



FLORIDA
Audubon
Naturalist

SUMMER/FALL 2010

**2010 AUDUBON
ASSEMBLY:
Protecting Florida's
Resilient Coasts and
Special Places
October 22-23**

**Responding to the
Gulf Oil Disaster**

**Rehydrating the
Everglades**



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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

It has been a difficult summer watching the impact of the Gulf oil spill on the birds and marine life in that remarkable body of water and worrying about the long-term implications for this most beautiful and fragile state of Florida. It is comforting to be part of an organization, the Florida Audubon Society, which has stood with Florida through many difficult challenges to its natural resources for over 110 years. I am very proud to chair the board of FAS because it gives me an opportunity to work with so many good people to do something real and significant in protecting our birds and wildlife rather than simply being a spectator to the destruction visited all too often on natural Florida.

The work of FAS, in partnership with the National Audubon Society, has consistently used good science and effective advocacy to champion sound environmental decision-making and investment to make a real difference. This commitment has been driven over time by our expanding understanding of the wonder and importance of the natural world, and by the deep personal connection to, and love for, Florida's wildlife and special places of so many Floridians over the past century.

The *Florida Audubon Naturalist* has been like a wise old friend throughout those years, informing and inspiring us, building in us the resolve and drive it takes to speak up and work to protect this wonderful state. I am proud to stand with the Florida Audubon Society to renew our commitment to another century of advocacy on behalf of natural Florida, a commitment reflected in this wonderful issue of an "old friend," the *Florida Audubon Naturalist*. Please enjoy these pages and then join all of us as we "come out swinging" on behalf of Florida's birds and wildlife once again!

Sincerely,
John H. Hankinson, Jr.
Chairman, Florida Audubon Society

Pelican Island Audubon Society President Richard Baker accompanied U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officials in May to release a brown pelican and a northern gannet, the first birds oiled in the Gulf spill. After being rehabilitated, they were set free in Florida's Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge. Brown pelican courtesy of Richard Baker





Florida Audubon President Eric Draper visited Panhandle beaches threatened by the Gulf oil disaster. Photo courtesy of Julie Wraithmell.

A WAKE-UP CALL

to Come Together and Protect Florida's Resilient Coasts

Over the past two decades the brown pelican has become the hopeful symbol of nature's resiliency. Once on the verge of extinction, this big handsome bird rebounded to become a common sight along Florida's coast. I am in awe every time I see them in flight.

Yet pelicans have now become the heartrending symbol of BP's Gulf oil disaster. We are confronted with images of oil-soaked birds and plumes of oil coating marshes and spoiling beaches where seabirds and shorebirds nest and forage. Important Bird Areas such as Lanark Reef, Audubon's Coastal Islands Sanctuaries and tens of thousands of nesting and migrating birds were placed at risk.

The good news that is there is much we can do to ensure birds' safety as the oil moves onto Florida's shores. That is because people are taking action in ways we have never seen. Our members and concerned people in Florida and throughout the country are asking, "I want to do something, what can I do?"

And Audubon has responded. Thousands of people joined our volunteer registry. We trained and deployed bird stewards and beach monitors to protect bird colonies, help with oiled bird rescue, and guide clean-up crews in sensitive habitats. We advised state and federal agencies on ways to protect shorebirds from the impacts of the oil. We helped get thousands to participate in Hands Across the Sand.

The blowout came at a moment in history when the oil industry was intent on persuading political leaders to relax protections in our coastal waters.

The Florida Legislature stopped just short of lifting the ban on drilling right off our beaches this year. I am proud to say that Audubon led the fight to stop drilling in state waters. The damage the disaster wreaked in Louisiana and elsewhere in the Gulf, and the oil and tar balls that have washed up on our pristine beaches, are stark examples of the disastrous impacts drilling could have in our nearshore waters.

We have important work cut out for us now and over the longer term to recover our coastal habitats. Oil is not the only threat. Over-drained and polluted waterways wipe out seagrass and damage the fish and wildlife food chain. Coastal armoring and development reduce natural areas. Human disturbance drives shorebirds to abandon nests. We can learn from our mistakes, achieve thoughtful solutions, and recover. Florida's coasts are resilient.

The oil spill is a wake-up call. We can and should come together at the Audubon Assembly to commit to a strategy to protect Florida's Resilient Coasts. You can help by becoming a volunteer, by attending the Assembly, and by using the envelope in this issue of the Florida Audubon Naturalist to contribute so that we can continue to defend the coastal birds and special places that inspire our love of this wonderful place, Florida.

