



SUMMER 2006

Florida Naturalist



SAVING BIRDS AND SPECIAL SPACES
Audubon Assembly October 19-21

CONFRONTING Global Warming

AUDUBON SCIENCE:
Applying Research to Conservation

HEALING LAKE O and the Estuaries

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Coming Together to Save our Birds



It's summer, a time when beaches and rivers beckon, and when hurricane season begins. I hope our Florida coasts will be spared damage this year; but that hope, frighteningly, may be in vain. The effects of global warming—more vigorous storms, rising sea levels, impacts on birds and wildlife—are causes for real concern.

All creatures, including humans, are vulnerable to climatic forces. These forces are beyond human control, but our activities can play a role in accelerating or slowing down their destructive effects. One way to learn and participate in solving issues of direct consequences to conservation is to attend the annual Audubon Assembly. Set for October in Cocoa Beach, this year's Assembly is dedicated to Saving Birds and Special Spaces.

The Assembly is an opportunity to bring together all the tools at our disposal to accomplish our 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." By using the best-available scientific information, we ground our advocacy in fact. By examining strategies to restore important ecosystems—coastal habitats, the Everglades, and systems as complex as Lake Okeechobee and the estuaries—we focus our energies. By organizing around an annual Conservation Action Plan, we ensure our effectiveness. Through learning sessions and workshops, we can make our future work even more effective, and field trips take us to wildlife-rich areas to renew our passion and strengthen our resolve.

Still within reach is our ability to restore and protect natural habitats, to uphold air and water quality standards, and to reduce the greenhouse gases we generate into the atmosphere. Also within reach is our ability to enjoy and value the natural places so important for our wellbeing and that of the species and spaces we protect.

Join us at the Assembly to be re-energized, to learn the latest in science and advocacy. Come together with like-minded advocates to strengthen our effectiveness and have a good time in nature. I look forward to seeing you in Cocoa Beach.

David E. Anderson
Executive Director, Audubon of Florida



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TAKING ACTION to Minimize Global Warming

Global warming is one of the greatest threats and challenges to the planet, birds, and their habitat worldwide. So begins the newly approved Audubon framework for engaging in this pressing issue.

For Florida, rising sea levels and increased storm intensity lead to beach erosion, encroachment on oceanfront property, and inundation of freshwater wetlands and marshes by saltwater. Ecosystems that cannot adapt or migrate will be lost, resulting in severe impacts on species diversity.

While the threats are disturbing, there is much that can be done nationally, statewide, locally and individually to minimize the impacts of global warming.

As Audubon's framework says:

- More and more, there is growing need for public involvement, engagement and education.
- More and more, the issue is framed in a larger moral imperative rather than as a highly technical issue to be negotiated in international meetings and treaties.
- More and more, it is becoming, and needs to be pursued as, a grass-roots movement to create the political demand in the United States for action—a political demand that has been lacking in the past.

- Audubon's involvement and leadership is timely and more logical now than in the past as “birds as indicators,” education and grass-roots engagement are strengths now strongly aligned with current need.

Audubon of Florida and its chapters have a unique and important role to play in addressing this issue. During the last legislative session, Audubon advocated for a Florida Action Plan on Global Warming, which was included in a package with legislation to establish a renewable energy technologies and energy efficiency act. Broward County Audubon Society is setting an example for local campaigns to address the issue.

Broward Audubon President Barry Heimlich explained: The chapter has “undertaken a grass-roots effort to raise awareness of global warming and to urge local governments to take the important first step of signing onto the US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement (MCPA) initiated by Seattle Mayor Greg Nichols. The Agreement was adopted in March 2006 by the US Conference of Mayors and has since been endorsed by 219 mayors nationwide, including 16 Florida cities, eight of which are in Broward County.”

The Agreement calls for establishing measurable goals and plans to roll back greenhouse gas emissions from government operations to 1990 levels. Clean transportation and green building technologies are at the very heart of the initiative.

The Chapter's Global Warming Initiative includes: monthly articles on global warming in its newsletter *The Warbler*, posted at www.browardaudubon.org; a global warming website: www.browardaudubon.org/globalwarming/; presentations and speeches at public events and to private groups; an expert speakers program; and promoting MCPA adoption directly to county, city and town governments and through non-profit organizations.

We should also act individually to reduce our carbon footprint, or the amount of carbon and other greenhouse gases we emit into the atmosphere. For more information on calculating and reducing your carbon footprint, visit: www.climatecrisis.net/takeaction/carboncalculator.

Lake Okeechobee: Immense Lake Is Key to Everglades' Health

Florida's peninsula-spanning natural systems—from the Caloosahatchee and St. Lucie estuaries, to the Everglades wetlands, and bays to the south—are dependent on the health of Lake Okeechobee and its 100,000-plus acres of wetlands. This immense lake is the heart of the greater Everglades system.

The effort to restore this magnificently complex system begins with a shared vision of what we want to, and can, achieve. Imagine a renewed paradise for all residents and vacationers. Picture the lake and estuaries teeming with wildlife—flocks of wading birds, plentiful game fish, and healthy populations of once-endangered species.

Envision projects of a sufficient scale to meet water supply demands and control floods; where the needs of people and the needs of the environment are no longer at odds; where pollution is kept in check through rigorous Best Management Practices and effective treatments; where businesses thrive in clean communities. Imagine a Florida in which everyone recognizes how important this natural heritage is to healthy communities of wildlife and humans.

Audubon of Florida has such a vision and is applying its science and policy expertise to achieving it.

First, Audubon is seriously pushing agencies to examine new realities in the design and implementation of management plans and restoration projects.

Florida has entered a wet weather cycle, which will put roughly twice as much annual inflow into Lake Okeechobee as in previous decades. As we contemplate handling this extra water, pollution goals for the lake have been tightened. Lake Okeechobee has had pollution control programs for decades, but pollution has been increasing; we must finally employ realistic solutions to the problem.

