

 Audubon
OF FLORIDA

SPRING 2009

Florida Naturalist

**PROTECTING
FLORIDA'S SPRINGS**
Birds and Climate
Change



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Audubon of Florida is focused on protecting birds and the important habitats we all need to survive. This is our mission and our passion; and so, when Audubon scientists release a report on the effects of climate change on birds, we work even harder to find solutions to protect them.

The recent Audubon report, *Birds and Climate Change: Ecological Disruption in Motion*, drives home the point that global warming already is affecting us here in Florida. The eastern bluebird and the American goldfinch in Florida are prime examples. These species are shifting where they spend the winter. Eastern bluebirds have moved north by 114.5 miles in the last 40 years. This decline in the numbers of Florida-wintering bluebirds is likely due to milder winter temperatures that allow the birds to stay farther north. The center of wintering distribution for the American goldfinch, a popular winter visitor to feeders, has moved more than 219 miles north in the last 40 years. Warmer winters and food availability at feeders have made this possible. However, it may put them at increased risk from unusually cold winters or harsh storms.

These shifting ranges are a sign of ecological disruption. While birds have wings and can fly as temperatures change, what about species that cannot relocate as easily, or whose habitats are vanishing? Some may not survive. And some new species could be introduced that would be harmful to the environment.

Scientists agree that humans need to reduce their global warming pollution 80 percent by 2050 in order to avoid the worst effects of climate change. To achieve this, Audubon advocacy staff and volunteers are calling for strong federal policies to reduce global warming pollution.

We also need to take steps here at home, and Audubon is employing all its tools to achieve meaningful climate legislation in Florida. Governor Charlie Crist has called for strong rules to reduce greenhouse gas from cars and light trucks, and to require that 20 percent of electricity come from renewable energy sources by 2020. We are working to ensure the Legislature approves these rules. They will take millions of pounds of global warming pollution out of the Florida's atmosphere, create green-energy jobs, and provide greater energy independence for our state.

Florida's birds already are on the move. With your support, our work will continue to move Florida in the right direction—one that provides solutions to protect the birds and special places we all care so much about.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Anderson".

David Anderson
Executive Director, Audubon of Florida



As the Spring 2009 issue of the Florida Naturalist reaches you, the Florida Legislature will be in full swing, and so will Audubon's advocacy to advance conservation. The economic situation makes this year's session challenging, but Audubon will not give up its efforts to protect clean water, and the land and air so important to birds, wildlife, and our quality of life.

For updates, visit www.audubonoffloridanews.org and click the link for Audubon's Conservation Action networks to receive timely newsletters and action alerts.

Photo of common moorhens by Jaime (Jay) Paredes, 2008 Chertok Contest winner.

AUDUBON ADVOCACY: Promoting Legislative Strategies to Protect Florida's Springs

To protect fresh water and springs, Audubon is working to advance positive legislation and defeat harmful measures. Here are some details:

CLEAN WATER STRATEGIES

Springs Bill – Senator Lee Constantine's Florida Springs Protection Act renews the effort for pilot programs to protect four of Florida's best known springs – Ichetucknee, Rainbow, Silver and Wakulla. The bill requires springs protection zones within which restrictions are required on septic tanks, fertilizers, sewage sludge disposal, and farming practices.

Florida Forever – The state's premier land-buying program prioritizes springs, spring buffers and groundwater recharge areas. Purchase of land around springs prevents development and erosion, and provides recreational access. Purchase of groundwater recharge areas, especially in sensitive karst areas, helps protect it from development and agricultural activities.

Severance Fee on Groundwater – Governor Crist has proposed a severance tax on groundwater withdrawals for bottled water, modeled on current state tax charged for the removal of phosphate ore and other minerals. Revenue would be directed toward preventing sources of pollution, such as sewage and septic tanks.

Nutrient Pollution – Florida's waterways have pollution standards, but the measurements are not strictly numeric. The state, under pressure from the federal government, will set limits on nutrients, in turn requiring controls on sources of pollution, including human and animal wastes and fertilizers.

No P Fertilizer Bill – A bill by Senator Ken Pruitt will prohibit most uses on turf grass of fertilizer containing the nutrient phosphorous. Florida's soils are already phosphorous-rich and most grass does not need phosphorous fertilizer.

