



FALL 2005

# Florida Naturalist



Strategic Plan for  
SAVING OUR BIRDS

FRIENDS OF THE EAGLE  
links conservation  
and development

AUDUBON ASSEMBLY 2005  
Cocoa Beach, October 20-22



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## Executive Director's Report Saving our Birds



One hundred years ago, plume hunters were devastating wading birds to support fashion trends. These hunters were part of a surge in human activities eradicating habitats and threatening species across Florida and the United States. Birds were becoming a barometer for the effects of humans on wildlife. People rallied to save the plumed birds and in the process formed the Audubon movement. In Florida, donations supported Audubon wardens, who patrolled critical nesting sites. The struggle to defend the birds was fierce and the sacrifices great. Three wardens were killed, but the beautiful, plumed birds escaped certain extinction.

Today, we face a different, perhaps more formidable, challenge. The recent rush of people to Florida is accompanied by uncontrolled conversion of farms and habitat to urban development. Once again, the threat to birds makes them a barometer, this time of the health of Florida's environment. Once again, as our forbearers did a hundred years ago, we must act quickly. As development accelerates, we must protect our habitats, our watersheds, and our wildlife. There is no time to hesitate.

In June, Audubon of Florida's Board of Directors approved our Strategic Plan for Saving Our Birds, and it already is being implemented. For the next five years, we will focus our efforts on protecting and restoring the places in Florida that are special to birds and other wildlife. Audubon, long an advocate for coastal areas, the Everglades ecosystem, and upland habitats, will expand and intensify these efforts, addressing five strategic themes:

- Public lands** - Accelerate Florida Forever and other land protection programs; ensure proper management of natural areas.
- Fresh water** - Keep water clean, and manage it first for the benefit of nature.
- Growth** - Keep development away from Florida's important ecosystems.
- Wildlife** - Strengthen laws that protect wildlife.
- People** - Educate residents, newcomers, and visitors to appreciate Florida's great natural heritage.

We are bringing all of Audubon's strengths to bear, strengths that are unique among conservation groups. We have 37,000 members and 42 Chapters, experience in engaging people and connecting them with nature, a reputation for effectively applying science and providing solutions, a century of experience with birds, leadership in environmental education, and a uniquely moderate and effective approach to growth.

Your will read, in this issue of the *Naturalist*, about many examples of AOF's vital work.

One hundred years from now, if we've achieved our objectives, people will write about how AOF and the concerned people of Florida saved the birds again, and with them, the great places that make Florida special.

David E. Anderson  
Executive Director, Audubon of Florida

## Confronting the impact of growth on ecosystems

*Audubon of Florida's plan for Saving Our Birds requires state policies to protect the land and water that birds and other wildlife need, not just to survive, but to be abundant. Audubon's legislative team focuses on those environmental and wildlife policies and appropriations that help us to accomplish our plan for Saving Our Birds.*

Photo near Lake Kissimmee courtesy of Christina Evans <http://cgstudios.smugmug.com/>

## Facing a Growth Crisis, the Legislature Says "Build Roads"

In the desperate competition between saving habitat and converting it to development, the 2005 Legislature took the side of increased growth. Given the opportunity to rewrite Florida's laws governing how cities grow and how new development is planned, the Legislature decided to invest in pavement. Sadly, they dedicated to roads funds that might otherwise have been spent to protect environmental land - land that is imminently threatened by the expanding boundaries of urban sprawl.

Florida's rapid population growth is eating up nearly 200,000 acres of forests and farmland every year. Not only are interior lands being converted to subdivisions and shopping centers, the coasts are being settled ever more intensively. Fringes of marsh and mangrove, considered just a few years ago not worth the bother, are now being filled in with buildings, docks and marinas.

The development pressure and competition for land has led to rapid increase in value of almost all land. Farmers struggling to stay in business see an easy out when speculators offer previously-unthinkable sums for their fields. Large tracts of forests and ranchlands are being chopped up and sold off to investors from around the world, putting Florida's efforts to save the best land at a terrible disadvantage.

Against this wave of building, Audubon has repeatedly urged the Legislature to invest more in public land acquisition, and to manage growth by putting certain areas and habitat off limits to new development. What follows is a scorecard of efforts to protect natural Florida and, in the process, to save our birds.

**#1 Public Land Acquisition** - With over two million acres on the state's priority list for protection through acquisition, Florida is falling behind. The \$105 million in Florida Forever funds set aside each year for conservation lands today buys only a fourth as much land as the state used to protect on an annual basis. In several major land deals, including

the Babcock Ranch and St. Vincent Bay Buffer, the state is unable to meet the landowners' increasing price expectations. Audubon's position is that the Legislature should accelerate Florida Forever, spend out the program in the next two years and launch a more ambitiously funded conservation lands program by 2008.

**#2 Ecosystem Restoration** - The \$8 billion Everglades restoration program is falling short and falling behind as development proposed for key restoration parcels drives up prices or removes those parcels from the plan. The Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands and Indian River Lagoon are two projects where development is eating away at land needed for restoration. Audubon is urging the government to put more money now into special restoration projects such as the Everglades, and to target funds more effectively to get ahead of land speculators.

**#3 Water for the Environment** - The Legislature passed, with Audubon's support, the Water Sustainability Act (SB 444 by Senator Paula Dockey) to advance the cleanup of polluted waterways and invest in alternative water supply. The legislation put \$30 million into cleanup of Lake Okeechobee, a major Audubon priority. Missing from the state's initiative is a new level of commitment to reserving Florida's water for the ecosystems that depend on historic amounts and timing of fresh water.

**#4 Rules for Growth** - The Legislature passed, at Governor Bush's request, SB 360 to better manage Florida's growth. The bill mandates that local governments do more to provide the infrastructure that expanding population requires. The legislation also sets up a process for creating visions of how communities choose to grow. Audubon will be mobilizing members and chapters to participate in the growth planning process, and will return to the Legislature to ask that new growth be required to compensate for losses of habitat and freshwater systems. Our statewide goal is an acre of land preserved for every acre that is developed.

**#5 Wildlife Policy** - Coastal waters are the greatest area of tension in wildlife policy. The Legislature is reluctant to limit business or recreational activities in way that would dictate, for example, that boaters slow down for manatees, avoid seagrass beds, or stay off shorebird nesting areas. Audubon sees the need to educate legislators about the positive economic effects generated by birders and wildlife observers, whose activities involve many, albeit quieter, people.





