



Audubon | FLORIDA Naturalist

Summer/Fall 2018



Photo: Leticia de Mello Bueno

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Jud Laird, Chair Florida Audubon Society

Dear Audubon Members and Supporters,

It is an incredible time to be a part of the Audubon movement as we celebrate 2018 as the Year of the Bird. With the annual Audubon Assembly right around the corner, it's never been more important to get engaged. The future of conservation hinges on the choices of people, governments, and organizations. Natural Florida needs us to do our part, and I hope you join us at the Assembly to learn more.

Just miles from this year's Assembly sits the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge, a symbol of what people can accomplish together. The refuge was almost lost forever in recent years, but thousands of Auduboners spoke out and saved it. The persistence of Audubon Everglades Policy Director Celeste De Palma, who rallied Audubon members and partners to save the refuge, impressed national wildlife refuge leaders enough for them to create an advocacy award to honor her.

And that's not the only good news for refuges. Charles Lee, Audubon Florida's Director of Advocacy, helped keep Three Sisters Springs as part of the Crystal River National Wildlife Refuge. This ensures the 57-acre refuge will continue to shelter manatees escaping cold winter waters. And near Tallahassee, Audubon teamed up with partners to acquire Smith Island and its important rookery, which is intended to become part of St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge.

These good news stories were not just the work of Audubon staff. These victories are because of an engaged network of 45 local chapters, incredible advocates, talented partners and generous supporters. It's a team effort, and you're a part of that. Thank you.

But it's not all great news. I know you've seen the frustrating news of red tide and blue-green algae. Yes, algae and red tide are naturally occurring, but warmer waters caused by climate change and the tremendous amounts of nutrients in our waterways exacerbate the problem.

Our policy staff are pushing hard at every level of government to push for strong investments in conservation and better policy. Not just for Florida's tourism-dependent economy, but because it's the right thing to do. Nonetheless, Audubon scientists tell us that individuals can make a real difference too.

While it's fresh on our minds, here are three things you can do to protect Florida's precious water resources:

- Skip the fertilizer, which feeds algae and red tide when rain flushes into our waterways;
- Plant native plants. Florida flora thrive without excessive watering or fertilizer; and
- Vote and support candidates that will protect and invest in our water resources, including safeguarding wetlands and restoring America's Everglades.

As you flip through the pages of this edition, enjoy the stories and share Audubon's conservation mission with your friends and family. We must each do our part to protect natural ecosystems because the future of Florida is counting on all of us.

Sincerely,

P.S. - Birds, wildlife, and the places they need depend upon you now more than ever. If you believe in Audubon's work to protect Florida, please make a gift using the enclosed envelope. Your actions and gift will do so much for the Florida we all love.



Julie Wraithmell, Executive Director Audubon Florida

Dear friends,

As I write this, I am preparing to testify in Florida Audubon Society's case on the side of birds and the places they need near Little Estero Island Critical Wildlife Area in Fort Myers Beach, Florida. Out-of-state investors are trying to build a private boardwalk across state-owned conservation lands and into nesting habitat for declining beach-nesting birds. If the project sounds like folly, that's because it is; building a vulnerable structure in highly-dynamic coastal habitat, to benefit a private few at the expense of threatened resources belonging to all of us. If allowed to stand, this permit could set a dangerous precedent for this travesty to be repeated up and down our coasts.

It's taken two years to get to this hearing. And there were many opportunities for the state to deny required permits or the investors to realize their boardwalk would have been destroyed after storms like Irma and subsequently strewn across conservation lands if Audubon had not stepped in to block it back in 2016. Yet here we are.

Our hard-working attorney tells me that the investors' main thrust in the hearing will be to claim that Florida Audubon Society lacks sufficient standing to challenge their boardwalk. That our 118 years of advocacy on behalf of wildlife and wildlands, our tens of thousands of members in Florida, do not have a sufficient interest in this resource. Our advocates who supported the establishment of Little Estero Island Critical Wildlife Area and the bird stewards who protect the nesting birds there each summer, don't matter, in the investors' opinion. They couldn't be more wrong.

There's an old lawyer's saying: When the facts are on your side, pound on the facts. When the law is on your side, pound on the law. When neither is on your side, pound on the table.

I fully expect some spectacular table pounding from the investors.

On our side, there will be soft-spoken eloquence. With the full support of Audubon members, we have faced down poachers, seen the end of DDT, and the recovery of species like Bald Eagles. We are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act this year, the cornerstone of North American bird conservation. We don't just have this incredible legacy with some of the top bird experts in the world on our team, we also have you. And it doesn't hurt that Audubon has textbook knowledge of habitats, birds, and the laws protecting them.

