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TURNING
SUGAR CANE
into Everglades
Restoration Gold



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

As I car-pooled to the Assembly with my colleague John Ogden, we alternated between watching birds and listening to disconcerting financial news on the radio. I had begun the trip anticipating an Assembly focused on learning and collaborating with others to "Save Birds in a Changing Environment."

The Assembly turned out to be a tremendous success. We enjoyed the highest attendance in five years, strong participation in learning sessions, and we established a dynamic set of conservation priorities. Florida Governor Charlie Crist spoke at the banquet, underscoring the need to restore the Everglades, extolling a progressive energy and climate policy, and thanking the volunteers and staff for their incredible efforts.

A shadow inching into each meeting and event, however, was the economic threat of market downturn, foreclosures, federal budget deficits, and a looming recession. Like the radio broadcasts we heard en route, this cloud generated worry, challenges, and the potential for the kind of economic decline that ignores critical conservation needs, such as acquiring important conservation lands.

We will be all right, though. Years ago Audubon of Florida created a strategic reserve, the interest and grants from which help fund our work around the state. This reserve also is intended to sustain us through periods of gyrating markets and earnings, and anticipates circumstances like those we face today. It is meant to bolster our ability to continue at full force our work of protecting and restoring the places in Florida that mean so much. This fiscal sensitivity positions us to work with our chapters to carry out the conservation priorities that were so carefully considered and approved during the Assembly.

But we cannot become complacent or take this financial situation lightly. Your continued and increased support is so important during these more difficult times. With your support and the energy and passion of our staff, board members, and volunteer chapter leaders, we will carry out our mission to preserve and restore nature's full abundance.

David Anderson
Executive Director, Audubon of Florida

With the election of Sen. Barack Obama as President, Audubon looks forward to a new era for, and commitment to, the environment and the people, birds, and other wildlife that depend on a healthy planet. Audubon is committed to helping the new administration and Congress to live up to their great promise; and to making conservation, clean energy, and green jobs part of America's path to a brighter tomorrow. Audubon of Florida cheers the strong approval of Constitutional Amendment 4 providing property tax incentives for private land conservation benefiting water and wildlife.

Readers are invited to submit comments to Audubon of Florida at flnaturalist@audubon.org

Audubon Assembly Approves 2009 Conservation Agenda

Many of the 250-plus participants at the Audubon Assembly in October gathered on a Saturday morning for one of Audubon of Florida's strongest traditions—setting its annual conservation priorities. The Audubon Assembly is unique in providing a forum where conservation leaders from around Florida gather to discuss and approve an annual agenda to conserve birds, wildlife, and their habitats.

The 2009 Audubon Agenda priorities, expressed in the form of eleven resolutions, were approved by vote at the Assembly. The resolutions carried this common statement:

Audubon of Florida, deploying professional staff and expertise and using information derived from sound science, will call on the volunteer leadership of local Audubon societies (chapters), members, and grassroots networks, and work with conservation allies, business and community leaders, and public officials.

Oystercatcher by R. J. Wiley.

2009 Conservation Action Agenda

Climate Change

Florida, its bird species, wildlife, and natural lands are especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including sea level rise, more intense storms and storm surges, droughts and fires.

Audubon will promote state and federal actions to set greenhouse gas emission reduction targets; support alternative transportation strategies; promote renewable energy, conservation, green building standards and other energy efficiency technologies, programs, and policies.

Conserve At-Risk and Declining Common Species of Birds

Many species of birds are at risk from the effects of human activities. Maintaining abundant resident and migratory bird and other wildlife populations and reversing recent declines requires increased understanding and circumvention of threats.

Audubon will work to stabilize and increase populations of at-risk birds; improve management and restoration of key habitats and systems; improve containment and eradication of invasive exotic species; increase consideration for the effects of disturbance in decisions about recreational uses of our public conservation lands.

Habitat—Public Lands, Growth Management, and Protecting Water Resources

As the state's population grows, the greatest conservation challenges will be to set aside the places that make Florida special. Land and water combine in Florida to form diverse habitats uniquely suited for resident and migratory species.

Audubon will continue to work to secure funding for Florida Forever, and for Everglades and Lake Okeechobee restoration. It will defend Florida water policies and advance new protections for wetlands, coastal, and special upland habitats.

Visit www.audubonofflorida.org to read or download complete text of the resolutions.