While present state and federal



Etching of snail kite by John Costin.

restoration plans are commendable, Audubon estimates that these plans, as now conceived are likely to achieve only about half of the water storage and treatment necessary to gain control of Okeechobee's water levels, and replenish the environment with clean water, as well as meet water supply demands. Given increased rainfall and Florida's explosive population growth, current plans for water storage and treatment

must be increased to meet both environmental and human needs.

Audubon of Florida will continue working to ensure that all programs are effectively implemented and to press for installation of adequate additional facilities. This must be accomplished to restore and renew Florida's unique natural systems.



Photo of Caloosahatchee estuary courtesy of South Florida Water Management District.

Healing the Lake and Estuaries

State and federal governments have shown concern about restoring Lake Okeechobee and protecting her downstream systems. Four major plans and a series of smaller initiatives to benefit the lake are being developed.

These include:

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) This more than \$10 billion federal/state partnership, approved in 2000, includes 68 project components to restore the greater Everglades ecosystem. The Lake Okeechobee Watershed (LOW) project is part of the plan. Other components include the experimental Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) wells for water storage.

The Lake Okeechobee Protection Act (LOPA) Approved by the Florida Legislature in 2000, this act calls for developing the Lake Okeechobee Protection Plan (LOPP) to lower annual phosphorus inputs to the lake to an average of 140 metric tons by the year 2015 (former goal was 361 metric tons).

The Kissimmee River Restoration (KRR) This River was straightened into a channel in the 1960s; thousands of acres of riparian wetlands were drained and a braided river was destroyed. This project refills nearly half of the canal, restoring about 26,500 acres of river marsh. In addition, Lake Kissimmee will be allowed to rise an extra foot-and-a-half in summer, re-flooding about 30,000 acres of lake marshes, and storing enough water to keep the river flowing during the dry season. This project has no additional water quality component, though.

Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Long Term Management Plan (KCOL LTMP) The Kissimmee Chain of Lakes region, about 40 percent of Lake Okeechobee's watershed, is the headwaters of the Everglades. Even though it faces the same over-drainage, nutrient pollution and urban sprawl as the rest of the system, this region was omitted from CERP projects. The LTMP is compiling data on regional hydrology, nutrients, habitat, exotic species and effects on recreation as the basis for recommending future restoration programs, which also can assure clean water for the restored Kissimmee River.

Other initiatives include:

The Lake Okeechobee and Estuary Recovery Plan (LOER) This umbrella program consolidates major aspects of plans outlined above in order to accelerate implementation. It also calls for revisiting permitting, land use planning and some phosphorus management issues.

Water Supply and Environment (WSE) Regulation Schedule To regulate the level of water in the lake, the WSE schedule guides when and how much water should be released into agricultural and urban areas, the estuaries and water conservation areas. Audubon is pushing for lower average levels that will be healthier for the lake and estuaries and Hoover Dike.

Total Maximum Daily Loads This term refers to the maximum amount of a pollutant that can enter a water body without impairing it. Phosphorus TMDLs must be established for tributaries flowing into Lake Okeechobee.

Caloosahatchee COUNTS

The two greatest threats to Lake Okeechobee's health are its management as a reservoir (rather than as a natural habitat) and pollution with nutrients, especially phosphorus. Now that its watershed wetlands are riddled with drainage canals, lake levels rise too quickly. Water that once took months to seep through vast prairies and swamps flows into the lake within days or weeks, leaving the watershed dry while overfilling the lake and loading it with phosphorus.

When this excess water is dumped eastward into the St. Lucie and westward into the Caloosahatchee estuaries, it carries pollution and alters the water salinity in the estuaries, making it too fresh. The results: harmful algae blooms, sea grass and oyster die-offs, diminished fisheries, and damage to the fish, turtles and dolphins exposed to algae blooms. Paradoxically, when Florida's winter dry season gets under way, reduced inflows and water-supply withdrawals from the lake for human use can result in water shortages for humans, nature and—after too much water in the summers—water shortages to the Caloosahatchee.

South Florida has enough water for both people and nature, but the supply is alternately hoarded for human use, and wasted by being dumped out to sea. Audubon of Florida is working to bring this complex system back to health, by building a system that prevents excessively deep levels in the lake, wasteful dumps to the coasts, and conveys water to the Caloosahatchee and Everglades at times when it will be beneficial.

Sound Science Supports Audubon Advocacy

Audubon of Florida's robust science program focuses on applied research to answer Florida's most pressing conservation questions.

Audubon of Florida's award-winning scientists are engaged in programs that are fully integrated into all facets of the organization. The science team participates in Audubon's policy initiatives, and undertakes many education programs statewide. Audubon prides itself on "Science Based Policy," where sound science is

used to formulate policy initiatives.

Members of our science staff are called upon regularly to brief political leaders and make presentations to governmental bodies. Audubon of Florida, through direct contact with decision makers, is able to incorporate its views into the decision-making process, rather than

trying to effect changes after policies are in place. This brief summary of Audubon of Florida's science programs outlines the range of activities being pursued during our second century of conservation in Florida.

Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries

The Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries (FCIS) program protects, monitors, and manages populations of colonial waterbirds and their habitats along Florida's central west coast. With the permission of landowners and the aid of chapter volunteers, the program actively monitors and protects more than 50 colonies totaling approximately 50,000 breeding pairs of 30 bird species, among the largest and most diverse coastal bird populations in Florida. The program promotes an understanding of and support for bird conservation throughout the community through education, advocacy, and action. In addition, the program is engaged in several habitat restoration projects at local bird colonies and Sanctuary islands, including cord-grass plantings and construction of experimental oyster reefs to stabilize island shorelines. FCIS staff helps advance local agency programs that acquire, manage and restore wildlife habitat, and is exploring partnerships to protect colonies in other areas including Citrus, Duval, and Martin counties, as well as Estero Bay.