DIRTY WATER STRATEGIES

Wetlands – Audubon is fighting back proposals to make it easier to destroy wetlands. Under the guise of streamlining environmental permitting, legislators have proposed making it harder for regulators to say no to developers, or for citizens to intervene to stop wetlands permits from being issued. Wetlands are nature's water filters and provide food and habitat for most species of birds.

Fertilizer Preemption – The fertilizer industry is continuing its legislative push to prevent state and local laws from regulating when and how much fertilizer can be used. By actively marketing fertilizer for use on landscapes that cannot easily assimilate nutrients, the industry is a major source of water pollution, especially in springs.

Stormwater – Legislators are moving to limit local governments' use of land-use plans to make sure that dirty stormwater does not taint local waterways. Audubon has joined Florida's cities and counties in the Fiscal Coalition for Water Quality, arguing for Ben Franklin's motto that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Wastewater Residuals – Despite passage of a prohibition on the land disposal of sewage sludge in the Lake Okeechobee watershed, the practice continues there and throughout the state. In all its forms, including pelletized AA (dried sludge disinfected and turned into pellets for fertilizer use), land application of wastewater residuals adds thousands of tons of nutrient pollution to Florida's waters.



Christina Evans took this photo of skimmers feeding their chicks at Egmont Key, one of the important habitats for beach-dependent birds that will continue to be managed by the state park service.

State Park Closures Averted, Florida Forever Funding Saved.

The previous *Naturalist* reported on a Florida Park Service proposal to temporarily close or transfer responsibility for 22 parks, including Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park and Egmont Key State Park, as a result of budget shortfalls.

On February 20, Audubon celebrated the release of Governor Charlie Crist's budget, not only because it recommended full funding for Florida Forever, but also because it provided for keeping these important state parks open. The parks' admission fees have long been undervalued, and Audubon advocated for small increases that would boost revenue to support park resource management.

It appears that these efforts have paid off. Modest increases in park admissions will likely go into effect by July. These would offset the costs of operating and managing the 22 parks, and buffer them from budget cuts. Although the Legislature, not the Governor, ultimately writes the budget, Audubon is optimistic that Governor Crist's budget recommendations, combined with the additional revenue, will eliminate once and for all the need to temporarily close any state parks.



To keep up with all the important conservation issues and initiatives that Audubon of Florida is working on, visit www.audubonoffloridanews.org

Photo of pig frog by Charlie Corbeil, 2008 Chertok Contest winner.



Photo of sunrise in Big Cypress by Alison Thomas, 2008 Chertok Contest winner.

Living with Florida's Springs

Noted scientist and naturalist Archie Carr called springs “the singular blessing of the Florida landscape,” and, for many, springs represent the essence of wild Florida. Humans’ love affair with Florida’s springs stretches back more than 12,000 years and continues today, with more than two million people visiting Florida’s 18 spring-based state parks annually. Unfortunately, many springs show signs of stress and require concerted efforts to protect them.

The condition of a spring is inextricably linked to the condition of its springshed, the area of land that supplies groundwater for spring flow. Because springsheds can be very large—that of Rainbow Springs, for example, covers more than 735 square miles—activities far from a spring have the potential to affect it. Two serious threats to spring health—decreases in discharge and increases in nutrients—result from activities in the springshed.

Within a springshed, human inhabitants and springs get nearly all of their water from the same finite source: groundwater. When humans use more water, less remains for springs. A 2008 study by the Southwest Florida Water Management District estimated that flow at Weeki Wachee Springs had declined by approximately nine

percent due to human water use within its springshed. In extreme cases, such as Kissengen and White springs, flow has all but disappeared as a result of human actions.

Much like the Everglades, Florida’s springs are adapted to low-nutrient conditions. Chemical fertilizers, human waste, and animal waste, among other factors, can contribute to nutrient increases in springs, particularly nitrates. Many spring systems now exhibit nitrate concentrations more than 100 times higher than natural background levels. These increases in nutrients, especially when combined with decreases in discharge, have potential to upset the delicate balance of spring ecosystems. Dense growths of filamentous algae, for instance, proliferate in nutrient-enriched systems, smothering native rooted plants. Lower levels of biological productivity have also been noted in springs with elevated nutrient concentrations.

