



Audubon | FLORIDA

Naturalist

Summer 2022

River Journey. Artist: Peter R. Gerbert



Heidi McCree, Board Chair

Summer is a time of movement in Florida. Wading birds scan the shallows to find food for their chicks; sea and shorebirds form loud, ever-shifting colonies on our sand beaches; Chimney Swifts and Barn Swallows twist and turn through the air like miniature acrobats.

At Audubon, we are always on the move too. A brand-new telemetry station at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary will tell us more about migrating birds, and new outreach and member programs will bring more visitors to our famous boardwalk (pg 14). Bands placed on the legs of Bald Eagles released by staff at the Center for Birds of Prey tell us critical information about their nesting efforts (pg 9), while research stations in the Everglades show changes from both sea level rise and restoration progress (pg 8). New Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission maps and guidelines — improved through comments made by Audubon staff and members — will better protect vulnerable beach birds (pg 4), while chapters continue to make new homes for an iconic Florida species: Purple Martins (pg 10).

Through it all, our staff, members, and volunteers move with us, innovating and protecting birds and the places they need. Cheers to a summer of movement!

Heidi McCree, *Chair, Audubon Florida*



Julie Wraithmell, Executive Director

This spring, Audubon Florida celebrated spring migration with a statewide Birdathon! In support of conservation, more than 120 staff, members, and supporters fanned out across beaches, mangroves, barrier islands, meadows, forests, and more to spot some of Florida's most iconic species.

I'll confess, I'm more of a "quality over quantity" birder and prefer to relish each species rather than rush, because each is a feathered reminder of why we do this important work. But I, too, was caught up in the adrenaline of a big birding day, counting 100 species before night fell on my efforts.

It was a gorgeous, blustery, North Florida day, which came with a fresh reminder that, while I sometimes watch birds for data, and other times watch birds to raise support for Audubon, I *always* watch birds for joy. What good fortune we have to live in this special place, and what a responsibility we have to ensure it remains so.

I finished the Birdathon further inspired by our staff, who collectively counted more than 220 species, including Burrowing Owls, Florida Scrub-Jays, Wood Storks, and Snail Kites. In the pages of this Summer Naturalist, I see their enthusiasm for conservation — and yours! — coming through in every project, field effort, and policy proposal. Thank you for being part of our flock!

Julie Wraithmell, *Executive Director, Audubon Florida*

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2022

Audubon Assembly

Birds Tell Us.

Registration will open soon for
Audubon Assembly 2022!

OCTOBER 13-15

Held in person at the Luminary Hotel in downtown
Fort Myers, this year's event centers on the theme
"Birds Tell Us."

With learning sessions, a keynote presentation,
awards, and field trips to some of the birdiest
hotspots in Southwest Florida, Assembly is a great
opportunity to network with Audubon members,
staff, and volunteers across the state.

Tickets: \$155

Early Bird Tickets: \$135

Friday Night Banquet Only: \$80



Hooded Warbler.
Photo: John A. Middleton, Jr.

**Visit FL.Audubon.org/Assembly
for updates and registration details.**

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING of the membership of The Florida Audubon Society. Pursuant to the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, notice is hereby given that the Annual Membership Meeting of the Florida Audubon Society will be held at 1 p.m. on Saturday, October 15, 2022. The meeting agenda will be to receive a financial report and hear any comments of the membership to the Board of Directors. A Meeting of the Board will follow immediately upon the conclusion of the Membership Meeting. For questions, contact Adrienne Ruhl at Adrienne.Ruhl@audubon.org.