2009 STATEWIDE POLICY CAMPAIGNS

Coastal Bird Habitat

Florida's shorebirds and seabirds depend on coastal habitats for breeding, wintering, and migratory habitat. These birds' ability to survive and prosper in Florida's coastal habitats is jeopardized by multiple threats including beach renourishment, coastal armoring, dredging and filling, beach grooming and recreational disturbance.

Audubon will work to improve management of coastal conservation lands for shorebirds and seabirds, ensure that bird colonies are posted and protected; influence the design, timing and frequency of beach renourishment projects to protect shorebirds and seabirds, and expand protection rules in coastal armoring permitting to include all imperiled species.

Seagrass Conservation Campaign

Florida's underwater grasslands are the basis for one of its most productive ecosystems. Destruction by dredge and fill activities, pollution, and propeller scarring threaten the state's ecology and marine economy. More than 173,000 acres of Florida's seagrasses have suffered significant scarring from propellers and groundings, and the losses continue.

Audubon will encourage state agencies to emphasize avoidance of impacts rather than seagrass mitigation; make seagrass recovery a baseline objective for ecosystem restoration programs including those for Florida Bay, the Everglades, Indian River Lagoon and other estuaries; and give DEP the authority to post shallow water/no motor zones in areas of seagrass mitigation or protection.

REGIONAL CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

Florida Audubon's 44 chapters are organized in six regions across the state, and working together they craft regional conservation plans. Supported by Audubon's policy staff, chapter conservation leaders commit to focusing their collective energies to accomplish the following regional conservation goals.

Greater Everglades Ecosystem

The Everglades system has been ditched, drained, polluted, invaded by exotic species, and paved over for buildings and roads. As a result, many species are in jeopardy, and the wading bird super-colonies that once symbolized the ecosystem are all but gone.

Audubon will promote and implement a sustainability plan for the Everglades Agricultural Area, push Everglades restoration as an adaptation strategy for climate change impacts, get moving on the construction of the initial one-mile bridge on Tamiami Trail, restore freshwater sheet flows to Everglades National Park and Florida Bay, reduce pollution and improve water management for Lake Okeechobee, and guard against development that compromises Everglades restoration goals.

Central Florida Ecosystems

Upper Kissimmee River, the Green Swamp/Withlacoochee River, the Upper St. Johns River, the Econlockhatchee River, the Indian River Lagoon, and Lake Wales Ridge are important ecosystems in Central Florida that are threatened by sprawl and mismanagement of water resources.

Audubon will push for a regional vision that incorporates land use, water management, and transportation decisions into a single plan for sustainability. Special focus will go to the Upper Kissimmee, where suburban sprawl threatens the headwaters of the Everglades.

Florida Gulf Coast Ecosystems

Florida's coastal areas include essential habitats used by diverse species of birds, fish and other wildlife, and plants. However, much of the coast is altered, disturbed, and dominated by human use as population growth and development have diminished habitats. The Gulf Coast is also vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Audubon will focus on building capacity in the Gulf Coast region to strengthen its volunteer leadership through programs such as the Suncoast Shorebird Partnership. Continued focus will be placed on the relationship between freshwater systems, including wetlands and free flowing rivers, and the health of bays, estuaries, and seagrass meadows along the coast.

Northeast Florida Ecosystems

The beaches of Northeast Florida are critical to birds in every season. Portions of these beaches are crucial as nesting areas for some species, and as resting and feeding areas for migrating and wintering species; habitat quality in addition.

Audubon will use its newly-established Northeast office to augment the local Chapters' work; oppose activities such as unnecessary deposition of sand on living shorelines, dredging, and coastal armoring projects that diminish habitat value; and strengthen existing laws to protect habitat.

Northwest Florida Ecosystems

Florida's Panhandle is home to eleven interstate rivers, hundreds of freshwater springs, and a beautiful wildlife-rich coastline. Millions of people visit the Panhandle's beaches and abundant natural settings. In the face of rapid growth, more comprehensive watershed and ecosystem-driven plans are necessary for each of this region's drainage basins.

Audubon will focus on educating residents and visitors to Northwest Florida through establishing an Audubon Center at West Bay, engaging with allies in programs to shape land use plans, infrastructure development, and regulatory decisions that will shape the future of the region.

Southwest Florida Ecosystems

This is one of the fastest-growing regions in the nation. Working from the science and policy base of the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary and advocacy resources statewide, Audubon's strategy is to minimize the impact of this growth.