## Abundant Birdlife is the Goal of Audubon's Wildlife Policy

Photo of Short-billed Dowitcher courtesy of Christina Evans.

Birds are part of everyday life: the mockingbird singing from the fencepost, the wood duck gliding across the pond, and the osprey clutching his prize catch as he soars overhead. The goal of Audubon's wildlife policy is to preserve this abundance of birdlife throughout Florida, to “keep common birds common,” and to recover birds at risk of extinction. To further this goal, Audubon staff members are contributing to the development of Florida's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. Audubon is working with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to make sure the strategy is science-driven and includes meaningful recommendations for conserving Florida's rich biodiversity.

But threats to Florida's birds and other wildlife abound. Habitat loss caused by rampant development shows no signs of slowing. An 80 percent increase in population is expected by the year 2030, pushing Florida's populace to nearly 30 million. Increased population growth means fewer healthy wetlands, as lands are drained for development. Remaining habitats are often invaded by species like old world climbing fern and melaleuca, which make them less hospitable to nesting and foraging birds. Audubon is committed to protecting the habitats and landscapes that support Florida's diverse wildlife against these threats.

Recent planning efforts have renewed AOF's commitment to saving our birds. Its work has been refocused toward accomplishing four primary bird and habitat conservation goals: stabilizing and increasing populations of at-risk species of birds, preventing persistent declines or range contractions in populations of common native birds, protecting and restoring sites essential for vulnerable species, and improving the health of landscapes that support or could support American birds.

### The goals set out by Audubon's wildlife policy will be achieved through the following actions:

- protecting remaining habitat through land conservation and growth management strategies,
- managing land to control invasive species,
- managing land to provide appropriate fire regimes and water levels,
- engaging in strategies to prevent extinctions and recover healthy populations of wildlife, and
- encouraging urban landscape design that provides wildlife habitat, conserves water, and reduces pollution.

With a strong, science-driven wildlife policy in place, and help from Audubon chapters and members throughout the state, diverse and abundant birdlife will continue to be a hallmark of Florida's great natural heritage.

## A major upgrade to Florida's water programs, SB 444 is the first to significantly combine water pollution, water supply and water concurrency in a single piece of legislation.

- Alternative Water Supply - The bill updates the regional water supply planning function of the water management districts to promote alternative water supply projects to both accommodate growth and to reduce use of groundwater supplies. Using alternative water supply - including reclaimed and stormwater - helps the environment by reducing water withdrawn from aquifers.
- Local Planning and Water Supply - Local land use plans are required to incorporate water supply plans, and water supply becomes part of concurrency requirements.
- Water Quality - The bill updates Florida law relating to the federal Clean Water Act requirement that states must identify and set cleanup targets for waterways that are polluted. The new program uses Basin Management Action Plans to set a timeline and allocate pollution reductions among polluters (mainly runoff from farms and developed areas). Once the plans are in place, the only way a discharger can avoid the risk of being ordered to clean up is to implement the cleanup activities specified in the Plans.

## St. Petersburg Audubon comes to the rescue

When HB 955 by Rep. Kim Berfield of Clearwater urged a study to increase motorboating in and from state parks, St. Pete Audubon Society, led by volunteer Monique Abrams, came to the rescue. Multiple phone calls and faxes and some helpful publicity persuaded Rep. Berfield to amend the legislation to require that the environmental impacts of increased boating be considered.

## Champions of the Environment

Senator **Paula Dockey** of Lakeland was again the environment's champion in the Legislature. She not only managed to pass major water policy legislation, but as chair of the Senate Environmental Preservation Committee, she blocked several anti-environmental proposals. Dockey, an avid birder and bicyclist, is a longtime friend of public lands. This year she added coastal protection to her impressive achievements by authoring and passing an Oceans and Coastal Protection bill. It will set up a commission to determine the science and efforts Florida should undertake to protect its estuarine and marine habitats. Audubon particularly applauds Dockey for making shorebird and seabird protection a specific feature of her legislation.

Senator **Ken Pruitt** was another star player, based on his Lake Okeechobee advocacy. Senators **Lee Constantine** and **Rod Smith** showed courage under fire. Senate President **Tom Lee** did much to prevent much that was bad. Representatives **Donna Clarke**, **Mike Davis**, **Dudley Goodlette** and **Joe Negron** worked hard to help the cause of conservation with good policy and money.



Photo of Bald Eagle courtesy of Bob Carey.

## Water quality and habitat are critical for Eagles' continued recovery

At least 537 pairs of Southern Bald Eagles make their nests within the ecosystems of Central Florida, primarily the Wekiva, St. Johns River, Upper Kissimmee River, and Green Swamp areas. This concentrated cluster of bald eagle nesting sites is the largest and most dense in the continental United States. Its eagle population now surpasses numbers documented in the entire lower 48 states at the bottom of the species' pesticide-related decline in the early 1960s.

This remarkable success story is now challenged by Florida's growth and development. As Orlando's urban sprawl threatens to encroach into the Wekiva, St. Johns, Kissimmee and Green Swamp ecosystems, the bald eagle's future is again uncertain. The eagle feeds primarily on aquatic prey, and water is the dominant feature of these ecosystems. But Central Florida's water

resources are under siege from expanding development and consumptive uses.

Ground and surface water are closely linked in Central Florida. Groundwater is the primary source of flow in springs that give life to the Wekiva system. The St. Johns River ecosystem sits at the eastern perimeter of the Orlando urban area, where it functions as a broad chain of marshes—an Everglades in miniature—to divide urbanized areas of Central Florida from rapidly growing coastal cities in Brevard, Indian River, and Volusia counties.

A complex interrelationship between groundwater recharge and surface water flow defines the Green Swamp, from which four major river systems (Hillsborough, Withlacoochee, Ocklawaha and Peace) flow. The Upper Kissimmee, literally the headwaters of the

Everglades, commences on the Disney World property just west of Orlando and flows through Shingle and Reedy creeks and a chain of lakes in the Kissimmee Prairie.