New Mapping Tool to Safeguard Beach-nesting Birds

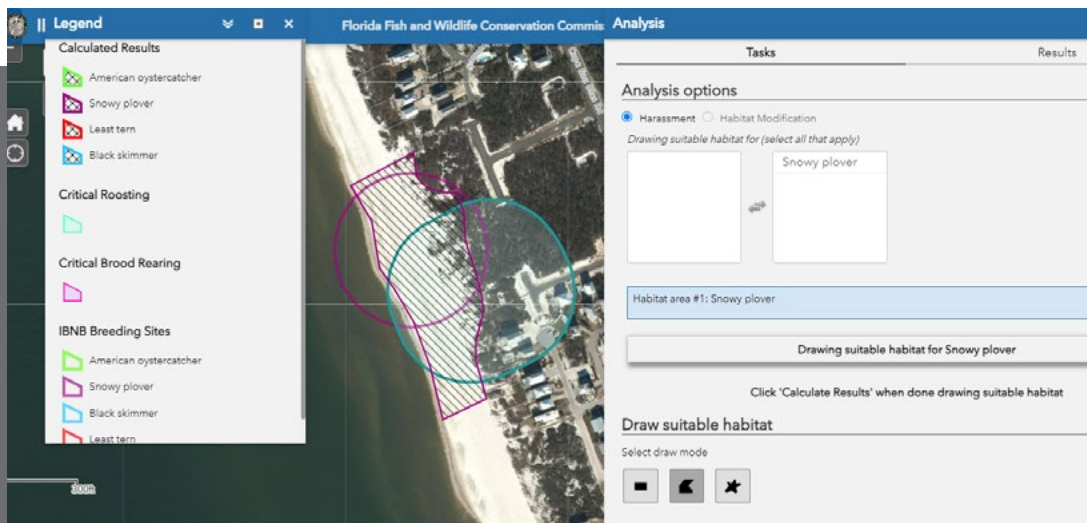
The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has a new mapping tool that will clearly show the true cost to beach-nesting birds when new coastal developments are proposed. Data collected by Audubon biologists and coastal bird stewards will make it possible for FWC's new tool to identify when proposed development could harm beach-nesting birds or their habitat, triggering regulations requiring applicants to avoid, minimize, or mitigate those impacts.

The new ShoreMapper tool works together with FWC's new Conservation Measures and Permitting Guidelines, outlining the steps developers must take to avoid or mitigate any damage to bird habitat or harassment of four state-Threatened species (Least Tern, Black Skimmer, American Oystercatcher, and Snowy Plover). The guidelines and tool come at a critical time, when beach-nesting birds, squeezed between coastal development and sea level rise and facing impacts from

intense storms, find intensifying threats as they attempt to nest and raise their chicks on beaches in Florida.

ShoreMapper shows all sites where beach-nesting birds have been documented nesting within the last five years. It can be used during the design and planning phase of any project to determine whether the project or activities will take place within these breeding sites. Early identification of beach-nesting bird breeding sites enables project managers to adapt their projects or activities to avoid or minimize impacts to the birds and their habitat, thereby avoiding or reducing costly mitigation fees that will be required when impacts occur.

When activities do impact a breeding bird site, ShoreMapper can be used to estimate the number of birds impacted and resulting mitigation requirements, including the cost of a financial contribution that will be used for conservation actions if the project cannot be adjusted to avoid impacts and permitting altogether.



The new ShoreMapper tool will identify beach-nesting bird sites and protective buffers when permittees review development proposals. For the first time, Florida will now require projects that would harm beach-nesting bird habitat to avoid, minimize, and mitigate for those impacts.

A draft version of ShoreMapper is available now here:
<https://gis.myfwc.com/ShoreMapper/>



▲ In the past, coastal development impacted the habitat of state-Threatened species, like these American Oystercatchers, without any consequences. Now, developers will have to avoid impacts or pay hefty mitigation fees. Photo: Idangie Sein/Audubon Florida

The cost of financial mitigation is based on the cost of conservation actions and habitat restoration projects for the impacted species.

For example, if a construction project is taking place within 300 feet of a Least Tern or Black Skimmer colony, or the breeding site of one of the state-Threatened solitary nesting species (Snowy Plover and American Oystercatcher), there may be impacts from harassment. There may be impacts if: the project takes place during the breeding season, and if the habitat loss or the footprint of the project is over 500 square feet. Habitat loss or degradation can occur in two ways: direct habitat loss occurs within the footprint of the project, while indirect impacts reduce the suitability of the surrounding habitat.

If developers cause impacts, they will have to pay. ShoreMapper will estimate not only the severity of each of these impacts but also the importance of the breeding site.

