



FLORIDA Audubon Naturalist

SUMMER 2011

**2011
Audubon Assembly:**
*Take Action for
Florida's Special Places
October 14-15*

**Connect to
Florida's Special
Places**

**Guarding the
Everglades
Treasure**



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President, Florida Audubon

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Cover Photo by Mac Stone

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*John Elting, Chairman,
Florida Audubon Society*

Our April board of directors meeting was a pivotal point for Florida Audubon Society (FAS). It was at that moment in time, surrounded by a chorus of birds at the Chinsegut Nature Center near FAS-owned Ahhochee Hill, that I think we all realized how far we had come this fiscal year. Our Executive Director Eric Draper, our committed board and tireless staff had a lot to celebrate.

Even during tough economic times, we were ending the year in a positive financial position, something other environmental groups are struggling with this year. We have achieved 100 percent board giving, both financially and in terms of gifts of time and talent. Our marketing efforts, particularly the expanded focus on social media, have resulted in a strong online community that helped protect Florida's state parks on three different occasions this year. Improved outreach and regional events are building engagement in Audubon throughout Florida. The board's science committee is taking our applied science work to new levels including accelerated involvement of citizen scientists. Lastly, we are beginning to work at the local, state and national level as One Audubon.

Audubon recently received public praise from several members of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission including Commissioner Brian Yablonski. At the Commission's June meeting in St. Augustine, Yablonski said of our Audubon bird stewards, "These folks are the hearty souls who are the doers of the work—not just the talkers of the work or the readers of the work. These are the doers of the work, the folks who have mud on their boots and sand between their toes. I give a huge salute to these folks." Those words describe what is so special about our staff and volunteers.

We have come a long way, but we still have a long way to go. Several key planning efforts are currently underway. Florida board members and staff have been engaged in National Audubon Society's strategic planning initiative.

The draft plan will be completed in October. It focuses on implementing large scale conservation projects in important bird areas (IBAs) linked to America's various flyways resulting in significant environmental benefits for birds and their habitats. The state and centers portion of the plan is targeted for completion next year.

In this edition you will see articles that showcase how far we have come – our remarkable work in the greater Everglades, a recap of our legislative and policy work, a peek at our exciting new Audubon Assembly features and a guide to some of Audubon's own special places in Florida.

Thanks for all you have done to support Audubon of Florida. Your donations, advocacy letters, bird stewarding and other volunteer actions have helped us end our fiscal year on a great note. Together we are becoming even better.

Sincerely,
John Elting
Chairman, Florida Audubon Society

*John Elting is leading the charge to make
Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary the Heart
of the Experience in the Western Everglades.
Part of the marketing plan includes expanding
the Sanctuary's experiential offerings
to include back country tours for major donors.*

Photo by Clyde Butcher



Take Five for Florida's Special Places

A Message from Executive Director Eric Draper

Eric Draper sits in a bird blind made by Eagle Scouts at Laidlaw Preserve in Washington County. The sanctuary is managed by Bay County Audubon and is truly one of Florida's special places.



Last month 1,000 people showed up at a public meeting in Pinellas County to express their opposition to a state proposal to allow a private RV campground to be developed at Honeymoon Island State Park. State officials withdrew the proposal and appear to have temporarily backed off from plans to put RV camps in other popular parks.

Audubon helped organize opposition to the private campground development proposals, and I am personally impressed and proud of the many local leaders who stood up against this bad idea. What I have recognized since local groups helped turn back proposals to close 53 state parks and then rose in opposition to putting golf courses in other parks, is that people really care about Florida's award winning park system and other public lands.

In my conservation career I have had the privilege of being involved in creating many parks. From the moment of getting money approved by legislators or local voters, to revisiting parks long after they are in use, I get excited to know that these special places are available to both people and wildlife. Those gems on the landscape are assumed to be permanently safe from development.

Now we find ourselves fighting off not only a series of proposals to change the way parks are used and managed, Governor Rick Scott has proposed that public lands get no public funds and must become self-sufficient. In interviews with the press I have called this a bad idea.

Florida's birds and wildlife depend on our public lands. And, if you are like me you depend on public lands – to see birds, to swim, and to find a respite in Florida's diverse natural beauty.

If we care about Florida's parks and public lands we must use them or lose them. That is why I am asking you to Take Five:

- Take yourself to a park
- Take friends or family
- Take pictures and notes
- Take time to share your pictures and notes with others
- Take action to protect our special places – you can take action at audubonofflorida.org.

You can also support Audubon's advocacy work by using the envelope in the center of this book to send a contribution or make a pledge to support Audubon's work to protect Florida's special places. I hope to see you at the Audubon Assembly October 14 and 15 in Lake Mary, where we will learn together and set our conservation agenda for the coming year.

Eric Draper

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric Draper'.

Executive Director



Eric Draper joins other Audubon members and conservationists in kicking off the Florida's Special Places Campaign. The site is Big Blue Lake in Washington County owned by the Knight family. Learn more about Florida's special places on pages 5-8.

2011 Legislature A Little Good, A Lotta Bad and Some Ugly



Audubon helped organize opposition to plans to put an RV camp at Honeymoon Island (shown above.) State officials withdrew the proposal affecting this and other popular parks.

Photo by Stephen Mann

Longstanding environmental laws and programs unraveled as Governor Scott and legislators laid the baseless and not so pretty blame for Florida's recession on clean water and urban development boundaries. Audubon's legislative team worked hard to inject science and defense of the public interest into these debates. Unfortunately, this year's environmental successes were measured in bills made "less bad" rather than good.

Water, Everglades and Lake Okeechobee

GOOD - Everglades Restoration received just under \$30 million in new and re-appropriated funds. Although it was not so good that Governor Scott later vetoed an Audubon priority funding for nutrient reduction strategies north of Lake Okeechobee.