By the time you read this, the case to protect this place from a habitat-destroying boardwalk may be settled. But no matter the outcome, I'm proud of Audubon's vigorous defense of birds and the places they so need. Because this is what Audubon does. I am so proud of this organization's legacy and inspired by its future.

When others sit down, Audubon stands up. And we're only able to take a stand because of you and your involvement. Thank you for joining us in this work.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie Wraithmell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

P.S. - Each October, we gather at the Audubon Assembly to learn, share and chart our course to meet the challenges our natural resources will face in the future. This year, I look forward to celebrating the diversity of our movement and our commitment to responding to climate change

Audubon's Philosophy on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Just as biodiversity strengthens natural systems, the diversity of human experience strengthens our conservation efforts for the benefit of nature and all human beings. Audubon should represent and reflect that human diversity, embracing it in all the communities where we work, in order to achieve our conservation goals. To that end, we are committed to increasing the diversity of our staff, board, volunteers, members, and supporters, and to fostering an inclusive network of Audubon centers and chapters in all kinds of communities, from rural to urban.

A Little Extra Credit Goes A Long Way

One college student's nature experience with several North Florida Audubon chapters inspired a one-time special event into a yearlong Audubon program engaging young adults. Planning for the Northeast Florida Conservation Leadership Academy was underway by several other Audubon chapters when Marion Audubon learned about the special event and wanted to get involved. The one-day academy is intended to inspire college students to care more about nature and explore being a conservation leader. Thanks to Marion Audubon Vice President Barbara Schwartz (with the help of some extra credit offered by Professor Steve McKenize), a record number of college students participated in this academy. Veteran Audubon members walked side-by-side with students who said they rarely spent time outdoors. The students raved about the experience and, in turn, inspired Marion Audubon to create a year-long program focused on engaging college students. The chapter received an Audubon in Action grant, which funds four activities.



Shamari Adams holding a banded bird before release at the Northeast Florida Conservation Leadership Academy. Photo: Jacqui Sulek

Tallahassee Birding Hot Spot Gets New Attention

Lake Elberta Park is one of Tallahassee's best kept birding secrets, tucked away in a historic African American neighborhood between Florida A&M University and Florida State University. Apalachee Audubon received a special Audubon grant to help restore the lake and share its significance with the diverse Tallahassee communities nearby. Students from both local universities are receiving scholarships to serve as local Audubon ambassadors. With the resources and support of Apalachee Audubon members, these ambassadors work with the community to restore the lake and teach diverse populations about the importance of this local natural treasure.



Photos: Peter Kleinhenz

Remembering Nat Reed and Bernie Yokel, Two Audubon Heroes

A tribute by: Charles Lee, Director of Advocacy, Audubon Florida



Nathaniel Reed



Bernie Yokel

Florida lost environmental giants Nat Reed and Bernie Yokel this July. Throughout my 46-year career at Audubon, I have been lucky to know the two irreplaceable leaders as both mentors and friends. Those of us in the conservation community know their accomplishments well. While generations to come may never know their names, they will benefit from the legacy Nat and Bernie leave behind. Let me tell you a little about both gentlemen.

Nathaniel Pryor Reed, 84, passed away July 11th from injuries sustained while fishing in Quebec. He was old school Republican who often rubbed elbows with American presidents. Claude Kirk, Florida's 36th governor, tapped Reed to be an advisor and lead his Department of Pollution Control. In that capacity, Nat persuaded Gov. Kirk to stop two massive projects that were threatening enormous environmental destruction: the Cross Florida Barge Canal and the Everglades Jetport. Nat went on to be appointed by President Nixon as an Assistant Secretary in the Dept. of Interior. In that capacity, he engineered expansion of Everglades National Park, the creation of the Big Cypress National Preserve, and expansion of Biscayne National Monument. Nat is also credited with the creation of the Endangered Species Act. After returning to Florida, he championed the first efforts toward restoration of America's Everglades and served on the Audubon board. In a fitting tribute to his legacy, Senators Bill Nelson and Marco Rubio recently announced an effort to rename the Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge after Nat.