Audubon will work to protect and restore components of the Big Cypress, Corkscrew, Caloosahatchee, Fisheating Creek, and Charlotte Harbor ecosystems; support regional land acquisition, and ensure the protection necessary for essential habitat preservation, restoration, and water management.



Painted buntings by R. J. Wiley

Governor Crist Unveils Historic Land Deal for Everglades Restoration

Governor Charlie Crist announced the details of Florida's revised plans to acquire lands in the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) from the U.S. Sugar Corporation during a press conference. It was held November 12, 2008, at the home of the late Everglades icon Marjory Stoneman Douglas.

The acquisition must be approved by U.S. Sugar's Board of Directors and the Governing Board of the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) and is expected to be signed in early December. Terms of the pending contract include the sale of U.S. Sugar's real estate properties (approximately 181,000 acres) for \$1.34 billion. Audubon strongly supports the plan and is confident that it is in the best interests of both Everglades restoration and the taxpayers.

"It's better than the larger acquisition first announced by the governor this summer," said Audubon Deputy Director Eric Draper. "The state gets the lands needed in the Everglades Agricultural Area for water storage, treatment, and conveyance. And communities in the area get to keep the sugar mill, citrus processing plant, rail lines, and some cane fields. So, in the end, the state will have what it needs to move forward with restoration of the Everglades, while protecting the economic integrity of the region."

In addition to providing storage and treatment areas for water flowing south out of Lake Okeechobee, the land may well provide hydrologic connection between the lake and the southern Everglades.

Since the initial announcement, Audubon has worked tirelessly in support of the governor's bold and unprecedented initiative. Its policy team has participated in every major public discussion since Governor Crist made the historic announcement. Audubon will continue to advocate in favor of this opportunity to restore the Everglades' full abundance and, as always, it will keep supporters abreast of all developments as they occur. Be sure to sign up for Audubon's conservation network by visiting www.audubonofflorida.org.



Kissimmee Prairie's unique dry prairie habitat requires regular, summer prescribed fires to remain healthy. Photo by Christina Evans.

State Parks Propose Closure or Transfer of 21 Parks

As a result of state revenue shortfalls, Governor Crist has requested 10% budget cuts from all state agencies. The current state budget situation is daunting, and no agency will be immune from the belt-tightening necessary to help our state weather this economic downturn. For many of our lean natural resource agencies, these proposals raise grave concerns that reductions will come at the expense of natural resources.

To meet this reduction, the Florida Park Service is proposing to “temporarily close” nineteen state parks to public access and reduce their management to a “caretaker” staff until the state budget returns to levels that can support the full functioning of the parks. An additional three parks, managed for other agencies, will be returned to those agencies. Some of these closures could have grave implications for Florida’s rarest natural communities and wildlife. Florida’s parks and other conservation lands are held in trust for the people of Florida. Holding land in trust means a commitment to good management and responsibility for stewardship of vulnerable natural resources. Audubon is calling on Governor Crist to give substantial consideration to the impacts of these reductions on the state’s ability to adequately manage these sensitive resources.

Examples of Proposed Park Closures and Transfers: Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park and Egmont Key State Park



2.

Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park in Okeechobee County is the largest intact remnant of Florida’s globally imperiled dry prairie ecosystem. It is the largest of only three sites in the world that still support the federally endangered Florida Grasshopper Sparrows. This species has suffered dramatic declines in recent years and requires that managers conduct labor-intensive summer burns on half the prairie—more than 20,000 acres—each year. The proposed “caretaker staff” for the Prairie cannot reasonably meet these prescribed fire needs, let alone the preserve’s additional management obligations including monitoring the Prairie’s 54,000 acres for lightning-ignited wildfires; maintaining fire lanes and perimeter fencing; patrolling the Prairie’s more than 50 miles of boundaries for poaching, trespassing, dumping and arson; identifying and eradicating exotics; as well as monitoring the health of the Prairie’s sparrow population.

Similarly, Egmont Key represents an important natural resource for imperiled beach-dependent birds in Tampa Bay. Reversion of this property to the National Wildlife Refuge system may provide some cost-savings, but the short timeframe proposed would not give the federal cooperating agency sufficient time to find the resources to replace the important functions the state park currently provides at Egmont. The current cooperative agreement between the refuge system and State Parks provides Egmont Key with a staffed presence to manage the more than 170,000 annual boater visits to the island, and protect the island’s unique historical and natural resources, including nesting marine turtles and extensive shorebird and seabird colonies. Without this presence, the park’s sensitive resources would be left without on-site, round-the-clock management, and the island would be vulnerable to trespass and resource abuse.