Photo of spoonbills by R.J.Wiley.

Tavernier Science Center

Well known for their roseate spoonbill banding and monitoring activities, researchers at Tavernier recently identified the oldest known spoonbill

The Tavernier Science Center was established in the Florida Keys in 1938, when National Audubon's first Director of Research, Robert Porter Allen, moved his family to Tavernier. Though initially focused on spoonbill research, the Center has performed a wide array of research and recovery projects over the years including work on bald eagles, California condors, whooping cranes, flamingos, and ivory-billed woodpeckers. The Center has done research on organisms of ecological significance in Florida Bay and the

Florida Keys including corals, seagrasses, mangroves, game fish, crocodiles, wading birds, and white-crowned pigeons. Habitat studies helped develop the Tropical Flyways proposal for the Conservation and Recreational Lands program. Today, the Center continues its role as a leader in ecological research with a variety of projects important to Everglades restoration, migratory birds, and reef fish populations.

Three separate research projects under way now are concerned with the response of estuarine

biota to water management, the use of natural areas in the Florida Keys by migratory birds (including the Florida Keys Raptor Migration Project and the Florida Keys Songbird Migration Project), and the utilization of mangrove habitats by reef fish. The Center also provides technical support for the development of Audubon policies regarding projects and resource management in the southern Everglades and adjacent estuarine systems.

Audubon Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary

Established in 1954 with less than 1,000 acres of cypress swamp, the sanctuary has expanded to 11,020 acres and includes a variety of habitats. Work carried out by Sanctuary scientists and staff involves restoring degraded habitat, eradicating exotic species, and performing prescribed burns. They participate in and respond to federal, state and local decisions that affect the ecology of the Corkscrew Watershed, and monitor important ecological information within the sanctuary. This includes data on rainfall, water quality, and water levels that are shared with the South Florida Water Management District and the U.S. Geological Survey, which also maintain and monitor wells and rainfall gauges within the sanctuary boundaries.

Efforts to improve and preserve habitat for threatened and endangered species carried out at Corkscrew includes research on the

Florida panther and on nesting patterns of wood storks.

Sanctuary volunteers monitor bird, frog and butterfly species on a monthly basis, and participate in a national data-sharing effort to track trends in these species.



Photo of white-tailed deer by R. J. Wiley.

Audubon Center for Birds of Prey

The Audubon Center for Birds of Prey, a premier raptor rehabilitation facility, has treated over 8,000 birds since 1979. Nearly 40 percent of the birds admitted to the center have been released back into the wild, including almost 300 bald eagles. The Center also features an active environmental education program, with lakeside aviaries exhibiting non-releasable birds of prey found in Florida.

The Center's mission for 25 years has been to promote a stewardship ethic toward Florida's birds of prey and their habitats through medical rehabilitation, interactive education, and practical research. Staff helps injured birds of prey everywhere by creating, refining and documenting innovative veterinary techniques, and by conducting toxicological and ecological research.

Lake Okeechobee Watershed

Audubon's Lake Okeechobee program dates back to 1936 when Marvin Chandler was hired as warden. In 1938, the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund (i.e., the Governor and Cabinet) designated two Audubon sanctuaries on Lake Okeechobee. Chandler and subsequent wardens through 1963 were deputized by state and federal authorities to enforce game laws, with a focus on deterring egg and plume collectors in Lake Okeechobee and on the Kissimmee Prairie.

The Sanctuaries remain, but staff activities now focus on water level management in the lake, improving water quality, conserving habitats and biodiversity in the watershed, and public outreach and education. Articles in this issue provide details on Audubon of Florida's current initiatives for Lake Okeechobee and the estuaries.

Keys Environmental Restoration Fund

Audubon's Florida Keys Environmental Restoration Fund addresses the restoration, enhancement, and management of natural areas in the Florida Keys. Funds from federal, state and local governments, as well as private individuals, are used for habitat restoration projects throughout the Keys with priority given to the most cost-effective methods of restoring disturbed natural communities. These include sea grasses, freshwater and marine wetlands, upland hammocks and pinelands. Methods range from scrape-down of filled wetlands, refilling of artificial canals and channels, removal and management of invasive non-native vegetation, and purchase of fee title or easements where significant restoration is possible.

Twenty-six projects have been performed to date, all on public lands, and 18 are now under way. Two of the largest projects are the Carysfort project and Port Bougainville, both in North Key Largo. The tropical hardwood hammock and wetlands in this area provide critical habitat for numerous listed and regionally-important plant and animal species.

Some projects focus almost exclusively on invasive-exotic plant removal or wetland restoration, while others are combinations of various techniques. Several restoration initiatives are taking place within the boundaries of U.S. Fish and Wildlife National Refuges in the Lower Keys, and many of them involve freshwater wetland restorations critical to endangered species in the area. Highlights include the de-mucking of silted-in solution holes (caused by man-made obstructions to water flow) which enhance habitat for fish and Key deer. Another multifaceted project is Big Pine Slough, which will install a culvert to restore tidal flow to an impounded wetland area. Similar projects are planned on Big Pine Key to restore flow through a freshwater wetland area critical to Key deer, American alligators, striped mud turtles, and other species.



SAVING

Our Birds and Other Endangered Species

Wildlife policy—one of Audubon of Florida's four advocacy platforms—is arguably at the nexus of the other three: public land acquisition and management, water policy, and growth management. Wildlife's right to adequate water and healthy habitat has always had to compete with development.

Education is one approach to problems arising from the sheer volume of people invading wildlife habitat. Around Memorial Day and the Fourth of July, Audubon works with the media to raise awareness of shorebirds, and to encourage beachgoers and beach park managers to minimize disturbance.

Some of the most significant struggles for wildlife's welfare hinge on Audubon's ability to persuade agencies to make choices in favor of conserving Florida's natural resources. In June, for example, Audubon staff commented on government proposals to remove the bald eagle from state and federal threatened and endangered species lists. Staff also weighed in on a proposal to harness development in Florida scrub-jay habitat to create mitigation banks for their conservation.