Eric Draper

President, Florida Audubon Society

2010 Florida Legislature: Backpedaling on Conservation

Bald eagles courtesy of R.J. Wiley



It was a tough year for conservation in the state Legislature. Audubon and its allies fought off proposals to open Florida's nearshore waters to oil drilling but saw backpedaling on state renewable-energy policy. Funding for conservation lands and the Everglades suffered deep budget cuts. The Legislature imposed some new rules to protect Florida's famous freshwater springs from pollution from septic tanks, but failed to ban land disposal of sewage sludge.

Anti-environmental moves came at the end of the session when a bill was amended to prohibit new rules without legislative approval. At the same time the Legislature refused to reauthorize the state's land use planning agency, the Department of Community Affairs. Audubon launched a successful campaign to persuade Governor Charlie Crist to veto the bad rules bill. But Big Oil won in a special session in late July, when the House failed to allow Floridians to vote on a constitutional ban on oil drilling in state waters.

OIL DRILLING IN FLORIDA'S WATERS

Proposals to allow drilling for oil in Florida's nearshore waters had fizzled by the time BP's oil rig blew out on April 20. Drilling lost support in the Senate in the face of the wall of truth refuting the industry's claims about safety and low risks. House proponents held a series of hearings to promote lifting the current ban on drilling, but abandoned the cause when they realized that Senate President Jeff Atwater would not go along.

LIGHTS DIM FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY

With the House focused on oil drilling, the Senate failed to repeat its previous efforts to move renewable energy policy. Late in the session the House appeared ready to pass a bill providing incentives for up to 1000 megawatts (as much as two to three major power plants' output) of renewable energy – mostly solar. The bill's minor ratepayer impact was enough to scare away support in this political campaign year. Audubon supports energy efficiency and renewable policy as a way to combat global climate change.

MISSING MONEY

Gone are the days when a reasonable effort could deliver \$300 million in state cash for land conservation and \$100 million for the Everglades. This year the cash-strapped Legislature appropriated bridge funding of \$15 million for land conservation and \$50 million for the Everglades. The money reflects a continuing commitment to these important and popular programs.

Springs May Flow a Little Cleaner: Senator Lee Constantine finally advanced legislation to help protect springs via Senate Bill 550. The bill requires inspection and replacement of failing septic tanks, a major source of pollution of Florida's unique and valuable freshwater springs.

Pythons vs. Politics: Ownership of pythons and other big nasty exotic snakes will be a bit tougher in Florida, thanks to legislation championed by Audubon. The goal is to keep these super-predators from taking over the Everglades and other parts of wild Florida.

Post-Session Victory - Governor Vetoes Bad Rules Bill: Audubon launched an aggressive post-session campaign to persuade Governor Charlie Crist to veto House Bill 1565, which required that nearly every environmental rule face legislative review. The bill made it nearly impossible to pass new rules designed to protect water resources and prevent loss wildlife habitat.

Audubon's Legislative Policy Team includes: Eric Draper, Julie Wraithmell, Charles Lee, and Traci Romine.

FLORIDA AUDUBON'S RESPONSE TO THE GULF OIL DISASTER

Building Community to Protect Coastal Birds



Dianna Flynt is Rehabilitation Supervisor at the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey.

Audubon leadership in bird rehabilitation

Audubon has been at the forefront of protecting birds and their habitats for more than a century. So when the Gulf Oil Disaster hit in April, Audubon veterans stepped into leadership roles to face the disaster.

Two of those experienced leaders are Resee Collins and Dianna Flynt. Collins, who worked for the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey, is currently the Paraprofessional Volunteer Transport Coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). She is responsible for staffing wildlife centers with qualified paraprofessionals who have offered their services for oiled wildlife response and for connecting resources within the wildlife rehabilitation community to deal with the immediate needs.

Flynt is the Rehabilitation Supervisor at Audubon Center for Birds of Prey and Secretary of the Board of Directors of the Florida Wildlife Rehabilitators Association. She has been working with seabirds since she was a high school student, and participated in rehabilitation efforts following a much smaller oil spill in Tampa Bay some years ago.

Both professionals understand the complexities of oiled-bird rehabilitation, the depth of the disaster, and the long-term consequences.