1.

*1. Florida Grasshopper Sparrow sings at Kissimmee Prairie. Photo by Christina Evans
2. Egmont is home to Florida’s largest royal and sandwich tern colony, and to skimmers like those shown here. Photo by Christina Evans*

Phosphorus and Lake Okeechobee



Wood storks by R. J. Wiley

Lake Okeechobee and its watershed are awash with human-added phosphorus. A nutrient naturally present in all ecosystems, phosphorus is an essential component of animal and plant cells. Beneficial when it occurs in “natural” concentrations, its presence in elevated levels creates problems.

Excess phosphorus levels in Lake Okeechobee have spawned blooms of toxin-forming algae that smell bad and kill fish, have led to rapid growth of noxious vegetation, and fueled accumulation of a mud-ooze lake-bottom layer that creates turbidity and smothers beneficial organisms at the base of the food chain.

The turbidity also keeps sunlight from reaching beneficial plants that bass and crappie need for spawning, inhibiting the fishes’ survival and recovery during high-water periods. When this water flows out of Lake Okeechobee, it carries these severe problems downstream into the estuaries and the Everglades.

Statistics related to phosphorus enrichment of the lake and its watershed are so immense they almost defy belief:

The average phosphorus level in Lake Okeechobee’s water from 2003 to 2007 was 173 parts per billion (ppb), four times the goal of 40 ppb and the highest five-year average in history.

More than 30,000 metric tons of phosphorus are near the surface of mud sediments covering almost half the lake bottom (about 300 square miles) and are projected to keep the lake phosphorus-rich for decades, even after phosphorus inflow goals are met.

Loads to the lake from 2003-2007 averaged 630 metric tons, six times the annual goal of 105 tons of inflow, and among the highest five-year periods in history.

People have added an estimated 190,000 metric tons of “legacy” phosphorus to Lake Okeechobee’s watershed, enough to meet the lake’s annual inflow goal of 105 metric tons for more than 1,800 years.

An estimated 5,600 metric tons of phosphorus are being added to Lake Okeechobee’s watershed each year, enough to meet the lake’s annual inflow goal for an additional 53 years.

Obviously, this advanced condition will require decades of significant effort to correct. The chief program addressing these goals is Florida’s “Northern Everglades Plan,” which includes multiple worthy programs aimed at reducing phosphorus loads to the lake. But according to the most recent calculations, these efforts will not achieve the phosphorus inflow goal by the 2015 deadline. A renewed initiative to correct Lake Okeechobee’s, and South Florida’s, phosphorus problem is needed.

The first principle in dealing with the problem is to reduce or eliminate the continued import of phosphorus to Okeechobee’s watershed. It is untenable to ask citizens to pay billions of dollars to keep past phosphorus additions out of the lake, while allowing new ones every day. Sources of new phosphorus include cities and various types of farms. Each requires a unique approach to finding ways they can “clean up their acts” while continuing to shelter Florida’s residents or produce food for the world. The second principle is that while agencies and organizations work to stem the flow of new phosphorus, public works projects (such as filter marshes and cost-share projects for land owners with phosphorus problems) are needed to deal with “legacy” phosphorus. Lastly, the mud center of the lake probably should be removed if the lake is to be completely restored.

The massive amounts of phosphorus in the lake’s watershed can, for the most part, remain there with proper nutrient and water management. Florida must develop a culture in which all landowners are helpful parts of the water management system. This will take time and effort, and Audubon is committed to it.



Mike W. Sole,
Florida Department of
Environmental Protection

Florida's Energy and Climate Change Action Plan sets **AMBITIOUS GOALS FOR REDUCING GREENHOUSE GASES**

Audubon Works to Enact Proposed Climate Change Solutions

Florida is emerging as the nation's leader in plans to reduce global warming. Audubon is working to turn those plans into solutions and benefits. Florida should be a leader for change, because it is particularly vulnerable to the effects of rising sea levels and warmer weather.

In October, the second report of the Governor's Action Team on Energy and Climate Change was delivered to Governor Charlie Crist. The report included a list of 50 separate policy recommendations, which if implemented, will reduce Florida's greenhouse gas emissions by two-thirds in 2025, save an estimated \$28 billion, and result in a huge reduction of the use of coal, oil, and natural gas.