I first met Dr. Bernie Yokel when he was the Director of the Marine Research Station at Rookery Bay near Naples. An accomplished marine biologist, Bernie led the effort to defeat permits that sought to destroy 5,000 acres of mangrove wetlands at Marco Island. Bernie brought the touch of a scientist and educator to environmental advocacy. His skills were recognized by the Florida Audubon Society, and he later led Florida Audubon as board president from 1984 to 1995. Bernie was then elected to the board of the National Audubon Society. Later in life, Bernie became the leader of the Trout Lake Nature Center in Lake County, Florida. He served there until very recently as an educator and member of the board. Bernie passed away at the age of 89 on July 4th.

The next time you're enjoying Florida's special places, I hope you feel the same sense of gratitude for the conservation leaders like Nat and Bernie that I do. Both Nat Reed and Dr. Bernie Yokel took the time to work with others inside and outside the environmental community to teach and guide new generations of conservationists. Now, they've passed the baton to us with the trails they blazed. Let's continue honoring their legacies by doing our part to preserve and protect our environment.



Photos: Reinier Munguia

Now What? Blue-Green Algae and Red Tide Leave Floridians Frustrated

Florida is witnessing one of the worst red tides and blue-green algae in recent memory. The catastrophic combination of red tide and blue-green algae blooms are hurting Florida's waterways and the wildlife that depend on clean water. Together, they cause significant public health concerns, threaten birds and wildlife, and tarnish Florida's reputation for world-class beaches.

Both occur naturally, but this year's geographic extent and duration are both extraordinary. A combination of excess nutrient pollution and increasingly warmer temperatures are the suspected culprits behind the observed intensity of both red tide spanning the South Florida coasts and the blue-green algae originating from Lake Okeechobee.

The harmful algal blooms and red tide captured national attention, and blame has been freely thrown around. Floridians along with local, state, and federal government agencies must do their part to protect Florida's waterways. Here's your guide to what's really happening and how you can help.