"Writing comments to agency proposals is rarely the most glamorous tactic," said Audubon Conservation Associate Julie Wraithmell, "but if we can influence a state or federal policy, its impacts are likely to be large-scale and longer lasting than other approaches." When time and travel budgets allow, staff testifies at hearings on these issues.

"What's really important is that anyone can comment," Wraithmell added. "Written comments allow time to craft thoughtful responses and offer a real opportunity to influence outcomes."

Photo of scrub jay by Christina Evans.

FLORIDA LEGISLATIVE REPORT

The 2006 legislative session produced a significant commitment to land preservation, a new wetlands program for the Panhandle, record money for Everglades restoration, land and water conservation projects, and a first-ever state commitment to address global warming.

Audubon staff worked closely with House and Senate leaders and committee chairs, and members of the Florida Conservation Network generated thousands of emails and phone calls on key issues. Some bad bills and amendments were stopped and some bills we opposed were improved enough to drop our opposition.

This is an election year, so term limits and elections will lead to many new faces next session. It is important that all conservationists remind candidates and incumbents that land and water conservation, along with growth management and wildlife protection, are policies and programs worth supporting.

By the time this issue of the Naturalist is in your hands, the Governor will have signed many of the bills summarized here.

Babcock Ranch: Historic \$350 million Ranch Purchase Passes HB 1347

The Legislature endorsed a plan to preserve nearly 74,000 acres of Babcock Ranch at a cost of \$350 million and offset by a development plan on 17,000 other acres. Audubon worked with House and Senate sponsors and representatives of developer Syd Kitson to craft the new concept of allowing a non-profit board to oversee ranch operations. The goal is to balance environmental features and public use with hunting, eco-tourism, and maintenance of a working cattle ranch. The ranch could be part of wildlife corridor from Lake Okeechobee to the Gulf, potentially allowing for northward migration of Florida panthers. Audubon staff have observed large flocks of wood storks, spoonbills and other wading birds on the ranch, and a variety of raptors and woodpeckers. The huge Telegraph Swamp is an important tributary to the Caloosahatchee River.

Florida Keys Area of Critical State Concern

As originally written, these bills threatened to lift state oversight of growth, water quality and habitat conservation in the Florida Keys. With the leverage generated by our grassroots advocates, the environmental community negotiated a compromise with the bill's sponsor, delaying the dates for consideration and de-designation until 2008-2009. This amendment was added to the Senate version of the bill before it passed the Senate Environmental Preservation Committee, and later to HB 1299 on the House floor. The compromise version of this bill was passed by both houses and signed by the Governor.

New Water and Wetlands Protection for Northwest Florida

The Florida Panhandle will now enjoy a level of protection for wetlands and stormwater similar to the rest of the state. The Legislature has finally required Environmental Resource Permits (ERPs) to protect water quality and wetlands integrity. The Panhandle's water management district is still weak and under-funded by limits placed in the state constitution decades ago. Protecting upstream wetlands and controlling stormwater is critical to maintaining healthy coastal habitats. Audubon will work with the Department of Environmental Protection and the Northwest Florida Water Management District to make sure the new program is as protective as envisioned in the legislation.

Renewable Energy and Climate Change Action Plan

SB 888 makes it easier to site power plants, including nuclear plants. However, it carries language to establish a Climate Action Plan for Florida and includes important incentives for solar energy. Audubon staff drafted and supported the climate change language introduced as an amendment to the Senate bill. The language was watered down in the House but still requires Florida to take initial steps to limit its contribution to global warming. Florida, with its non-stop air conditioning and reliance on the automobile, emits a disproportionate share of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Audubon is committed to working through the state process to turn the Climate Action Plan into real action to save our state from the effects of global warming, climate change and sea level rise.

MONEY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The Florida General Appropriations Act provided a new level of funding for the environment. Audubon supported the following appropriations:

Conservation Appropriations Highlights:

- \$300 million for Florida Forever (only \$15 million is for conservation lands)
- \$310 million for Babcock Ranch

These funds come from reallocations of \$310 million in land trust fund surpluses:

Conservation and Recreation Lands Trust Fund - \$50 million

Land Acquisition Trust Fund - \$15 million

Water Management Lands Trust Fund - \$245 million

- \$25 million for Lake Okeechobee
- \$135 million for Everglades Restoration, including:
 - Biscayne Bay and Florida Bay - \$25 million
 - Loxahatchee River Water Storage - \$10 million
- \$19.25 million for the Indian River Lagoon
- \$4 million for the St. Lucie River
- \$1 million for the Loxahatchee Slough M Canal
- \$3.7 million for Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative
- \$20 million for Florida Keys Wastewater
- \$4 million for Apalachicola River Surface Water Improvement
- \$10 million for the Lower St. Johns River Basin Initiative

GET INVOLVED

Audubon of Florida enlists help from citizens like you through our online Advocacy Center at www.ga1.org/natureadvocate.

Sign up today!

Read Audubon of Florida's comment letters on wildlife policy and more at www.audubonofflorida.org/pubs_LettersTestimonyArchive.html.

News releases, including the Memorial Day shorebird release, are online at www.audubonofflorida.org/pubs_media.html.

For regular notices on public comment periods:

Florida Administrative Weekly:

www.flrules.com/default.asp

Federal Register:

www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html

Photo of royal tern by Christina Evans.

Anatomy of a Victory

Pressure to expand urban areas is a significant threat to Florida's natural lands. The prevailing growth patterns constitute urban sprawl, a term often applied to low-density development that radiates from dense urban areas and encroaches on rural and environmentally sensitive lands.

The model created by Audubon of Florida and its partners to confront the challenge of sprawling development can be replicated throughout Florida. In April, the Hold the Line Campaign in Miami-Dade County stopped nine proposed developments threatening the Everglades and Biscayne Bay. Overwhelming public support generated by the Campaign led the Miami-Dade County Commission to reject the proposed developments in favor of protecting environmental lands.