BAD - Bills passed making it harder for citizens to appeal bad permit approvals (HB 993), making it easier for agricultural landowners to develop farmland without mitigating environmental damage (SB 421), and gutting the budgets of the state's five water management districts (SB 2142).

UGLY - After a tough fight the anti-environmental regulatory HB 991 failed to pass, as did proposed repeals of Florida's existing ban on the land spreading of septage (HB 1479) and reclassifying Florida's impaired waterways to ease regulatory restrictions (HB 239). HB 13 repealing Florida's septic tank inspection law failed, but language in the budget hamstringing the state's ability to begin inspections this year.

Florida Forever and Public Lands

GOOD - The public rallied for state parks and a proposal to close 53 parks was scrubbed by the Governor mid-Session. Similar clamor resulted in Senate and House sponsors pulling back a bill which would have paved the way for private golf courses to be built in five state parks.

BAD - Florida Forever received zero funds. Grassroots pressure helped save two aquatic preserve offices in southwest and southeast Florida, but funds for another four of these important regulatory and management of-

fices were zeroed out and the programs were closed.

UGLY - Governor Scott vetoed a line item providing \$305 million in spending authority for Florida Forever in the event that funds could be raised by sale of surplus state assets such as parking lots and office buildings.

Energy

SAD - Renewable energy legislation died in committee when Governor Scott objected to allowing utility rates to be used to finance clean energy.

Growth Management

BAD AND UGLY - Florida's growth management laws were revised to limit state oversight of local land use decisions, making advocacy at the city and county levels more important now than ever. The Department of Community Affairs growth management staff was gutted and transferred to the new Department of Economic Opportunity, where it will become the Division of Community Development.

Some Post Session Good News

This summer, Department of Environmental Protection announced that it was fast-tracking four novel proposals to build vast privatized RV campgrounds at DeLeon Springs, Fanning Springs, Honeymoon Island and Wakulla Springs state parks. Audubon sounded the alarm when the expedited process was first heard by the state Acquisition and Restoration Council and along with chapters, park friends' groups, and other advocacy groups, pushed back on the proposals until they were retracted by the Governor's office!

Lessons Learned and the Way Forward

This Legislature displayed disinterest and disdain for arguments made on behalf of natural resources or the public interest. Much of this, we found, was due to the overwhelming percentage of freshman legislators unfamiliar with these priorities. Education of elected officials and grassroots advocacy are the way forward. As in all three of the state park issues we won this year, public opinion won the day.

Now more than ever, Audubon members need to be engaged and vocal. Be sure to connect with our conservation community through our advocacy center, Facebook and our blog. Our ability to influence these decisions depends on informed and dedicated advocates like you!

Page 1 - Travel News

If you have followed our blog or Facebook page, you have probably heard of our "Florida's Special Places" campaign, where nature-lovers of all ages are encouraged to nominate their favorite natural areas throughout the Sunshine State. Nominations can be a neighborhood park or a national forest, a wetland oasis or stretch of pristine beach. We want to know why a particular part of Florida is important to you, your family and your community.

Why this strong emphasis on identifying and connecting people with Florida's Special Places? By nature, Audubon is an outdoors organization. One of our main priorities is to help citizens get outside and rediscover Florida's natural treasures. We believe that by connecting with Florida's one-of-a-kind landscapes, we can re-energize ourselves while reminding ourselves of the natural wealth we work to conserve: Florida's birds and their habitats.

Father's Day on the Withlacoochee
CHARLES LEE AND DAUGHTER MELISSA LEE

Audubon's Own Special Places

Many of Florida's Special Places are public lands, some are working landscapes supporting agriculture and timber production, some are protected by non-profit entities such as Audubon, and some may be in your own backyard. The Audubon Encounters featured in this article reflect the special places identified by many Audubon staff involved in our conservation work from the Panhandle to the Florida Keys.

Audubon has our own special places which include property owned and managed by National Audubon Society or Florida Audubon Society, lands managed by Audubon Chapters and sites owned and managed by government or other organizations and of significance to Audubon of Florida's conservation work. Florida Audubon Society owns more than 60 sanctuaries throughout Florida, few of which provide public access,

but all of which provide nesting areas, respite and habitat for many important bird species.

Before planning your next nature experience, look at these Audubon Encounters selected as special places by our own Audubon staff. We encourage you to nominate your special place by visiting our website at <http://www.FloridasSpecialPlaces.org>

continued next page

Photo by Carole Barice

Photo by John Moran

**#1: The Great Northwest Florida Coast**

The high dunes and sugar sand of the Panhandle's coast have me in their grips. Wispy Snowy Plover chicks scampering across the beach at St. Joseph Peninsula State Park humbly me with their simultaneous vulnerability and toughness. Migrating Merlins threading expertly through the stunted oak canopy at Bald Point State Park, chasing after songbirds, leave me giddy with the chase. And the electric atmosphere during a spring fallout at St. George Island State Park, when Scarlet Tanagers, Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Worm-eating Warblers and Wood Thrushes seemingly appear from thin air reminds me of the irreplaceable magic of these places, and why my only choice is to be relentless in their conservation.

Julie Winnichell, Director of Wildlife Conservation

#2: The Historic Northeast Florida Coast

This is summer and for me it means cute beach-nesting bird babies to look at! In Northeast Florida, I can go from the busy and loud beach of Huguenot Memorial Park packed with thousands of Royal Terns and Laughing Gull chicks to the quiet orange and white beach at Fort Matanzas National Monument where the last of the Wilson's Plover chicks of the season sprint up and down the beach. The first migrants are showing up and I start looking beyond the Whimbrels at Huguenot toward the remarkably well preserved Coastal Hammocks of Fort George and Talbot Islands; their majestic trees, which seem intent to engulf the narrow roads, are great sites for migrating songbirds!