Audubon's goal is to give these ecosystems national visibility on a level achieved for Everglades restoration. The eagle's dramatic recovery, and Audubon's commitment to addressing development pressures that imperil this magnificent creature, are emblematic of the organization's resolve to preserve and restore these essential ecosystems.



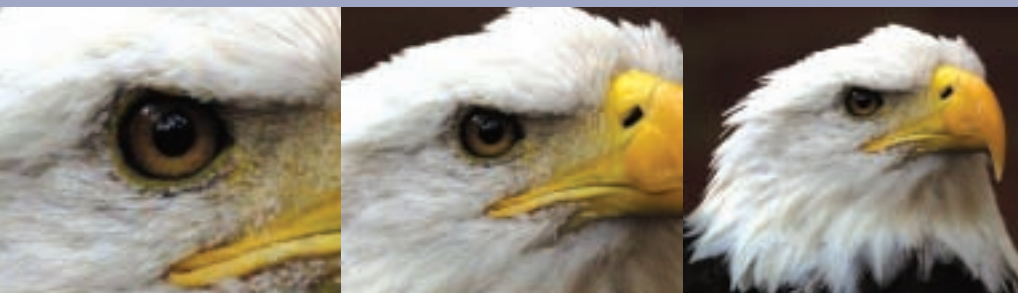


Photo of Bald Eagle courtesy of Bob Carey.

## Spotlight on Ginn Clubs and Resorts Lights, Camera, Action...

If you're looking for new programs in this fall's television line up, you will have a unique source of entertainment and education. If nature cooperates, coming soon to the National Audubon website will be streaming video of Florida Bald Eagles building a nest, hatching their chicks, feeding and fledging them! All this will be possible thanks to a dynamic new partnership—called **Friends of the Eagle**—between Audubon of Florida and Ginn Clubs and Resorts of Celebration, Florida.

Two years ago, the Ginn Company set the standard for Florida Bald Eagle protection at its 1,400-acre Tesoro community in Port St. Lucie. In December 2003, the Ginn Company discovered an eagle's nest with two fledglings on its property. The company immediately complied with Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission regulations and guidelines, stopping construction within 1,500 feet of the nest site and fencing off all access. The company then went above and beyond regulations by removing 38 nearby residential lots from sale and redesigning the entire east side of the development, incurring a cost of more than \$28 million.

Because of the Ginn Company's prompt and direct action, the eagles fledged two babies that year. The eagles have raised more young since then, despite interference from a great horned owl and hurricanes Frances and Jeanne.

This gesture on the part of the Ginn Company constitutes a key step in Audubon of Florida's new Strategic Vision. Designed to address spiraling growth across the state by preserving select waterscapes and landscapes in six broad regions, Audubon is inviting partners like the Ginn Company to participate in preserving critical species and their threatened habitats.

"The eagles were here before we were," says Ginn Clubs and Resorts CEO Bobby Ginn, "and we know it is possible to manage around them. It is something that comes with selecting desirable sites. Our experience at Tesoro proves that wildlife and development can coexist in this way."

The company's actions speak volumes to developers and builders about how environmental issues can be embraced to become assets rather than liabilities to their industries. And how growth, when planned properly, can benefit both environmental and development sectors. Because eagles are likely to be downgraded from the endangered species list to threatened status, the Ginn-sponsored Tesoro eagle project will help to keep these magnificent birds and their critical habitat in the public eye.

Ginn hired biological consultant Joe Carroll, a former head of Pelican Island Audubon Society in Vero Beach, to monitor the eagles' activity on Tesoro property for four nesting seasons. He observed the pair's varying success rate and shared the information with agencies and interested parties, including Audubon. "The first year, three eaglets reached fledging (a rare event); the second year, no young were produced, even though the

pair re-nested," Carroll recounts. "The third year, two young fledged, and this past season one young eagle fledged. Add to this the fact that their nest was taken over by a great horned owl, forcing them to relocate and build a new nest, and the next year two hurricanes blew down the nest and they had to rebuild, and you have a very interesting period of eagle watching." Many Tesoro buyers and Ginn Company employees have been attracted and impressed by the company's emphasis on protecting these eagles, and are inspired when they see the raptors flying overhead.

The Friends of the Eagle Partnership, recognized as its positive outcome for both conservation and economic development, was formed earlier this year. "The purpose of the partnership," relates David Anderson, Executive Director of Audubon of Florida, "is to inform the public of the need to protect the bald eagle and its habitat, to show people in Florida and the nation how they can help protect this magnificent bird, and to teach succeeding generations about eagles, their feeding and habitat requirements, and the importance of protecting the species across America." The partnership includes three components: the Tesoro EagleCam, satellite tracking of eagle fledglings, and the Eagle Ambassador program based at Audubon's Center for Birds of Prey in Maitland, Florida.

The **EagleCam** project, slated to start this fall, will provide live streaming video of the Tesoro nest. Tesoro residents, Audubon members, local classrooms and anyone with Internet access will be able to view live video of eagle nest activity during the 2005-2006 nesting season. Information, photos, and a FAQ page prepared by the Center for Birds of Prey about eagle habits and habitats will be posted before and after the nesting season. Visitors to the Web site will be able to ask the Center staff questions by email and get prompt answers.

"The installation of the eagle nest camera is the culmination of a public/private partnership that will benefit generations of naturalists interested in the preservation of listed species and their habitats," says Al Jones, Southeast Regional President of the Ginn Company. "Ginn Clubs and Resorts is proud to partner with Audubon of Florida in this unprecedented relationship between a world class developer and a world class conservation organization. Through the World Wide Web we are excited to share with the rest of the world the life of the nesting bald eagles that chose to call Tesoro their home."

The Friends of the Eagle Partnership will collaborate with the Institute of Wildlife Sciences in Davie, Florida, to track the eaglets once they leave the nest. As part of a study to learn whether eagles of Central Florida follow migratory patterns that differ from those of South Florida's eagles, the eaglets will be fitted with **satellite transmitters** to track their movements. (Transmitter harnesses do not harm the birds, and fall off after four to five years.) After the nest camera is shut down, enthusiasts

will be able to follow the birds' migrations through websites maintained by Audubon of Florida and the Institute of Wildlife Sciences.