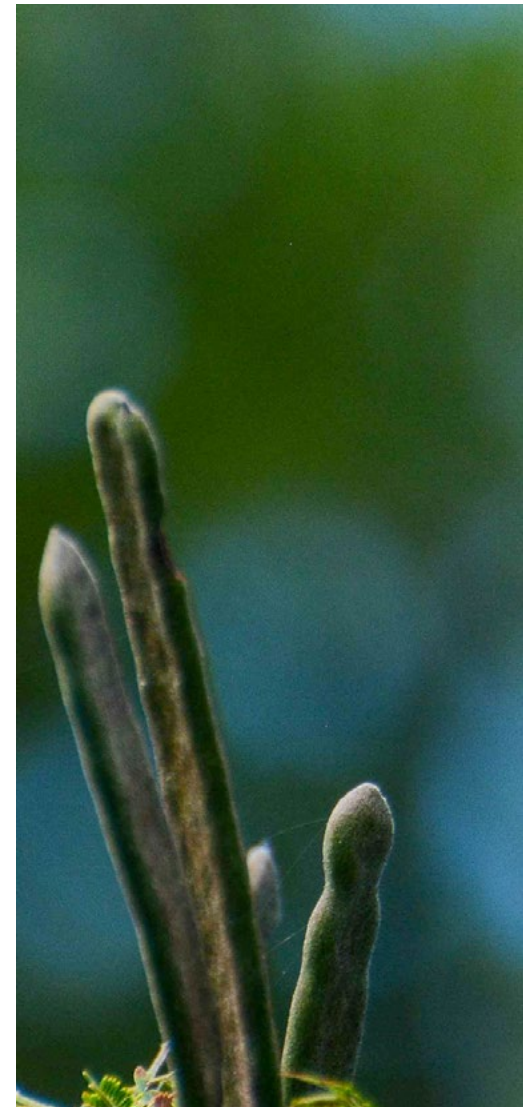
ShoreMapper can also determine if an event taking place during the breeding season is likely to be within 300 feet of a breeding site. If so, planners would either need to shift the location to move it away from the breeding site, and therefore avoid the need to apply for a permit, or seek a permit for the necessary mitigation to counterbalance any harassment and budget for the necessary financial mitigation to counterbalance any harassment to the birds from the event.

Audubon Florida is working with the FWC as they continue to refine the tool and share it with stakeholders. Our hope is that by getting this information early on in the project planning stages, developers will be incentivized to adjust projects to avoid impacts to beach-nesting birds altogether.

Hold the Urban Development Boundary in Miami-Dade County, Protect the Everglades

When you fly over Miami-Dade, the sprawl of urban development gallops west from the water until it stops abruptly, as if hitting an invisible barrier. That barrier is the Urban Development Boundary (UDB), a legal line wisely established in 1983 to limit the westward extent of development and drive smart growth. On one side, you have neighborhoods and shopping districts, industrial zones and pavement. On the other are the agricultural lands and natural landscapes South Florida requires for the implementation of Everglades restoration projects to safeguard the region's water supply and protect it from the worst effects of climate change. But this line can only protect our quality of life if we respect it. In September, the Board of County Commissioners will again consider a proposal to convert nearly 800 acres of farmland outside the UDB to an industrial park, potentially throwing that good planning out the window and hamstringing our ability to protect the Everglades and our water.

Caitlin Newcamp, Audubon Florida's new Everglades Policy Associate, testifies before the Commission that holding the Urban Development Boundary protects water quality for both birds and people.



The commission had been set to vote on this bad proposal in May, but deferred action after hearing compelling public testimony that breaking the Urban Development boundary to permit this 800-acre industrial site is a bad deal for South Floridians. Not only does it weaken the very idea of the boundary itself, but applicants have overestimated the number of jobs it could offer. Most importantly, this facility can be built elsewhere, but the Everglades can't. This iconic mosaic of sawgrass marshes, freshwater ponds, prairies, and forested uplands is uniquely Floridian, provides drinking water for all of Miami-Dade and Monroe counties, absorbs storm surge and flooding, and supports a robust outdoor recreation and fishing economy. It is at the heart of South Florida's prosperity.





◀ Birds like the Mangrove Cuckoo and other wildlife depend on the undeveloped land west of the Urban Development Boundary, as these areas will be further restored as more Everglades projects come online. Photo: Jesse Gordon/Audubon Photography Awards

Farmland can one day be restored to a healthy swath of the River of Grass; if it is converted to concrete and buildings, that can never happen. The 800 acres in question are only two miles from Biscayne Bay, which is already suffering from seagrass loss, algal blooms, and fish kills.

This acreage is incorporated into the footprint of the Biscayne Bay Southeastern Ecosystem Restoration project for its ability to clean our water and help Biscayne Bay. An industrial facility that can be built somewhere else will never offer those benefits.