“The spill has shown me America at its worst—it’s an environmental disaster of unprecedented proportions, entwined in bureaucracy, the effects of which we won’t fully understand for quite some time,” Collins said. “But it also has shown me America at its finest. We, the people, will recover and restore our wildlife and wild lands. The people have been the most amazing of all—from all over the country, leaving their own lives to travel to a place they’ve never been, to save wildlife and wild lands they’ve never seen, and to work under stressful environmental and political conditions.”

Flynt cautions that every form of life, all the way up the food chain, will be devastated because of the quantities of oil that have entered the Gulf waters. The fate of all the breeding pelicans and other shorebirds is a concern, and she noted that birds migrating through the Gulf and nesting birds, which bring back oil that chicks ingest, are of special concern.

“This is a decades-long situation and the best approach is to gear up for the long term,” Flynt said. “If we learn nothing else, it is the importance of protecting the environment we have. This includes having a back-up plan, building in safeguards, and finding energy sources other than oil.”

Collins’ perspective has changed since the oil emergency began. “People are asking how they can get involved, and not everyone has the ability or opportunity to come to the command center or the Gulf to help firsthand. That doesn’t matter, because conservation really does start at home,” she said. “If people make better choices in their everyday lives—conserving energy, recycling, working to protect habitat in their own yards, neighborhoods and communities—they are making as much of a difference as cleaning an oiled bird. The birds of the Gulf are the hemisphere’s birds—people can help improve their outlook without ever leaving home.”

“Wildlife rehabilitators are often the unsung heroes in our local communities. Facilities like Audubon’s Center for Birds of Prey work tirelessly, during disasters or ordinary times, to help our wildlife and deserve your local support,” Collins said.



Weathered crude oil from the Gulf Deepwater Horizon disaster arrived June 4, 2010 in the form of tar balls up to a foot in diameter on Opal Beach, one of many spectacular stretches of pristine shoreline within Gulf Islands National Seashore that stretches past Pensacola. Photo courtesy of Lucy Duncan.

GULF OIL DISASTER Hitting Home in Florida

In early June, Lucy Duncan, an active Frances M. Weston Audubon Society volunteer, took her grandchildren to Opal Beach, thinking it might be one of the last days the sugar sands would be unspoiled. “When we got there, we found a few small dime-sized blobs of oil. We had fun digging in the sand and letting the waves chase us up and down the incline,” she said. “About an hour later, all of a sudden, the waves filled with filth and in came the oil.”

To join Florida Audubon's efforts to train and deploy bird stewards, visit audubonoffloridanews.org and click on Gulf Oil Spill Response: How You Can Help.



Audubon volunteers Judy and Harvey Goldman joined biologist Chris Burney to post nesting sites near Pensacola. Photo courtesy of Lyssa Oberkreser

Audubon Volunteers in Action to Protect Birds and Beaches

Audubon volunteer Lyssa Oberkreser was one of many who joined our partnership with Florida state conservation agencies to protect nesting shorebirds at St. Joseph Peninsula State Park in the wake of the threats posed by the Gulf Deepwater Horizon disaster. The Florida native resolved to take action against the oil spill's effects.

“Not wanting to feel completely helpless, I signed up for the Audubon Society's volunteer registry. I received an e-mail asking for volunteers to help post signs to mark the shorebird nesting areas in hopes that they won't get trampled if/when oil clean-up crews and bird-rescuing volunteers invade the beaches. I was called to duty and asked to report at 8 a.m. EST, which meant leaving my home in Tallahassee by 5:40 a.m.,” she recounted. “I had to get up before the birds in order to help the birds, and that was fine by me.”

Oberkreser and Apalachee Audubon Society's Harvey and Judy Goldman worked with biologists from the Florida Park Service and Chris Burney of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, who maintains that agency's shorebird database. They spent all day putting up signs and stringing twine barriers around nesting sites. In the process, Oberkreser saw terns, oystercatchers, black skimmers, snowy plovers, and laughing gulls. The group also spotted some common terns loafing at the end of the cape with oil on their breasts, likely picked up as they foraged over the central Gulf long before the tar balls reached Florida's beaches.

Audubon bird stewards help ensure long-term nesting success to offset losses



Wilson's plovers courtesy of Linda Martino.

In the wake of the Gulf oil spill, awareness of the perils that shore birds faced increased exponentially. Concerned citizens signed up with Audubon's volunteer registry, eager to help. They learned that cleaning off oiled birds is a job reserved for experienced rehabbers, but there is other crucial help volunteers can perform.