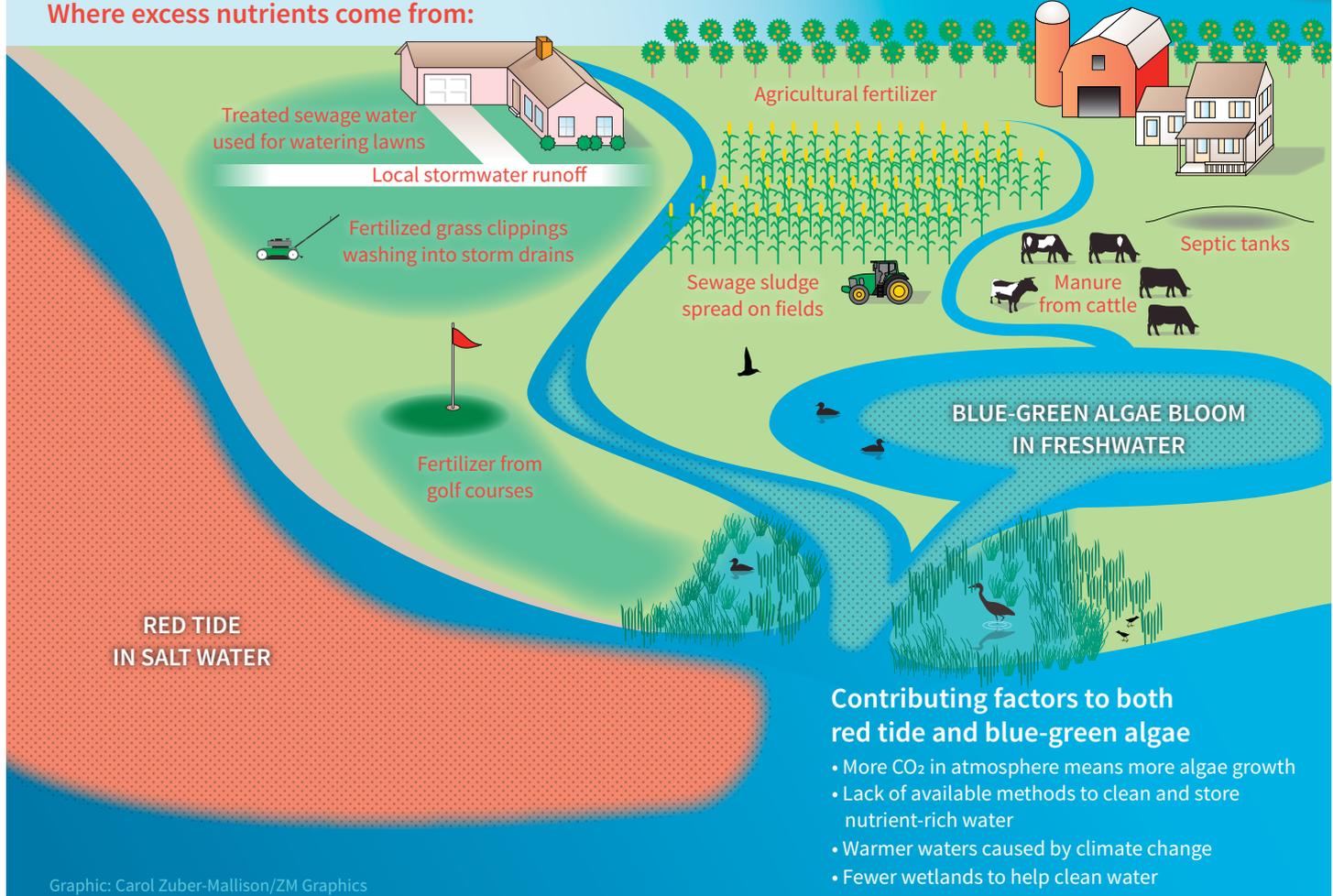


Toxic blue-green algae in Southeast Florida. Photo: Mac Stone

Excess nutrients make it worse

Both red tide and blue-green algae are fueled by an excessive amount of nitrogen and phosphorus in the water.

Where excess nutrients come from:



Graphic: Carol Zuber-Mallison/ZM Graphics

This cannot be the status quo. This cannot be our future.

People have contributed to this tragedy, but people also have the opportunity to be the solution. Audubon scientists report that warmer water temperatures and nutrient-laden nearshore waters create the perfect conditions for explosive red tide and blue-green algae. Audubon's policy staff and chapter network are fighting at every level of government to protect Florida's water resources, but we could use your help. Individuals can make a meaningful difference by taking simple steps to protect Florida's water resources.

Your Choices Can Lessen Algal Blooms



AVOID FERTILIZERS

Choose native plants that use less water and require no fertilizer. They also provide habitat for birds and pollinators.

Find native plants for your area by visiting our database tool at Audubon.org/PlantsForBirds



VOTE WISELY

Support candidates and efforts that invest in and protect our precious water resources.

Ask for local protections that support waterways. Expect state water protections to be well funded and enforced.



PROTECT AND RESTORE WETLANDS

Wetlands absorb flood waters during heavy rainfall and also help clean nutrients from water. Wetlands are lost permit by permit and are difficult to regain.

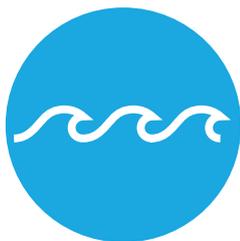


RESTORE AMERICA'S EVERGLADES

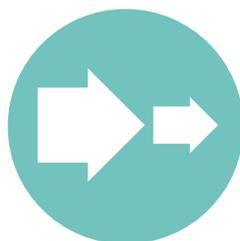
We must build the imminent Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir to hold and clean more water from Lake Okeechobee. North of the lake, we must slow and clean more water naturally in wetlands.

We must send more water south where it is desperately needed.

Audubon's Solutions to Florida's Water Crisis



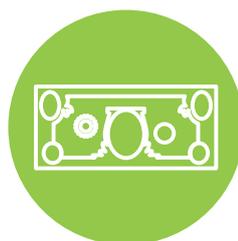
Building water infrastructure needed to restore the north-to- south flow of water through the River of Grass.



Investment in water quality projects and programs to clean excess nutrients from waterways.



Robust and reliable funding to prevent the starts and stops that hamper restoration efforts.



Restoring water management district budgets.



Serious investment in agricultural nutrient management plans to reduce nutrient loading into our waterways.

Want to learn more? Attend *The Nuts and Bolts of Florida's Coastal Water Crises: What's Aggravating Algae Blooms and Red Tides, and How You Can Help*, a special session during the Audubon Assembly. Flip to pages 14-15 to learn more about this year's Audubon Assembly.



Freedom Flies: 600th Bald Eagle Makes Majestic Return to Florida Skies



Photos: Bill Doster

This summer, Audubon Center for Birds of Prey released its 600th rehabilitated Bald Eagle back into the Florida skies with the help of long-time Audubon supporters Dick and Mimi Ford. Audubon rescued the eagle in March after injuries likely sustained from a territory fight with another eagle. The eagle had punctures all over his face and beak, significant wounds on the right and left wing, wounds on the feet, and lead poisoning. Audubon quickly treated him for lead poisoning and coordinated care with Winter Park Veterinary Hospital, a partner animal hospital. Once his wounds healed, the eagle moved to the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey's 100-foot Disney Magic of Flight barn for reconditioning to prepare for life back in the wild.