Monique Berben, Northeast Florida Policy Associate



Photo by David Macci

#3: Audubon's Center for Birds of Prey

Tucked away in the heart of Central Florida you will find a special gem housing some of Florida's top predators. It is not the typical "thrill ride" you might think, but a face to face view of a Bald Eagle that gives you goose bumps. It is the sounds here, which make this place just as special as the view. The hoot of an owl, the call of a Bald Eagle and the trill of an American Kestrel creates a memorable experience to anyone who walks through the gates. Spend an hour, enjoy lunch lakeside, those who visit can't wait to come back and bring friends. It has been described as a Real Florida Experience, the Best Kept Secret in Central Florida, but for some of us the Center for Birds of Prey is our home.

Katie Warner, Manager, Center for Birds of Prey

#4: Central Florida's Inland Treasures

My favorite Audubon site is Ahhochee Hill Sanctuary, 8 miles North of Brooksville. This 270 acre property is steeped in the history of one of Florida Audubon's founders, Lisa Von Borowsky. I go there to walk the two-mile trail in Florida's pristine hill country to see barred and Great Horned Owls, Red Tailed Hawks, Bluebirds and much more. Open by appointment to Audubon chapters and members. Call (352) 797-3545 and speak to Sanctuary Manager Christie Anderberg.

Two other gems are the Lake Region Audubon's Street Nature Center in Winter Haven, known for resident Bald Eagles as well as a diversity of migrants including Indigo Buntings, and Ridge Audubon's Babson Park Nature Center in Babson Park, offering a bird's eye view of native Florida Scrub, with species like Eastern Towhees, White-eyed Vireos and Common Nighthawks.

Charles Lee, Director of Advocacy



Photo by Susie Warren



Photo by Stephen Mann

#5: Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries

Audubon's Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries, located along west central Florida's Gulf coast, include nesting and bird habitat islands in St. Joseph Sound, Clearwater Harbor, Tampa and Sarasota Bays, and the north end of Charlotte Harbor. These 30 island refuges provide nesting sites for nearly 25,000 breeding pairs. Rare species that rely on our island sanctuaries include Reddish Egret, Roseate Spoonbill, American Oystercatcher, and Black Skimmer. Other special birds include Brown Pelicans, Wood Storks, and Great Egrets. These islands can be visited by boat (but no landing on the islands!) The Sarasota Bay Explorers (at Mote Marine Aquarium) offer a trip to the Roberts Bay Bird Colony Islands. Tampa's Florida Aquarium's eco-tour cruises near the Alafia Bank Bird Sanctuary, but mostly concentrates on dolphins.

Ann Paul, Tampa Bay Area Regional Coordinator

#6: The Gulf Coast

A local, well-kept secret, Wall Springs Park in Pinellas County offers short boardwalks and an observation tower overlooking mangrove lagoons and St. Joseph Sound. Roseate Spoonbills, Reddish Egrets and sometimes hundreds of other waterbirds grace the park's shallow waters.

Another favorite destination is Caladesi Island, accessed by the ferry from Honeymoon Island State Park. In springtime, resident Prairie Warblers sing from the mangroves, and the old-Florida maritime hammocks are chock full of migrating songbirds. Leaving the upland forest, I walk on a beach time has forgotten to the island's north tip and back in the company of American Oystercatchers, Snowy Plovers, and hundreds of migratory shorebirds.

Marianne Korsy, Florida IBA Program Coordinator



Photo by R.J. Wiley

#7: Big Cypress

Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary is at the heart of the Western Everglades experience. Spanning 14,000 acres, it encompasses the largest stand of Old Growth Cypress trees in North America; the largest endangered Wood Stork colony in the USA, and a tremendous diversity of birds, reptiles and mammals including the endangered Florida panther. I walk the 2.25 mile boardwalk in different seasons, like a spiritual labyrinth path, listening to the beautiful chorus of birds and swamp sounds. From Corkscrew, I head to the "other" Big Cypress - Big Cypress National Preserve. 729,000 acres of dwarf bald cypress savannas, cypress strands, wet prairies, pines, and their wild denizens - from red-cockaded woodpeckers to the iconic panther. This is a wilderness like no other.

Brad Cornell, Big Cypress Ecosystem Policy Associate

#8: Everglades National Park

The vast expanse of the River of Grass is not only my special place, but a place every Floridian should visit. There are many ways to visit the Everglades, each offering a unique experience, but my tried and true favorite (and a site accessible to all) lies west of Miami on Tamiami Trail at the Everglades National Park Shark Valley Visitor's Center. Here you can enjoy walking, biking or riding a tram through a 15 mile paved loop and have an up-close experience with a diversity of habitats and the wildlife that call the Everglades home. Midway through the loop, get a bird's eye view from the 45 foot high observation tower below which alligators take in the sun. Great Blue, Little Blue, Green and Yellow-crowned Night Herons sit nearby while in the distance, Roseate Spoonbills and Wood Storks remind me of the importance of conservation and restoration. Before taking off on your adventure, check the list of recently sighted wildlife at the main building and report your own discoveries!

Julie Hill-Gabriel, Everglades Policy Director

#9: The Northern Everglades

A very special place is the Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park, and the landscape it is embedded in. The Preserve hosts North America's most diverse plant community, and the longest butterfly list in the state. It is home to the extraordinarily endangered Florida Grasshopper Sparrow, along with all Florida's endemic prairie birds. The working ranchlands of the region contain wetlands that fill with water and the variety of wading birds, shorebirds, waterfowl and others is astonishing and visible along regional roadsides. The town of Okeechobee's fishing pier is a good spot to see Everglade Snail Kites, Limpkins, and myriad waterbirds from shore.

