



## THANK YOU:

On behalf of the Audubon Florida volunteer and staff advocacy team, thank you for your inspiring effort this year. Please read this session wrap-up report and know that you made a difference in the results.

Remember, you can contact me at [edraper@audubon.org](mailto:edraper@audubon.org) or by calling my Tallahassee office line at 850-999-1028. You can also follow me on Twitter at @EricDraper or @AudubonFL.

Your gift matters for Florida's birds and wildlife.

Sincerely,

Eric Draper,  
Executive Director



*Snapshot from Session: Audubon's Eric Draper with State Senators addressing the media about funding for parks and land conservation.*

## 2016 POST-SESSION REPORT TO OUR SUPPORTERS

By Eric Draper, Executive Director

A few weeks ago I received an unexpected text from an important legislator telling me not to stir up Audubon Florida members.

*Why do you think he had to tell me that?*

I wrote back to tell him that our members expect me to do everything I can to persuade lawmakers to put more funds into protecting Florida's special places. I told him that engaging and empowering citizens to become conservation advocates is *exactly* what our members signed up for.

The 2016 Florida Legislative Session wrapped up last Friday. And I'm glad to send legislators home to face the voters. Indeed, it appears that the prospect of elections may have motivated lawmakers to treat the environment *a bit* better this year than last.

It might also be the fact that huge volumes of polluted water from Lake Okeechobee have been sent to coastal estuaries when the natural path of water is to flow south to be cleaned up and released into the Everglades.

But I believe it was your efforts, and the efforts of others like you, that had the greatest effect. [You give power to the voice of Florida conservation.](#)

*A few weeks ago, I asked my friend and Audubon Florida Board Member Dykes Everett to come to Tallahassee to meet face to face with an important state senator. Dykes is a fifth generation Floridian and a dedicated advocate for land preservation. You can hear his passion for protecting natural Florida in his voice. His enthusiasm is infectious – and persuasive.*

I reached out to Dykes for the same reason I reach out to you. Your passion for Florida's special places and wildlife can make a real difference at the Capitol and back home. Legislators need to hear from people like you and Dykes.

That is why I am sending this special report to you, the Audubon Florida members who helped underwrite our vital advocacy work at the Capitol.

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***"You give power to the voice of conservation in Florida. Our birds and wild places need your passion." – Eric Draper, Executive Director***

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*Everglade Snail Kite by RJ Wiley*

## Contact Us

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## DEDICATING AMENDMENT 1 DOLLARS

HB 989 reserved a significant percentage of voter-approved Amendment 1 dollars for Everglades restoration, estuary recovery, springs preservation, and cleaning up the terribly polluted Lake Apopka. Specifically:

Everglades and Coastal Estuaries	\$200 million or 25% of Amendment 1
Cleaning up and restoring flows to Florida's springs	\$75 million or 7.6% of Amendment 1
Cleaning up Lake Apopka (Florida's most diverse bird area)	\$5 million

I am proud to tell you that Audubon is credited with helping pass this good bill and we will work to dedicate even more Amendment 1 dollars in the future.

## STATE LANDS

HB 1075 started as a bill promoting surplus of conservation lands and the use of land conservation funds to underwrite water supply projects. Audubon worked with conservation allies to fix the worst parts of the bill. A process for swapping state lands for conservation easements now must meet the test of providing "net conservation value." HB 1075 reaffirmed the Florida Forever program and gives new priority to water protection.

## FLORIDA'S WATER

SB 552 disappointed most conservation advocates for what it did not accomplish, which is to set Florida on a rapid path to solving the problems with Florida's springs and polluted coastal waters. Nevertheless, as part of Audubon's work, state agencies are now required to enforce state water quality programs and the practices agricultural discharges must follow to avoid adding pollution to waterways. Stopping the discharges to coastal estuaries and restoring springs will take tough new rules to conserve water and control pollution sources.

## BUDGET

The final budget, while generous to the Everglades and springs, fell short of our goal for land conservation. Last year, when Audubon worked with others to pass the Water and Land Amendment, we expected the Legislature to devote at least \$150 million to land conservation. This year, \$92 million is going to that purpose, which is up from \$52 million last year.

## PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF

In 2007, Audubon fought to win a ban on dumping sewage sludge in the Lake Okeechobee watershed, cutting 25% of the lake's pollution. In 2010, we got then-Senator Lee Constantine to pass a law to eliminate the absurd uncontrolled practice of dumping millions of tons of septic tank pump-out in vulnerable watersheds. After years of watching the septic tank industry delay the ban, we are glad to report that septage dumping and its impact on our springs and waterways finally ends in 2016.

## YOUR PART

Thank you for being the voice of conservation during the 2016 Florida Legislative Session. I hope we can continue to count on your help throughout the year. In addition to making generous contributions to our advocacy budget, we need you to become an advocate for our birds, parks, and waterways. Sign up for the Audubon Advocate at <http://fl.audubon.org/signup>