Landscapes that can be turned back into high-quality natural areas — like this one — are becoming more valuable as Florida's population grows and Everglades restoration accelerates with historic levels of state and federal funding. Time and time again, the Miami-Dade Commission has wisely voted to protect Biscayne Bay

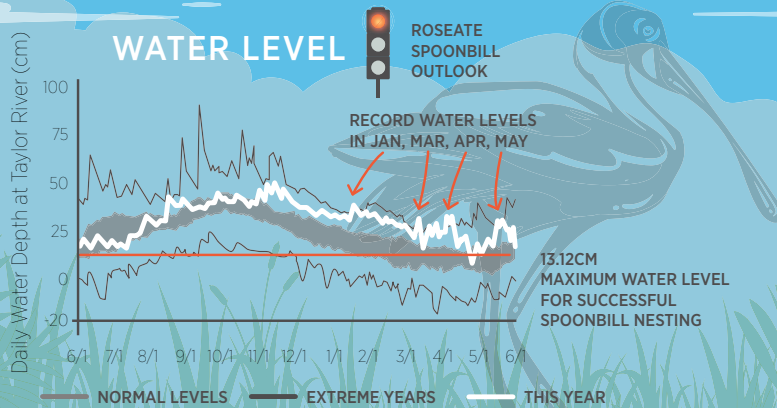
and the Everglades, prevent fish kills, and do what is right for the environment. In fact, those votes were a catalyst for the creation of Governor DeSantis' Biscayne Bay Commission to support its restoration.

The Commission must uphold its tradition of supporting Biscayne Bay by voting no on this application. In doing so, it would be voting for current and future generations of Floridians who want to drink and recreate in clean water. Who want to feel safer during storms. Who want to see their favorite birds, fish, and dolphins in Biscayne Bay.

The Board of County Commissioners has voted twice to defer a vote on this issue, and are poised to take up the application in their September 2022 meeting. At Audubon, we are clear: Move the industrial park, hold the line, protect our Florida.

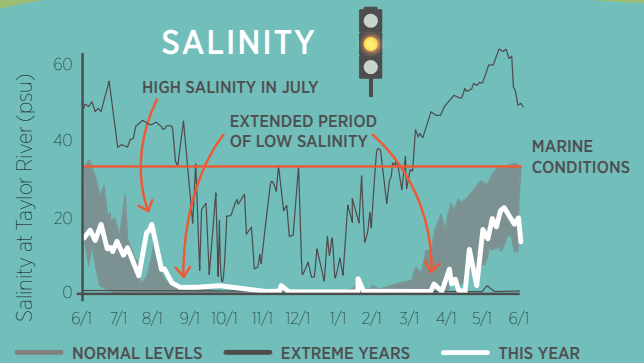


At the southern end of Everglades National Park, a series of sloughs convey freshwater to the Florida Bay estuary. Audubon researchers track these freshwater deliveries (or lack thereof) and their impacts on the ecology of Taylor Slough and the Bay.

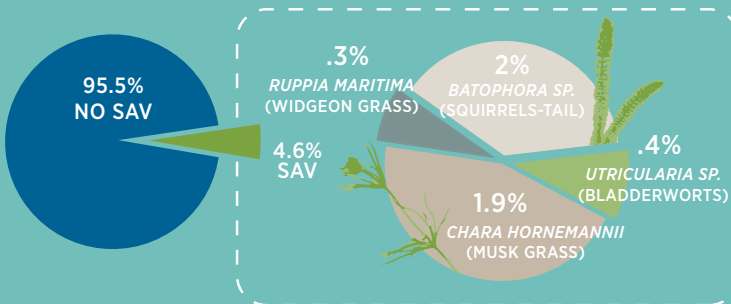


Taylor Slough experienced record-high water levels in January, March, April, and May of 2022, and overall experienced higher than normal water levels due to rapid sea level rise since 2000. The critical water level where prey fish accumulate in high numbers (around 13 cm) did not coincide with Roseate Spoonbill nesting and only dipped low for a short time in late April. Higher water levels occurred during historical Roseate Spoonbill nesting season, making it difficult for birds to successfully forage enough prey fish to feed their chicks.

Florida Bay used to receive four times more freshwater from the Everglades ecosystem than it does today. As a result, rainfall and water management make all the difference between a healthy Bay and a hypersaline one, which kills seagrass and the species that depend on it. Audubon uses our science to accelerate Everglades restoration projects to deliver much needed freshwater to Florida Bay.



