been instrumental in the establishment of more than 70 school gardens at elementary, middle, and high schools throughout Palm Beach County and 10 additional Florida counties. A number of teachers who have adopted the UF school garden program have gone on to win local, state, and even national awards. In 2001, the Barn Owl Program and Students SOAR were recognized with a Secretary of Agriculture's USDA Honor Award.

December's meeting is also our annual Holiday Pot Luck Dinner.

Please join us at 6:30 p.m. for the Holiday Pot Luck Dinner, which will be followed by this exciting presentation about the barn owls of the EAA.

Last names with letters A–R should provide casseroles, vegetables, fruit or salads. Letters S–Z bring desserts. Food should be delivered by 6:30. Dinner will be served at 6:45, followed by the program at 7:30.

REMINDER

Our meeting location has changed! We now meet at the FAU Pine Jog Environmental Education Center, located on Summit Blvd. just east of Jog Road.

The Everglade Kite

is the newsletter of the Audubon Society of the Everglades, published 11 times a year.

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Audubon Society of the Everglades, incorporated in 1966, serves communities in Palm Beach County. Our purpose is to promote the conservation of wildlife and the natural environment and to advance human understanding of our place in the total ecological system.

Bird of the Month: Barn Owl

December's bird of the month is the subject of our presentation at the general membership meeting. Dr. Richard Raid will tell us all about the Barn Owls of the EAA. Bring your own pictures to display. Continue to help choose a bird of the month by sending me emails at hlinda@aol.com or calling me at 561-742-7791. Any comments are greatly appreciated.

President's Perspective

Linda Humphries

Last week was exciting and interesting for me. Since moving to Florida I have always wanted to learn more about the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA). I spent Thursday in a classroom and Friday out in the EAA fields. I did not realize that crops were rotated after a couple of years with the sugar cane to help keep the nutrients in the soil. Also I learned that the burning of the cane did not affect the stalks below. The top leaves are burned so quickly that the fire is done in about 10 minutes. The machinery used to harvest the sugar cane was huge!

I was surprised to learn that Florida grows rice. We visited a rice processing plant and saw what was involved in processing the rice for market. It was surprising to hear all the extra work involved in planting and storing of the rice so that some of the rice can be called organic. I also was on the world's largest radish farm and saw the way radishes were planted. We also observed many different types and colors of lettuce that was planted in the fields. In the winter they grow sweet corn and other vegetables. These crops were constantly being rotated to enrich the soil and save on fertilizers.

One of the highlights of our tour was a stop at the Research and Education Center where Dr. Richard Raid took us to see the baby Barn Owls that were almost ready for flight.

Thursday at the lecture on cattle, I found out we don't raise them for their beef, but for the sale of their calves. Florida was the first state to raise cattle and have cowboys. Cattle were originally brought over when Ponce De Leon landed.

There was also a lecture on the state of our citrus crops and how hard it is for citrus to survive with all the diseases that are affecting the grapefruit and oranges. Everyone who spoke on the different topics and on the field trips stressed how much they were doing to help clean up the water and how they are trying not to contribute more phosphorous into water.

After the program was over, I realized that the farmers, citrus growers, and cattlemen are aware of the water contamination problems and have been trying to clean up the extra phosphorous they contribute in the water, but that there still is a long way to go to achieve clean water. The results that have been accomplished thus far can be contributed to community complaints and public awareness that has been brought on by you and your conservation efforts. I hope that everyone working together can help restore the water flow and water quality to the Everglades. Thank you for your support and help.

Volunteer Pages

We are looking forward to the Science Fair on Dec.10. We have a great panel of volunteer judges. For more information, email roysue@bellsouth.net or call 561-627-7829.

Field Trip leaders needed. Some of our field trips for this year are in need of leaders. Please contact Ben Kolstad at 561-367-7689 or ben@kolstad.com. Many thanks to Andy Furman for helping out this December!

Everglades Restoration on Hold...Again

Construction of a 1-mile bridge along an eastern portion of Tamiami Trail intersecting Shark River Slough, being built to restore flows into Everglades National Park, cannot begin until further analysis is conducted, a Federal Judge said on Friday. The US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) was sued by the Miccosukee Tribe in June to prevent a groundbreaking on the project that was scheduled for December. The bridge is part of the Modified Water Deliveries to Everglades National Park project (Mod Waters), which was passed by congress in 1989, more than a decade before the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). This 1989 legislation also said that Mod Waters must be completed before other essential projects can begin. The goal is to re-establish historic flows from the Water Conservation Areas north of Tamiami Trail south to Everglades National Park, and to keep flows concentrated in the historic heart of flow: Shark River Slough. The 1-mile bridge is an important first step, opening up flows along Northeast Shark River Slough, the area that has been the most flow-deprived. These changes are urgently needed to prevent the continued deterioration of the Everglades and to provide the ecological benefits necessary for wildlife recovery.