The report is the product of the Governor's Action Team, which was chaired by Michael W. Sole, Secretary of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Secretary. Audubon staff members Julie Wraithmell and Eric Draper served on Technical Working Groups for the team. Recommendations address everything from home and office energy conservation to stimulating renewable energy from solar and other sources.

The report documents the current greenhouse gases from electric power production (42 percent) and transportation (32 percent) rising over the next two decades. A disturbing trend is the increasing percentage coming from gasoline used to power automobiles.

The debate on the global impacts of dramatic increases of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases is over. Now we face the challenge of slowing the

rate of change and adapting to climate change. Slowing or reversing the growth of greenhouse gases will require aggressive efforts by businesses and citizens of all nations.

The Florida Energy and Climate Change Plan proposes specific recommendations that could become law within the next year. These include proposals for more efficient use of electricity, getting electricity from renewable sources such as solar, and switching to cleaner cars.

Energy Bill HB 7135, passed during the 2008 Legislative session, gives specific direction for rules on energy efficiency and conservation, renewable energy, and clean cars. Audubon is working hard on each of these rules:

Efficiency and Conservation – The 2008 legislation made a major change to the way Florida requires electric utilities to provide programs that encourage their customers to conserve. Now the Public Service Commission (PSC) may not constrain programs based on rate impacts for costs of conservation programs. This should result in increased utility investment in conservation.

Renewable Energy – Audubon is urging the PSC to adopt a rule that sets a standard for a percentage of electricity that each utility provides from renewable sources. The standard recommended by Governor Crist, and supported by most advocates, is 20 percent renewable energy by 2020. That standard will allow solar, biomass, and other renewable sources of electricity to offset millions tons of greenhouse gases. Opposition comes

primarily from consumer advocates and some utilities that are focused on short-term costs rather than on the long-term savings available by tapping free energy from the sun. The Legislature must ratify the PSC's rule, so this battle will continue into the 2009 session.

Clean Cars – The Crist plan assumes that Florida will adopt California's rule requiring automakers to build cars that emit less greenhouse gas. Now the Florida Environmental Regulation Commission (ERC) is considering adopting California's "clean car" rule. Detroit is resisting, doing its best to persuade Florida's decision-makers that states should not make car pollution rules, and that someday the federal government will issue its own rule. Audubon is leading a coalition of environmental groups in a campaign to persuade the ERC that the time to act is now.

Work on these three important policies will take the proposals from the Energy and Climate Change Plan and turn them into enforceable laws. These policies—energy conservation and efficiency, renewable energy, and clean cars—have the potential to make Florida one of the greenest and cleanest places on earth. For a copy of the Action Plan, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/climatechange.

To stay informed on Audubon's climate action work, join the Climate Action Network at www.audubonofflorida.org and receive the Climate Solutions Newsletter.

CONGRATULATIONS TO 2008 CHAPTER AWARD WINNERS

Chapter of the Year

— Lake Region Audubon

Audubon and the Lake Region Chapter have a dynamic partnership at the Street Nature Center. Owned by Audubon of Florida and managed and

maintained by the chapter, the 40-acre property and Center are home to the chapter.

Dedicated volunteers mow and repair, plan chapter functions, and raise funds to keep up their end of the partnership. They sponsor an annual Nature Faire, distribute Audubon Adventures to over 50 local classrooms, are restoring habitat for wintering sparrows, and advocate for local environmental issues. These retired professionals volunteer long hours of hard work to the Audubon cause.



David Anderson and Jacqui Sulek congratulate members of the steering committee for Lake Region Audubon Society. From far right to left are Lee Shoe, Bill Karnofsky, and Chuck Geanangel.

Best Chapter Education Program

— Tampa Audubon

The Flatwoods Park Bluebird Trail was created over 20 years ago in an effort to protect the then-endangered eastern bluebird. Three years ago Mary Miller led an initiative to monitor progress and add an education program. The chapter members monitored and cleaned the trail, counted birds, and also produced a brochure so that visitors could learn more about these beautiful birds. The project Mary led engaged not only her husband but also many volunteers from the Tampa Audubon Chapter.