The success of the Hold the Line Campaign stems from its compelling theme: quality of life. Its message united a diverse group of stakeholders:

140 organizations and 18 municipalities encompassing civic, homeowner, agricultural and conservation interests. Hold the Line unmistakably linked environmental issues to situations caused by urban sprawl: traffic congestion, overcrowded schools, lack of affordable housing, diminishing drinking-water supplies and loss of natural lands.

Communities throughout Florida are confronting these same growth-related issues. A proven technique for saving our special places is to identify common ground with non-traditional allies.

By diversifying the face of conservation, we increase the impact our initiatives can have on policy makers and elected officials. By integrating environmental protection goals with efforts to preserve quality of life, we further Audubon's mission to protect birds, habitats, and our healthy communities.

Saving Birds and Special Spaces - Audubon Assembly 2006

Fun Pre-Assembly Activities

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19

- 2 - 4:00 pm Field Trip - Orlando Wetlands Park
- 5 - 7:30 pm Beachside reception. Cash bar
- 6 - 8:00 pm Field Trip - Sunset Cruise, Indian River Lagoon
- 8 -10:00 pm Movie Madness! Screening of "Hoot"

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20

- 7 - 11:45 am Field Trip - Jetty Park and Canaveral Locks
- 7 - 11:45 am Field Trip - Merritt Island NWR
- 10 -11:30 am Audubon on the Hill by Audubon's D.C. policy staff

ASSEMBLY

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20

- 12 -1:45 pm Kickoff Lunch - Audubon in Action with David Anderson
- 2 - 3:30 pm Learning Sessions
- 3:30 - 4 pm Coffee Social
- 4 - 5:30 pm Learning Sessions
- 6 - 7:00 pm Entertainment with John Hankinson and Friends! Cash Bar
- 7 - 9:30 pm Awards Banquet

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21

- 7 - 8:30 am Field Trip - Lori Wilson Park
- 8 - 9:30 am Audubon Chapter Presidents' Breakfast
- 8:30 - 11:30 am Field Trip - Indian Mound Station Sanctuary
- 9:30 -11:30 am Outdoor Education: Connecting People with Nature
- 9:30 - Noon Setting Florida's Conservation Action Agenda
- Noon -1:30 pm Lunch - Chapter Awards
- 2 - 6:00 pm Annual Florida Audubon Society and Audubon of Florida Membership meeting followed by Audubon Board meeting

Audubon Assembly Goes to the Beach!

Relax and enjoy the casual, beachfront atmosphere of the Holiday Inn Cocoa Beach Oceanfront Resort. Join Audubon of Florida for engaging programs that highlight Florida's coastal environments and issues that affect their wellbeing. Get inspired and sharpen skills for advocating for birds and their protection. Hear scientists share insights on global warming and its consequences for Florida's extensive coastal areas. Collaborate with other environmentalists and birders from across the region to shape policies and take an active part in saving our birds, wildlife, and habitats. Enjoy one of Florida's best beaches while you catch up with friends, colleagues, and fellow Audubon members. Field trips will take in some of Florida's birding hot spots, so don't forget the binoculars!

Register by September 27 and pay only \$99 for all receptions, meals, programs, workshops, and even a movie. (After September 27, this all-inclusive package is \$125.) Conference costs are underwritten by Audubon of Florida to keep participants' costs to a minimum, so make plans NOW to attend.

Book hotel accommodations directly with the Holiday Inn, and take advantage of the special rate for Audubon Assembly participants. Oceanfront rooms are available at additional cost.

Setting Florida's Conservation Action Agenda

Audubon's six regional conservation committees and state leaders will lead discussions on the places and strategies we use to save the birds and places that make Florida special. Discussions of Florida's problems with growth, transportation, water, land conservation, wildlife policy and global warming impacts will precede votes on our 2007 Audubon Action Agenda. Regional conservation strategies to save coastal habitat, the Everglades and Big Cypress and important Central Florida ecosystems will be unveiled and discussed.

Learning Sessions.

Six specially planned mini-sessions will help local conservation leaders prepare to address a range of important issues.

Birds vs. Coastal Development: The Case for Managing Florida's Coasts for Their Natural Inhabitants Squeezed between development and the sea, our shrinking coastal margins are increasingly crucial to Florida's most imperiled birds. Learn about globetrotting Red Knots and stately Reddish Egrets—and how your participation in coastal management can make a difference.

Bird Alert! The Eyes and Ears of Audubon Science Learn how birdwatchers inform conservation policies by adding to Audubon's scientific knowledge. Observations from Audubon members like you are the cornerstone of projects like EagleWatch, ColonyWatch and Florida Bay spoonbill tracking.

Holding the Line Against Development in the Everglades Roseate spoonbills are now nesting in their historic northeast Florida Bay habitat. Halting development and drainage of Everglades areas are keys to this result. Using case studies, this session explores practical ways to "hold the line" and save natural areas in your community.

Acre by Acre: Promoting Protection of Places that are Special to You and Important to Birds How to get your land and water conservation priorities on lists for acquisition and restoration by state, federal and local governments. New strategies for protecting Florida - *acre by acre!*

Climate Change and Florida's Fate Destructive storms, warmer water, confused birds, altered ecosystems - these conditions and others can be traced to global warming. Learn how Florida conservationists can help reverse the causes and related risks of climate change.

Leave No Beach Un-termed! What began as a few birders concerned about nesting terns is now a groundswell of activism on behalf of Florida's beach- and rooftop-nesting birds. Explore this multi-chapter, multi-organization initiative harnessing data collection, education, and fundraising for incredible gains for birds.