As the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey approaches its 40th anniversary this year, releasing its 600th eagle is a fitting tribute to the crucial role Audubon has played in the recovery and continuing success of the species. While Florida's population of eagles has recovered significantly since the pesticide-induced decline that reached crisis proportions in the 1960's, loss of habitat in Florida's natural areas adds increased pressures to the state's eagle population.

"This is wonderful. There's no feeling quite like watching an eagle recover from the brink of death and return to the wild. With shrinking available habitat, this eagle's release serves as a reminder that we must continue to protect birds and the places they need."

– Katie Warner, Center Director,
Audubon Center for Birds of Prey

How you can help

Volunteer Your Time With the Eagles - Audubon is a leader in eagle care and education with more than 250 volunteers monitoring eagle nests statewide as part of its community science program, Audubon EagleWatch. Learn more about Audubon's EagleWatch program at FL.Audubon.org/EagleWatch.

Help the Center Prepare for the Next 600 Eagle Patients - Audubon recently launched *Restore the Nest*, a special campaign to restore and repair its aging aviaries and clinical facilities. Hurricane Irma caused long-lasting damage and exposed weaknesses at the Center. You can support Audubon's important conservation work by visiting the Center in Maitland or making a gift at FL.Audubon.org/RestoreTheNest.

Meet Dick and Mimi Ford

Protecting birds and the places they need is part of the Ford's family legacy. Dick Ford's mother Fran had a passion for nature that she passed on to her children. She was president of Florida Keys Audubon and championed conservation efforts throughout the Florida Keys. Her children follow her footsteps. In addition to assisting Audubon with releasing a Bald Eagle, Dick and Mimi Ford recently hosted a fundraiser to support Audubon's conservation work. And David Ford, Dick's brother, completed a term as chair of the National Audubon Society board and continues to serve as a board member.

Audubon in Action: Fighting for Critical Habitat in Southwest Florida

The birds can't speak for themselves. We have to be their voice.

Two years ago, Audubon entered a legal battle to protect Little Estero Island Critical Wildlife Area in Southwest Florida. Out-of-state investors wanted to build a private boardwalk over a state-owned lagoon and conservation lands, barely skirting the edge of the critical wildlife area. Audubon scientists immediately sounded the alarm. When the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) signaled its plans to greenlight this habitat-destroying project, Audubon had to act. Out-of-state investors shouldn't receive a free pass to destroy critical conservation lands with a private boardwalk for vacation rental houses.

This designated protected area is essential habitat for rare nesting, migrant and wintering shorebirds and seabirds. A boardwalk like this would dramatically alter the habitat by encouraging predators and foot traffic while frightening away birds.

With support from Audubon members and the Town of Fort Myers Beach, our attorneys spent the last two years crossing swords with these investors and DEP. They tried every legal maneuver in the book to exhaust and outspend Audubon, but Audubon does not go down without a fight. Ironically, if Audubon had not stepped up to stop its construction back in 2016, Hurricane Irma would have destroyed this bad boardwalk in this highly dynamic habitat.

By the time you read this story, Audubon's lawyers and experts will have already testified in the case. Without a doubt, the people of Southwest Florida expect the state to be more protective of our suffering coastal habitats, and we hope there is good news to share in the next edition.

We are Audubon, and this is what we do. No matter the outcome, standing up for Little Estero Island Critical Wildlife Area was worth the fight. Floridians know all too well that incremental losses—permit by permit—combine to make some of the greatest conservation tragedies. Help us stay strong and ready to act for the next urgent case. Continue your support of Audubon with a generous donation using the enclosed envelope. These gifts give us the power to act quickly when threats emerge to birds and the places they need.

P.S. To find out what happened, stay tuned to Audubon Florida's Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram!



Coastal habitats not only support wildlife, but also help protect our communities from storms, sea level rise and impacts to water quality. Snowy Plover chicks depend on Little Estero Island Critical Wildlife Area. Photo: Jean Hall

Audubon has its eyes on several issues in DC

MBTA: The administration took unprecedented steps to gut the Migratory Bird Treaty Act earlier this year. While we challenge this move in the courts, we also have our eye on legislation to better protect birds at the state and federal levels.

LWCF: Restoring the Land and Water Conservation Fund is key to protecting some of Florida's important conservation landscapes, especially those connected to national forests and wildlife refuges.