Paul Gray, PhD, Science Coordinator

CONNECT TO FLORIDA'S

SPECIAL PLACES
AUDUBON ENCOUNTERS

Photo by Mac Stone



#10: Tavernier and The Florida Bay

The Florida Keys offer numerous opportunities for viewing species not frequently found in peninsular Florida, or sometimes the U.S. for that matter. During the summer, I often awake to the busy chatter of Gray Kingbirds. Visits to hardwood hammocks may turn up a Black-whiskered Vireo, and catching a glimpse of the mustache-like Whisker-throated Vireo, and catching a glimpse of the Red-eyed Vireo lacks is a fun challenge. Even trips to the grocery in Tavernier are exciting, as dusk brings both Antillean and Common Nighthawks floating overhead, distinguished easily by their different calls, although virtually indistinguishable by sight. A Great White Heron viewed from the shores of Florida Bay reminds me of the importance of returning freshwater flows to this estuary so that fish-eating birds return to former abundances

Megan Tinley, Everglades Policy Associate



Photo by Julie Hill-Gabriel

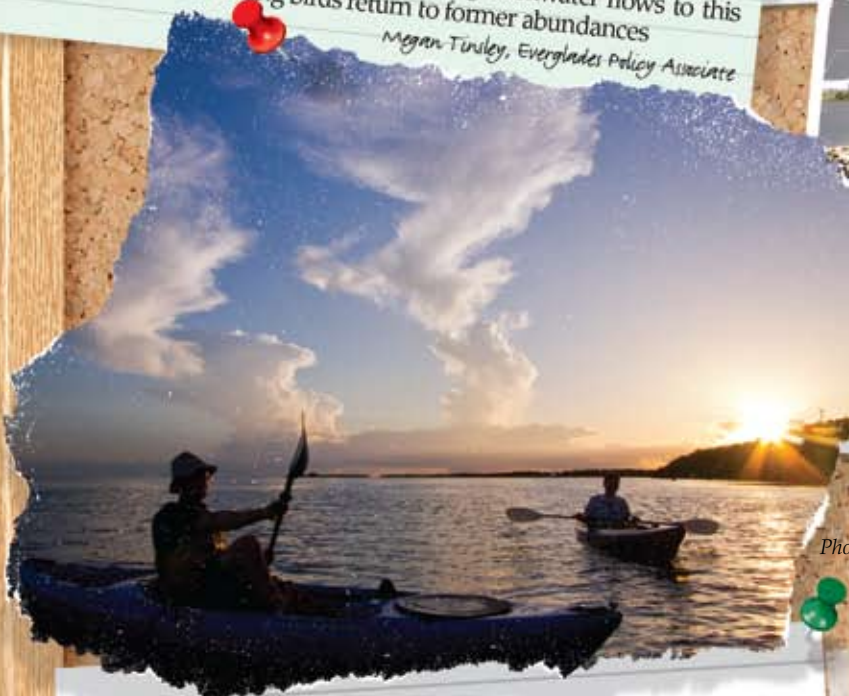


Photo by Mac Stone

#11: The Florida Keys

I'm honored to be a part of and really enjoy the fruits of our habitat restoration efforts in the Florida Keys. There are plenty of opportunities for viewing great birds and wildlife, including Dagny Johnson Key Largo State Park where Audubon has restored 42 acres of wetlands at Port Bougainville, Carysfort Marina and Dispatch Slough. Keep a sharp eye and ear out for White-crowned Pigeons and Mangrove Cuckoo. As you travel farther down the Florida Keys along the famous overseas highway be sure to stop on Ohio Key, where Audubon restored a sheltered tidal pond. Wading birds including Reddish Egret and Great White Heron are often spotted there, and shorebirds congregate on the adjacent tidal flat.

Jeanette Hobbs, Manager, Keys Environmental Restoration Fund

To view other special places nominees
or to nominate your favorite special place visit:
<http://www.FloridaSpecialPlaces.org>

To help plan a birding encounter go to:
<http://floridabirdingtrail.com>
www.floridastateparks.org

Rob Patten: Creating a Legacy for Coastal Island Sanctuaries

Florida's Gulf Coast has been a focal point for Rob Patten his entire life. The Florida native, who has lived the last 35 years in Sarasota, owns his own coastal habitat restoration company, Coastal Dunes Associates, where he does large scale landscape and restoration projects for individuals from Palm Beach to Martha's Vineyard to the Caribbean. He and his partner, Babette Bach, share a love for Florida's beaches and other natural treasures.

In addition to his private sector work, he chaired the Sarasota County Planning Commission from 1988 to 1992 and was Executive Director of Environmental Services for Sarasota County with more than 500 employees from 2001 – 2006. He has been an advocate for reasonable community planning that protects quality of life, conserves environmental lands and improves Sarasota Bay and the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. Due to his expertise in coastal restoration and erosion projects, he provided great support for the Roberts Bay Bird Colony Islands wavebreak project funded by Sarasota County, working closely with Audubon's staff to execute this important project.

Rob shares that he has always been involved in environmental issues and has supported many conservation groups during his lifetime. But, he has a special place in his heart for Audubon's Florida Coastal Island Sanctuaries. "I like to support groups where I can see where my money goes," said Rob. "Through the years I worked with Coastal Island's staff including Ann Paul and her late husband Rich. I know how hard Ann works and how she leverages the funding they receive to do good work," he added. That is why Rob has given to the program throughout the years and why he has included Audubon's Florida Coastal Island Sanctuaries in his will.