So, if you live in a springshed, what can you do to protect the health of your spring? As you might expect, water conservation and nutrient management are key strategies. In most households, outdoor water use accounts for around 50 percent of water consumption. Reduce your use by irrigating only when lawns show signs of

wilt. Even better, consider replacing part or all of turf areas with drought-resistant native vegetation that needs no irrigation.

Indoors, conserve by installing low-flow fixtures and water-efficient appliances, washing only full loads of laundry and dishes, checking regularly for leaks, and taking shorter showers. You can reduce nutrient enrichment of springs by carefully following instructions on fertilizer bags (more is not better) and avoiding application near water bodies, sinkholes, and impermeable surfaces that send runoff directly into drains, bypassing vegetation entirely. If you have a septic tank, inspect and maintain it regularly to reduce leaching of nutrients into groundwater. Let others know how they can help, too.

For more information on these and other tips, please visit watermatters.org, fyn.ifas.ufl.edu and floridasprings.org.

This article was contributed by Gary E. Williams, a senior environmental scientist with the Southwest Florida Water Management District. With degrees in wildlife ecology (emphasis on birds), Dr. Williams currently focuses on the management and restoration of springs.

A Warning from the Birds:



Photo of goldfinch by R. J. Wiley.

Climate Change Is Happening Now and Urgent Solutions Are Needed

The long-term threats of global climate change—now widely accepted as real—continue to be mistakenly perceived as far-off in both time and locale. But new analyses by Audubon scientists reveal that 40 years of shifts in avian wintering ranges add up to a very different message: Ecological disruptions caused by climate change have been happening across North America for decades, and are having a measurable, visible impact on familiar bird species.

Nearly 60 percent of species that winter in North America have moved northward or inland, with climate playing a likely role in shifts that can exceed hundreds of miles. Changes are visible among the birds of Florida. Though implications for individual species can appear benign, the long-term environmental disruptions they portend are serious for birds, for other wildlife, and people alike. Visit www.birdsandclimate.org to learn more about these findings and to join Audubon's campaign to curb global warming. Also visit www.audubonoffloridanews.org to read the Florida fact sheet and to sign up for the Florida Climate Action Network.

Audubon is working in Florida to curb the impact of climate change by advocating for strong national legislation to cap and trade global warming pollution and by pressing for strong state renewable energy and clean car policies. (*See the story on page 11*).

Join us. Visit www.audubonoffloridanews.org and sign up for our Climate Action Network. Together we can shape a better future for birds and all life on Earth. **GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE IS HAPPENING NOW. WHAT HAPPENS TOMORROW IS UP TO US.**

Financial information about National Audubon Society can be obtained by writing to us at 225 Varick St., 7th Floor, New York, New York, 10014 or as stated below: NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY FLORIDA REGISTRATION # CH281: A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE, WITHIN THE STATE, 1-800-HELP-FLA. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE STATE.

Audubon and Its Partners Survey Wintering Shorebirds on Florida's Beaches



In February, Audubon of Florida and its partners surveyed much of Florida's beaches to count wintering birds. Birds such as sanderlings, dunlins, semipalmated plovers, short-billed dowitchers as well as the rare red knots, which are in dramatic decline, and piping plovers, federally listed, use Florida beaches for up to eight months a year before going to nest further north.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife office in Jacksonville, in partnership with Flagler Audubon, started a mid-winter shorebirds survey three years ago. Audubon volunteers bring their bird identification expertise and team up with professionals to survey every inch of beach.

Monique Borboen, Northeast Florida Policy Associate for Audubon, helped coordinate the survey. This year's coverage extended more than 170 miles, from the Georgia border to Cape Canaveral. "To survey such an extensive coastline, partnership is key," she said. "The goal is to expand the survey statewide. This year about a dozen Audubon chapters from the Northeast and Gulf Coast regions participated, teaming up with state and federal agencies, land managers from cities and counties, and staff from state, county and national parks."

February's systematic survey will help the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to better assess location and numbers of the birds wintering in Florida, and the data will further the service's current bird conservation projects. This survey gathered critical information about the bird species that winter on Florida's beaches, as Audubon of Florida continues to advocate for better ways to protect them.