Carbon Tax: Earlier this fall Congressman Carlos Curbelo (Miami) introduced the MARKET CHOICE Act to exchange a carbon tax for the gas tax. Audubon supports this unique move to combat carbon emissions.

CBRA: Since President Reagan signed it into law, the Coastal Barrier Resources Act helps protect coastal habitats and the American taxpayer from subsidizing risky coastal development. Audubon is working to expand the areas that enjoy these protections.



Bald Eagle. Photo: Graham McGeorge/Audubon Photography Awards

Lend your voice to the birds.
Go to FL.Audubon.org/SignUp to join our action network.

Wading Bird Supercolonies in America's Everglades Tell Us Something We Already Knew



Paving the way for protecting birds today, Audubon wardens protected the giant supercolonies in America's Everglades and reported astonishing numbers in the 1930's and 40's—sometimes exceeding 200,000 nesting wading birds. Robbyn Spratt/Audubon Photography Awards

Visitors to America's Everglades in the 19th century frequently reported astonishment at the sheer numbers of wading birds they saw. John James Audubon wrote, "The flocks of birds that covered the shelly beaches, and those hovering overhead, so astonished us that we could for awhile scarcely believe our eyes." That all changed when plume hunters decimated the iconic Florida birds in the 1880's. At the turn of the century, with Audubon wardens to protect them and new laws like the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the wading birds of America's Everglades recovered quickly through the 1930's and 1940's.

Unfortunately, draining of the Everglades began in earnest shortly after the successful turnaround of wading birds. These canaries-in-the-mines for America's Everglades, wading bird populations fell dramatically once again. By the 1970's, reports of 50,000 birds were rare, and by the 1980's reports of 20,000 birds were non-existent.

As water managers better understood environmental needs and restoration of America's Everglades began, there was some recovery. Wading bird populations began to rise. In the 2000's, the Everglades were averaging about 30,000 nesting wading birds with a peak of 126,000 wading birds in 2009. Although encouraging, most recent nesting occurred in the Central Everglades, far away from historic supercolony sites.

This past nesting season, however, pleasantly surprised biologists when more than 220,000 nesting birds were discovered throughout the Everglades! One supercolony had more than 100,000 nesting birds; the sight of which drove people to charter planes just to see the spectacle.

Audubon experts say restoration efforts are helping but that we must continue to fully restore the famed River of Grass. Recent strong numbers resulted are attributed to a rare combination of



Wood Storks are one of the top indicator species for America's Everglades. Photo: Ron Magill

various factors, supported by restoration efforts, that made the Everglades unusually favorable for wading birds. Audubon scientists point to the water recession rate that concentrated prey across the landscape and through time plus massive rainfall from Hurricane Irma.

These awe-inspiring wading bird supercolonies of America's Everglades tell us something we already knew: if we get the water right, the birds will come back in big ways.

Reddish Egret. Photo: Reinier Munguia





Aquatic macroinvertebrates are used to gauge restoration success. Photo: Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary

Audubon Researchers Use Frogs and Fish to Gauge Restoration Success at Picayune Strand

This summer, the Western Everglades research team at Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary found themselves rising early, packing field gear and a lunch, and heading out for a new project in the Picayune Strand. But this summer came with new energy for the team. After recovering from Hurricane Irma's flooding and nearby coasts still suffering with blue-green algae combined with red tide, researchers were eager to start collecting data and better understand freshwater wetland restoration efforts. Their passion took them to the Picayune Strand Restoration Project, the first Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Project (CERP) to begin construction.

Audubon is partnering with Johnson Engineering and Florida Gulf Coast University on this unique research effort, which uses aquatic fauna like fish and frogs to shed light on restoration progress. Wetlands are hotspots for fish, aquatic macroinvertebrates, and amphibians, and their responses to hydrologic change provides vital data for Audubon researchers on wetland restoration efforts. These small creatures can indicate if restoration is working, provide valuable management insights, and empower project managers to make better ecological decisions as restoration progresses.

Research like this has never been more important because it tells researchers how well restoration is working. And restoring freshwater wetlands doesn't just help the fish and frogs. They help people, too. According to Audubon scientists, severe flooding, wildfires, blue-green algae, and red tide are made much worse when there are fewer wetlands around. High-functioning, restored wetlands perform important functions like:

- Buffering extreme flood events by storing and holding water,
- Cleaning and filtering water with its mosaic of plant communities, reducing nutrients that exacerbate blue-green algae and red tide, and
- Protecting communities from large out-of-control wildfires by supporting natural fire regimes and helping prevent catastrophic wildfires.