It is not surprising that Rob has chosen to commit a legacy gift to Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries. His life has been woven around coastal conservation. Rob shares that this is his way of making a statement. "It is a way we can support others that need funding to con-



Photo by Pat Haire

Rob stands on a piece of land purchased through funds from the Sarasota Forever Environmentally Sensitive Lands Program. He chaired the citizen's committee that passed the referendum and later managed the purchase of such lands as Director of Environmental Services.

tinue critical coastal work. People that we know will put the funds to good use," he ended.

If you are interested in creating a legacy as Rob has chosen to do, please contact Margaret Spontak at (352) 229-2887 or email mspontak@audubon.org. You may have a special Audubon place or program

A Simple Way to Leave a Legacy without a Will

Research indicates that only 50 to 60 percent of people over 50 have wills. The number drops dramatically for younger citizens. To some the process seems too daunting or overwhelming and they can't seem to make the first step to reach out to a lawyer or financial consultant. Some individuals do not have heirs, have heirs that are financially very well off or have estates that are not very significant. The list of reasons individuals do not take this important action are varied.

Creating a will is not the only way to leave a conservation legacy. Even if you do not have a will, you can still leave a gift or legacy for Audubon or any of your favorite charities through a few simple steps. Every time you establish an Individual Retirement Account, life insurance policy or annuity, you are asked to name a ben-

eficiary. If you have already established many of these beneficiary designations, forms are available from your plan pro-

***"Do what you can.
Use what you have.
Start where you are."***

– Arthur Ashe

viders to adjust beneficiary designations. Carefully review the policies on how such processes are handled at each institution. If the forms do not provide the flexibility for the detail you need (multiple designations or specific ways you want the funds applied), a separate, notarized letter can be included that clearly establishes how

you want your designations handled. The designation form should refer to the letter and a copy of both should be kept with your estate documents.

Even designating a modest percent such as 10-25 percent to a charity can be a tremendous boost to the work of that organization. You can name Audubon as the full beneficiary or split the residuals between various beneficiaries including charities and family members. This simple gesture allows you to protect Florida's birds and their habitats.

If you are interested in making Audubon a beneficiary, we suggest you review you wishes with your retirement plan administrator, legal advisor, tax professional or financial advisor.

For more information call or email Margaret Spontak at (352) 229-2887.

Take Action

for Florida's Special Places
at the 2011 Audubon Assembly
October 14 and 15
in Lake Mary Florida

The 2011 Assembly is the time and place to chart your course to take action for Florida's special places. Join us for a time of discovery, reflection, celebration and planning for our next challenges together.

Florida's signature conservation event offers you the opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals, to participate in forming Audubon's 2012 conservation priorities, to join exciting field trips, and to learn new conservation skills and tactics.



Photo by Kevin Boldenow

Exciting Features Included in This Year's Audubon Assembly

Thursday Evening Special Event: Flyway Fiesta at Audubon Center for Birds of Prey

Migrate to the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey to kick off the 2011 Assembly. Join us from 5-7 p.m., Thursday, October 13 for an evening with international flair to celebrate flyways.

Learn about Florida's raptor species, the habitats they need to survive, and the unique flyways several of these species use during migration. Early birds can

experience a special behind-the-scenes tour of this premier raptor rehabilitation facility beginning at 4 p.m. Registration for Flyway Fiesta and the behind-the-scenes tours is separate from Assembly registration—space is limited. Please visit www.audubonofflorida.org or call 850-222-BIRD (2473) to register.

Photo by Susie Warren



members and college students to network, share and learn from each other. Participants will learn how to better communicate and engage with the next generation of conservationists. Students are introduced to advocacy, citizen science work and green jobs. Friday morning includes walking workshops to some of Florida's special places including Lyonia Preserve and Orlando Wetlands Park, which allow for great conversation and co-learning. Students receive scholarships to all of Friday's activities. Participation in this youth forum is free and requires advance registration and a commitment to mentoring a young person (Friday only). Contact (407) 644-0190, ext. 101 or email flconservation@audubon.org, if interested in participating in this exciting event.

Friday Field Trips

Assembly field trips to nearby special places, led by local, knowledgeable chapters, offer the opportunity to see new habitats and species, and to make new friendships. Regular field trip sign-up occurs on-site at the Assembly registration table; visit www.audubonofflorida.org for a list of field trip times and destinations.

Friday Lunch: Take Action for Florida's Special Places

The official kick-off for the Assembly, the Take Action Luncheon begins with an inspiring lunchtime message by Eric Draper, Executive Director of Audubon of

Florida. Enjoy table topic discussions on ways to take action for Florida's special places such as citizen science, green jobs and social networking.

Friday Afternoon: Six Thought-provoking Learning Sessions

Expand your knowledge and sharpen your conservation skills by attending Friday afternoon learning sessions where scientists, conservation leaders, and policy experts are on hand to share examples and case studies. Come away with new contacts and ideas for taking action (see detail to the right).

Friday Evening: Journey through Florida's Special Places

Beginning with the reception Friday evening, join us for a photo journey through Florida's Special Places. Photographers will showcase their beautiful shots of habitats across Florida, followed by keynote speaker John Moran, award-winning photographer and journalist, who will present special places of Florida through outstanding photography and adventuresome storytelling at the awards banquet.



John Moran

NEW!

Youth Forum: Connecting College Students with Audubon Leaders

Audubon is including an innovative new program in this year's Assembly. Friday's premier event unites Audubon leaders with some of the best and brightest college students to develop new ways to take action for Florida's environment. This intergenerational experience provides a mentoring opportunity for both Audubon

Saturday Morning: Set Audubon's 2012 Conservation Priorities

The formal adoption of Audubon's 2012 conservation priorities occurs Saturday morning. Resolutions from the six regional conservation committees will be presented for additional input, and then formally recommended for approval by Audubon's Board of Directors at the October 15 annual meeting.