In 2005, due to high cost estimates, Congress rejected a plan to build a 2-mile western bridge in addition to the 1-mile bridge, which is why the Corps moved to this 1-mile alternative in 2008 as a way to jump start moving needed flows under Tamiami Trail. Judge Ursula Ungaro ruled that because the Corps did not evaluate enough of the differences between the 2005 and 2008 plans, a more in-depth analysis of the new plan must be conducted before any further steps are taken toward building the bridge. Some specific areas to be re-evaluated include any changes in the environment near the project during the time of construction, and flooding impacts to Miami-Dade County and lands owned by the Miccosukee Tribe.

We are at a crossroads when for the first time in twenty years, the political will has converged with Corps planning, identified funding, and potential benefits, yet because of this decision, the project will be further delayed. Audubon has been working arduously to ensure that this project moves forward and will continue to use our strength in political and legal advocacy to see that Mod Waters comes to a successful conclusion and provides the foundation for CERP.

Trip Report: Everglades National Park

Linda Humphries

Eleven people from Palm Beach County joined our November 8th walk at Everglades National Park. We met Tropical Audubon Society at the Coe Center at 7:30 am. John Boyd from Tropical Audubon was the leader. We began by leaving the Park and going to Lucky Hammock. There were many birds in the field and Hammock area. We even found a grasshopper sparrow. I was lucky enough to see a Swainson's Hawk—it was hopping on the ground. It was a life bird for me. We also saw a Crested Caracara on the ground, which was unusual for that area. The Sandhill Cranes were a delight as more cranes kept flying in to join the group. There were the usual birds at the Anhinga Trail and a Short-tailed Hawk flying overhead in a kettle of Turkey Vultures. The water level was high and I didn't see the usual amount of alligators that hang around the boardwalk. A kingfisher and several black vultures were hanging out at Mahogany Hammock. Paurotis Pond had only one Roseate Spoonbill roosting on the banks, because the night time roosting had not begun. One of the best sightings was at Mrazek Pond where we were lucky enough to see several ducks, including Northern Pintail, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, American Wigeon and the usual wading birds. The trip ended in the Flamingo area by the shoreline where there was a variety of shorebirds and, to my delight, a Great White Heron flew in as my final bird of the day. The trip produced over 80 different species of birds. We will be having another trip to the Everglades in January and March. Make sure you come out and join the fun.

Young Naturalist Program

Linda Humphries

The YN program on raptors was held at Okeeheelee Nature Center, November 15, 2008 1:00 p.m. The program was great; the children were excited seeing the owls and hawks up close. The next program is going to be on December 13, 2 p.m. at Green Cay Nature Center. It is going to be on Reptiles and Amphibians, followed by a guided tour on the boardwalk. Come see the live snakes and alligators! The cost is \$3 per person. Call Linda to register, 561-742-7791 or hlinda@aol.com. Don't let your children miss out on the fun. Ages 8 to 15.

Painted Bunting Monitoring Project

Dr. James Rotenberg with the Department of Environmental Studies at the University of North Carolina Wilmington is participating in the NC component of a range-wide project monitoring wintering Painted Buntings and would like to expand his winter feeder watch program to include Florida. He has about 2000 Painted Buntings color banded and re-sightings would contribute to information on survival. His website for this effort is already established (www.paintedbuntings.org) and can be modified to include data from Florida. Information on the feeder watch program, sign up directions, and instructions for observations and data entry are provided at the website.

If you are interested in helping Dr. Rotenberg with this project please contact him at rotenbergj@uncw.edu or call 910 962-7549.

Michael Delany
Biological Scientist IV
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Wildlife Research Laboratory
1105 SW Williston Road
Gainesville, FL 32601
352 955 2081 x 114

April 17-19 Fort Desoto Birding Trip

Linda Humphries

I have joined Tropical Audubon on this trip at least three times. It is one of the most exciting birding trips I do in Florida. It is a three-day, two-night van trip to Ft. DeSoto, and other spring migration hotspots in the Tampa Bay area. The trip is led by Brian Rapoza, author of *Birding Florida*, and Paul Bithorn. Stops en-route will include Babcock-Webb Wildlife Management Area, Oscar Scherer State Park and Celery Fields Regional Stormwater Facility (where I saw my first King Rail). Tropical Audubon Society and Audubon of the Everglades have decided to join together on this trip. Three people from ASE have already signed up. Contact me at 561-742-7791, hlinda@aol.com, or Brian at Brianrapoza@aol.com if you are interested. Space is limited, so don't delay.