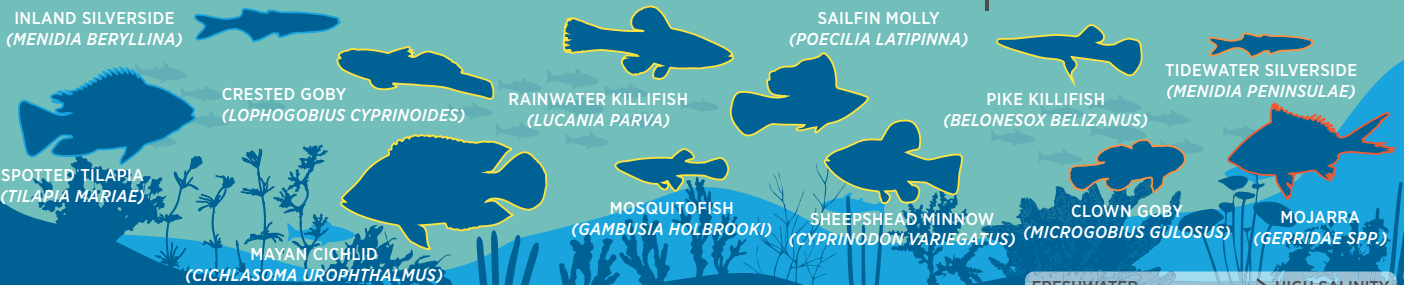
SUBMERGED AQUATIC VEGETATION (SAV) COVERAGE



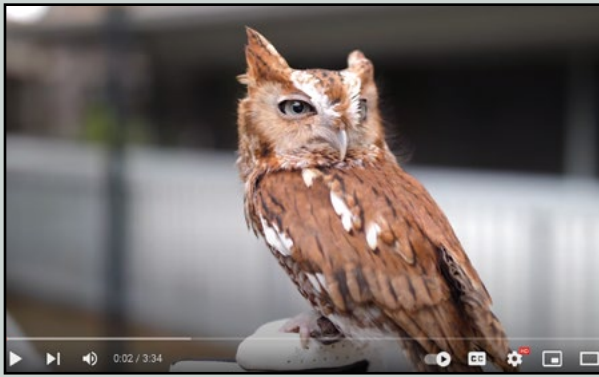
Historically, Taylor Slough is a freshwater ecosystem. The salinity pulses through August to start the wet season negatively affected freshwater plant and fish communities that are sensitive to salt. However, the extended period of low salinity well into the late dry season (April) is an excellent indication that restoration efforts are having a positive impact on plants and prey fish.

The average cover of plants for 2021-22 season was 4.6% — lower than previous years as a result of the high salinity peak in July and the extended time period before freshwater conditions returned.

FISH SPECIES CAPTURED THIS YEAR AT TAYLOR SLOUGH



During regular sampling, 11% of fish caught were freshwater species, falling well short of the target of having freshwater species make up more than 40% of the catch but still a promising result given that freshwater species have made up less than 5% of the catch for most of the last decade. A long period of low salinity is vital for freshwater plant species like Utricularia and Cladophora to establish, as well as freshwater fish species like Bluefin Killifish, which were not caught this hydro year. This also highlights how important it is for restoration infrastructure and rainfall to keep salinity levels low, thus lengthening the period for these freshwater plants and fish to establish, which also benefits wading birds.



Baby Owl Shower Success

Thank you to OUC, the Reliable One, for supporting the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey's 2022 Baby Owl Shower. OUC supports the Center's conservation efforts to protect raptors and important habitats. Check out their new video to learn more about our partnership and how OUC is helping our communities.



Watch the video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMW0nG8x9iQ>

Banded Bald Eagle Spotted at Citrus County Landfill

Audubon Florida staff received a report of another auxiliary band resight for 2022!

The individual Bald Eagle originally came to Audubon's Center for Birds of Prey after being rescued on the front lawn of a busy elementary school in April 2018 after falling from its nest.

"His family was gone by the time he was ready to go back into the wild in June 2018, so he was released on property near the Mission Inn Resort with another fledgling that was rescued nearby," explains Shawnlei Breeding, Program Manager for Audubon EagleWatch. He was banded with a green band marked "K/20" so he could be recognized in the future, and just a month after his release, he was resighted in a backyard in West Virginia.

He wasn't seen again until March 2022, when photographer Ken Rohling saw K/20, then four years old, at the Citrus County Landfill, its bands clearly visible in photographs.

As part of a long-term cooperative study through the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey, all rescued Bald Eagle fledglings treated by its Raptor Trauma Clinic receive a colored auxiliary leg band before release. The color designates the type of nest they came from: green bands for natural nests and black bands for nests on man-made structures. Audubon's goal is to learn if the type of nest structure an eagle hatches in influences the type of nest structure it chooses as a breeding adult.

Since 2017, Audubon has banded and released 86 fledgling Bald Eagles as part of this ongoing study. Each

eagle that is rescued and released gets a second chance at life and the opportunity to contribute to the future of the wild population. Plus, the information collected when the birds are resighted will help in future management and protections for Bald Eagles in Florida.

"Banding resights like this one bring us one step closer to understanding Bald Eagle nesting habits," says Breeding. "We depend on community scientists to help us track these majestic birds."