In addition to the conservation session, several other informative workshops will focus on advocating for Florida's special places.

Saturday Lunch: Celebrate Audubon Chapters

The Saturday Chapter Awards Luncheon recognizes significant chapter achievements and milestones. West Volusia Audubon turns 50 this year! Exhibits on display throughout Assembly will highlight chapter efforts and projects. Dr. Ellen Prager, marine scientist and author, will deliver the keynote speech at the Chapter Awards Luncheon highlighting her new book *Sex, Drugs, and Sea Slime: The Oceans' Oddest Creatures and Why They Matter*. She will share her experience of using colorful words, storytelling and compelling messages to connect people with nature.



Ellen Prager

CHAPTER AWARD NOMINATIONS DUE SEPTEMBER 10, 2011!

The inspiring accomplishments of Florida chapters and volunteers will be recognized Saturday, Oct. 15 at the 2011 Audubon Assembly Chapter Luncheon.

Award categories are: Chapter of the Year, Best Chapter Conservation Project, Best Chapter Education Project, and Best Membership Recruitment program. Nominate your own chapter or another one. Chapter Presidents have received an email outlining award criteria and requirements.

Nominations and supporting materials must be received by Sat., Sept. 10th, to be considered. For additional questions or to submit your nominations, contact Jacqui Sulek, Chapter Conservation Manager, at jsulek@audubon.org or (850) 251-1297.

Register Now for Audubon Assembly 2011

The Early Bird all inclusive Assembly registration package is only \$120 per person if booked on or before October 1. Package includes all Friday and Saturday programs: field trips, Friday luncheon, learning sessions, cocktail reception (cash bar), awards banquet, Saturday breakfast and lunch, conservation session and workshops.

Flyway Fiesta: Thursday evening event at the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey: \$25 (Not included in conference registration.) Please visit www.audubonofflorida.org or call 850-222-BIRD (2473) to register.

Regular and at-the-door all inclusive ticket: \$140 (after Oct. 2)

Friday Only (field trips, Take Action Luncheon and learning sessions without reception and banquet): \$85

Friday Evening (reception/awards banquet): \$50

To register online: www.audubonofflorida.org
To register by mail, contact Jonathan Webber at 850-222-2473 or jwebber@audubon.org.

Make Your Hotel Reservation by Sept. 24

Orlando Marriot Lake Mary

The Assembly takes place at this designated Green Lodging facility. Call 1-800-380-7724 to reserve your room by September 24 and mention Florida Audubon Society to receive the special \$90 rate.

Orlando Marriot Lake Mary
1501 International Parkway
Lake Mary, FL 32746

Special Note: Please consider migrating to the Assembly in flocks by sharing transportation in order to reduce climate change pollution.

Friday Learning Sessions

Flyways Connect IBAs and Other Special Places

Florida is a critical component of the Atlantic Flyway and is home to numerous Important Bird Areas (IBAs) and other special places. As National Audubon is setting conservation priorities along this flyway, how do Florida's special species and places tie in?

One Everglades

From the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes, to Lake Okeechobee and south to Florida Bay, the Everglades is one ecosystem facing a myriad of challenges. Learn more about current restoration plans and measurements of restoration success.

Payment for Environmental Services

Payment for Environmental Services (PES)—such as water supply storage and filtration, carbon sequestration, etc—is a conservation tool for the next generation. Explore the basics of PES including landowner's perspectives, as well as Florida-specific examples.

Citizen Science in Florida's Special Places

Citizen science is making important strides in protecting Florida's special places. Discover projects supported by Audubon volunteers and learn how you can contribute to the conservation of a special place near you.

Spotlight on Strategies to Save Birds

Populations of key ecosystem indicator species across Florida are declining. What strategies is Audubon employing to save not only birds such as Everglade Snail Kites and Roseate Spoonbills, but also the wetlands and other habitats they need to survive?

Private Lands are Special Places, too

Florida's special places and wildlife depend on private lands. With Audubon's treasured Corkscrew Wood Stork colony as a case study, learn about the importance of ecosystem connectedness and what steps you can take to ensure private lands function as valuable wildlife habitat.

Special Social Media Workshop

Does your chapter have a Facebook page? Bring your laptop to Assembly to participate in a tutorial on how to grow your chapter's online networking capability.

Guarding the Everglades Treasure

Abundant birdlife is the true measure of Everglades restoration. Long known as the most significant breeding ground for wading birds in North America, the Everglades is also host to many other resident and migratory avian treasures. Audubon's unique approach to restoration is science-based protection and recovery of these birds and their habitats.

From the vulnerable Southern Bald Eagles in the Kissimmee Valley to the dwindling colonies of Roseate Spoonbills in Florida Bay, scarce Wood Storks in the Big Cypress and the vanishing Everglade Snail Kite, four bird species characterize the corners of the vast wetland system known as the Greater Everglades. Each of these iconic species is water dependent. And each in their core range, represents the points of an ecological diamond encompassing an avian treasure dependent on the great array of habitat we call the Everglades.

If these four birds are present in abundant numbers then the ecosystem is functioning. But if they are disappearing to other parts of Florida, or just not reproducing in their historic range, something is wrong with the way the system is being managed. Eagles, Storks, Kites and Spoonbills are the true measures of health of the Everglades and that is why Audubon is increasingly organizing its science and advocacy around these four species.

To understand Audubon's work, imagine a diamond that begins with the Northern Everglades extending south and east to Lake Okeechobee and the Central Everglades, southwest to Florida's Big Cypress National Preserve and Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, and finally ending at the Southern Everglades and Florida Bay.

