

Apalachee Audubon

The Newsletter Of The Apalachee Audubon Society, Inc.

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April, 2002

President's Column

Spring Has Sprung

The morning chorus of songbirds has reached a high point in our Tallahassee yards. Spring is here and migrating songbirds are returning to take up house-keeping. This is the season of the most intense activity for birders.

For April, Marvin Collins, our fieldtrip leader, has planned several excellent outings to some of our favorite bird watching sites. And Jim Shelton, our Bird Festival Coordinator, has worked with folks from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, Wakulla Springs State Park, St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge and other area organizations on the Welcome Back Song Birds Festival at Wakulla Springs State Park on April 27th. (See Insert)

Finally, your chapter's 2002 BIRDATHON will be during the week of April 20th - 27th. See the following article.

Come join the fun. Join us at one or more of these Audubon events this spring.

Larry

The World's Most Competitive Birding Event

Audubon chapters, corporations, and individuals participate in Birdathons through the United States during April and May to coincide with the peak migration periods in their regions. From dawn until late in the evening, they tally every bird species they observe to raise money for their favorite conservation causes. Since most groups expect to find between 100 and 200 species, they raise thousands of dollars for local conservation projects from the pledge per species they have obtained from their supporters.

Funds raised by the Apalachee Audubon Society will be used to support our local Audubon Adventures Classrooms and other environmental education projects. Birdathon proceeds also support our efforts to protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats. If you are interested in participating in the Birdathon as a counter on one of our teams or if you would like to pledge your support, please

contact any one of the board members, chapter officers (see list inside) or Larry Thompson at 681-2591 or by e-mail at lthompson@earthlink.org.



Program Highlight Tuesday, April 28

Andy Smith of The Apalachicola Bay & River Keepers joins us to discuss the protection and stewardship of the River and Bay. The goal is to protect the river's tributaries and watershed in order to improve and maintain its environmental integrity and to preserve its natural, scenic, recreational, and commercial fishing character.

The Apalachicola River and Bay system is an ecological keystone to the Florida Panhandle. Learn more about the challenges to this major system and the efforts to protect it! It deserves our attention.

Programs begin with an informal social at 7:00 p.m., followed by the program at 7:30.

Birdwalk – Apalachee Audubon’s Monthly Stroll Through Area “Hot Spots”

Report on our March 16th visit to the St. Marks Wildlife Refuge

A group of 12 avid and beginning birders spent the morning touring the St. Marks Wildlife Refuge "hotspots" from the visitors center to the bay. Highlights included an American Bittern and a pair of Great Horned Owl chicks in the old Bald Eagles nest at Headquarters Pond. We also had good looks at Yellow-throated Warblers, Northern Parulas, Common Yellowthroats, and, of course, the ubiquitous Yellow-rumped Warblers as well as a good cross-section of the other common to not-so-common birds of the season.

Our next bird walk will be on Saturday, May 4. I am planning an all day excursion that will probably run from Tallahassee to Apalachicola and coastal areas in between. May 4th is near the end of the heavy migratory season and I hope we can see some good birds including, with luck, some interesting warblers, tanagers, bobolinks, and shorebirds in breeding plumage. Since this itinerary is more complex, please call Marvin Collins at 224-9549 a week or so ahead to confirm the schedule and meeting places.

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Mission Statement
Protection of the environment
through education, appreciation
and conservation

Join National Audubon

Make a difference by joining the National Audubon Society and the Apalachee Chapter. Every new member strengthens the organization and helps make our voice heard on behalf of wildlife and the environment.

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Members receive six bi-monthly issues of the award-winning Audubon magazine, eight issues per year of the Apalachee newsletter, free membership in the local Audubon Chapter, opportunities to visit most sanctuaries and nature centers, invitations to study with Audubon experts at ecology camps and workshops, and eligibility to participate in wide-ranging Audubon travel. Local Chapter: Apalachee Audubon, **E19 7XCH**

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A Poetic Moment with Gail Menk

"Song of the Brown Thrasher: A Fantasy"

As I continue to dabble with poetry based on bird songs, I am submitting the following as of possible interest to some birders at large, especially those who have expressed a concern about the apparent dearth of the Brown Thrasher in parts of Florida during December/January.

On 28 Feb. at 0700 Hours I walked the path at Robert White Williams Nature Trail (Black Swamp II) and soon recorded five singing Brown Thrashers after a night-before cold front and resultant record-breaking morning temperature of 18 degrees replete with stark clear sky and piercing sunrays, also bone-chilled extremities on my part, all of which makes for a birding scenario I shall long remember.

I have with time concluded that when I do not readily see a Brown Thrasher my best recourse is to scrutinize vine-entwined fence rows looking for the species, where there also may be Towhees and White-throated Sparrows, all three of which I find to be not always viewable during winter, but always a likely trilogy in said habitat (i.e., at Lake Jackson's Faulk Drive Landing on January 4). My three tallies of Brown Thrashers

taken approximately at five day intervals during 11-25 FEB were 1-1-9, and the latter "sudden" increase of eight individuals was via "sudden" hearings of their songs.

The song itself, Sibley says, is "...of rich, musical phrases, each repeated two or three times with pause between each set; no other species has such closely paired rhythm..." Did those Georgia school children have such singing in mind when they elected the Brown Thrasher the state bird? If so, I find it even more fitting that such wiser youngsters should exercise such democracy rather than us "wisened" adults. And speaking anthropomorphically, my repeated readings of a poem by Henry van Dyke, "Song of the Brown Thrasher", have suggested to me sentiments I would have probably never before entertained. Note not only the "paired rhythms", but also the anthropomorphically inherent blessings-counting:

Luck, luck
What luck?
Good enough for me.
I'm alive, you see.
Sun shining, no repining;
Never borrow, idle sorrow.
Drop it, cover it up.
Hold your cup.
Joy will fill it.
Don't spill it.
Steady, be ready.
Love you, luck.

Monthly Meetings, field trips, conservation activities and bird walks

Audubon Calendar

Monthly meetings are free and open to the public. They are held at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Tallahassee, 2810 North Meridian Road. The evenings begin with an informal social at 7:00 p.m., followed by the program at 7:30. Unless otherwise stated, field trips will depart from the First Union Bank at 3400 S. Monroe Street (opposite the Fairgrounds). Note the time of departure for each trip. For more info check out our web site at <http://www.apalachee.org/calendar.html>.

Tuesday, April 23 - Membership Meeting. Andy Smith - Apalachicola Bay & River Keepers, Inc.

Sunday – Saturday, April 20 – 27 – Apalachee Audubon’s annual Birdathon.

Friday - Sunday, April 26 - 28 - Welcome Back Songbirds and the Wakulla Wildlife Festival. Wakulla Springs State Park. See insert for details.

Saturday, May 4 - Bird Walk. Coastal Panhandle - an all day affair. Call Marvin Collins at 224-9549 for details.

Tuesday, May 21 - Membership Meeting. Gil Nelson - Natural Gardens of the Big Bend: An Introduction to the Plant Communities of the Florida Panhandle. Note change from 4th to 3rd Tuesday due to Memorial Day holiday.

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