The third piece of the Friends of the Eagle Partnership is the **Eagle Ambassador** program, a statewide educational outreach focusing on the bald eagle. A new Eagle Ambassador van, underwritten by the Ginn Company, will enable Audubon educators from the Center for Birds of Prey to bring eagles and other raptor ambassadors to events of special significance across the state. This up-close-and-personal approach to raptor education inspires participants' interest in the raptors' future, and reinforces the availability of Tesoro's EagleCam as a continuing resource. The program also reminds the public of Audubon of Florida's strategic vision of protecting Florida's birds in conjunction with valued partners like the Ginn Company.

Audubon commends The Ginn Company on their outstanding dedication to this unique project. Both parties are extremely excited about the opportunity, and look forward to this first phase of a long-term partnership. Because the program incorporates science, education and community involvement, it supports every aspect of Audubon's long term goals, which are focused on saving Florida's birds.

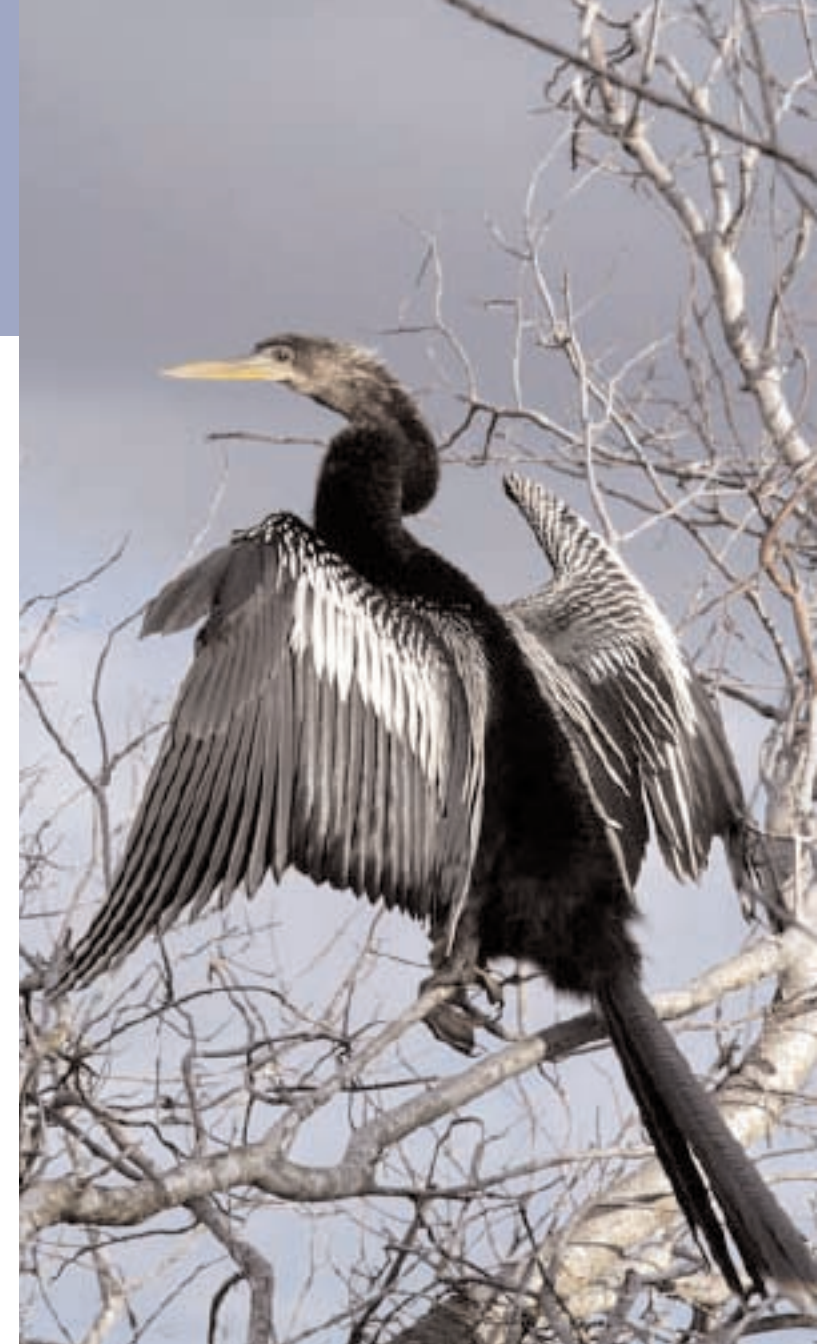


Photo of Anhinga courtesy of Charles Lee.

## YOUR BENEFICIARIES There are more of them than you realize!



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

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

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

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



To learn more, call for a free brochure. Wayne Mones, Vice President, Planned giving, National Audubon Society, 700 Broadway, New York, NY 10003, 212-979-3033. [www.plannedgifts@audubon.org](http://www.plannedgifts@audubon.org)



## ASSEMBLY AT A GLANCE

### THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20

Noon - 4 pm Field Trip -  
Merritt Island National  
Wildlife Refuge  
3 - 5:30 pm Conference Registration  
6 - 8 pm Field Trip -  
Sunset Cruise,  
Indian River Lagoon  
5:30 - 7:30 pm Beachside reception.  
Cash bar

### FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21

8:30 am - 5 pm Conference Registration  
9 am - 5 pm Chapter Exhibits Open  
9 am - noon Concurrent Workshops  
10:15 - 10:45 am Break  
Noon - 1:30 pm Lunch  
2 - 5 pm Setting Florida's  
Conservation Action  
Agenda 2006  
2:30 - 5:30 pm Field Trip - Orlando  
Wetlands Park  
3:15-3:45 pm Break  
6 - 6:30 pm Cocktail reception.  
Cash bar  
6:30 - 9 PM Awards Banquet.