Featured Speakers

Robert Twilley, Ph.D. [Friday learning session] Dr. Twilley is a professor in the Dept. of Oceanography and Coastal Science and director of the Wetland Biogeochemistry Institute at Louisiana State University. His research focuses on systems ecology and management of coastal wetlands in the Gulf of Mexico and Latin America. He is the lead author of *Confronting Climate Change in the Gulf Coast Region: Prospects for Sustaining Our Ecological Heritage*.

Daniel L. Childers, Ph.D. [Friday learning session] Dr. Childers is director of the Florida Coastal Everglades Long-Term Ecological Research (LTER) program (<http://fcelter.fiu.edu>). This program, funded by the National Science Foundation, supports the Everglades LTER, part of NSF's network of 26 LTER sites. At FIU, Dr. Childers focuses on environmental challenges to the Everglades, addressing water quality and water supply issues.

David Anderson, Executive Director, Audubon of Florida. At lunch on Friday, David Anderson will share vital insights into Audubon's progress on regional initiatives, conservation outcomes, and priority targets across Florida.

Field Trips *Coordinated by Orange Audubon Society and Space Coast Audubon.*

DEADLINE FOR FIELD TRIP REGISTRATIONS IS OCTOBER 10.

Reservations are required for all field trips. Please note the attendee limitations for some trips. Payment for trips is required on-site. Cash and credit cards will be accepted. NO personal checks - no exceptions. **Bring water, sunscreen, and binoculars!**

THURSDAY, OCT. 19

2:00 - 4:00 pm

ORLANDO WETLANDS PARK [FREE] Donations accepted. Reservations required.

Meet at site at 1:45 pm. Directions provided. *The Orlando Wetlands Park is a 1,280-acre man-made wetland that filters water from the Iron Bridge Water Treatment Facility. More than 18 miles of dikes lead visitors to view wintering waterfowl, including blue-winged teal, northern shovelers and American wigeons. A variety of wading birds are also found here.* [<http://myfwc.com/viewing/sites/site-c10.html>]

6:00 - 8:00 pm

SPACE COAST NATURE TOURS: SUNSET BOAT CRUISE ON THE INDIAN RIVER LAGOON [\$25/person] Reservations required.

Minimum 20 people, maximum 40. Boat leaves from Titusville Municipal Marina, Slip A-23 (451 Marina Rd). Meet at dock 5:30 pm, directions provided. Boat departs promptly at 6 pm. *Explore the wonders of nature on this 90-minute narrated sunset boat cruise on the beautiful Indian River Lagoon, where eagles soar, dolphins play, and alligators lurk. Complimentary wine and cheese served.* [<http://www.spacecoastnaturetours.com/>]

FRIDAY, OCT. 20

7:00 - 11:45 am

JETTY PARK AND THE CANAVERAL LOCK [\$10 PER CAR] Reservations required.

Minimum 10, maximum 24 people. Meet in hotel lobby at 6:45 am for carpool. Directions provided. Located at Port Canaveral, Jetty Park and the Locks are great birding areas for terns, gulls, wading birds and shorebirds. Manatees and dolphins are often seen at the Locks and black-crowned night herons nest nearby. *Learn background on Cape Canaveral Air Force Station and see launch pads and the Canaveral Lighthouse from Jetty Park Pier.*

7:00 - 11:45 am

BLACK POINT DRIVE, MERRITT ISLAND NWR [FREE] Donations accepted. Reservations required.

Maximum 20 people. Meet at Merritt Island NWR Visitor Center at 7:45 am. Travel time from hotel - approx. 45 min.

This 7-mile journey offers views of the many animals found in the National Wildlife Refuge. Merritt Island supports sizable winter populations of ducks, coots, gulls and terns, raptors, and songbirds. [<http://merrittisland.fws.gov/>]

SATURDAY, OCT. 21

7:00 - 8:30 am

LORI WILSON PARK [FREE] Reservations required.

Meet in Hotel Lobby at 6:45 am. The Park is adjacent to hotel. Participants will walk to field trip site. This 32-acre beach park is on A1A, 2 miles south of SR 520. *This Great Birding hot spot, includes migratory birds, shorebirds, songbirds, butterflies, opossum, raccoons and snakes! A 3,155-ft. boardwalk winds through a maritime hammock* [www.brevardparks.com/nature/loriwilson.htm]

8:00 - 11:30 am

INDIAN MOUND STATION SANCTUARY [FREE] Donations accepted. Reservations Required.

Meet in Hotel Lobby at 8:00 am for carpool. Directions provided. *A magnet for migrating warblers and songbirds, this 85-acre property is part of Brevard's Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) program. On the Atlantic Coastal Ridge, it contains a broad range of habitats. An Indian burial mound marks this historic spot, also the site of a trading post used by pioneers traveling between St Johns River and Indian River Lagoon.*

Hotel Information

HOLIDAY INN COCOA BEACH OCEANFRONT RESORT

Holiday Inn Cocoa Beach Oceanfront Resort
1300 N. Atlantic Ave., Cocoa Beach, FL 32931
800-206-2747 Audubon code: AUD

RESERVATIONS: Audubon Assembly Rate: \$89.99/night (Ask for the special Audubon Assembly rate). Cut off date for Special Room Rates is **SEPT. 27, 2006**. After this date room rates will revert to the standard room rate. No exceptions.

UPGRADES TO BEACHFRONT AVAILABLE AT

ADDITIONAL COST (please refer to AUD code).

Oceanfront standard \$139.99, Oceanfront Suite \$189.99, Lofts \$189.99, Villas \$149.99, and Kid Suites \$109.99.

CASUAL ATTIRE. Meeting rooms can be cool, so bring a wrap to the sessions. For field trips, bring your sunscreen, hat, and plenty of liquids. The beach is right outside, so have bathing suit and towel handy!

Registration and Exhibit Space

REGISTER NOW for all-inclusive package of \$99 (offer expires Sept. 27). After September 27 registration cost is \$125. Download Assembly Registration forms and check out detailed information on-line: www.audubonofflorida.org

To request Registration information by mail or fax, contact Vicky Johnston 305-371-6399 ext. 134 or email vjohnston@audubon.org.

