

Audubon FLORIDA *Naturalist*

Annual Report 2015



Photo by R.J. Wiley

Something to Sing About

2015
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Photo By Ralph Anwood



Harnessing the Power of People

*Steve Lynch, Chairman
Florida Audubon Society*

Dear Audubon Members & Supporters,

During the Audubon Assembly, where more than 300 local leaders, Audubon directors, and staff gathered to celebrate a good year and set our path for the future, I turned to Eric Draper and asked, "How do we top this?"

The Audubon Assembly started with exciting field trips that included students selected from eight Florida colleges. The students joined us for two days of learning sessions on climate change, engaging people, and taking a stand for Florida's parks. We know from experience that many of these students will stay involved with Audubon Florida's local programs as volunteers and perhaps staff.

Eric answered my question by saying that we need to keep investing in people. Audubon needs to be the place where students, retirees, and working-age adults can make a difference through science, advocacy, and habitat stewardship.

As Florida grows, Audubon needs to grow our capacity.

That means building on citizen science projects like Jay Watch, which measures the breeding success of endangered Florida Scrub-Jay families. It means putting more bird stewards on Florida's shores to guard nesting colonies and educate beach users and boaters. It means deploying scientists to study wading birds and forage fish in the Everglades and other wetlands systems. It means bringing more people to Corkscrew to educate them that swamps are part of vast ecosystems that need protection.

Once we could depend on the state to manage public lands and the wildlife public lands harbor. Increasingly, legislators and state agencies are turning away from the job of acquiring and managing public lands for the benefit of natural systems.

We are mad about Tallahassee diverting Amendment 1 dollars away from buying parkland to paying the salaries of agency heads. We need to get busy.

So over the next year we are going to double down on getting people involved. Not by complaining about Tallahassee but by planting our feet firmly on places we care about and using that passion to make water and wildlife important to our fellow Floridians. You can find our state conservation priorities and ways to get involved at <http://fl.audubon.org>.

Audubon Florida has never had a stronger base of engaged people – and we are making a difference.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Steve Lynch
Chairman, Audubon Florida

Thank You For Your Service

Bob Keim
Robert S. Stamps, Ph.D.
George Willson



Something to Sing About

*Eric Draper, Executive Director
Audubon Florida*

Dear Friends,

In this the best of all Florida seasons, Painting Buntings have migrated from their coastal nesting sites to winter in Central and South Florida. Last month I took friends to see and hear buntings at Fort Clinch State Park, but the birds had already ventured south. So we explored the coastal woods and talked about how important it is to preserve nesting sites.

This is also the season for giving. Your gift to Audubon Florida helps to make sure that we have parks like Fort Clinch where we can see Painted Buntings and enjoy nature with our friends and family. Parks need Audubon science, advocacy, and our feet on the ground.

This special issue of the Audubon Florida Naturalist is titled “Something to Sing About.” Please read through these pages and find the many stories of amazing conservation work taking place all over Florida.



Photo by R.J. Wiley

I hope you are inspired to get outside with others and enjoy Florida’s special places. I encourage you to get involved with conservation through your local Audubon chapter or one of our citizen science or habitat stewardship projects.

One project that really has me singing is an island near Naples named Second Chance Sandbar. It happens to be an important shorebird nesting site. As a result of Audubon’s science and conservation efforts, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission designated the island a Critical Wildlife Area in November. Signs will now warn boaters to stay away from the island during nesting season so shorebirds can raise their chicks undisturbed by human and canine intrusion. You can learn more about this important designation on page 9.

That makes me want to sing. With data and determination, we can protect wild areas and give hope to future generations of birds and people.

I am glad to share these stories of our work over the past year. And I hope you will be glad to make a generous end of year contribution to Audubon Florida.

Thank you for all that you do.

Sincerely,

Eric Draper, Executive Director
Audubon Florida

PS – Our budget depends on your gifts. Use the envelope to make a year-end contribution to Audubon Florida.

People Powered Conservation

“I continue to be inspired by the amazing effort of Florida’s people, who regularly go above and beyond to protect our birds and wildlife.”

— Lida Rodriguez-Taseff, Audubon Florida Board of Directors

Audubon Jay Watchers Solve Florida Scrub-Jay Mystery in Southwest Florida

Jay Watch volunteers are a dedicated lot. They eagerly travel to some of the most remote and inhospitable scrub habitat to protect our state’s only endemic bird species, the Florida Scrub-Jay. In 2015, a handful of these intrepid citizen scientists went above and beyond to track down a couple of “missing” scrub-jays.