"One way to compensate for the loss of birds and habitat along the Gulf is to help insure the long-term nesting success of beach-nesting birds all along Florida's coastline," said Monique Borboen, Audubon's Northeast Florida Policy Associate. "Many new volunteers came as a result of the registry that was set up to help birds affected by the oil spill. When they understood that many birds of the same species that nest in the oil-affected areas—such as Wilson's plovers and royal terns—are also present in Northeast Florida, they agreed to become bird stewards at their local beaches."

Borboen and the Audubon volunteers work with land managers and agencies through regional shorebird partnerships to conserve shorebirds and seabirds throughout Northeast Florida. In St. Johns County they stewarded nesting least terns and Wilson's plovers at three different sites, and at Huguenot Memorial Park they helped protect hundreds of royal tern and laughing gull chicks. Bird stewards assume vital roles of educating the public and preventing disturbances to the nesting birds and their offspring. "Roasting in the sun for their three-hour long shifts, and facing irascible beachgoers upset that their beach-driving privileges have been reduced by a few hundred yards due to nesting birds, might not have seemed as appealing as cleaning up oiled birds, but it was every bit as meaningful. My deep appreciation goes to all our volunteers!" Borboen said.

Even far from the Gulf, protection efforts are helpful because so many beach-dependent birds species are on the decline. Northeast Florida joined the efforts of birds stewards all around the state. Audubon hopes volunteers will stay engaged beyond the nesting season. Their help is needed with surveys to assess the long-term effects of the spill, and this data will contribute to the recovery of affected species. Florida's network of shorebird partnerships is growing, and Audubon staff and volunteer participation is key to their effectiveness. Audubon encourages you to get involved!

Visit the registry at audubonoffloridanews.org and click on Gulf Oil Spill Response: How You Can Help or contact jsulek@audubon.org to find a shorebird partnership near you.



Gifts for the Gulf

In July Florida Audubon, chapter leaders, and volunteers brought the beach to 15 Simon shopping malls in Florida to educate shoppers about protecting Florida's vulnerable birds and beaches in the wake of the Gulf oil disaster. The Gifts for the Gulf events on Saturday and Sunday, July 24 and 25, provided an excellent opportunity for Audubon to share its conservation messages, recruit volunteer bird stewards and advocates, and educate kids who enjoyed coloring the drawings of birds. Thank you, Simon Malls, for this important collaboration to protect Florida's Resilient Coasts.



A ghost orchid at Corkscrew produced 14 buds in July 2010, marking its second bloom this year and its fourth consecutive year of floral display. The extremely rare plant's delicate white blossoms were visible in June and July on an ancient bald cypress tree about 150 feet from the boardwalk, where spotting scopes were set up. Photo courtesy of R.J. Wiley

Save Our Swamp: Major Conservation Victory for Corkscrew Swamp

Florida Audubon and a coalition of five environmental organizations including Collier County Audubon Society, Florida and National Wildlife Federations, and the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, have settled two lawsuits against two of three residential and golf projects proposed for wetlands near Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary.

Major changes made to the two projects will protect 200-plus more acres and restore hundreds of acres more as habitat for wood storks and other imperiled species. A major road will be shifted away from wetlands into old farm fields, and the number of dwelling units has been reduced by 750.

“Coupled with hundreds of acres of offsite wetland restoration and preservation designed to replace the function of wetlands destroyed, wood storks nesting at Corkscrew Swamp and other wading birds will benefit significantly from these settlement improvements,” said Jason Lauritsen, wood stork biologist at

Audubon’s Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. He emphasized that reducing wetland impacts significantly protects the quality and supply of water, and provides flood protection downstream as far as Wiggins Pass on the Gulf of Mexico.

Added to the October 2009 court win against the adjacent Mirasol project, which revoked that project’s wetland-destroying federal permit, these legal settlements mark major victories for the sensitive ecology surrounding Audubon’s Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary – home to an old growth cypress forest. The Mirasol project would destroy 645 acres of wetland and habitat – more than twice the impacts of the two settled projects combined. The five conservation groups, with support from the Everglades Foundation, are preparing to oppose an expected third submittal of the Mirasol federal permit application, a battle begun in 2002.