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22

7 - 8:30 am Field Trip -  
Lori Wilson Park  
8 - 9:30 am AOF Chapter  
Presidents' Breakfast  
8:30 am - noon Conference Registration  
9 am - noon Chapter Exhibits Open  
9:30 - 11:30 am Field trip -  
Enchanted Forest  
9:30 am - noon Setting Florida's  
Conservation Action  
Agenda, cont'd  
Noon - 1:30 pm Lunch, Chapter Awards.  
2 - 6 pm Annual Florida Audubon  
Society and AOF  
Membership Meeting  
followed by AOF  
Board Meeting

## HOTEL INFORMATION

**Holiday Inn Cocoa Beach Oceanfront Resort**  
1300 N. Atlantic Ave., Cocoa Beach, FL 32931  
Parking is free. See photos online at  
<http://hicoacoabeach-oceanfront.felcor.com/>

**Reserve rooms by September 28 for \$89.99/night rate.** Call 1-800-206-2747 or log onto [http://www.ichotelsgroup.com/h/d/hi/1/en/rates/coibe?&\\_GPC=AUA&](http://www.ichotelsgroup.com/h/d/hi/1/en/rates/coibe?&_GPC=AUA&)

## Audubon Assembly Goes to the Beach!

**Mingle with old friends and make new ones as you join birders and environmentalists from across the state at the 2005 Audubon Assembly. Help shape Audubon of Florida's legislative policies and take an active part in saving our birds, wildlife and habitats. Register by September 28 and pay \$99 for all receptions, meals, programs, and workshops.**

After September 25, this all-inclusive package is \$125.

**Relax and enjoy the casual, beachfront atmosphere** of the Holiday Inn Cocoa Beach Oceanfront Resort, with swimming pools, tennis courts and acres of landscaped grounds beside a broad stretch of beach along the Atlantic Ocean. **Visit the nature preserve and boardwalk** adjacent to the resort-on your own, or during the guided tour that is part of the Assembly's field trip offerings.

**Make your hotel accommodations** directly with the Holiday Inn. Audubon Assembly participants receive a reduced rate of \$89.99/night, up to 4 in a room. The daily resort fee has been waived and parking is free. *Special rate valid through September 28. Oceanfront suites and lofts can be reserved, if available, at prevailing rates.*

## Featured Speakers

**David Anderson and John Flanigan. Friday & Saturday Lunch.**

On Friday, John Flanigan, Chairman, AOF Board of Directors, and David Anderson, Executive Director, AOF will present Audubon of Florida's new Strategic Vision. On Saturday, David Anderson will share vital insights into Audubon's progress on regional initiatives, conservation outcomes, and priority targets across Florida.

**Dr. Jerry Lorenz, State Director of Research, AOF. Friday Awards Banquet.**

*"Roseate Spoonbills in Florida Bay-A Pink Canary in a Coal Mine"*

Using 70 years of Audubon data and his own spoonbill-related studies, Dr. Lorenz will reveal the effects South Florida's population boom has had on the pink birds and ecosystems throughout the region.

## Workshops and Programs

**Sustainable Lifestyles** As people occupy more land, how do we keep that land friendly and available to birds, wildlife, and native plants while maintaining clean air and water? This workshop will include concepts from Audubon at Home and other proposals on nature-friendly living.

**Trends and Efforts in Bird Conservation** Important Bird Areas and Watchlist are two tools Audubon uses to plan bird conservation. This workshop will illustrate the programs being used to protect birds and their habitats, and how you can participate in them.

**Citizen Participation in Conservation Planning** Local land-use plans and proposed new avenues for citizen participation offer opportunities to draw lines around the places we think should be protected. Learn how the planning process works and how you can use it to preserve your favorite bird habitats.

**Celebrating Birds by Flying Wild** A "how to" guide to bird conservation through classroom activities and school bird festivals. This lively workshop involves active participation by attendees.

**EagleWatch, Colony Watch, Tropical Flyways and Nesting Woodstorks** Keeping our eyes and ears trained on the places where key species rest and nest helps us predict trends in bird populations.

**Emerging Strategies for Protecting Wetlands and Monitoring Conservation Easements** As development pressures on Florida's wetlands increase, how do we know if these important habitats are really being protected? Featuring Bay County Audubon Society's landmark study on conservation easements.

### SETTING FLORIDA'S CONSERVATION ACTION AGENDA FOR 2006

Stimulating breakout sessions are a vital feature of Audubon Assembly

**Friday, October 21** **Session A** Big-Picture Conservation The future of Florida Forever, wildlife policy, growth management and water.  
**Session B** Regional Conservation Priorities How staff, allies, and volunteer leaders are formulating action plans and strategies.  
**Session C** Strategies and Action Plans for Audubon's regional priorities. Breakout groups discuss regional conservation priorities and build consensus for plans and strategies to recommend for the Florida conservation agenda.

**Saturday, October 22** **Session A** Reports and recommendations from breakout sessions on Regional Plans.  
**Session B** Discussion and approval of Conservation Action Agenda for 2006.

## Field Trips *organized by Space Coast Audubon and Orange Audubon Society chapters.*

**RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED by October 10 for all field trips.**

Reserve early, because capacity is limited for the Black Point/Merritt Island trip and the Sunset Boat Cruise. You **MUST** reserve by Oct. 10 for field trips, free or otherwise. Fees are payable on-site to tour operators and refuges, not to Audubon. Cash and credit cards accepted, but **NO** personal checks. No exceptions. Don't forget your water, sunscreen and binoculars!

### THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20

Noon - 4:00 pm **Black Point Drive, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and Canaveral Seashore. FREE. Meet at Merritt Island Visitor's Center.** Over 500 species of wildlife frequent Merritt Island, which supports huge winter populations of birds. Canaveral National Seashore which includes ocean, beach, dune, hammock, lagoon, salt marsh, and pine flatland habitats. [<http://merrittisland.fws.gov/>]

**Space Coast Nature Tours: Sunset Boat Cruise on the Indian River Lagoon** \$25/person (Min. 20, max. 40 people). **Meet at Titusville Marina, 5:30.** Explore the wonders of nature on this 90-minute narrated sunset cruise on the Indian River Lagoon, where eagles soar, dolphins play, and alligators lurk. Complimentary wine and cheese will be served. [<http://www.spacecoastnaturetours.com/>]

### FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21. *Carpool from hotel at 1:45 pm.*

2:30 - 5:30 pm **Orlando Wetlands Park. FREE. Donations accepted.** This man-made wetland, with dike-top trails wrapping around cattail marshes and open water, attracts wintering waterfowl, wood storks, white ibis, black-crowned night herons, and other wading birds in winter. Don't miss it! [<http://myfwc.com/viewing/sites/site-c10.html>]

### SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22. *Both trips - Meet in hotel lobby*

7:00 - 8:30 am **Lori Wilson Park/Johnnie Johnson Nature Center and Boardwalk Trail. FREE.** At this 32.43-acre regional beach park and birding hotspot, expect to see migratory birds, shorebirds, songbirds, butterflies, opossums, raccoons and snakes. A glimpse of old Cocoa Beach. [<http://www.brevardparks.com/nature/loriwilson.htm>]

9:30 - 11:30 am **Enchanted Forest Nature Sanctuary. FREE. Donations accepted.** The Enchanted Forest is the flagship nature sanctuary of Brevard County's Environmentally Endangered Lands (EEL) program. Trails wander through 393 acres of timeless Scrub, Mesic, and Hydric ecosystems with their wide variety of endangered and threatened species. [<http://www.nbbd.com/godo/ef/>]



*Photo of Vireo courtesy of Christina Evans.*

## REGISTRATION AND EXHIBIT SPACE

**REGISTER NOW** for all-inclusive package of \$99 (offer expires Sept. 28). After September 28, registration cost is \$125.

**GET DETAILED INFORMATION** on-line and download Assembly registration forms at [www.audubonofflorida.org](http://www.audubonofflorida.org). To request forms by mail or fax, contact Vicky Johnston 305-371-6399 ext. 134, or email [vjohnston@audubon.org](mailto:vjohnston@audubon.org).

**CHAPTER EXHIBITS** Exhibit space is free but limited. Contact Jacqui Sulek, Chapters Coordinator by **October 10** to reserve space. [jsulek@audubon.org](mailto:jsulek@audubon.org) 850-251-1297

**QUESTIONS?** Contact Vicky Johnston 305-371-6399 ext. 134, or email [vjohnston@audubon.org](mailto:vjohnston@audubon.org).





## Lake Okeechobee's cloudy future

The drought in 2000, and good drawdowns since, had created a vigorous recovery of plant and animal communities in Lake Okeechobee. Then came last year's hurricanes and the recovery appears reversed. As natural phenomena, hurricanes are expected to cause stress to biological communities. However, Lake Okeechobee has a thick, unhealthy layer of mud in its center, the result of decades of pollution. That muddy silt has led to greater and more lasting damage to the lake than hurricanes alone would have caused.

The lake has remained so turbid that, in June 2005, scientists at the South Florida Water Management District estimated that light penetrating its waters was reduced to about one-sixth the amount needed to sustain submerged plants. At least 60 square miles of submerged plant communities have been lost, leaving only open, dirty water. The absence of these plants robs large-mouth bass of their preferred habitat and food supplies, and their populations dropped sharply. Algae, the base of the planktonic food chain for shad and young crappie, has also been reduced by the limited light. In turn, it appears that young shad and one- and two-year old crappie are almost gone from the lake. Small wading birds did not attempt to nest on the lake because it remained too deep this spring.

These plants and animals will recover if the lake is drawn down to let light hit the bottom and stimulate germination. The agencies had a good

drawdown plan for next spring, but with this year's heavy rains, the lake is already so deep that chances of sufficient drawdown are slim. With no benign places to put the excess water, agencies are dumping massive amounts into the estuaries, with concomitant harm.

These water management dilemmas will continue until the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) is built. But we're realizing something new — even with CERP in place, the mud at the lake's center makes Okeechobee vulnerable to massive plant loss every time a hurricane vigorously stirs it up. Estimates based on current technology indicate it could cost \$3 billion to remove the mud. Because the state cannot afford that now, Audubon is urging state and federal agencies working on CERP to design an infrastructure explicitly to facilitate lake-recovering drawdowns after natural calamities like hurricanes.

For more about the Lake Okeechobee ecosystem, visit <http://www.sfwmd.gov/site/index.php?id=16>. See reports under "Lake Okeechobee Status Reports" for information on all parts of the Kissimmee, Okeechobee, estuary and Everglades systems.

*Upper left: Water flowing into Lake Okeechobee looks blue compared with sections of the lake still churned up seven months after last year's hurricanes. Photo courtesy of South Florida Water Management District.*

## The Everglades makes a compelling classroom. Outreach program awakens youth to Florida's natural heritage.



*The 2005 Urban Everglades Outreach Specialists were photographed at the Wolfson Campus of Miami-Dade College, which provided classrooms and computers for non-field-study portions of the five-week program.*

The world of nature has been irrevocably transformed for the 150 high school students who've become Urban Everglades Outreach Specialists. The students supplied the "urban" component, and the vast Everglades ecosystem was their field classroom.

The five-year-old summer program conceived by Alison Austin, AOF's director of outreach and communications, has so effectively engaged minority youth in environmental issues that National Audubon hopes to replicate it in other states.

Because the program involves a variety of community partners, the students meet role models in academia, business, and government. As a result, many have been inspired to pursue careers in science, medicine, environmental fields they might never have considered.

Austin attributes the program's nationally-recognized success in part to its holistic approach. "The students gain communications skills, professional development skills, and take part in community service," she said. "As outreach specialists, they are charged with passing on to their peers and family members the information they gain." Proof of the students' communications skills is the fact that several UEOS alumni have been valedictorians and salutatorians at their high schools.

The Environmental Protection Agency funds the program, which includes stipends for the participants. "For many, this was their first job," Austin noted. "They also got exposure to a college campus, because Miami-Dade College provided classrooms and computer space." This summer, 25 students from Miami-Dade County Public Schools engaged in a debate that paralleled a real-life struggle still in progress over the proposed extension of an urban development boundary (see "Hold the Line" article in this issue). It focused on the impact of humans on the environment.

AOF's Everglades Policy Associate Jamie Furgang set up a scenario in which student "commissioners" heard presentations by teams representing the interests of development, education, transportation and the environment. After listening to pros and cons, the mock commission vetoed the boundary extension. The exercise gave each student new insight into the political processes that affect Florida's environment. Branden Williams, a junior at Miami Northwestern Senior High, noted that the mock commission process "gave us real life facts about how things go on in our community, things most people aren't exposed to."

April Johnson, assigned to play a county commissioner, conceded that the developer team made some good points, but voted No on moving the line. "We need the wetlands. We shouldn't damage them," she said. "Development would create jobs, but would also increase pollution." Johnson is a 10th grader at Dr Michael Krop Senior High.