AUDUBON ASKS THE PUBLIC TO HELP PROTECT BIRDS BY:

- **WALKING AROUND BIRDS.** Like people, shorebirds need to feed and rest in peace. Avoid flushing birds when you walk, bike, or drive on beaches. Every time they fly up, birds expend precious energy and burn fat reserves they need to migrate back to their nesting grounds.
- **KEEPING DOGS AWAY FROM THE BIRDS.** Birds see dogs as predators and are disturbed by their presence, even when humans much closer don't seem to bother them.
- **AVOIDING DISTURBANCE,** such as kite flying and kite surfing. To birds, kites are gigantic aerial predators, so keep your distance from birds when you fly kites or engage in kite surfing and similar activities.

Black skimmers fly above volunteers and staff from Audubon and University of Florida Whitney Laboratory for Marine Biosciences as they survey birds at Fort Matanzas National Monument. Photo by Jose Nunez.

RESTORING THE EVERGLADES

THE BENEFIT OF U.S. SUGAR LANDS

Efforts to consummate a deal on land in the Everglades Agricultural Area continue despite the threat of legislation that would prevent the South Florida Water Management District from completing its purchase of U.S. Sugar's farmland.

Other landowners have objected to the District's purchase and convinced legislators to introduce bills to kill the deal. The proposed purchase would be financed with bonds to be repaid by property taxes collected by the District.

Audubon is collaborating with the Everglades Foundation campaign to build public support for the purchase because it will provide important lands so that dirty water in Lake Okeechobee can be treated and stored before being released into the natural Everglades ecosystem. The southern end of the Everglades is parched, while water from Lake Okeechobee is routinely dumped into Atlantic and Gulf coastal estuaries.

Audubon believes the time to acquire these lands is now and the reasons are compelling, meaning security for water resources, for nature, wildlife, and people. The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) envisioned putting more than 300 huge wells in and around Lake Okeechobee that could pump the equivalent of about three feet (approximately 1.5 million acre-feet) of the Lake's depth annually. That idea, while not completely abandoned, is no longer considered viable because of the technical and financial issues surrounding the operation of so many huge pumps. This leaves a water storage deficit in CERP that the U.S. Sugar lands can alleviate.

Dealing with Okeechobee's dirty water each year is also a huge problem. CERP envisioned sending only about six inches of the lake's water to the Everglades annually, and built that much water cleansing capacity. But the Northern Everglades plan calculated that to protect the St. Lucie and

Caloosahatchee estuaries from harmful releases from the lake, four to six times that volume of storage is needed upstream of Lake Okeechobee. Once captured, that water must move through the system during dry periods. So in addition to giving Florida more storage ability, the U.S. Sugar land would provide more area for filter marshes (perhaps 50,000 acres) for cleansing Okeechobee's water as it moves south. This would help to rehydrate the Everglades and protect the estuaries from large discharges of dirty lake water.

Recent modeling from the SFWMD indicates that if acquired, the US Sugar land could be used to virtually eliminate harmful estuary releases, make Okeechobee water clean enough for the Everglades, and move enough Okeechobee water to benefit the needs of the Everglades—conclusions not seen by Audubon scientists before.

All stakeholders will participate in the open process of deciding what land to use, trade or surplus from the 181,000 acres. The ability to use extensive land in the EAA to store excess water during wet periods, clean it, and deliver it where and when it is needed most will secure water for South Florida's population during dry periods and protect coastal communities during wet seasons.

Everglades advocates urge the public and decision-makers alike to support the USSC land deal as a smart restoration decision, which will provide tremendous benefits for the public and for the natural system.

For a detailed fact sheet on the state acquisition of U.S. Sugar lands, visit <http://audubonoffloridanews.org/ea.pdf>.



Photo of roseate spoonbills by Harry Moulis.

WADING BIRD NESTING TRENDS SHOW A DECLINE IN THE SOUTHERN EVERGLADES AND FLORIDA BAY

Audubon Science Shows Restoration IS URGENTLY NEEDED.

One need not look far to see evidence that the southern Everglades and Florida Bay continue on a downward trajectory. Recent scientific documentation and a preliminary report of recurring low roseate spoonbill nesting numbers in Florida Bay are warnings that further delays in Everglades restoration will be disastrous.