To prevent further destruction of wetlands and habitat, the coalition is urging state and federal agencies to improve the way they permit and compensate for wetland losses caused by development sited in Florida wetlands. Recommendations on the table now could significantly reduce or eliminate degradation before projects reach the courts, or worse, get built and irrevocably destroy habitat. Florida’s declining wildlife and the public’s interests will only benefit from vigilant protection of vital water resources.

Park Service Recommends Bridging Tamiami Trail to Rehydrate Everglades National Park



When Everglades advocates speak with a persistent, united voice, rewarding restoration progress follows. Nowhere is this more evident than in the long-running battle to bridge portions of Tamiami Trail to increase natural water flows into Everglades National Park (ENP).

Built in the 1920s to connect Tampa and Miami, Tamiami Trail was part of a decades-long effort to drain, ditch, and dike the slow-moving River of Grass and make way for urban and agricultural development. The Trail forms the northern border of the Park and functions as a dam, holding back water at Northeast Shark River Slough. What once was a historic center of flows no longer exhibits the characteristic ridge-and-slough landscape that supported and nurtured many of Florida's iconic wading birds, including wood storks and roseate spoonbills. To the north, endangered snail kite habitat is so altered that their populations have rapidly declined in these areas. Clearly, modifying Tamiami Trail is one of the most important Everglades restoration initiatives in a program aimed at reconnecting the River of Grass for ecological benefits.

In December 2009 the groundbreaking of a one-mile bridge as part of the Modified Water Deliveries to ENP marked the culmination of more than twenty years of struggle over planning, policy, and legal issues. While construction of the mile-long bridge represents a huge symbolic victory for restoration, Audubon and other scientists acknowledge that it is only a first step.

Responding to calls for a comprehensive solution to Tamiami Trail-related problems, Congress required the National Park Service (NPS) to look at options for additional bridging. In a significant victory for Everglades advocates, the NPS has recommended construction of 5.5 miles of bridges that will connect marshes and ridge-and-slough habitat while preventing additional wetland loss. The plan for bridging is cost-effective and will increase ecological connectivity north and south of the Trail by 500 percent. Reopening the flow will substantially improve conditions for fish, birds, and other wildlife that make the Everglades such a unique natural treasure.

Moving freshwater under Tamiami Trail will also generate important benefits for other restoration projects. The C-111 Spreader Canal project, designed to restore the balance of freshwater and saltwater in the Florida Bay mangrove zone, and the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project, which will hold off saltwater intrusion in Biscayne Bay, need more freshwater flowing under Tamiami Trail to be fully effective. Projects north of Tamiami Trail, including the removal of damaging levees and canals known as the Decomp project, require that more water move under the Trail to achieve fully-reconnected flows.

These efforts to raise sections of Tamiami Trail demonstrate the importance of persisting until measurable ecological benefits are realized. With your support, Audubon will apply this same level of dedication to making the 5.5 mile bridge plan a restoration reality, one that will benefit the people, the economy, and the wildlife that rely on the Everglades for survival.

2010 Audubon Assembly

Learning Sessions – Field Trips – Good Food –

Join your Audubon friends from around Florida and stoke your passion for birds and



Reddish egret courtesy of James C. Leopold

JOIN US FOR THE 2010 AUDUBON ASSEMBLY

St. Petersburg FL October 22 and 23

Please join Florida Audubon for the 2010 Audubon Assembly on October 22 and 23 at the Hilton St. Petersburg Carillon Park in St. Petersburg. This year's Assembly will bring together conservation leaders, thinkers and scientists, policy makers, and business leaders to craft strategies to protect *Florida's Resilient Coasts and the Places That Make Florida Special*.

The Assembly kicks off at noon on Friday with a Special Welcome Lunch: *110 Years of Connecting People with Nature* featuring Florida Audubon Society President Eric Draper and other leaders in bird conservation.

Register Online Today @ audubonoffloridanews.org

All-inclusive Assembly registration package is only \$120/person if booked on or before October 5, 2010. From October 6 on, registration package is \$140.

PACKAGE includes programs, workshops, cocktail reception (with cash bar), Friday banquet, two lunches, and field trips.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EARLY-BIRD PACKAGE by registering online NOW at audubonoffloridanews.org. You must book hotel accommodations separately.

- **Early Bird** package ticket: **\$120**. (on or before Oct. 5)
- **Last Minute** package ticket: **\$140**. (Oct. 6 and after)
- **Friday Evening** reception and Women in Conservation Banquet ticket: **\$50**.