Kevin Poutanen, an 11th grader at Miami Southridge Senior High, said "the program has opened my eyes" to career opportunities in conservation and protection. His feeling was shared by others. "This was one of the best programs I have ever participated in," said Samantha Wofford, a 12th grader at Miami Northwestern Senior High. "It allowed me to learn about myself and how my actions affect the environment. People come into situations thinking only about humans. But it is important to consider animals' needs too; they can't speak for themselves."

## Audubon EagleWatch Program

Audubon EagleWatch, a citizen-science based program, has completed another successful year. More than 250 volunteers were in the field during the recent nesting season (October 1 - May 15), monitoring 20 percent of Florida's urban bald eagle nests.

The number of eagle pairs that found suitable nesting habitat and raised young after the devastation caused by last year's hurricanes came as a pleasant surprise. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission asked EagleWatch volunteers to help compile reports and observe nest activity following the storms. Despite the fact that 70 percent or more of Florida's nest sites were damaged or destroyed by storms, it is estimated that 80 percent of the nesting population was successful. Final numbers will be confirmed this fall.

Volunteers are always needed, particularly in Polk, Osceola, and Lake counties, and the Panhandle area. Volunteers receive training in eagle biology and behavior, and learn why it is so important to educate others on the value of protecting eagles and their habitat.

To get involved in helping with this vital program, please contact Lynda White, Audubon EagleWatch Coordinator, at [eaglewatch@audubon.org](mailto:eaglewatch@audubon.org) 407-644-0190, fax 407-644-8940. 1101 Audubon Way, Maitland, FL 32751

## Register Now for Audubon Assembly 2005

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

### Registration Fee - Per Person

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

\$99 Early bird registration (up to Sept. 28)  \$125 after September 28

Friday Reception and Awards Banquet (only) \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$50/per person = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

### TOTAL DUE \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ payable to Audubon of Florida. Charge my  VISA  Mastercard in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card No. \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

	No. of People	No. of People
Thursday <input type="checkbox"/> Black Point/Merritt Island NWR/Canaveral	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Indian River Lagoon Sunset Cruise (\$25)
Friday <input type="checkbox"/> Orlando Wetlands Park	_____	
Saturday <input type="checkbox"/> Lori Wilson Park	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Enchanted Forest Nature Trail

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



## Deconstructing a failed stork nesting season at Corkscrew

You may have heard the news. Corkscrew's wood stork colony failed this year. This marks the eighth time since 1958 that this has happened. On seven other occasions the storks didn't attempt to nest at all. Two questions immediately come to mind: What causes colony failure? Is this a trend we should be worried about?

The first question is straightforward. Scientists have known for quite some time the general secret to success for wood stork nesting. There has to be plenty of water during rainy season inundating ample good habitat to support a population explosion of small fish. This must be followed by a drought period (minimum 12 weeks) which causes water levels to drop steadily, thereby concentrating the small fish that make up the prey base for storks. Heavy rain events during nesting spell trouble for the storks, especially if there are already chicks to feed. This is what occurred recently at Corkscrew.

The storks showed up early this year, but waited until early February to nest. Rains in late February and early March hampered their ability to feed their chicks resulting in total abandonment by March 21. "Rain-induced failure is no surprise and no cause for alarm," said Jason Lauritsen, resource management specialist at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. "Storks are relatively long-lived and have easily endured South Florida's inclement weather for thousands of years. What is troubling is this relatively new trend of delayed nesting," he said.

Before 1982 the average nesting start-date for Corkscrew's birds was the second week in December. Since then nesting has been occurring later, averaging a more-than-five-week delay to the third week of January. Late nesters fledge fewer young. Colonies at Corkscrew that initiate nesting on or before December 30 account for nearly 73,000 fledged young. Colonies that begin nesting on or after January first have produced just over 6,000 fledged young. Late-nesting colonies appear to be twice as likely to fail as early-nesting colonies, and produce fewer young.

Colonies that start nesting early can re-nest if the first attempts fail. This second chance is not available to birds that nest later in the cycle. Habitat alteration, specifically loss of wetlands that historically were available for wood stork foraging from early November through December, have been disproportionately drained and developed. Audubon of Florida is concerned about this troubling trend and, from its base at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, is working to identify and protect these shallow, ephemeral wetlands.

For nesting data as far back as 1958, and more about Corkscrew's wildlife, visit [www.audubon.org/local/sanctuary/corkscrew/](http://www.audubon.org/local/sanctuary/corkscrew/).

### AUDUBON BOOKS 40% off through September 30, 2005.

The Nature Store at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary is offering Naturalist readers a 40% discount on selected overstock titles through September 30, while quantities last. Tax and shipping are additional.

TO PURCHASE, CONTACT THE NATURE STORE AT CORKSCREW SWAMP SANCTUARY AT 239-348-9151.

- Kenn Kaufman *Birds of North America* reg. \$22 **now \$13.20**
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Photo of Wood Stork at Corkscrew courtesy of Christina Evans.



Photo courtesy of Christina Evans.

## Coastal Everglades Campaign Confronts Assault on Urban Development Boundary

Audubon of Florida is focused on protecting and restoring the last remnant of Coastal Everglades in Miami-Dade County. Along Card Sound Road leading to the Florida Keys, these unprotected fresh- and saltwater wetlands extend eastward to Biscayne and Florida Bays where roseate spoonbills and wood storks nest and feed. This fragile area is the target of recent attempts to push development beyond Miami-Dade County's urban development boundary (UDB). This county-established line separates urban areas from agricultural lands, well fields that supply drinking water, and the Everglades. Conversion of this natural habitat to development poses an irreversible threat to sustainable habitat for birds and other wildlife, to Biscayne Bay, and to South Florida residents' quality of life.

Audubon of Florida has joined with Tropical Audubon Society and other environmental partners to spearhead the Hold the Line Campaign. Hold the Line is a growing alliance of more than 50 civic, homeowner, agriculture, real estate development, and conservation groups who oppose extending the UDB into agricultural and environmentally sensitive lands.

The campaign recognizes that residents are best served when their tax dollars are used to reinvigorate existing infrastructure and create housing and job opportunities along mass transportation routes, while protecting drinking water supplies and natural ecosystems. Audubon's involvement in the campaign has brought the Coastal Everglades issue to print, television, and radio news programs throughout South Florida.