In July, a team of nine Jay Watch citizen scientists were shocked to discover two color-banded Scrub-Jays at the Southwest Florida Water Management District’s Little Manatee River Southfork Preserve. Florida Scrub-Jays have never been banded on this property so the finding was extraordinary. Florida Scrub-Jays are sedentary and rarely move more than about 7 kilometers from where they hatched. So when they reported their findings to the other volunteers in this Jay Watch group, the excitement was palpable.

The citizen scientists regrouped for two extra site visits to Southfork Preserve, bush-whacking through overgrown scrub to photograph the banded birds. Photos and sighting records enabled Jay Watch to track down the origin of these two female Scrub-Jays. One was banded on private property about 10 miles away from Southfork and had been noted as “missing” for three years prior. The other jay was banded 1.6 miles away and had been “missing” for the past five years.

The dedication of volunteers Pam and Doug DeNeve, Cheryl Merz, Kathy Prophet, Paul Ahnberg and others in tracking down these birds is a testament to their passion for natural Florida. Because of their invaluable work, conservationists and agency decision-makers now have a better understanding of how Florida Scrub-Jays move across landscapes and find isolated scrub patches on which they can settle and raise young.



Audubon Jay Watch volunteers in the scrub.



Photo by Laura Ciociola.

Many Audubon members travelled to Tallahassee to make their voices heard during the 2015 Florida Legislative Session.

Audubon Advocates Lead the Fight for Florida’s Birds and Wildlife

Advocacy is at the heart of Audubon’s mission. For well over a century our members have been the conservation voice of Florida. Together, we’ve confronted the biggest issues of the day – from fighting the devastating plume trade in the early part of the twentieth century to the monumental Amendment 1 victory in 2014.

And this year was just as active. At dozens of public hearings, in all corners of the state, Audubon members gave their time and lent their voices to protect natural Florida. Advocates spoke up for Gulf Coast birds at RESTORE meetings, rallied on the steps of the Old Capitol for Amendment 1 funding, made the case for Florida black bears at Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

hearings, spoke in public workshops and hearings on behalf of a new Critical Wildlife Area in Collier County, and vigorously defended our state parks at every turn – just to name a few. Advocates also used Audubon Florida’s online email form over 10,000 times to send messages to agency and elected officials about a wide array of important conservation issues.

Your voice matters. And Florida’s birds and wildlife will surely need it again in 2016. Thank you for all that you do.

Bird Stewards Redefine Commitment for Florida's Coastal Wildlife

Audubon Bird Stewards are the eyes and ears of coastal conservation in Florida. Over 450 volunteers monitored and protected nesting birds at more than 40 beach sites during the 2015 season. Additionally, Audubon biologists and wardens worked to post and monitor over 50 more. Colony Watch volunteers helped Wood Storks, Roseate Spoonbills, and other wading birds successfully fledge the next generation. And rooftop colony chick-checkers returned fallen Least Terns to their beaches in the sky.

But what really made 2015 so special are the ways stewards continued to redefine commitment. Not only did volunteers spend their Fourth of July evening protecting birds from impromptu fireworks, but in several places (St. Petersburg, Sarasota, St. Augustine, to name a few), stewards recognized that plans for official fireworks displays would have catastrophic effects on specific colonies and successfully worked to convince decision-makers to relocate the events before the holiday.

On Marco Island, many heartsick stewards couldn't bear to volunteer after Fish Crows systematically decimated a large Black Skimmer and Least Tern Colony. Volunteers were helpless to stop the carnage, as the crows carried off all the eggs and chicks. Thankfully, bird steward Jean Hall was a daily fixture, engaging the public and relentlessly documenting the crows' impacts—essential evidence in our efforts to address this issue before next season.



Audubon Bird Steward protecting a nesting area.

In total, Audubon volunteers and staff helped support the following number of birds to fledging in 2015:
500+ Least Terns, 570+ Black Skimmers, 25 American Oystercatchers, 90+ Snowy Plovers, 7,240 Royal Terns, 3,425 Brown Pelicans, 475 Roseate Spoonbills, 70 Reddish Egrets, 1,500 Wood Storks, and 21,000 White Ibises.

Audubon EagleWatch Volunteers Play Important Conservation Role

Bald Eagle nests in Florida are often faced with the threat of encroaching development. EagleWatch volunteers play an important role in preventing disturbance to nests and nestlings from active construction. They also help keep developers honest.