To register by mail, contact Lisa Reichert at 305-371-6399, ext. 122 to request a registration form, or email lreichert@flaudubon.org.

Consider carpooling to St. Petersburg. It's a fun way to spend time with friends and reduce global warming.



THE VENUE WAS SUCH A HIT, WE'RE GOING BACK! Hilton St. Petersburg Carillon Park

Assembly participants saw dozens of species of birds in the lake beside this certified green hotel. Enjoy Hilton comforts at a special Florida Audubon Society rate of \$109 per room. Enter the code "FAS" when making your reservations at www.hiltonhotelstpete.com, or mention this code when you call a reservations clerk. Be sure to specify Carillon Park.



Brown pelicans courtesy of Christina Evans

BE A SPONSOR

of the 2010 Audubon Assembly.

Connect with hundreds of people who are passionate about preserving and protecting Florida's environment and wildlife.

For information on sponsorship opportunities and benefits, call Vicky Johnston 305-371-6399, ext. 134, or email vjohnston@audubon.org.

Great Friends

conservation at the 2010 Audubon Assembly

FRIDAY NIGHT BANQUET: Honoring those who fight for Florida's Environment and Recognizing Women in Conservation

Special Speaker — Florida's Important Bird Areas

Saturday — Setting Florida's 2011 Conservation Agenda

Join Audubon leaders from around Florida as we set our conservation agenda for 2011. Featuring:

- Regional Conservation Priorities
- Florida's Coastal Habitats and Land Conservation
- Climate Solutions and Clean Energy
- The Role of Citizen Science and Stewardship in Bird Conservation
- IBAs: the Maps of Important Bird Areas

Plus great field trips, delicious meals and camaraderie with friends and conservation heroes for an all-inclusive price of \$120. Make your plans today to take advantage of this Early Bird price.

Inspiring Friday learning sessions:

PROTECTING THE PLACES THAT MAKE FLORIDA SPECIAL

Florida Forever, Everglades restoration, controlling exotic species, using prescribed fire, freshwater flows. Land and water conservation is a big job. Learn what tools are needed and available to conserve and restore habitats for the benefit of Important Bird Areas.

FLORIDA'S RESILIENT COASTS — BEYOND THE OILED PELICAN

The Gulf oil disaster focused public attention on our vulnerable coastal birds. How do we convert that passion and all those volunteers into lasting power for coastal habitat protection and recovery? Beach bird stewardship, colony management, working with law enforcement, and connecting people with nature — these strategies will make a lasting difference for our coastal birds.

THE WEB OF WATER, ENERGY AND BIRD CONSERVATION IS ALL CONNECTED

Saving water, energy and birds with the same actions? You bet. Hear the stories (and write your own) of how people are taking everyday actions to use less and save more. Learn how energy and water use are connected to saving birds. Take the Conservation Challenge for water and bird friendly yards and energy efficiency.

WATER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Florida is blessed with abundant, clean freshwater. But with 18 million people can we sustain our springs, lakes, rivers, swamps and estuaries? It's going to take some extraordinary cooperation to harness individual, government and commercial commitment. Learn how we can recover from the damage and protect our waterways from the Everglades to the Panhandle.

Exhibits and Audubon's Nature Store

See what Audubon's sponsors, partners, and chapters are doing to recover from the Gulf oil disaster, protect birds, conserve habitats, and improve humans' quality of life. Visit Audubon's Nature Store to browse and buy gifts, art, books, and other awesome nature inspired products.

Connect with Nature on Field Trips

St. Petersburg offers great birding, and Audubon's St. Petersburg and Clearwater chapters will team up to host trips to the great outdoors. Wander through Roosevelt wetlands as the sun rises, or set up your scopes on a nearby rooftop for a bird's eye view of a restored wetland during this outing on Saturday morning.

Come early on Friday and enjoy a wetlands tour before the kick off luncheon on Friday. You can also stay after we wrap up on Saturday and enjoy Clearwater Audubon's tour of Honeymoon Island. Consider staying one more night to experience the famous St. Petersburg half day round robin at Fort De Soto on Sunday morning. For more information, visit audubonoffloridanews.org.



Snail kite courtesy of R. J. Wiley

Audubon's Remedies for Tackling Phosphorus Pollution

Building upon many years of work to tackle phosphorus pollution, Audubon is focusing its science-based advocacy on the Lake Okeechobee Protection Plan update, due in 2011; rulemaking on stormwater treatment regulations; and a new deal for the state's land purchase in the Everglades Agricultural Area.