Our signature approach is successful through the coordination of Audubon's far-reaching resources, including our science centers, sanctuaries, policy expertise and grassroots chapter leadership that spans the entire ecosystem. This expansive knowledge of all parts of the ecosystem is unique, and helps us connect the points of this ecological treasure.

Audubon helped bring the Bald Eagle back to Central Florida by operating the Center for Birds of Prey and the EagleWatch program near the Northern Everglades and Kissimmee Chain of Lakes region in the Orlando area. Over thirty percent of the population of Bald Eagles can be traced back to the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey. This includes rehabilitated birds released back to the wild and their offspring. More than 280 eagle nests are monitored by our volunteer EagleWatchers. We work closely with public land managers and private ranchers to promote stewardship of the prairies and lakes that characterize the Northern Everglades.

Audubon owns the ancient cypress swamp that is home to

the core nesting colony of Wood Storks at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary near Naples. Corkscrew's storks depend on the Western Everglades' freshwater wetlands that Audubon works so hard to protect, and our birds are the source of Wood Storks seen throughout the state. But Storks are at risk as development pushes into the Everglades' forested wetlands that are so essential for nesting success.

The Everglade Snail Kite is Florida's most endangered bird due to loss of freshwater sources of their favorite food, apple snails – just 700 birds are left in Florida. The Everglade Snail Kite is one of only three "Total System-wide Performance Measures" for the

Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, making it one of the most important indicators for the success of restoration. Audubon's Lake Okeechobee Sanctuary is ground zero for the Everglade Snail Kite, and our science and policy are deployed to advocate that state and federal agencies manage water and complete Everglades restoration projects to bring this beautiful bird back from the edge of extinction.

The spectacular Roseate Spoonbill was once the bright beacon of life at the estuarine edge of the Everglades and Florida Bay. For 70 years Audubon scientists working from the Florida Keys research station have collected evidence showing the impact of draining the Everglades on Spoonbill nesting success. Our research is now used as the key measure of the results of Southern Everglades restoration projects.

The Everglades ecosystem provides critical stopover for migratory songbirds. For 25 years, Audubon's Keys Environmental Restoration Fund has restored mangrove swamps, seagrasses, and tropical hammocks. Audubon's sanctuaries and restoration projects in the Florida Keys and Rookery Bay are part of the coastal edge of the Everglades so essential to migrating birds.

Everglades restoration will succeed if plans to clean up and free the flow of water through the system from the Kissimmee headwaters to Florida Bay are implemented. Audubon's policy work in the Legislature and Congress, where we push for appropriations for restoration projects and defend wetlands and wildlife laws, is critical to the success of Everglades restoration. Earlier this year Audubon was credited with turning back legislation that would have rewritten 27 different environmental laws.

The true measure of success for Everglades restoration is holding onto its winged treasures. As our volunteers and staff count the Eagles, Storks, Kites and Spoonbills, we will be measuring success. And if the birds are not there, we will redouble our efforts to get the water and habitat right so our treasured birds can return.


*The true measure
of success
for Everglades
restoration
is holding onto
its winged treasures.*




Photo by David Pugsley



Photo by Reinter Munguia

*Birds are the Measure
and the Treasure
of the Everglades*



Photo by David Pugsley



Photo by David Pugsley

Volunteers in Action

Richard Baker Receives National Audubon Society Callison Award

Dr. Richard Baker, President of Pelican Island Audubon Society in Vero Beach was awarded National Audubon Society's Charles H. Callison Award for Outstanding Chapter Volunteer in 2011. Winners are individuals who have made remarkable contributions to conservation through environmental policy achievements, creativity, coalition building, education, and outreach.

An active member of the Pelican Island Audubon Society chapter since 1991, Dr. Baker has served on the Chapter Board for 20 years. Currently a full time volunteer, Dr. Baker initiated a campaign that raised over \$250,000 towards building a 3,000 sq. foot nature center on University property. He has been very active in his community, where the chapter spearheaded rewriting the county's landscaping ordinance, mandating native plants and regulating water use. And with his wife, Juanita, Richard published a coffee table book about one of their favorite rivers: *Reflections of Blue Cypress*. Sales of the book netted \$50,000 for the chapter.

Audubon Academy

Joyce King, Academy Coordinator and Jacqui Sulek, Chapter Conservation Manager, organized the 2011 Audubon Academy on March 18-20 in Gainesville with over 100 members and staff attending. The event included five walking workshops, facilitated sessions on Florida's Special Places, a keynote address from Eric Draper, and a presentation by Julie Wraithmell on working together to save Florida's Special Places. One focal point was the workshop on social networking to reach across the divide of age and engage others in our issues and chapters. A special thanks to the host chapters, Alachua Audubon and Four Rivers Audubon, who helped organize this inspiring weekend. The Academy was funded 100% through registration fees and chapter donations.



Richard Baker receives award from National Audubon President David Yarnold (left) and National Audubon Board Chair Holt Thrasher (right).

Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries Sunset Cruise

On June 7, 130 of Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries' devoted supporters were treated to a sunset cruise around the Richard T. Paul Alafia Bank Bird Sanctuary in Hillsborough Bay. Departing from Tampa, the participants made their way south aboard the Florida Aquarium's tour boat, the Bay Spirit II. Chapter and community leaders, as well as Board members Barbara Sheen Todd, Dave Kandz, and John Hood, served as hosts for the event. The birds of Florida's most important colonial wading bird colony did not

Oystercatchers, Little Blue and Tricolored Herons, Snowy and Cattle Egrets, Least Terns and American White Pelicans were also on hand.