That was exactly the case on October 14, 2015. Margie Ford, who has been looking out for Florida's eagles for ten years now, was making her rounds of the four nests she monitors in Manatee County when she saw something she knew wasn't right. Heavy equipment was being used to clear and grade the land around one of her nests, and if something wasn't done soon to stop it, the eagles would likely abandon the nest. While monitoring the nest from the public right of way, a representative of the developer approached Margie and explained that they had a permit for their work.



Audubon EagleWatchers keep a close eye on Florida's Bald Eagle population.

However, Margie's EagleWatch instincts kicked in. She knew it wasn't likely for them to have a permit to work that close to the nest during nesting season. After taking photos and video, she forwarded the information to Audubon Florida and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). EagleWatch was able to work with FWC to stop the work, and later confirmed that the developer was not in compliance with their permits.

An informed, proactive volunteer can make all the difference in the world for an eagle pair. Situations like this are a common occurrence all over Florida during the nesting season, highlighting the importance of EagleWatch volunteers like Margie, and their role in protecting Florida's eagles.

Protecting Iconic Florida Species

“Florida’s native birds and other wildlife are treasures worth protecting. They enrich our lives in innumerable ways every time we step out the door. A healthy environment is key to our quality of life.”

– Barbara Walker, Audubon Florida Board of Directors

Big Results for Florida’s Coastal Birds Thanks to Audubon’s New Rooftop Nesting Program

Least Terns, Black Skimmers, and Gull-billed Terns are some of the most iconic birds of Florida’s Gulf Coast. Unfortunately, their habitat is threatened by development and human encroachment.

For lack of undisturbed natural beach habitat, these species are increasingly nesting on the flat, gravel rooftops of buildings. While rooftops may be far away from crowds and predators on the beach, they are not without peril. Many young chicks find themselves wandering close to the edge of the roof, where they fall off, often to their death.

Beginning about 15 years ago, Audubon volunteers began returning unharmed fallen chicks to rooftops and making rooftops safer – first in Pinellas County and then northeast and southwest Florida. In 2014, Audubon expanded the “chick checking” work to the Panhandle with Gulf Restoration funds

from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. And last winter, Audubon took the next step in protecting rooftop-hatched chicks.

In late 2014, staff organized volunteers and partners to “chick proof” five of the Panhandle’s most problematic rooftops. The team meticulously added fencing along the roof edges and installed mesh screening over water downspouts. But the question remained – would the new fencing work?

Now that the 2015 nesting season is over, Audubon is proud to report the results. At one site in Panama City Beach, fewer than 10 Least Tern chicks survived in 2014. In 2015, staff and volunteers documented more than 200 on their improved rooftop!



Audubon staff and volunteers installed fencing on nesting rooftops to prevent chicks from falling to their death.

While these tenacious little birds have other threats to face on these rooftop colonies, falling is no longer one of them.

To learn more about how you can get involved with deploying chick fencing, and helping chick check rooftops that can't be secured, please email flconservation@audubon.org.

Nesting Roseate Spoonbills Tell the Story of Florida Bay

Photo by Mac Stone



Audubon has studied Roseate Spoonbills in Florida Bay for over 75 years.

This summer, the Florida Bay ecosystem suffered fish kills and seagrass die-offs in levels that researchers haven’t seen in decades. The harmful conditions are the result of high salinity levels created by drought, combined with too little freshwater flow discharging into the Bay.

Roseate Spoonbills – the iconic pink birds of the Everglades – are important ecological indicators of how the ecosystem is handling the changes. Spoonbills feed on forage fish – small fish that live and breed in seagrass meadows. Healthy seagrasses and lower salinities mean lots of forage fish for spoonbills to feed themselves and their chicks.

Over the past few decades, canals and other structures drained water away from Florida Bay. As less water made its way south, the number of nesting spoonbills declined. In the last few years, less than 400 nests have been recorded annually in the Bay.

Audubon Florida has been studying Roseate Spoonbills in Florida Bay for over 75 years. Our science team says the key to reversing this ecological crisis is speeding up Everglades restoration. Restoring the flow of freshwater to the Everglades will help lower the salinity levels of Florida Bay and allow seagrasses and forage fish to rebound. In turn, this will mean more food for spoonbills and other wading birds.

Audubon scientists continue to study these important birds. Our policy staff use their data to advocate for the restoration efforts needed to repair the ecosystem. Spoonbills tell the story of the health of the Bay and Audubon staff are making sure decision-makers are listening to what they have to say.