In late 2008 the South Florida Water Management District released its annual South Florida Wading Bird report. Packed with information on bird nesting and populations throughout the Everglades ecosystem, the report shows an overall trend of drastic declines in several key species in the southern part of the system. Wading bird indicator species used to measure Everglades restoration performance are the great egret, snowy egret, tricolored heron, white ibis, and wood stork.

During the 1930s and early 1940s, more than 90 percent of nesting efforts of these five species occurred in the southern Everglades marshes and mangrove estuaries. But in 2008, less than 7 percent of the combined total of these indicator species nested in this region. This startling statistic confirms that the southern Everglades habitat is now capable of supporting only a fraction of winged wonders that once nested there. Perhaps the National Research Council's

report, *Progress Toward Restoring the Everglades: The Second Biennial Review, 2008*, states the situation best: "Wading birds have redistributed themselves to new locations outside their former ranges that included Everglades National Park, one of the jewels of the national park system."

For indications of the health of Florida Bay and nearby wetlands, all eyes are focused on the roseate spoonbill, a recognized ecological indicator for the southernmost part of the system. Last nesting season, Audubon scientists documented the lowest numbers of nesting roseate spoonbills in Florida Bay since the 1960s. The 2009 preliminary counts of all Florida Bay nests show a further decrease over last year, a sign that Florida Bay and nearby wetlands critical for wading bird foraging are not currently able to support a sustainable spoonbill population.

On a positive note, overall productivity, measured by numbers of chicks fledged per nest, appears to be higher despite fewer nests than last year in Florida Bay. This is likely attributable to more favorable hydrological conditions across the birds' foraging areas, since wading birds depend on defined wet and dry seasons. Rains trigger the huge production capability of the birds' foraging areas; then a dry season causes prey to be concentrated in pools where adult spoonbills can catch adequate food for hungry, growing chicks.

Weather patterns will continue to influence nesting success throughout the Everglades region, as did the two years of drought prior to the last nesting season. Reducing the drainage capacity of canals that cut across the southern end of the ecosystem, starting with construction of the C-111 projects, can work to reduce the negative effects of climate change, and possibly help bird populations to better endure severe weather events.

Audubon continues to advocate for authorization, funding, and construction of critical restoration projects, while its scientists remain dedicated to banding and tracking roseate spoonbills to determine their precise nesting patterns and movements. As always, your help in reporting sightings of banded spoonbills is essential.

Please visit www.audubonofflorida.org/who_tavernier_reportspoonbills.html to learn about the new bands used on this year's chicks. Spoonbill population and movement data is needed now more than ever.



SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES ADD UP

The sustainable practices triggered by the FGCU Colloquium model are an impressive measure of Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary's education work. By the end of 2009, the use of a bus instead of private cars will have **reduced** carbon emissions by 45 tons and **eliminated** 105,984 road miles. Thirty-five partner educators have already been **trained** and now teach on the boardwalk at Corkscrew.

Photo of barred owl chicks at Corkscrew by R J Wiley.

In Harmony with Nature

Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary and Gulf Coast University Teach Real Life Lessons in Sustainability

After hosting Florida Gulf Coast University's (FGCU) University Colloquium course at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary for over a decade, simple changes in program delivery have triggered a significant shift toward sustainability of this established collaborative program.

The educational strategy at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary is to lead by example, enable others to learn sound environmental education practices, and to empower visitors and students to incorporate conservation into their lives. An ideal place to demonstrate the course's principles, the Sanctuary is a working model that "being green" is a viable business practice.



Students from Florida Gulf Coast University explore Corkscrew's natural wastewater treatment facility.

Designed to teach economic, social, and ecological sustainability, the course is structured so that participants will become aware of environmental issues and find their "sense of place" in the natural environment they inhabit. Initially, a hundred FGCU students participated in the Colloquium each year. But today the course brings nearly 1,800 students a year to the Sanctuary. The Colloquium's relatively large groups no longer allowed students to experience the serenity of natural habitats, and the frequent visits strained the staff and volunteer boardwalk guides. Paradoxically, the crowds of students were arriving at the Audubon Sanctuary in separate cars to discuss ecological sustainability.

So the Education Department worked with FGCU team members to evaluate and implement changes to delivery of the program, actions that demonstrate Corkscrew's strategy of "Lead, Learn, Live." Here are some of the results.