The first decision to open up the Coastal Everglades to development beyond the UDB was the June 7 Miami-Dade County Commission vote on Florida City's proposal to annex 1,700 acres. The Florida City proposal is no ordinary annexation request, because it raises concerns about restoring South Florida's Everglades, hurricane evacuation, South Dade's economy, and future water supply.

The annexation area may affect two Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) projects: the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands and the C-111 North Spreader Canal.

Both projects are necessary to restore habitat in Biscayne Bay, Florida Bay, and Barnes and Card sounds. Development in this area could result in bottlenecks during hurricane evacuations from south Miami-Dade and the Florida Keys. It is likely to affect the \$3 million South Miami-Dade Watershed Study that is currently examining long-term land use in South Dade, and could exacerbate saltwater intrusion into the drinking water supply. Additionally, the owner of the annexed area is planning a major development of 6,000 homes and 400,000 square feet of retail and office space.

Citizen advocates worked hard to influence the vote in favor of protecting the Coastal Everglades. They sent more than 4,000 letters, emails, and faxes to County Commissioners urging them to oppose annexation and save this critical habitat from development. More than 200 people from across the county went to County Hall wearing blue shirts with big yellow stickers indicating their opposition to the UDB extension.

At its June 7 meeting, the Commission voted 7 to 5 to allow Florida City to annex this environmentally sensitive land. At the urging of Audubon and the Hold the Line Campaign, Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Alvarez upheld his commitment to Biscayne Bay and vetoed the proposed ordinance. However, on June 21 the Commission overrode the mayoral veto by a single vote. Land use decisions, such as where the UDB will be located, remain within the jurisdiction of the County. Independent of the Florida City annexation vote, Audubon's efforts to protect and restore the Coastal Everglades continue. With the help of the South Florida Water Management District, the Biscayne Bay restoration projects have been given priority through Governor Bush's Acceler8 program.

By continuing to focus attention on Miami-Dade County's UDB and the Everglades projects, the full protection and restoration of these last wild places may soon be realized.



## Federal Funding Urgently Needed for Everglades Restoration Lands



Photo of alligator courtesy of Christina Evans.

Since 1993, Florida has spent two-and-a-half times as much as the federal partner for Everglades restoration, according to the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force. The State of Florida, through the Water Management District, has committed to providing more than \$1 billion over a decade for Everglades restoration lands. It has made significant progress in securing key parcels. Last year, the governor committed another \$1.5 billion for early construction of restoration projects. As the 50 percent cost share partner, it is time for a serious infusion of federal dollars for restoration lands under imminent threat of development.

Development pressures in Miami-Dade, Martin, Palm Beach, and Broward counties stand to jeopardize restoration. Project footprints are already being promised and restoration options are being foreclosed. Numerous project sites totaling more than 44,000 acres of habitat and habitat restoration are at immediate risk. **The State of Florida needs federal assistance to protect lands under immediate threat of development.**

### 196,000 ACRES STILL NEEDED FOR EVERGLADES RESTORATION

Fifty percent of all Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) lands, more than 200,000 acres, are already in public ownership. Due to the lack of sufficient funding, however, the State is acquiring only lands needed for structures, to the exclusion of wetlands, natural storage, and other natural areas. **This approach seriously jeopardizes one of CERP's primary objectives: "Increase the total spatial extent of natural areas."**

### TOTAL CERP LAND ACQUISITION

Acquired	Expended	Remaining to be Acquired	Remaining Cost Estimate
~206,000 acres	\$1.07 billion	~196,000 acres	\$1.5 - 2 Billion

### 3440 ACRES OF EVERGLADES RESTORATION LANDS LOST

While significant progress has been made, the pressures of price escalation and development increase daily, resulting in shrinking restoration footprints and lost habitat function. Due to lack of available funding for land, project benefits originally including marshlands and other habitat are being reduced in favor of intensively engineered water storage.

### EVERGLADES RESTORATION LANDS LOST TO DATE

Affected CERP Project	Lost Acres	CERP Intended Use	Lost For:
Acme Basin B	640 acres	STA/Water Storage	Ranchette Housing
Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands	200 acres	Water Quality	Suburban Housing
Indian River Lagoon	1800 acres	Wetland Restoration	Ranchette Housing
Site 1 Impoundment	800 acres	Water Storage	Cost
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3440 acres</b>	<b>no longer available for CERP</b>	

Development pressure threatens to undermine the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP). The majority of early acquisitions have been large single-owner tracts. Remaining lands will present much greater challenges, as most are smaller parcels under scattered ownership.

To keep restoration on track, the State of Florida must acquire 200,000 acres at an estimated cost of \$1.5 to \$2 billion by 2010. Providing additional funding for lands now will reduce the cost of restoration overall and increase habitat benefits to the Everglades by securing natural areas that will otherwise be lost.



## Supporting Chapters is a Priority

Jacqueline Sulek, AOF's full-time Chapter Coordinator since May, enjoys birding, butterflying, gardening, and kayaking. She has captained boats, worked for a naval architect, and led bird watching tours to Latin America. Her expertise with people and natural history come together in the new position. "I am very excited about the opportunity to work with Audubon," she said. "The work is about empowering people and helping them achieve their goals."

A former board member of Broward County Audubon, Sulek knows firsthand how vital Chapter activities are to the overall success of AOF's strategic plan of saving our birds. Her can-do attitude and love of the environment make her an excellent choice to nurture AOF's partnership with Chapters. "Jacqui's energy and expertise reflect our strong commitment to our Chapter members around the state," said David Anderson, AOF's Executive Director.

## Miracles Still Happen

Birders rejoiced last April when scientists announced the first confirmed sightings of an ivory-billed woodpecker in 60 years. The sightings were kept secret for fourteen months while the Nature Conservancy acquired additional land around the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge in Arkansas, where the bird was seen.



The move to enlarge protected habitat of this woodpecker - until then believed to be extinct, and whose range once extended into Florida—emphasizes the urgent need to protect, preserve, and manage important habitat in this state as well.

The strategy is a sound one. Three orchids believed to have been extinct were rediscovered between January and June of this year, according to a Miami Herald article. Biologists found two in Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park near Naples, and one in Everglades National Park.



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