Good News for Florida Panthers as Audubon Continues Advocacy on Their Behalf

Audubon is committed to the recovery of the Florida panther, where less than 200 individuals remain in the wild. Throughout 2015, staff and volunteers advocated on behalf of these great cats and the habitat they need for recovery.

In January, Governor Rick Scott and the Florida Cabinet approved the purchase of 619 acres of panther habitat in the Western Everglades. The property was previously slated for home development and has been an Audubon priority for many years. Known as the Gargiulo tract, the land offers significant restoration opportunities and will enhance nearby wildlife habitat value.

Unfortunately, over the summer, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission released a policy statement to re-prioritize state resources for panther recovery. The proposed plan would have negatively affected collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) on expanding panthers' breeding range, an essential part of recovery.

In response to objections from Audubon and others, Commissioners revised the policy statement in a positive way.

In other advances, Service Director Dan Ashe committed to increasing their resources for panther recovery efforts. That includes advancing an Audubon-supported strategy to incentivize and collaborate with ranchers and large landowners to manage their land for panthers. Such financial incentives, along with smart land use planning and public education, are widely considered key to rural communities accepting a wide-ranging carnivore throughout the cat's former southeastern United States range.



This photo was taken by a trail cam at Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary in the Everglades.

Learn more at <http://corkscrew.audubon.org>.

Another good sign along the road to panther recovery is the Florida Department of Transportation's recent commitment to extend wildlife protection fencing and underpasses on Alligator Alley for an additional 18 miles.

Florida Grasshopper Sparrows: Hope for One of the Most Endangered Birds in the United States



FGSP Working Group on a field day at Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area. FGSP habitat is very short and very open, which requires frequent prescribed fires.

The Florida Grasshopper Sparrow (FGSP) is one of the most endangered birds in the continental United States. But thanks to efforts by Audubon, wildlife agencies and allies, hope may be on the horizon.

The strongholds for FGSP populations have been on three publicly-owned

properties, but the populations on two of the properties have almost disappeared. The Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area still holds about 55 singing males and about 25 singing FGSP were found on a private ranch. Sadly, that may be all that remain in the wild.

Partly through extensive outreach by Audubon Florida, including a high-profile Audubon magazine article in 2013, the plight of this bird has been recognized and myriad actions are underway. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is doing intensive research on the Three Lakes population. That work is in cooperation with universities, private research centers, and Audubon, and includes work on

the Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park, Avon Park Air Force Range, and private land. This year, for the first time ever, researchers brought seven FGSP into captivity for breeding.

Audubon's Dr. Paul Gray works with the Grasshopper Sparrow Working Group has extensive input on these efforts. Dr. Gray led a sub-committee that developed protocols for law enforcement to deal with potential predatory visitors (e.g., unscrupulous photographers or tour leaders). Dr. Gray also administers Audubon's Ordway-Whittell trust fund that funded three sparrow technicians at the Kissimmee Prairie in 2015.

Dedication to this bird is the latest chapter of Audubon's work on the prairies, dating to the 1930s.

Defending the Places that Birds Need for Survival

“Florida’s birds need people to protect their habitat.”

– Charlie Margiotta, Audubon Florida Board of Directors

Florida Audubon Society Protects Rare Rookery Island in Terra Ceia Bay

It’s not every day that entire islands go on sale on Florida’s Gulf Coast. This is especially true for islands that provide vital habitat to some of our most iconic water birds. That’s why the team at Audubon’s Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries jumped at a recent rare opportunity to buy Terra Ceia Little Bird Key in Manatee County.

Little Bird Key is a special mangrove estuary island where Florida birds like Brown Pelicans, Roseate Spoonbills, Black-crowned Night-Herons, and other wading birds nest. Audubon researchers have recorded over 600 nests on this vital little island in a single season.

Upon hearing the island was up for sale, Audubon’s Ann Paul and Mark Rachal wasted no time in raising the money to make it a permanent sanctuary. Contributions came in from across the globe to help with the purchase and pay for future conservation work in the area.



Audubon researchers have recorded over 600 nests on Little Bird Key in a single season, including Roseate Spoonbills (eggs pictured). Photo by Mac Stone.

Among these donations was one generous gift that came with a special condition - that the Florida Audubon Society Board of Directors name the island the “Ann and Rich Paul Sanctuary” in honor of Ann Paul & her late husband Rich Paul, the Sanctuary’s former Director. It is a fitting tribute for true Audubon leaders.

Buying this island and making it a sanctuary removes the threat of development forever. Audubon looks forward to protecting and conducting research on this new sanctuary for many years to come.