Hernando Volunteers Support Ahhochee Hill

Hernando Audubon Society and Brooksville Ridge Volunteers have supported Ahhochee Hill for many years through removal of invasive plants and other activities. On June 11, volunteers spent a morning picking buckets of invasive coral ardesia berries at Ahhochee Hill. Another berry picking day is planned for Oct 29 as part of the TogetherGreen grant. This invasive plant is the most challenging management issue at Ahhochee. To aid with hauling equipment, buckets of invasive berries and tools, Hernando County Audubon members recently raised enough money to purchase a John Deere Gator utility vehicle. This will be a tremendous help in managing this special place.



The Brooksville Ridge volunteers picked invasive coral ardesiaberreries at Ahhochee Hill.

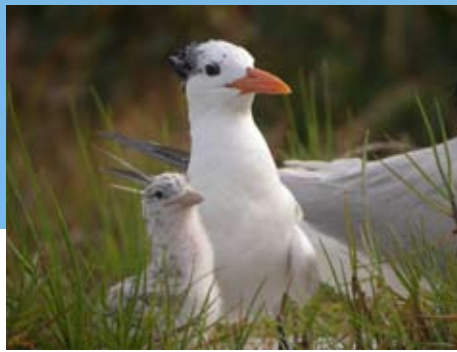
Photo by Christie Anderberg

disappoint guests. Many young Roseate Spoonbills, White and Glossy Ibis and Brown Pelicans covered the sandbar as the adult birds streamed in from every direction to feed the chicks. American

Developing a Conservation Community in Northeast Florida

Audubon of Florida staff and chapter members held Bird-a-thons throughout the state from Tallahassee to the Everglades this spring. Audubon of Florida board member Diane Reed provided an excellent report from Northeast Florida's recent Bird-a-thon to benefit Audubon's Northeast Florida Program. The event attracted ten birding teams

Photo by Marianne Korosy



from throughout the region who ended up with a list of 153 unduplicated species and raised about two thousand dollars for the program. Board members Ann Moore and Allan Milledge participated.

The event underscored that the Northeast Florida Program initiated by Carole Adams, past President of Duval Audubon, has created a true conservation community in Northeast Florida. Since its inception, the relationships between the coastal chapters (Duval Audubon, St. John's County Audubon and Flagler Audubon) and Audubon staff have served as a model of cooperation.

Bird Stewardship and Protection Efforts Expanding

Audubon of Florida's bird stewarding model is being used throughout Florida from the panhandle to southwest Florida to protect nesting shorebirds and their chicks. Our model for training citizen scientists is now being shared with Audubon conservation leaders throughout the United States.

The online Coastal Strand e-newsletter has been expanded to capture stories of new and growing programs around the state. Just to mention a few, Clearwater Audubon initiated a bird steward program at Three Rooker Bar which included private boats delivering stewards to this state-owned barrier island located just north of Honeymoon Island. Collier County and Lee County's fledgling Beach Nesting Bird steward programs at Big Marco Pass and Ft. Myers Beach, respectively, expanded from the beaches to gravel rooftops used by Least Terns. St. Petersburg and Clearwater Audubon's collaborative program has expanded to include banding and tracking of fallen chicks at rooftop colonies. Manatee Audubon's partnership with the Beach Nesting Bird/Turtle Watch team on Anna Maria Island has also taken on a Least Tern rooftop site. In the Panhandle Alan Knothe continues to build his volunteer base. Bay County and Choctawhatchee Audubon have generously provided funding for several scopes for the program. St. George's Island State Park was a new site for Bird Stewards this sea-

son. On the east coast, bird stewards are protecting Least Terns, Wilson's Plovers, Royal Terns and Laughing Gulls chicks in Duval and St. Johns Counties.

Orange Audubon Society Photography Contest

Orange Audubon Society (OAS) recently held their annual banquet and nature photography contest. The contest drew 100 participants with well over three hundred images entered. The goal of the Chertok Nature Photography Contest is "to promote interest and concern for preserving the native fauna and flora of Florida, and to encourage nature photography." There were three categories (youth, amateur and advanced) and over \$1,200 in awards. Winners from 2006 through 2011 contests, and news about the 2012 competition when available, can be seen at the OAS website (www.orangeaudubonfl.org). The contest, now in its 23rd year, is totally self-sustaining financially. Selected images from the contest are displayed both in the front windows and inside the contest co-sponsor's store (Colonial Photo and Hobby, Orlando.)



Megan Authement, 16-year-old Orange Audubon Member, won the chapter's 1st place award in the youth category for two years in a row. This year's entry, the Snowy Egret, was taken at Fort DeSoto State Park near St. Petersburg, Megan's home. Megan is currently working with park personnel to create a photography display of beach nesting birds.

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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.

TAKE ACTION FOR FLORIDA'S SPECIAL PLACES

October 14-15, 2011

Lake Mary Marriott*

Lake Mary, Florida

*A designated Florida Green Lodging Hotel

Special features include:

- Pre-conference Flyways Fiesta at the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey (Thursday evening)
- College Youth Forum – 30 area youth will join us from UCF, Stetson and New College
- Field trips and special Walking Workshops for youth and mentors
- Friday Take Action Luncheon with table topic discussions
- Journey through Florida's Special Places – showcase of Florida photography during our Friday evening cocktail party
- Author and photographer John Moran as our Friday evening keynote speaker
- Saturday featured luncheon speaker Dr. Ellen Prager, author of *Sex, Drugs and Sea Slime*

Register online at www.audubonofflorida.org

Notice of Annual Meeting of the Membership of 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 Lake Mary Marriott, Lake Mary, Florida at 1:45 p.m. on Saturday, October 15.

Mystic Springs, Chipola River.

*Photo by John Moran
and David Moynahan*