Thank you to all who were involved in the rescue, treatment, and release of Bald Eagle K/20, as well as Ken Rohling for photographing the bird and reporting it to us.

Have you spotted a banded Bald Eagle? Make note of the band color, alphanumeric code if visible, and which leg the band is on and report this important information to USGS Bird Banding at reportband.gov. This data helps researchers track longevity, migratory habits, habitat usage, and other vital population parameters.



Green band K/20 is visible on the Bald Eagle at top.
Photo: Ken Rohling

Purple Martins flock to their new homes put up by Alachua Audubon Society and Four Rivers Audubon. Photo: Jacqui Sulek/ Audubon Florida

Sarasota Audubon monitors their nests each week to count the number of eggs and chicks. Photo: Glynnis Thomas/ Sarasota Audubon



Audubon Chapters Create New Homes for Purple Martins

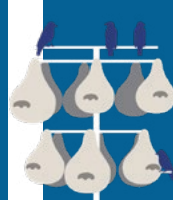
While it is well documented that Indigenous peoples dried and hung gourds for nesting Purple Martins (PUMAs), we cannot be sure when the birds made the transition from natural nesting cavities to the man-made nests they rely upon today. Unfortunately, Purple Martin numbers are declining, but Audubon Chapters are stepping up to help!

Several Florida chapters are installing suites of hollow gourds or “apartments” mounted on tall poles and protected with snake guards. A handful of pine needles is placed into each gourd just before the arrival of the birds in late February. The arrays are mounted so they can be raised and lowered to monitor the colony. Once the birds have found a good place to nest, they will return year after year and the colonies will continue to grow if more housing opportunities are added.



Second graders from the Venice Area Audubon Society education program observe and ask questions about the Purple Martin houses. Photo: Jean Pichler/Venice Area Audubon Society

Shelly Rozenberg of Audubon Everglades has led the charge in Palm Beach County with 11 projects completed — the most recent being a suite at the Lion Country Safari Rhino habitat. “I’m hoping to start a traditional ‘Purple Martin Day’ for all our locations in Palm Beach County,” says Rozenberg.



In LaBelle, the local Rotary Club asked Hendry-Glades Audubon to create a display for the County Courthouse after the chapter installed a Purple Martin Nest Rack in a park near Clewiston. The display was designed by their Conservation Leadership Initiative student Stephanie Wagley, complete with a QR code and linked to a website with the web cam to view actual Purple Martins nesting!

Sarasota Audubon Society has an active Purple Martin monitoring program at their Celery Fields Nature Center. “People always come to watch us take down the nests and we talk to them about the birds. People love it and this way they become interested and sometimes involved,” says Glyniss Thomas from the monitoring team. “The birds are true ambassadors!”

In North Central Florida, Alachua Audubon Society and Four Rivers Audubon teamed up and installed multiple gourd systems at the Lake City Treatment Wetlands. Monitoring this April found that “Thirty-one gourds contained eggs and/or recent hatchlings, with a total of 114 eggs and 25 young. How exciting to know that this colony will likely fledge over 100 Purple Martins from this Audubon-generated bird conservation project,” writes Debbie Segal, President of Alachua Audubon.



Photo: Jean Pichler/
Venice Area
Audubon
Society



From Venice Area Audubon we hear, “Venice Area Audubon serves as landlord for 42 Purple Martin housing units (14 wooden apartment-style cavities as well as 28 gourds). This year the birds have laid more than 150 eggs and new hatchlings have grown and fledged. Data will be shared with the Purple Martin Conservancy Association. The second graders from our chapter education program are the absolute best visitors with their questions and enthusiasm,” explains Barbara Zitell, PUMA Committee Chair.

Should you decide to become a Purple Martin landlord you may need to be patient. Southeast Volusia Audubon (SEVAS) is still waiting for their tenants to arrive at the Marine Discovery Center. “I was excited to see our chapter trying to get a Martin colony started, but it sometimes takes time,” says John Kendall from SEVAS.





The Tampa Bay Regional Resilience Cohort brought together college students and local government staff to create greenhouse gas inventories for 10 municipalities as well as Pasco and Sarasota counties. These baselines provide critical information to local governments as they seek to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

Working to Reduce Emissions for Birds and All Floridians

Climate change impacts threaten birds, other wildlife, and people. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is one solution to create safer, healthier communities, save taxpayer dollars, and protect Florida's natural resources.