Experts from Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary will continue to lead these important efforts and provide guidance to restoration project managers based on their research.



Did you know: when finished, the Picayune Strand Restoration Project will restore more than 50,000 acres of critical freshwater wetland habitat in the Western Everglades? The project involves removing more than 200 miles of paved roads and gets rid of 83 miles of wetland-drying canals in Southwest Florida.



**Learn more about visiting Audubon's
Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary in person at
Corkscrew.Audubon.org.**

With Two Decades of Coastal Bird Protection, Audubon Sees Strength in Florida's Diverse Volunteers and Nesting Sites

Coastal “bird stewards” from all walks of life volunteer with Audubon – and they are brought together by one common passion: caring for birds and the places they need. From the shores of Pensacola beach in Northwest Florida to the resurging colonies in Northeast Florida and all the way down to the busy beaches of South Florida, coastal birds depend on Audubon for protection.

Audubon's diverse group of bird stewards are important ambassadors for nature, helping coastal visitors understand that beach birds are not just sitting idly on the sand in the summer and spring. The birds are often sitting on eggs and sheltering vulnerable chicks from the sweltering summer heat. Posts connected by twine and educational signs let beachgoers know that they can see bird families raising their next generation in those special areas. At nesting seabird colonies, bird stewards also set up spotting scopes so visitors can get close up views of the pale, speckled eggs and tiny, toddling chicks inside fenced areas.

Audubon coordinates coastal bird stewardship on beaches and islands across Florida because strong stewardship at all these differing nesting sites provides greater promise to the species Audubon works to protect. Events like tropical storms and red tide can devastate an entire colony of beach-nesting birds, but Audubon's large and spread-out statewide presence gives each colony a fighting chance. If one colony doesn't perform well, there are many more receiving Audubon protection.

Audubon respects the individuality of each of our volunteers and warmly welcomes all bird lovers regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, national or ethnic origin, politics, or veteran status.





Just like Florida's people, the nesting sites for Florida's coastal birds are also unique. Some nest right along busy highways while others retreat to remote islands. Many, however, nest near the same beach hotspots that tourists love. Across the state, stewards chat with passersby about the special, sand-nesting birds while intercepting disturbances like volleyballs, drones, and unleashed dogs. These beach playthings cause birds to fly off in fright, leaving their eggs and chicks to literally cook in the hot summer sun. Bird stewards are also chaperones, returning wayward chicks to their posted safe zone so they aren't stepped on or thought to be lost and "rescued" by well-meaning beachgoers.

When storms send waves crashing onto Florida beaches and washing eggs and chicks into the ocean, Audubon bird stewards are there to protect the site as birds usually attempt to re-nest. When red tides litter the shores with dead fish and sea turtles, bird stewards watch over nesting sites even more carefully. Adult birds may spend even more time away as they search for uncontaminated fish in inland waterways to feed hungry chicks. Audubon's 20 year history of coastal bird stewardship makes a real difference between survival or failure of eggs and baby birds.



Audubon warmly welcomes all who care about Florida's iconic – and sometimes well-camouflaged – coastal birds.

Want to help?

Email us at FLconservation@audubon.org today.



Great Egret. Photo: Ron Magill

2018 Audubon Assembly

Rising Tides, Building Common Ground for Climate Change Solutions

October 19-20, 2018

West Palm Beach Marriott

1001 Okeechobee Blvd., West Palm Beach, FL 33401, 561-833-1234

Join Audubon Florida in West Palm Beach for Florida's premier conservation gathering, where grassroots leaders from around the state join Audubon's professional staff and partners to grow their knowledge and skills to protect Florida's precious natural resources. This year's theme focuses on engaging diverse audiences to discover and implement climate change solutions.

Lodging & Registration

This year's exciting Assembly is at the West Palm Beach Marriott. Details on event registration and booking a hotel room can be found online at FL.Audubon.org/Assembly. Please note, registration does not include lodging. The Assembly hotel is conveniently located just 0.2 miles from the West Palm Beach Tri-Rail station.