Trip Report: Green Cay, November 22

A half-dozen ASErs joined leader Ben Kolstad in braving the cool weather and windy conditions at Green Cay today, netting 40 species as their reward. "The usual suspects" were all there: many a moorhen, cratefuls of coots, a bushel of blackbirds (red-winged, of course), and a cackle of grackles, boat-tailed. We missed Sora, but saw several lovely Purple Gallinules in gorgeous morning light; we didn't get Roseate Spoonbill, but we did have a Green Heron trying gamely to swallow a frog that looked far too big for it...

A lone Blue Jay tried to incite a mob action against a Red-shouldered Hawk but was unable to interest his comrades in the struggle; they were too busy fighting a territorial dispute of their own in the oaks on the north end.

Also on the north end, a nice lineup of herons stood by patiently while we examined just how to distinguish the Tricolored from the Little Blue. The Tricolored watched the action from a Pond Apple, while the Little Blue was on the water's edge in some fireflag.

After we meandered over to the eastern side of the site, the wind picked up something fierce, limiting our birding prospects to those fairly sheltered areas where a few birds (like this glossy ibis) were huddled together, trying to avoid the attention of the resident 'gator, who, we all assumed, had devoured the photographer who had foolishly left his tripod behind on the boardwalk while he went in closer

for a better shot. There was no evidence of a struggle, however, and the gator (see below) wasn't giving anything away, and a few minutes later an out-of-breath fellow with a couple of cameras around his neck came running up to reclaim his abandoned gear...

As we rounded third and headed for home, we ran into a large group of birders from Tropical on their annual Palm Beach Wetlands excursion; they'd already been to Wakodahatchee, where all the Soras are apparently hanging out, and were on their way to Yamato Scrub to check up on the Least Grebes that are still hanging out there.

After we left them, a spectacular American Kestrel flew to one of the snags nearby; the wind made a digiscoped attempt at capturing it something of a futile gesture, but it was fun!

All in all, a nice day, gorgeous weather, and some good birds. A good time was had by all; come on out and join us, y'all! Our next scheduled trip is to Okeeheelee Nature Center on December 10th; Ethel Kujanpaa is leading. The following weekend will find us at the Loxahatchee Refuge on December 13; Andy Furman will lead. Then on the 20th, we'll have our Nature Walk/Least Grebe watch at Yamato Scrub with Ben Kolstad. We'll close out 2008 on Jan 3, 2009, with the Christmas Bird Count (call Chuck Weber for details). Hope to see you out there!

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The *Everglade Kite* is a monthly publication of the Audubon Society of the Everglades, P.O. Box 16914, West Palm Beach, Florida, 33416-6914. Also available on the web: www.auduboneverglades.org.

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Check out our online community at www.auduboneverglades.org. Send us your thoughts!

Join Audubon Society of the Everglades

There are now two ways to join ASE: Chapter-only membership, and membership through the National Audubon Society.

Chapter-Only Membership

When you become a member of the Audubon Society of the Everglades by using the form at right, all of your membership fees are put to use supporting **local** projects: Everglades Day; Education Programs such as model schools and field trips; Scholarships; and Conservation activities. Audubon Society of the Everglades members also receive 11 issues of the *Everglade Kite* newsletter.

National Audubon Society Membership

When you join ASE through the National Audubon Society, you also receive 6 issues of *Audubon* Magazine, and membership in Audubon of Florida. For details, visit www.audubon.org. To join the National Society, send your information as above, but make your check out to **National Audubon Society**. NOTE: The annual fee is \$20 for regular NAS membership. In either case, send your check, payable to ASE (\$15/\$10) or NAS (\$20) as appropriate, along with this form to

Membership, Audubon Society of the Everglades

P.O. Box 16914

West Palm Beach, FL 33416-6914

Audubon Society of the Everglades (ASE)

YES! I want to become a **chapter-only member** of ASE. Enclosed is my check made payable to Audubon Society of the Everglades for:

☐ Regular \$15 ☐ Senior (62+)/Student \$10

☐ I would like to save ASE postage and printing costs; please send my *Kite* via email

I would like to donate an additional

☐ \$20 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$_____

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____

e-mail _____

I would like to volunteer for:

- ☐ Education
☐ Conservation
☐ Everglades Day
☐ Fundraising
☐ Other: _____

E00 7XCH

Audubon Society of the Everglades general meetings are held the first Tuesday of every month at 7:30 p.m. at FAU Pine Jog Environmental Education Center, located on Summit Blvd, near the intersection of Summit and Jog, in West Palm Beach. The public is welcome to attend.