Gift by Reid Hughes Saves 200 acres of Marsh Habitat in Nassau County



Protecting Florida’s birds means protecting their habitat and the ecosystems they rely on for survival. Reid Hughes of New Smyrna Beach knows this better than anyone. Hughes serves as a member of Audubon’s Board of Directors and is a past member of the St. Johns

River Water Management District Governing Board.

Over the summer, Reid decided to make a gift that will impact the birds of northeast Florida forever. Thanks to his leadership, the Florida Audubon Society has added

nearly 200 acres of this pristine marshland in Nassau County to its system of wildlife sanctuaries. Audubon will name the new sanctuary the “Reid Hughes Marsh Sanctuary” in honor of his generous donation.

Sea level rise, development, and other factors threaten the vast salt marshes of Nassau County. This habitat is vital for both resident bird species and migrants on the Atlantic Flyway, including Saltmarsh Sparrows, Wood Storks, ibis, herons, egrets, and many types of shorebirds. Also found here are MacGillivray’s Seaside Sparrows and Worthington’s Marsh Wrens, a Species of Special Concern in Florida.

The Sanctuary is a testament to what one individual can do to assure the conservation of Florida’s special places and the remarkable species that live there.

Audubon Members Work to Protect the St. Johns River Ecosystem

Development in Florida is on the rise again. And the key to it all is access to water. More growth usually means more water removed from the ecosystem, potentially to the detriment of birds and other wildlife. Audubon has made it a priority to ensure that as our communities grow, local governments employ smart water policies that maximize conservation. The St. Johns River is a remarkably diverse mosaic of natural lands running from South Florida to Jacksonville. The system includes marshes, swamps, springs, and streams, with both crystal clear and tannin-stained waters. It is a haven for Florida's majestic wading birds and supports many Bald Eagles that nest along the river.

Yet, this incredibly important resource is in peril. Unsustainable growth in Central Florida and a dwindling water supply are driving plans to remove massive quantities of water from the St. Johns River ecosystem.

Chris Farrell, Audubon's North-east Florida Policy Associate, is working to defeat these costly and harmful projects. Over the summer, Chris and conservation ally St. Johns Riverkeeper represented North Florida's environment in meetings with leadership from three water management districts.

In November, Chris led a campaign with the support of Audubon members to convey our message of "conservation first" to the Governing Board of the St. Johns River Water Management District.



The St. Johns River ecosystem supports important species like Bald Eagles. Photo by RJ Wiley.

Our message was heard loud and clear. The Governing Board passed a motion to support additional conservation efforts as planning continues. Additionally, district staff are preparing a resolution for board vote stating river withdrawals will only be considered as a "last resort."

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Establishes First New Critical Wildlife Area in Decades



The new Critical Wildlife Area designation at Second Chance Sandbar will help protect Least Terns, Black Skimmers, and Wilson's Plovers. Photo by Dave Graff/Florida DEP.

In November, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission voted unanimously to establish a new Critical Wildlife Area (CWA) at Second Chance Sandbar in southwest Florida. The new CWA will close the island to vessel landings during the beach-nesting bird season.

Second Chance Sandbar is part of a shoal system south of Collier County's

Cape Romano. It has supported the region's largest Least Tern colony in past years, as well as nesting Black Skimmers and Wilson's Plovers. Least Terns and Black Skimmers are both state Threatened and Wilson's Plovers are a declining species of growing conservation concern.

Commissioner Liesa Priddy—a southwest Florida resident who has visited the site—was an impassioned advocate for

passage. Commissioner Ron Bergeron also endorsed the protection, saying that he has fished this region since childhood and marveled at its bird wealth. Chairman Brian Yablonski told the Commissioners that there has only been one other CWA designation in the state in the last twenty years, but to look closely because "we're going to be seeing more of these."

Special thanks to Collier County Bird Steward and wildlife photographer Jean Hall for travelling 16 hours round-trip to the meeting in Panama City and to Bay County Audubon co-president Ron Houser for their testimonies on behalf of the designation.

But most of all, congratulations to the staff of Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, FWC and Audubon, and the many volunteers who give their time to protect these special places. Because of your efforts, Second Chance CWA now has a real chance at success for nesting birds.

Celebrating Conservation Leadership & Vision

“The success of Audubon’s mission is thanks to the vision of its members and supporters. I’m proud to be part of the conservation legacy of this great organization.”

– Jud Laird, Audubon Florida Board of Directors

Two Audubon Chapters Open New Nature Centers

Nature Centers provide important environmental education opportunities to both children and adults. It’s not cheap or easy to build and operate these special places, but that didn’t deter two Audubon Chapters in Florida from opening new facilities in 2015.