CHAPTER EXHIBITS

Exhibit space will be offered for Chapters at the Holiday Inn Cocoa Beach Oceanfront Resort. Cost is free but spaces are limited, so please contact **Jacqui Sulek, Chapters Coordinator** at jsulek@audubon.org or **850-251-1297** by **October 10, 2006**.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED!

Please join Audubon staff by volunteering a few hours during this exciting weekend. Contact jsulek@audubon.org with your availability.

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION IS OPEN

Thursday 3 - 5:30 pm, Friday 9 am - 5 pm, and Saturday 9 am - noon.

Exciting exhibits will be on display throughout the event.

REGISTER NOW FOR AUDUBON ASSEMBLY 2006

First Name _____ Last Name _____
Spouse/Guest/First Name _____ Last Name _____
Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Cell _____ Fax _____
Email _____ Chapter/Organization _____
 YES! I would like to volunteer at the Audubon Assembly. Please reach me by telephone email
Special dietary needs _____

Registration Fee - Per Person

All-inclusive package includes Thursday beachside reception, Friday lunch and dinner, Saturday lunch, and all workshops and programs.

Refund policy: Up to 30 days prior - full refund; 10 or more days prior - \$50 refund. Within 10 days of Assembly - sorry, no refunds.

- \$99 Early bird registration (up to Sept. 27) \$125 after September 27
 Friday Reception and Awards Banquet (only) _____ @ \$40/per person = \$ _____

Hotel reservations are not included in Registration. Book rooms directly with Holiday Inn Cocoa Beach Oceanfront Resort 1-800-206-2747.

TOTAL DUE \$ _____

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$ _____ payable to Audubon of Florida. Charge my VISA Mastercard in the amount of \$ _____
Credit Card No. _____ Exp. Date _____ Signature _____

Mail form to Audubon of Florida, 444 Brickell Avenue, Suite 850, Miami, FL 33131 or Fax to 305-371-6398.

FIELD TRIPS. You must reserve by October 10 for ALL trips.

	No. of People		No. of People
Thursday <input type="radio"/> Orlando Wetlands Park	_____	<input type="radio"/> Indian River Lagoon Sunset Cruise (\$25/person)	_____
Friday <input type="radio"/> Jetty Park and the Canaveral Locks (\$10/car)	_____	<input type="radio"/> Black Point/Merritt Island NWR	_____
Saturday <input type="radio"/> Lori Wilson Park	_____	<input type="radio"/> Indian Mound Station Sanctuary	_____

Pay field trip fees directly to operator/facility at time of event. Cash or credit cards accepted. No checks.



Stuart D. Strahl, Ph.D., Everglades Fund has raised \$93,400 for Everglades protection.

Stuart Strahl, Ph.D., (pictured above) led Audubon's Everglades restoration efforts in Florida from 1996 through 2003 when he assumed his current position as Director of the Brookfield Zoo and Chicago Zoological Society. One of his major accomplishments at Audubon of Florida was his leadership in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, the largest ecological restoration initiative in history.

When Audubon of Florida established the Stuart D. Strahl, Ph.D., Everglades Fund in December 2003, Strahl committed the first \$10,000. "He demonstrated his continuing commitment to Everglades restoration," said Tim Bachmeyer, Ph.D., Director of Development for Audubon of Florida. "Contributions to this fund now total \$93,400."

These funds support the Everglades and Coastal Everglades Campaigns, which achieved two important victories recently: the reservation of water supplies in Florida for fish and wildlife protection, and the Hold the Line Campaign to halt urban sprawl from extending beyond the Urban Development Boundary in Miami Dade County.

By contributing to this important fund, you join other Everglades defenders in continuing the important work begun by Stuart Strahl, Ph.D. For more information about this special fund, and to make your contribution to it, contact Tim Bachmeyer, Ph.D., at 786-402-4841 or Audubon Executive Director David Anderson at 305-371-6399 ext. 128.



Photo of screech owls by Susie Warren.

ADOPT-a-BIRD

As Audubon Center for Birds of Prey continues to catch up from a hugely successful, busy baby bird season, we still need your help! Joining the Adopt-a-bird program is a unique and thoughtful way to participate in the conservation of Florida's raptors housed and treated at the Center. Contributions also support Center educational programs that help protect these species and their habitats. A variety of gift levels are available: Buddy, Parent, Guardian, or Protector. A great idea for gifts!

For more information contact Audubon Center for Birds of Prey 407-644-0190 or visit us on line at www.audubonofflorida.org/who_centers_CBOP_adoptabird.html

Financial information about National Audubon Society can be obtained by writing to us at 700 Broadway, New York, 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.

YOUR BENEFICIARIES There are more of them than you realize!



At Audubon, we have always understood the vital connection between people and nature.

By including a bequest to Audubon in your will, you can help ensure a brighter future for both.

Make your bequest by asking your lawyer to use the following language in your will:

I bequeath to the National Audubon Society, Inc., a not-for-profit organization located at 700 Broadway, New York, NY 10003, _____% of my residuary estate for the benefit of Audubon of Florida.



To learn more, call for a free brochure. Wayne Mones, Vice President, Planned Giving, National Audubon Society, 700 Broadway, New York, NY 10003, 212-979-3033. www.plannedgifts@audubon.org

Audubon Adventures Day in Lake County

OVAS is nationally recognized for powerful education programs

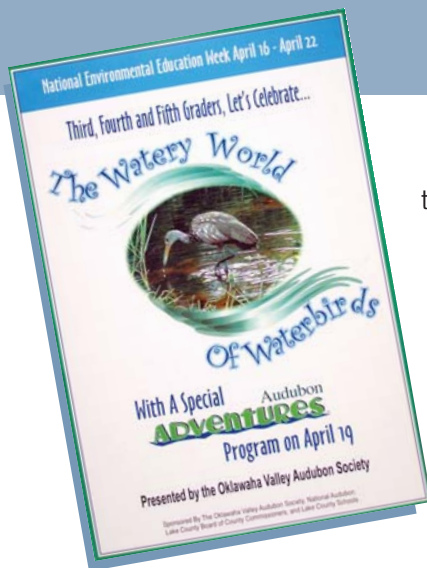


Photo of Lost Lake class by Karen Hart.