In the Tampa Bay region, Audubon partnered with ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, Pinellas County UF/IFAS Extension, and the University of South Florida to develop baselines for greenhouse gas emissions in municipal operations. Representatives from ten cities/towns, as well as Pasco and Sarasota counties, were paired with students to gather data about the emissions produced by operations in their municipality's buildings, fleets, waste services, and more. By understanding their municipal operations, local governments create a critical framework for local resiliency decisions to reduce emissions and maximize efficiency while providing transparent accountability to their taxpayers. In addition, student fellows earned valuable experience in project management, resilience planning, and municipal operations while gaining class credit toward their graduation requirement. Now that these local governments know the emissions levels they're starting from, the race to zero is on!

Audubon Advocates' Calls Influenced Important Solar Veto!

Governor DeSantis delivered a legislative "win" for climate when he vetoed HB 741, securing a future for Florida's fledgling rooftop solar industry. The bill, as proposed, would have significantly reduced the investment feasibility for homeowners who generate their own solar power. Thanks to action from groups like Audubon Florida and advocates like you, rooftop solar is still economically viable for homeowners. Florida needs all the renewable energy it can get to meet the challenge of climate change.



Introducing Audubon's First Cohort of Florida Climate Entrepreneurs

Audubon Florida is debuting its first class of Florida Climate Entrepreneurs: Private sector innovators who are in the business of helping Florida meet the challenges of climate change while creating jobs in Florida's emerging climate economy. Few places are as vulnerable as Florida to the challenges of climate change. From sustainable communities to artificial reef installations, to renewable energy generation and next-generation transmission tech, harnessing private sector innovation to address climate change in Florida

makes smart economic sense. The private sector has a crucial role to play in helping us blunt the worst effects of climate change and weather those that remain. How we respond to climate change will determine our state's future prosperity and quality of life; these entrepreneurs are mainstreaming Florida's climate economy and the future careers it will support.

Learn more about our first class of Climate Entrepreneurs, our first panel discussion, and how to nominate a Climate Entrepreneur in your community!

<https://FL.Audubon.org/climate-entrepreneurs>



◀ Audubon was a vocal opponent of bad legislation in 2022 that would have stifled Florida's fledgling rooftop solar industry. While the bill passed over our objections, calls from advocates like you succeeded in convincing Governor DeSantis to veto HB 741!

Special Experiences, Service, and Cutting-Edge Science at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary

Close your eyes and imagine a place where birdsong fills the air instead of traffic noise. A place where giant trees surround you; trees that have been growing since before America was born. A wild landscape where Florida panthers, river otters, and wading birds thrive. This is Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, the cathedral of the Western Everglades.

NATURE PROGRAMS AND TOURS

Guided tours at the Sanctuary resumed in 2022, providing guests an up close and personal experience of the swamp. Offerings include Friday morning boardwalk tours, ancient forest tours, early birding walks, and sunset strolls. Monthly special events, including the recent Free Admission Day in honor of the 60th Anniversary of the National Natural Landmark Program, and the June Summer Solstice Sunset Celebration, have welcomed new visitors to experiences on the boardwalk.

One of the most exciting happenings this summer is the new Wild Florida Adventure Camp for children ages 6-10 years at the Sanctuary. All summer long, weekly themes with fun, interactive, hands-on activities invite campers to explore the natural wonders of the swamp through activities that integrate science, arts, music, movement, drama, and more.

You can find the entire lineup of programs at: Corkscrew.Audubon.org/programs



Publix Volunteers at the Sanctuary. Photo: David Korte



Florida Power & Light Co. volunteers at the Sanctuary. Photo: David Korte



SERVICE DAYS PROVIDE HELPING HANDS

We are so fortunate for the tremendous support we receive from corporate partners including Florida Power & Light Co. and Publix Super Markets. This spring, both companies each sent a team of enthusiastic employees ready to lend a hand. The volunteers painted our administration building, trimmed back branches and overgrown vegetation in the parking lot, and cleared vegetation around our sprinkler tank, among other duties. In exchange, they enjoyed spending free time on the boardwalk and left with the satisfaction of knowing their efforts were an investment in nature conservation.

Friends of Corkscrew members enjoy free admission to the boardwalk all year and now get early bird boardwalk access at 7AM one day a month, from May to September.

Not a member? Join today:
Corkscrew.Audubon.org/friends



TRACKING BIRDS IN FLIGHT

Staff at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary recently installed a Motus Wildlife Tracking System station as part of Audubon's Migratory Bird Initiative. Located in the Sanctuary's backcountry, the antenna picks up radio signals emitted from birds outfitted with tracking devices if their flight path takes them within seven miles of the tower.