Under President Dr. Richard Baker’s leadership, Pelican Island Audubon Society raised \$500,000 for the construction of the new Audubon House in Vero Beach. The Center opened its doors in April 2015 on the chapter’s 50th Anniversary. The Audubon House will provide a home base for local conservation education and training. The Center will also raise Pelican Island Audubon’s visibility in the community as they work to conserve, protect, and advocate for local wildlife and Indian River County waterways.

Thanks to years of engagement between Sarasota Audubon and Sarasota County,

the Celery Fields is now one of the best bird habitats in Florida. The full impact of their efforts can be enjoyed and studied at the new Sarasota Audubon Society Nature Center. President Jeanne Dubi worked relentlessly to organize a capital campaign that raised over \$1.3 million and, with the help of a \$42,000 grant from the William G. and Marie Selby Foundation, the Center was constructed to a LEED Gold Standard. Dubi proudly claims that “the 6000 square feet campus provides a teaching opportunity where people will learn about sustainability, wildlife, and conservation.”

Congratulations to Pelican Island Audubon Society and Sarasota Audubon for their remarkable conservation vision and leadership.



For more information on how you can visit or support these two Audubon Nature Centers, please visit:

- <http://www.sarasotaudubon.org>
- <http://www.pelicanislandaudubon.org>

Darden: Over a Decade of Conservation Leadership

Darden and Audubon Florida are committed partners in the effort to conserve Florida’s natural resources. Darden’s first gift was to the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey as part of the Center’s capital campaign to upgrade the facility in 2002. Starting in 2008, Darden supported Audubon Florida’s work to restore and recover the Northern Everglades, enabling our staff to work with cattle ranchers in the Kissimmee Valley to improve water management and water cleaning strategies. And most recently, in 2015, Darden made a gift of \$25,000 to Audubon Florida to support the state program. Over the years, Darden has contributed over \$360,000 towards Audubon’s conservation work.

Darden’s employees are personally invested in our mission as well. In October of this year, Kristine Young, Darden Sustainability Manager, joined Audubon members at the annual Audubon Assembly where she heard about a unique fundraiser from Audubon scientist Mike Kline.

Mike was riding his bike from the Everglades Science Center in the Florida Keys to the Assembly in Orlando to raise the funds to replace a damaged research boat. Kristine was so inspired by Mike’s effort that she committed an additional \$5,000 gift from Darden Sustainability to help Mike and his colleagues buy their new boat.

Thank you to Darden Sustainability and Kristine for your wonderful conservation leadership. Donations are still needed for the new research boat. For more information on how you can join Darden in supporting Mike’s effort, please visit: <http://bit.ly/MikeBikeEverglades>.



Thanks to Darden Sustainability, Audubon’s Everglades Science Team is closer to replacing an important research vessel that was recently damaged.

Audubon Leaders Leave a Conservation Legacy

“It is so hard to pick one thing that we are most proud of, but inspiring others to do what they can for conservation and making lots of conservation friends is what stands out.” - Bob Stamps and Loretta Satterthwaite.

Bob Stamps and Loretta Satterthwaite have been the stalwarts of Orange Audubon Society. Together, they have supported and nurtured the 44 chapters in Florida while serving on the Audubon Florida Board. And they have set the high bar for their effort, dedication, and vision for conserving Florida’s birds and wildlife.

After retiring from a successful career in horticulture at the University of Florida, Dr. Robert H. Stamps decided to dedicate himself to conservation full-time. Bob is now recognized as an extraordinary leader and valuable asset to the Audubon Florida community. When asked what inspired him to

become involved in conservation, Bob replied, “I credit my grandmother and father for introducing me to nature, and to my mother who taught me to care and respect all living things.”

Loretta Satterthwaite’s career has been primarily academic. She shared, “While teaching biology for non-majors at the University of Illinois, I realized just how important it was for people to be made aware of how badly we were treating the earth. Coupling that with Bob’s enthusiasm for the outdoors, it was an easy choice to continue to fight the conservation battles.”



Bob Stamps and Loretta Satterthwaite were honored at the 2015 Audubon Assembly with the prestigious William T. Dutcher award. And as they prepare to relocate to Illinois, they leave behind their vision of the Orange Audubon Nature Center.

Ann Harwood-Nuss: A Personal Commitment to Protecting Florida’s Birds

After retiring from a long and rewarding career in academic emergency medicine, Ann Harwood-Nuss knew she wanted to become more involved in conservation work.