LEAD – Corkscrew is a working model of how to achieve conservation goals while remaining economically sustainable through tourism dollars, contributions, and merchandise sales. Key components are the natural wastewater treatment facility, the boardwalk made of

sustainably-harvested timber, and 13,000 acres of native habitats managed to maintain the health of wild and human populations.

LEARN – A pilot program trains FGCU faculty and students to guide boardwalk trips themselves. "The program is a win-win," said Laurie Coventry-Payne of FGCU. "Student naturalists develop valuable leadership skills and benefit by having field experiences tailored to the curriculum. Faculty members appreciate the assistance, and Corkscrew's volunteers are freed up to perform valuable service elsewhere in the Sanctuary."

LIVE – "As of January 2009, buses transport the entire Colloquium classes, reducing the carbon footprint, highway traffic, and parking requirements," said Annette Snapp, Colloquium coordinator. "Bus trips mean more teaching time with the students, and serve as a lesson in sustainability." The students agree. "The bus was the best carpool," said student Richard Callahan. "I realized we often use individual vehicles out of convenience rather than necessity." Another student, Travis Wagner, added that "using the bus reinforces the principles of sustainability that are being taught in this course."



Photo of sandhill cranes and chicks by Jim Urbach, 2008 Chertok Contest winner.

Call on Florida Legislators TO HEED VOTERS

The Florida Legislature has before it two important climate solutions policies that voters clearly support: A renewable portfolio standard and a clean car rule.

These policies were first proposed two years ago by Florida Governor Charlie Crist and Audubon is focused on ensuring the Florida Legislature turns these policies into law in 2009.

Renewable Portfolio Standard: Governor Charlie Crist supports, and the Florida Public Service Commission (PSC) recommended to the Legislature, a rule that would require utilities to supply 20 percent of their energy using renewable sources, such as solar, by 2020. Legislators should approve this rule as it is, and stick to the letter of Florida law HB 7135 in defining renewable energy. Attempts to change the rule to a clean energy standard that includes nuclear power should be opposed.

Clean Car Rule: Governor Crist supports, and the Florida Environmental Regulation Commission approved, Florida's adoption of the California Vehicle Emissions Standards that would require auto manufacturers to sell cars and light trucks that emit fewer greenhouse gases. The rule is now before the Legislature and Audubon urges approval.

FLORIDA VOTERS AGREE: Legislators Should Pass Renewable Energy and Clean Car Laws Now

The results are in, and a large majority of Florida voters agree that state legislators should pass laws to require auto makers to sell clean cars and require utilities to use renewable energy.

Audubon of Florida teamed up with the Florida Wildlife Federation and the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy (SACE) in February to have the Kitchens Group conduct a statistically-sound survey of Florida voters about their views on global warming and solutions to the climate crisis.

To help constituents compare legislative views to the views of Florida voters, Audubon and its partners have launched the Take a Stand on Climate Change campaign with a new website: www.climateflorida.org. There, legislators will be asked to let their constituents know where they stand on climate change policies. The interactive website allows visitors to examine the results of the voter survey, and call on their lawmaker's to take a stand. Get involved at www.climateflorida.org.

The survey clearly demonstrates that the public wants state action to address global warming. Florida legislators that deny the problem and try to delay action are out of step with their constituencies. Global warming is a serious issue that needs serious solutions. Governor Charlie Crist recognized this almost two years ago, and walking in lock step with Floridians, called for strong clean car rules and a rule, called a renewable portfolio standard, that would require utilities to provide 20 percent of electricity from renewable energy sources by 2020.

Survey results:

- Global climate change is occurring and emissions of greenhouse gases from human activities are contributing to it: 63 percent of Florida voters agree.
- Florida will be impacted by the effects of climate change: 65 percent of Florida voters agree.
- Florida should regulate greenhouse gases the same way they do other pollutants: 70 percent of Florida voters agree.
- Florida should require electric utilities to provide a certain percentage of electricity from renewable sources: 83 percent of Florida voters agree.
- Florida should require electric utilities to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases: 78 percent of Florida voters agree.
- Florida should require auto manufacturers to sell cars and trucks that emit fewer greenhouse gases: 71 percent of Florida voters agree.
- The price of electricity and gas will increase in the future due to rising oil prices: 79 percent of Florida voters agree.