The station joins a growing network of 16 stations in the Audubon network and countless others around the world. The information collected by the antenna is uploaded to a database where researchers, who use tracking technology, can see the exact date and time when the tagged bird was in the vicinity of a tower.

By monitoring details about the timing and duration of migratory flights for individual birds of many species, scientists can gain a better understanding of the timing and seasonal duration of migration. The data also informs land managers about birds' seasonal habitat preferences, helping our staff learn more about the role the Sanctuary plays as a stopover point of passage for migratory birds.

Research Leads the Way to Cleaner Water in the Guana River

In far Northeast Florida, just south of Jacksonville and a stone's throw from the Atlantic Ocean, the Guana River flows between the mainland and a ridge of barrier islands, providing critical habitat for wading birds, waterfowl, and migratory songbirds. Unfortunately, water quality has declined over the past several decades, but a series of research and restoration efforts will usher this waterway into a new, more resilient era.

For several years, Audubon Florida has been working with local partners to improve water quality in the Guana River System of St. Johns County. The system runs from Lake Vedra in Ponte Vedra Beach south along the coast to the confluence of the Guana and Tolomato Rivers. The Guana River is categorized as an Outstanding Florida Water, and is a central component of the Guana River Marsh Aquatic Preserve and the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve (GTM NERR). Improved water quality will benefit wildlife, make recreation safer, and help return a thriving shellfish industry to the region.

In 2017, Audubon Florida began working with staff from the GTM NERR as well as other non-profit organizations (Friends of the GTM NERR and St. Johns County Audubon) on an effort to collect and report water quality data for this neglected system. The primary goal of this project was to collect data that could be used by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to assess the health and safety of the Guana River.

After three years, the Guana River water quality project has reached an important milestone. DEP will be adding three of the region's water bodies to its list of impaired waters. This is important! Being listed as "impaired" triggers further action towards water quality restoration, including the development of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) to identify pollution sources and reductions needs, plus the development of a Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) to guide restoration activities.

Audubon participates in the "Guana Nutrients: Budgets and Bivalves" project led by the University of Florida and GTM NERR staff. Additionally, Audubon and local partners are exploring opportunities for what DEP calls "alternative restoration plans." These plans can achieve cleaner water faster than BMAPs, but are less

The Guana River suffered from poor water quality for decades. New research and restoration efforts may finally turn the tide on improving water quality, habitat, and more in this critical Northeast Florida waterway.



regulatory and require more buy-in and voluntary commitments from those involved.

As research, restoration, and regulatory plans combine, stakeholders across disciplines and county lines will work together to improve water quality for wildlife and people.

Land Surplus Crisis Averted at St. Johns River Water Management District

In early June, Audubon's Northeast Florida Policy Associate Chris Farrell was perplexed by an item on the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) Governing Board consent agenda for the following week's meeting. The District identified parcels in its ownership that it deemed weren't needed for conservation purposes — but gave no maps or identifiers beyond the property appraiser parcel numbers listed. Selling lands purchased for conservation is a big deal, so he decided to dig in, researching many of the parcels on property appraisers' sites. The results were astonishing.


District staff had identified properties for surplus that included vulnerable coastal habitat and portions of hallowed conservation lands like Orange County's Hal Scott Preserve and Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park, just to name a few. Farrell and Audubon engaged with District staff to better understand how this list came to be and voice objections to many of the identified parcels.

Thanks to Farrell's careful scrutiny and quick action, the District acknowledged the process for identifying these parcels was fatally flawed and quickly changed course, pulling the item from the meeting's agenda.

We are grateful to Executive Director Register and Governing Board Chair Rob Bradley for hitting reset on this process to ensure the transparency, accountability, and safeguards Floridians expect for their conservation lands.

Flight of the Wood Stork

“Flight of the Wood Stork,” a brand new, short film produced by National Audubon Society’s Senior Producer, Visual Storytelling, Christine Lin, showcases how Wood Storks are responding to changes in hydrology and restoration efforts underway at the Sanctuary.

 Watch the short film at:
Corkscrew.Audubon.org/flight-wood-stork



FLIGHT OF THE WOOD STORK



ABOUT THE COVER

River Journey © 2022 Peter R. Gerbert, Acrylics

Four White Ibises

Late one afternoon, as I was exploring the river near my home looking for birds and wildlife, the sun was hitting the far edge of the river creating intriguing shadows. I came up with this composition, placing ibises in flight to create an illusion of depth in this beautiful setting. Molding-paste and gesso were applied, embossing the cypress tree roots and the birds in this acrylic painting.



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