In May, Ann released the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey’s 500th rehabilitated Bald Eagle.

In 2012, Ann started volunteering for Audubon’s EagleWatch program and was the only volunteer in Northeast Florida. Thanks to Ann, that program has grown and there are now 35 EagleWatch volunteers in the area. Ann’s dedication to Florida’s birds was so strong that she has since become a member of the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey Sustainability Committee and joined the Audubon Florida Board of Directors.

Ann not only supports Audubon Florida with the precious gift of time but also significantly supports our work with financial contributions. In 2015, Ann provided the funding for the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey to purchase a new digital X-Ray machine. This equipment helps the Center provide better treatment for injured raptors that arrive at the clinic for care.

But one of Ann’s most important contributions to conservation in Florida was her decision to leave a legacy gift to Audubon and become a member of the Grinnell Legacy Society. Ann’s energy

and vision for conservation is boundless. She’s already helped recruit another member to the Grinnell Legacy Society and she’s working on more.

In Ann’s own words, “Although there are many maxims about the benefits of giving, in a beautifully simple phrase, the power of giving is that it feels good.” We are so grateful to be a beneficiary of her generosity and passion for Florida’s birds.



If you would like to learn more about naming Audubon Florida as a beneficiary in your estate plans, please contact Audubon’s Cathy Rodgers at crodgers@audubon.org.



What Will 2016 Bring Florida's Environment?

Eric Draper looks at 2016's opportunities and challenges for Audubon's science, water and conservation work.

Getting it Done Now and Taking the Long View

The other day I was at the groundbreaking for an Everglades restoration project. As the shovels moved the dirt I remembered that the seeds for this project were planted long ago. The land was purchased with funds from both the state and Martin County. The project was designed by federal agencies. Soon the site will treat and store billions of excess St. Lucie River water.

Next year I hope to take part in more restoration groundbreakings and ribbon cuttings. Each brings us a step closer to plans that were charted nearly twenty years ago. That is the long view.

Today as I started writing this article, the phone rang with questions from reporters about the state's budget. Governor Rick Scott recommends more money for the Everglades, but shorts the land acquisition programs that so many voters thought they were getting with the 2014 Water and Land Conservation Amendment. That is short-sighted. It bothers me that this Governor is only recommending 1/10th of what his predecessors put into land conservation – even though there are ninety projects with a million acres waiting for state funds.

Florida is growing quickly, but state leaders are not investing adequate funds in the land and water infrastructure needed to protect our springs, rivers, and estuaries, along with wildlife and parks for people. Instead, they take the short view of promising short-term economic gains.



At the groundbreaking of the new C-44 reservoir in Martin County.

Audubon's recommendations for the state budget take the long view. We ask that voter-approved Amendment 1 dollars be used for:

- Everglades restoration - \$150 million
- Land conservation - \$150 million
- Springs recovery - \$50 million
- Conservation land management - \$100 million

As the funds captured by Amendment 1 grow over the next 19 years, so should environmental spending.

Water: Today's Crisis and Tomorrow's Opportunity

The Legislature is likely to pass a major water bill next year. Far from perfect, it fails in its original ambition to clean up and restore flows to Florida's springs. But hard-fought advocacy caused bill sponsors to make changes that make it likely that less pollution finds its way into the Everglades, Lake Okeechobee, coastal waters, and springs.

The water bill also sets up processes for managing water supply when there is not enough water for growing human needs and the environment. Utilities are still clinging to short-term thinking that

involves building expensive projects to treat and deliver water that none of us want coming out of our taps. Audubon has demonstrated that Florida can meet its water needs with existing sources if we get serious about water conservation. That is the long view.

Audubon Science to Guide the Future of Florida's Wetland Resources

We know birds need wetlands to thrive. That's why Audubon has long invested in Everglades science. Under state and federal laws, developers and farmers are supposed to avoid wetlands. And those wetlands that are lost to development and roadbuilding have to be replaced. In 2016, Audubon will refocus our science to take the long view on the success of damaged or replacement wetlands. In recent years, our scientists have noted trends in wading bird nesting success related to how much water is in wetlands at different times of the year. We hope the new research will influence everyone from developers to government agencies to treat existing wetlands a little better and make sure the replacement wetlands live up to the promise. That is the long view.