The survey of Florida voters' views on climate change was conducted in February 2009 by the Kitchens Group on behalf of Audubon of Florida, working with the Florida Wildlife Federation and the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy (SACE). The random-sample survey of 500 Republicans and Democrats has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.4 percent, with a 95 percent confidence level.

YOUR SUPPORT IS NEEDED

Spring is here, and now is a good time to visit an Audubon Center as you enjoy the many migrant species traveling through Florida. At Audubon Center for Birds of Prey, spring is the busiest season because up to 20 percent of the annual “patients” arrive during these months. Many of them are chicks, orphaned when storms blow their nests out of trees, or when weakened limbs break. Your support helps Audubon to help them.

Be a part of this special program supporting the care and medical treatment of birds brought to Audubon Center for Birds of Prey, for those birds permanently housed at the Center on display, and for community education programs.

All basic adoptions include a photo of your bird, an adoption certificate, free admission to the Center in Maitland, and an introductory membership to Audubon. For details call 407-644-0190, or visit the web site at http://www.audubonofflorida.org/who_centers_CBOP_adoptabird.html.

ADOPT-a-BIRD

THINK OF YOUR BEQUEST TO AUDUBON AS AN INVESTMENT. HERE ARE SOME OF THE DIVIDENDS...

Please support our conservation work by including a bequest in your will, or by naming Audubon of Florida as a beneficiary of your retirement plan assets.



Audubon



WE SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING WORDING: *I bequeath \$_____ (or _____% of my residuary estate) to the National Audubon Society, Inc., a not-for-profit environmental conservation organization, with its principal offices located in New York, NY, for its Florida state office (Audubon of Florida).*

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT: *Wayne Mones, Vice President, Senior Philanthropy Advisor, Audubon, 225 Varick Street, 7th floor, New York, NY 10014, or call 212-979-3033.*



Eaglets Make Their Debut at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary

A pair of bald eagles has taken up residence in the Sanctuary, to the delight of director Ed Carlson and staff. This is the first recorded nesting pair at Corkscrew since the 1940s, and the fact that the birds chose this area for their territory is a testament to the mission of Audubon, "...to conserve and restore Florida's ecosystems for native birds..."

Corkscrew was not a logical choice for these birds, since they prefer to nest within a mile of a large body of water. But Corkscrew offers something bald eagles in Florida are finding in increasingly short supply—suitable nesting substrate. Corkscrew's pines are perfect for the nesting birds, and the pair chose a spot that is inaccessible to the casual visitor. The family should have a peaceful and uneventful nesting season. The eaglets, three weeks old in the photo, appear healthy and content.

Wildlife photographer and Corkscrew volunteer R J Wiley captured this photo from a safe distance using a combined focal length of 1275 mm. He then enhanced it with digital software to provide this amazing glimpse into the lives of Corkscrew's American bald eagles.

Left to right, Maureen Fitzpatrick, Carole Martin, and John Eggert of West Volusia Audubon at the Manatee Festival in Orange City.



Audubon Chapters Work to Save Florida's Springs and Drinking Water

Blue Spring in Orange City, Florida, is the largest spring that feeds into the St. Johns River. Working groups meet four times a year to discuss strategies to protect once-pristine sources of water like Blue Spring, and Arnette Sherman, co-president of West Volusia Audubon, regularly participates. The chapter is also active at the annual Manatee Festival in Orange City, famous for the hundreds of manatees that spend part of each winter there. Planners for the chapter's booth are Victor and Gloria Johnson and Donna Reynolds, who are assisted by many others throughout the festival weekend.

The chapter's participation in the Manatee Festival focuses primarily on educating the public about Florida's springs and natural environment, and demonstrating the importance of protecting these irreplaceable resources. The volunteers recycle Audubon magazines and offer festival-goers an array of educational materials. Members of Halifax River Audubon make the trip north each year to participate in the festival, which also functions as a chapter fundraiser. To get involved, visit www.volusia.org/birding/wvaudubon.htm and www.halifaxriveras.org/

CALL FOR ENTRIES

ORANGE AUDUBON SOCIETY'S 21ST ANNUAL KIT AND SIDNEY CHERTOK NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST



One of the main goals of the respected contest is to generate interest in Florida's native species and natural areas, so it does not accept images of exotics. To help everyone learn the difference between natives and exotics (non-natives), the chapter will pre-screen submissions that are received by April 16, 2009. Early entrants will be notified if their images don't meet the Florida native or other contest criteria, and they can replace the disqualified images with no additional entry-fee charges.