Best Chapter Membership Recruitment Program

— Four Rivers Audubon

All chapters share the goal of increasing their membership rosters. As Jacqui Sulek reminded her own chapter, "If each member recruited just

one more member, you could generate thousands of dollars for your conservation work. You just have to ask people to join!" With her encouragement, the chapter began aggressively recruiting. In the past two years, its membership surged to 238 from 150 members.

Best Chapter Conservation Project

— Bay County Audubon

The Conservation Committee from Bay County Audubon is always active. Ed Keppner, Ph.D. and his wife Lisa took the initiative to document and evaluate natural resources of the St. Andrews Bay in anticipation of the creation of the West Bay Audubon Center, and Neil Lamb, Ph.D., focused on a 272-acre parcel donated to Audubon of Florida from Beulah Laidlaw

in the 1980s. The committee developed a Memorandum of Understanding between Audubon of Florida and Bay County Audubon that allows these volunteers to carry out important scientific work on behalf of Audubon, dedicating tremendous amounts of time and resources to the projects.



Neil Lamb accepts the award on behalf of Bay County Audubon Society.

Best Assembly Display

— **Hernando Audubon.** Chapters from all over Florida work diligently all year to share their missions and act as ambassadors in the community for Audubon's causes. At the Assembly, they bring displays that detail their current projects and accomplishments. Hernando Audubon's exhibit was recognized for its exceptional creativity in highlighting both the area's birds and the chapter's activities.



For his leadership in encouraging the purchase of the U.S. Sugar Corporation's lands for Everglades restoration, Governor Charlie Crist was named 2008 Champion of the Everglades at the Assembly banquet. "I'm grateful," he said. "It touches me to receive such an award."



John Hankinson (left), newly-elected chairman of Audubon of Florida's board of directors, presented Robert Christianson of the St. Johns River Water Management District with Audubon's 2008 Florida Special Place Award.

2008 Audubon Assembly a Rousing Success

Corkscrew Volunteer of the Year

Jack Wheeler is Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary's jack-of-all trades. The 15-year volunteer is a boardwalk naturalist who greets visitors every Friday, answering their questions and helping them identify birds and other wildlife. Later he patrols the boardwalk to remove water bottles and other discards, using tools of his own design to retrieve hard-to-reach items. During the spring dry-down, he joins those who wade into the swamp to clear out detritus.

Jack has been instrumental in building infrastructure for many of the Sanctuary's programs. When the Blair Audubon Center opened, he worked to convert the old admissions building into the Parker Library and Sanctuary offices. He built work benches, learning stations, a dip-netting platform, and display tables for the second grade Insect Adventure program for Collier County public school field trips. When sections of the boardwalk need work, Jack is there with his tools installing everything from signs to plaques to rails, replacing boards, and cleaning up after storms. Always there with a smile, giving generously of his time and talents to help people, programs, and the natural environment, Jack is Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary's Renaissance man.



Researchers probably applied the harmless red dye (much easier to spot than leg bands) to this laughing gull as part of a short-term study, according to John Ogden, Audubon's director of bird conservation. "We know it's for a short term study," Ogden said, "because the color will fade on its own or disappear when the bird molts. It may have been applied to track local movements of individually-recognizable birds in a nesting colony over a period of days or weeks. Studies of energetics, for example, are conducted to determine how much time a nesting bird spends each day attending young vs. loafing vs. bathing vs. feeding." Ogden said the bright red on the undersides of this laughing gull's wings—photographed on an Assembly field trip to Fort Island Beach in Crystal River—would make the bird easy to identify when flying low. Photo by Neil J. Lamb.



The learning sessions, like this one on "Magical Partnerships," were opportunities for Assembly participants to dig deeper into Audubon's priority issues. Linda Macbeth (left) and Laura Starkey are pictured.

Audubon Center for Birds of Prey Volunteer of the Year

Jim White began his volunteer career with Audubon Center for Birds of Prey through osmosis—he is married to EagleWatch Coordinator Lynda White. Jim was lending a hand even before Lynda joined the staff in 1998. Now the retired engineer contributes 20 to 100 volunteer hours a month at the Center.

At the Center, he is sander and painter, computer repair man, landscaper, raptor furniture builder, and raptor rescuer. Known to entertain guests at special events with jokes and drinks, Jim is the resident bartender. He has directed and coordinated volunteer crews on work day projects and, as an experienced handler of "ambassador birds," Jim has taught countless children and adults about the world of raptors.