Audubon Assembly 2015

Parks: The Heart of Natural Florida

Thank you to everyone who attended the 2015 Audubon Assembly in Maitland. It was an inspiring weekend, full of interesting lectures, exciting field trips, and an unforgettable keynote presentation from Rafael Galvez. We hope to see you all again next year. Details will be revealed in the coming months – stay tuned to our website!

2015 Award Winners:



Champion of the Everglades
Senator Darren Soto



Theodore Roosevelt
Senator Thad Altman



Florida's Special Places
Will Abberger



Guy Bradley
Laurie Macdonald



Women in Conservation
Deirdre Macnab



Florida's Special Places
Alik Moncrief



Distinguished Philanthropist Award
Michael Sheridan



Volunteer of the Year
Jean Hall



Chapter of the Year
Sarasota Audubon Society

Thank you to our Assembly sponsors:



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Thank You

Audubon is able to protect Florida's birds and conserve their habitat thanks to the dedication, foresight, and generosity of people like you. To learn more about how you can join this effort, please visit <http://www.GivetoAudubonFlorida.org> or contact Cathy Rodgers at: croddgers@audubon.org or 407-644-0190.

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The Everglades Foundation, Inc.

\$100,000 - \$249,999

Close Friend Foundation
The Mosaic Company
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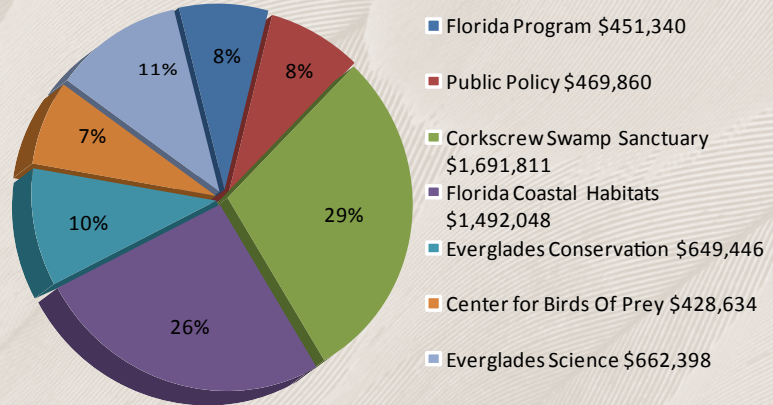
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Financials July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015

Florida Audubon Society and National Audubon Society operate together as Audubon Florida – led by a state board and operating team. Contributions and other income to Audubon Florida are used to support state level science, education, and conservation programs. Contributions to Florida Audubon Society are used to train volunteer leaders, support advocacy, and build our state endowment. For more on how your funds and planned gifts are used to advance Audubon's mission, please contact Jonathan Webber at 850-222-2473 or email jwebber@audubon.org.

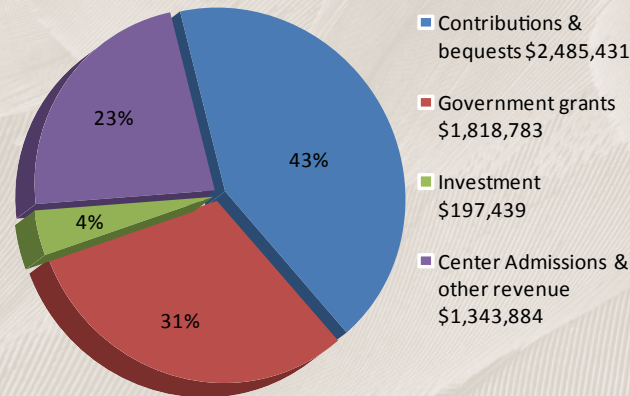
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Expenses by Program



Total Expense \$5,845,537

Revenue Sources



Total Revenue \$5,845,537

FLORIDA AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC. Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Assets As of June 30, 2015

ASSETS

Current Assets	
Cash	36,067
Cash - Restricted	19,594
Accounts Receivable	0
Charles Schwab Investment	3,549,013
Charles Schwab Investment -Restricted	969,223
Total Current Assets	4,573,897
Other Assets	
Land	3,034,379
Building & Improvements	2,247,387
Furniture & Equipment	39,360
Accumulated Depreciation	-1,067,109
Total Other Assets	4,254,016

TOTAL ASSETS

8,827,914

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Liabilities	6,755
Equity	
Land-Preservation	503,612
Board Designated Acquisition Fund	3,336,177
Unrestricted Net Assets	4,048,212
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	581,782
Permanent Restricted Net Assets	300,000
Net Income	51,376

Total Equity

8,821,159

TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY

8,827,914



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Annual Report 2015

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Photo by Mac Stone