"Early entrants get a free do-over and Orange Audubon Society has the opportunity to educate by, for example, identifying the non-natives and sharing information about problems associated with invasive species like Brazilian pepper," said contest chair Teresa Williams. Final deadline for entries is May 21, 2009.

For contest rules and entry forms, and to see the winning photos from 2008, visit www.orangeaudubonfl.org

Photo taken at Wekiva Springs State Park by Tony Blankenship, 2008 Chertok Contest winner.

FOUR RIVERS AUDUBON HAS ADOPTED ICHETUCKNEE SPRINGS STATE PARK.

In 1972, the head spring of the Ichetucknee River was declared a National Natural Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior. Multiple first-magnitude springs feed into the six-mile length of this river. The most-often-tubed river in the United States, it generates \$22 million each year for the local economy, so protecting it is essential. The state park itself is designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA), home to breeding populations of southeastern kestrels and Bachman's sparrows. The river also attracts a wide variety of songbirds during migration.

Chapter leaders Loye Barnard and Frank Sedmera are regular participants at the quarterly Ichetucknee Springs working group. Jerry Krummrich leads "Alli-walks" at Alligator Lake (the headwaters for the springs and river), and takes that opportunity to explain how fertilizers and other pollutants are altering the quality of Florida's springs. The chapter is committed to educating others about springs, and the importance of protecting as well as enjoying this precious resource.

Visit www.fourriversaudubon.org. and www.floridastateparks.org/ichetuckneesprings/default.cfm to learn more.

River patrol volunteer George Baldwin (right) and 82-year-old paddler Chris Sulek take a moment to enjoy Devil's Eye, one of the first-magnitude springs that feed the Ichetucknee River.



AUDUBON SCIENTISTS HONORED BY NATIONAL AND REGIONAL AGENCIES

Audubon of Florida's scientists are deeply involved in shaping and advancing conservation and restoration projects, as recent awards confirm. The South Florida Water Management District recognized John Ogden, Director of Bird Conservation, for his "outstanding contribution and participation in The River of Grass Restoration Targets Workshop to develop a revised restoration target range" for the Everglades.

The U.S. Department of Interior (DOI) honored three Audubon staff members for their work on the development of a report, "System-wide Indicators for Everglades Restoration." Dr. Jerry Lorenz and Peter Frezza of Audubon of Florida's Tavernier Science Center, and Ogden, were cited on the DOI award. The report was put together by the department's Science Coordination Group and approved by the South Florida Everglades Restoration Task Force.

COVER IMAGE

John Moran was the state's nature photographer in 2006, when he created a calendar highlighting Florida Forever land acquisitions for the Department of Environmental Protection. His work has appeared in National Geographic, Life, Time, Newsweek, Smithsonian, and on the cover of the National Audubon Society Field Guide to Florida. Moran's photograph on the cover of this issue, taken at **Ichetucknee Springs State Park**, illustrates his vision, which evokes the way "natural Florida might have appeared to Ponce de Leon and other early strangers in paradise."



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The Hilton St. Petersburg Carillon Park is surrounded by lakefront hiking trails. Participants at the 2009 Audubon Assembly get a special room rate of \$109/night, plus free parking and wireless internet in rooms and throughout the property.

SAVE THE DATE

2009 AUDUBON ASSEMBLY OCTOBER 23 – 24 IN ST. PETERSBURG

Conserving Our Coasts as the Climate Changes is the theme of the 2009 Audubon Assembly, whose location honors the 100th anniversary of the St. Petersburg Audubon Society. Don't miss the information-packed programs, fun field trips, and inspiring awards when conservation-minded people gather at the Audubon Assembly in St. Petersburg on October 23–24. Join chapter members, Audubon scientists and staff, wildlife professionals, and environmental advocates to network and learn how we can all collaborate to make a difference for our birds, wildlife, and world.

AUDUBON ASSEMBLY REGISTRATION information and details about programs, exhibits, and field trips to birding hotspots will appear in the summer *Naturalist*. Information will be available at <http://audubonoffloridanews.org> in late July.

Audubon's Mission *To conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats, for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.*



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