Jim's largest volunteer contribution may be with the Audubon EagleWatch program. He has made multiple trips from the Keys to Pensacola and everywhere in between educating Florida residents about bald eagles, and participated in eagle releases all over the state. Audubon is truly fortunate to have his help and dedication, and is grateful for his many years of service.

THANK YOU

Audubon is deeply grateful to all the individuals, corporations, foundations and organizations whose generous contributions supported our conservation work throughout Florida during our fiscal year 2008. The following list recognizes donors from July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008

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We apologize for any omissions or errors on this list. Please contact the Development Dept. at 305-371-6399 to report addition or corrections.

2009 Philanthropy Award Honors The Batchelor Foundation

For its generous support of Audubon's work to sustain wildlife and educate the public about the environment, The Batchelor Foundation received the 2008 award for Distinguished Foundation. Grants from the Miami-based private foundation have been directed to scientific studies related to eagles, ospreys, roseate spoonbills, and other species over more than two decades. Deeply committed to conservation-based research and wildlife rehabilitation, the Foundation has been a cornerstone of support for Audubon Center for Birds of Prey and Tavernier Science Center.

The Foundation was set up in 1990 by the late George Batchelor. The Batchelor Foundation's four trustees, chaired by Sandy Batchelor, are committed to following the founder's directives to provide charitable gifts to aid the welfare of children and to protect animals and the natural environment. "Mr. Batchelor selected Audubon when he was alive. When organizations began to apply for grants, Audubon was one that he gave to because it is one of the premiere conservation groups in the country, not just in Florida. Audubon is the gold standard when it comes to work in conservation of birds and environmental education," Sandy Batchelor said.

A brilliant pioneer in the field of aviation, George Bachelor learned to fly in his native Oklahoma at 16. He built an aviation empire over 50 years that included Arrow Air, Batch Air, International Air Leases, and Aerospace Finance, Ltd.

"Mr. Batchelor was very smart, and hard core data impressed him. Audubon has rigorous scientific research programs, and it is that science that provides the data for policy work and sound legislation," said Sandy Batchelor, currently a member of Audubon of Florida's board of directors. She keeps a well-informed eye on all the organization's initiatives, having earned degrees in wildlife biology, forest resources and conservation, as well as two law degrees. The Foundation's trustees are passionate about educating the public and helping people connect with nature. Audubon of Florida is grateful for the generous philanthropic and collaborative partnership The Batchelor Foundation has provided to realize successful conservation objectives throughout Florida.

Visit the [Corkscrew Nature Store online](http://www.corkscrewnaturestore.org)
www.corkscrewnaturestore.org for conservation-minded holiday gift ideas



Least terns nest on the gravel rooftops of commercial buildings when their natural beach nesting areas are not available. In the Florida Keys near Tavernier, hatchlings kept tumbling from the roof near a Chinese restaurant. Stanley Lin (left) and Kevin Xu, pictured here, took the initiative to guard fallen chicks until conservationists could return each one to the rooftop, and by doing so, contributed to the survival of many young terns.

Photo courtesy Tavernier Science Center.

Audubon Center for Birds of Prey's Lynda White Is Tamar Chotzen Audubon Educator of the Year



The National Audubon Society announced in October that Lynda White, EagleWatch Coordinator at the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey in Maitland, was named 2008 Tamar Chotzen Audubon Educator of the Year. This honor recognizes exemplary work in education, and is presented annually to an individual who has furthered Audubon's vision for environmental education, Audubon Centers, and conservation work.

"Lynda is recognized by her peers as both an inspiring educator and an effective advocate for birds and the environment in Florida," said Judy Braus, Senior Vice President of Education and Centers for Audubon. "With her extraordinary passion, commitment, and knowledge, she is opening new eyes to nature and conservation each day."

A member of the Center's staff since 1998, White oversees more than 300 EagleWatch volunteers. These "citizen scientists" monitor nearly 300 active nest sites, evaluate threats and problems, and provide state and federal wildlife agencies with data that influences conservation planning and protection of bald eagles and their habitat.

White travels throughout the state with one of the Center's rehabilitated bald eagles by her side, inspiring Eagle Scouts, veterinarians, civic groups, decision makers, Audubon chapter members, bird festival-goers, school children and others to care about and protect the natural world. She has contributed to the development of program curricula that meet Florida Sunshine state standards, and to an educators' guide to the film and novel HOOT being distributed nationwide by Walden Media.