The watersheds of the Kissimmee River, Lake Okeechobee, the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee estuaries, and the entire greater Everglades ecosystem are naturally low in phosphorus and nitrogen. The introduction of excessive nutrient loads causes eutrophication, algal blooms, and changes in submerged and emergent vegetation that displace native plants. Algal blooms can be toxic to fish and wildlife, and changes in natural vegetation deprive these creatures of suitable habitats.

Federal and state laws set a standard of 40 parts per billion (ppb) phosphorus for Lake Okeechobee, which equals an annual loading into the lake of just 105 tons of phosphorus from human sources (farming, fertilizers, runoff, etc.) by the year 2015. Audubon's scientific analysis demonstrates that, under current conditions, more than 700 tons of phosphorus will enter the lake each year.

Cleaning the Lake is also essential to meeting the 10 ppb target for phosphorus in the Everglades. Every gallon of polluted Lake water moving south has to be cleaned up before reaching the natural system.

To lower these inflows, Audubon's program is focused on a suite of remedies to control the sources of phosphorus and clean it up once it has flowed into

waterways and watersheds. These strategies include strengthening Best Management Practices that agricultural landowners must follow to reduce phosphorus flowing off farmland, and expanding stormwater treatment areas to deal with polluted water.

Audubon also aims to transform the South Florida Water Management District's (SFWMD) Lake Okeechobee Protection Plan, being updated by 2011, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) water quality programs. Both currently focus on large-scale reservoir storage and should increasingly prioritize programs that will primarily pay cattle ranch owners for the service of managing and storing water to improve water quality and reduce harmful flows to the lake and estuaries.

The DEP's new stormwater rule is under development now and scheduled for adoption in mid-2011. Audubon believes that this rule should be tailored to facilitate the greatest possible nutrient reduction, while at the same time providing opportunities for landowners, such as the Kissimmee cattle ranchers, to participate in stormwater solutions in ways that will economically benefit their operations.

Finally, as this magazine was going to print, Audubon applauded the SFWMD's new plan to purchase US Sugar Corporation lands in the Everglades Agricultural Area. The new plan included acquisition of 26,791 acres in Hendry and Palm Beach counties to increase the effectiveness of existing Stormwater Treatment Areas and create new ones to remove nutrients from the freshwater flows.

Get Involved

Audubon Chapters Get the Job Done for Conservation, Education, and Wildlife

As different as Florida's 44 Audubon chapters are, they each share a common purpose—to connect people with nature in order to protect our natural world.

The activities of a chapter fall into three related categories—fun, education, and conservation. The approach works because it engages people in enjoyment of the outdoors. At the same time, chapters teach children and adults facts about their own environment, and about challenges that face Florida's natural systems, birds, and wildlife every day. These outdoor experiences and new information almost always inspire people to conserve nature, either through hands-on projects or through advocacy.

A visit to the Who We Are section along the banner of www.audubonoffloridanews.com will take you to Audubon's chapters' pages and yield their regions, meeting locations, event schedules, reviews of past activities, and details about conservation projects and issues of relevance. The issues emphasized vary from region to region, because Florida encompasses a fascinating variety of habitats and natural environments—and all deserve to be protected.

For anyone not yet active in a chapter, a great way to get involved is to take a beginning class in birding or go on a birdwalk. That is the best way to learn, and Audubon chapter members have a well-deserved reputation for friendliness.

Audubon is not ONLY about the fun and the social interaction. It is also a strong and growing collective voice for birds and conservation. Your local chapter is waiting to hear from you!



Valerie Thomas, co-president of Four Rivers Audubon, checks a kestrel nesting box as part of the chapter's partnership with Ichetucknee Springs State Park in Columbia County. Four Rivers Audubon adopted this IBA and helps manage habitat for the threatened Southeastern American kestrel.

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

Financial information about Florida Audubon Society can be obtained by writing to us at 444 Brickell Avenue, #850, Miami, FL 33131 or as stated below: FLORIDA AUDUBON SOCIETY REGISTRATION # CH425: A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE, WITHIN THE STATE, 1-800-435-7253 WITHIN THE STATE OF FLORIDA. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE STATE.



EagleWatch Coordinator Lynda White assists Henry Dean as he prepares to release a bald eagle that was rehabilitated at the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey. Photo courtesy of Sarah Butsch

ADOPT-a-BIRD



Three red-shouldered hawk chicks were admitted in spring 2010 and later released back into the wild. Photo by Susie Warren.