Schedule of Events

Thursday, Oct. 18

Thursday evening Early Bird Reception

Friday, Oct. 19

Friday morning Expert-Led Field Trips
12:00 - 1:45 p.m. Welcome Luncheon
2:00 - 3:30 p.m. Learning Sessions (Round 1)
3:45 - 5:15 p.m. Learning Sessions (Round 2)
6:00 - 7:00 p.m. Welcome Reception
7:00 - 9:00 p.m. Keynote and Awards Ceremony

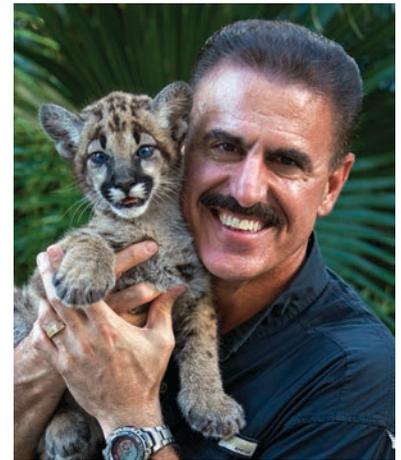
Saturday, Oct. 20

7:00 - 8:15 a.m. Networking Breakfast
8:15 - 9:15 a.m. Chapters' Celebration
9:30 - 11:00 a.m. Plenary Session: Florida's Coastal Water Crises
11:15 - 12:30 p.m. 2019 Conservation Action Agenda Setting Session & Closing Remarks
1:00 p.m. Florida Audubon Society Annual Meeting

Visit
FL.Audubon.org/Assembly
to register and learn more!

Keynote Speaker: Ron Magill

Celebrated South Florida conservationist and wildlife photographer Ron Magill is the keynote speaker for the 2018 Audubon Assembly. Ron will share his passion for the magic of America's Everglades, which is both extraordinarily vulnerable to climate change and essential to South Florida's climate resilience. The threats facing this international treasure are substantial but so too is its ability to unite many behind its restoration. Ron's inspiring images and contagious enthusiasm will help attendees explore how to reinvigorate long-time advocates and enlist new audiences in combatting today's conservation challenges. His passion for wildlife has landed Ron on many national and international TV programs including *Sábago Gigante*, one of the longest-running Spanish-language shows. Sometimes seen as the Miami response to Jack Hanna, this Miami-resident works full-time inspiring others to care about wildlife at ZooMiami. He also leads the Ron Magill Conservation Endowment and serves on the board of Audubon Florida.



Ron Magill is the keynote for the 2018 Audubon Assembly. Photo: Ron Magill

Learning Sessions

Wildlife Advocacy and Conservation Meets Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Bird and wildlife conservation for the long term depends on a unified voice by the broad diversity of people in the Florida we all love. Learn how Florida's young conservation leaders are engaging with diverse groups to build new bridges between people and wildlife.

Coastal Resilience: A Global Issue in Need of Local Solutions

From increasing sea levels to king tides and hurricanes, Florida's coastal communities face many challenges as they try to meet the needs of people and wildlife. Join this session and learn more about how you can help move forward with resilience work in your community.

Why Are Waterbirds Moving: Food, Water, or Climate Change?

Snail Kites, Wood Storks, and Roseate Spoonbills are changing their Florida nesting distributions as food availability, water, and climate change. Audubon scientists present the latest research on what you need to know about the challenges these iconic birds face in Florida's changing urban landscape.

Plenary: The Nuts and Bolts of Florida's Coastal Water Crises: What's Aggravating Algae Blooms and Red Tides, and How You Can Help

In the wake of one of the worst red tides and blue-green algal blooms in Florida's history, this special session of the Audubon Assembly brings together leading experts to discuss the mechanics of algal blooms and red tides. Audubon scientists and outside experts will discuss what causes and feeds the Gulf of Mexico's red tide and blue-green algal blooms in Lake Okeechobee and the estuaries. Climate change, septic tanks, biosolids, reclaimed water, fertilizer, agriculture, and wetlands are all a part of this important discussion. Join this engaging panel where you'll learn how you can help and ask questions of the expert panelists.

Field Trips

As an attendee of the Audubon Assembly, you're invited to join local Audubon experts in exploring Palm Beach County and surrounding areas on spectacular birding field trips. All trips take place on Friday morning, Oct. 19. The trips have different start times and are rated according to ease and length of walking. All trips will meet in the conference center lobby where your trip coordinators will assemble the carpools and provide directions. Advanced registration is required, and Assembly registrants will receive sign up information to the email address provided upon registering for the Audubon Assembly. This year's field trips include:



- South Florida Water Management District's Stormwater Treatment Area 1 East (STA-1E)
- Wakodahatchee Wetlands
- Frenchman's Forest Natural Area
- Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge



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Save the Date: Annual Audubon Assembly October 19-20 in West Palm Beach



Brown Pelican. Photo: © Studio Barcelona, Adobe Stock.

Visit FL.Audubon.org/Assembly for Updates and Registration Details