THE PERFECT HOLIDAY PRESENT: GIVE A RAPTOR A BETTER FUTURE.



Kestrel with holiday tree. by Susie Warren.

Giving green and supporting your favorite conservation organization can go a long way to help Florida's environment. The Adopt a Bird program at Audubon Center for Birds of Prey is an important way you can participate in the conservation of Florida's magnificent raptors housed and treated at the Center.

The perfect holiday gift, an "adoption" is an annual investment in the care, feeding, and medical treatment of birds brought to the Center for care, and those permanently housed there for education programs. An adoption packet includes a certificate, photo, biography, and species information. Adoption levels range from \$35 and up. Download an adoption form at www.audubonofflorida.org or call 407-644-0190 for more information.

ADOPT-a-BIRD

The Center is open during the holiday season, so bring family and friends to learn about Audubon conservation and Florida's magnificent raptors. Center hours: Tuesday-Sunday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Closed Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

Audubon Welcomes Claudia Welsh and Kari Oeltjen

Audubon is pleased to welcome two new professionals to its development staff. **Chief Development Officer Claudia Welsh** brings 30 years of experience to Audubon. Her background includes developing and managing capital campaigns, building organizational infrastructure for fundraising, and comprehensive experience with integrative gift planning including major gifts, planned gifts and foundation fund raising. A native of New York, Welsh has lived in South Florida for 23 years.

Kari Oeltjen is Major Gifts Officer for Southeast Florida. She has more than a decade of experience in professional fundraising, encompassing two "Big 10" medical schools (University of Iowa and University of Minnesota), The Nature Conservancy and, most recently, the Boca Raton Community Hospital Foundation. An avid birder, Oeltjen is a former volunteer birds of prey rehabilitator, a key volunteer for the Osprey Reintroduction Program in Iowa (in conjunction with the US Fish and Wildlife Service), and served on the State of Iowa Wildlife Rehabilitator's Association Board.

Both Welsh and Oeltjen are enthusiastic about contributing to Audubon's important work for the environment.

Financial information about National Audubon Society can be obtained by writing to us at 700 Broadway, New York, NY 10003 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, 1-800-435-7352 WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.

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AUDUBON ACADEMY 2009 GOES TO THE FLORIDA SCRUB MARCH 27-29 IN HAINES CITY

The ancient islands along Florida's spine form an ecosystem unique in the world. Audubon Academy 2009 will be held in this fascinating part of Florida March 27-29 near Haines City at the Florida FFA Leadership Training Center.

Whether a chapter is large and urban or small and rural, conservation projects are an effective chapter's powerhouse. From urban backyards to large ecosystems, habitats for birds and other wildlife benefit from the effective conservation actions of Audubon chapters. Speakers at workshops geared to launch chapters into new, exciting initiatives will include Rob Fergus, senior scientist, Audubon At Home, National Audubon; Charles Lee, Audubon of Florida's director of advocacy; Stuart Langton, Ph.D, senior fellow, FSU, and president of Stuart Langton & Associates (invited); Michelle Frankel, Audubon of Florida grant specialist; chapter leaders from around Florida, and scientists from Archbold Biological Station.

Florida scrub specialists will lead field trips to the adjacent Catfish Creek Preserve. Kayaks, canoes, and a pontoon boat ride on Lake Pierce will provide a relaxing end of the day. Bring guitars, banjos, and harmonicas to make music around the bonfire. Saturday evening's program will be a special presentation, "Natural Florida in Word, Image, and Deed," created by Florida Defenders of the Environment in association with the Florida Humanities Council.

Registration is still only \$25. All meals and accommodations will be in the beautiful FFA Center's facilities. Preview the FFA Center at www.flaltc.org. Tent camping and RV hook-ups are available. **For more details, contact Joyce King, Audubon Academy Coordinator sjoyceking@comcast.net 352-475-1999 or Jacqui Sulek, Audubon of Florida Chapters Coordinator at jsulek@audubon.org or 850-251-1297. Registration materials will be available January 15, 2009.**

Photo by Nancy Deyrup. Bee Fly (Poecilognathus punctipennis) feeding on pollen of scrub dayflower (Commelina erecta).

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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WINTER 2008 / 09

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Cover *Sugar Cane image from Plantae utiliore, Illustrations of Useful Plants Employed in Medicine.*
Published by M. A. Burnett, London, 1842-1850. Courtesy Special Collections, Florida State University Libraries.



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