Your support is needed

Help protect Florida's raptors by investing in their future. Your donation to the Adopt-a-Bird helps support the care and medical treatment of birds brought to Audubon Center for Birds of Prey, for those birds permanently housed at the Center on display, and for birds used in our community education programs (the Center averages 500-600 admissions annually).

Basic adoptions include a photo of your bird, adoption certificate, free admission to the Center and an introductory membership to Audubon. A variety of membership levels are available.

For details check out http://www.audubonofflorida.org/who_centers_CBOP_adoptabird.html or phone the Center to request a brochure 407-644-0190.

Audubon Releases Its 400th Rehabilitated Bald Eagle Back to the Wild

The Audubon Center for Birds of Prey released its 400th rehabilitated bald eagle back in to the wild in June, with special help from Florida Audubon Board Member Henry Dean.

The Center's experts and special guests gathered at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville to watch the eagle soar off into the sky. The majestic bird is a symbol not only of the United States, but also of the success of bald eagle recovery efforts by Audubon through education, conservation, and rehabilitation.

This adult female bald eagle was struck by a vehicle on Interstate 10 in Baker County, about 20 miles west of Jacksonville on April 11. She was rescued and sent to the University of Florida School of Veterinary Medicine, then transferred to the Audubon Center on April 14. Audubon staff and veterinarians treated the eagle for internal injuries, bruises and abrasions, and the loss of half her tail feathers. Following conditioning in the Center's 100-foot-long flight cage, the eagle was released.

This milestone release draws attention to the crucial role the Audubon Center has played for thirty years in the recovery and continuing success of the bald eagle in Florida. While the state's eagle population has increased significantly since the pesticide-induced decline that reached crisis proportions in the 1960s, loss of habitat due to land development continues to stress Florida's eagle population. Audubon is a leader in eagle care and education, with more than 250 volunteers monitoring urban eagle nests statewide as part of its citizen-science Audubon EagleWatch Program. For more information on how to get involved in activities at the Audubon Center, visit audubonoffloridanews.org or call 407-644-0190.

Jane Graham joins Audubon as Everglades Policy Associate

Florida Audubon welcomes Jane Graham as Everglades Policy Associate. A member of the Florida Bar, Graham holds undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Miami. She is finishing up a master's degree in environmental law from Vermont Law School where her thesis, to be completed later this year, deals with aquatic and wetlands invasive species issues. The topic was inspired by stories of Burmese and African rock pythons in the Everglades.

Before joining Audubon she interned with the National Wildlife Federation's northeast regional office, where she worked on cases related to the National Flood Insurance Program, the Endangered Species Act, climate change, and the Clean Water Act. Her background in litigation as an intern with the Miami-Dade Public Defender's Office and the U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District, prepared her to spearhead Audubon's initiatives, particularly those related to water usage.

Recent publications, including "National Marine Sanctuaries Act: A Hidden Sanctuary for Climate Change Litigation?" (July 2010, American Bar Association Marine Resources Committee Newsletter) and "Statutes with Sharp Teeth: Prosecuting a Crocodile Killing with State and Federal Statutes." (Jane Graham and Jonathan Tanoos, Florida Bar's Animal Law Committee Newsletter, Vol. 2, Iss. 1, Spring 2009.), underline her commitment to Audubon's mission and its conservation and wildlife protection goals.

Jane Graham, Everglades Policy Associate



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To email a staff member, use: first initial of first name + last name @ audubon.org
For example, the email address of a staff member named Red Knot would be rknot@audubon.org.

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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.*

JOIN US AT THE AUDUBON ASSEMBLY See details on pages 10-11

OCTOBER 22 – 23, 2010

at the Hilton St. Petersburg Carillon Park

A certified Green Lodging establishment (See details inside.)

Protecting Florida's Resilient Coasts and Special Places is the theme of the 2010 Audubon Assembly. Now more than ever, Florida's birds and wildlife need our protection. Join in working toward solutions for today and for future generations.

Register online for Audubon Assembly at audubonoffloridanews.org

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 Meeting of the Florida Audubon Society will be held at the Hilton St. Petersburg Carillon Park in St. Petersburg, Florida, at 1:45 p.m. on Saturday, October 23, 2010.



Lake at Carillon Park is rich in birds and wildlife.