Oklawaha Valley Audubon Society (OVAS), led by Environmental Education Chair Mary Anderson, held its third annual "Audubon Adventures Day" in April. The Lake County Board of County Commissioners and the School Board showed their appreciation and support by jointly proclaiming April 19, 2006, as Audubon Adventure Day throughout the county.

Chapter members arranged for 9,000 copies of "The Watery World of Waterbirds," an Audubon Adventures publication, to be distributed to third-, fourth- and fifth-grade students. Classroom resource manuals for 400 teachers, and National Audubon Society materials that supplement Florida's curriculum requirements were also provided. OVAS members produced, with help from Lake Sumter Community College staff, a 30-minute DVD about local water birds for each of the 22 participating schools. An essay contest about "My Favorite Waterbird" extended the students' involvement. Five of the contest winners and their parents enjoyed a chapter-sponsored boat trip on Lake Eustis and through the Dead River Canal for up-close viewing of the water birds they studied.

"Thanks go to Elaine O'Sullivan at Audubon Adventures, to the commissioners and school board, and to all those who have contributed to the chapter's education fund and assisted with the program," said Anderson, founder of this project that has brought the community together on many levels.

Film adaptation of "HOOT" hatched an Educator's Guide.

Environmental education materials developed around the movie "Hoot" are available free of charge. Nearly 30 Audubon chapters in Florida are already taking advantage of this resource in their educational programming.

Audubon Center for Birds of Prey contributed educational content to the guide, which was produced by Walden Media. The material targets grades 6-8 and meets national content and educational standards for science, language arts, social studies and character education.

Based on the novel by Florida resident and best-selling author Carl Hiaasen, the movie focuses on a boy who moves to Florida and unearths a threat to a local population of burrowing owls. The movie "Hoot" will be shown Thursday, October 19 at the Audubon Assembly.

To obtain the Educator's Guide materials, contact the Center at 407-644-0910 or visit <http://www.walden.com/html/pub/hoot/> (Walden Media's Web site) for details.

Inspired by birds and nature, Escambia third-graders take action

In May the Frances M. Weston Audubon Society (FMWAS) got a donation that shows the power of its environmental education programs to touch lives. After a visit to the Roy Hyatt Environmental Center near Pensacola, a group of third graders launched fundraisers at their school, Bratt Elementary, in Century near the Alabama border.

The 8-year-olds, part of the school's PATS program (an acronym for Primary school Academically Talented Students), were supported in their efforts by teachers and parents. An art

teacher helped them create pictures of animals and birds that were auctioned off, and there were other drives too.

"When a check for \$791.51 arrived, we were just overwhelmed," said FMWAS president Annelise Reunert. "I called the school's principal, who told me the class had liked their visit so much that they wanted to do something for the Hyatt Center." Escambia School System owns the Center, and FMWAS supplies environmental education programming there.

The chapter recently received funding from

the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation for an outreach program to be developed for inner city schools. Rural Bratt Elementary will be added to their list of schools. Chapter volunteers will set up bird feeders on school grounds, alert students to birds they can expect to see, and organize birding trips to nearby parks.

"Century is a long drive from Pensacola, but we will overcome that," said Reunert, adding that the chapter plans a ceremony to recognize the school.

Citizen science in St Johns County

Audubon EagleWatch volunteer Lucy E. Seeds celebrates her 78th birthday this year. For more than



Photo of Lucy Seeds by Terry Brown.

50 of those, she has been a member of Audubon. An accomplished birder whose specialty is “birding by ear,” Seeds has participated as a citizen scientist by monitoring a bald eagle nest in her St. Johns County neighborhood for ten years. When the eagles were threatened by development, she hounded the county commissioners until they passed a bald eagle management plan.

This year from February through April, Lucy could be found every Saturday morning at Julington Creek Plantation observing “her” eagles. She kept two spotting scopes donated by the local Wild Birds Unlimited store trained on the nest—one for adults, and another set low enough for kids. Seeds estimated that an average of 40 people peered at the nest every Saturday. She also organized special viewings and programs for scout troops, school groups, and others.

In April Lynda White, Audubon’s EagleWatch coordinator, brought Paige, an education ambassador eagle, to Jacksonville to highlight the conservation education work done by Seeds.

“On Friday I talked to 275 fifth graders and on Saturday I was at the park with Lucy,” White said. “Among the 200 people attending the program in the park, many came up and told me what a wonderful learning experience this has been for their children and for them.”

“Lucy is a perfect example of the ways Audubon’s volunteer citizen scientists spread the message of conservation and preservation of natural resources, while educating people about Florida’s bald eagles,” White said.

For information on the Audubon EagleWatch program, visit www.audubonofflorida.org.

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Notice of Annual Meeting of the Membership of The Florida Audubon Society



Pursuant to the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, notice is hereby given that the Annual Membership Meeting of the Florida Audubon Society will be held at the Holiday Inn Cocoa Beach Oceanfront Resort at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 21, 2006, in conjunction with the Annual Assembly of Audubon of Florida being held there October 19 - 21, 2006. The meeting agenda will be to receive a financial report and hear any comments of the membership to the Board of Directors. A Meeting of the Board will follow immediately upon the conclusion of the Membership Meeting.

For more about the 2006 Audubon Assembly, including programs, field trips, registration, and hotel information, see pages 10 and 11 in this issue.

Photo of black-bellied whistling ducks courtesy of Peg Urban.

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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SUMMER 2006

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