

Apalachee Audubon

The Newsletter Of The Apalachee Audubon Society, Inc.

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President's Column

A New Meeting Place and Night for Apalachee Audubon

We have found a fantastic new location for our monthly membership programs due to the generosity of the Fringe Benefits Management Company. Now that we have arranged for this modern, comfortable location, you have to find it. Fortunately, it is very easy to find and, as an added inducement, the next program on Thursday, February 27th is on Hummingbirds and is a great one to inaugurate the location. Winter hummingbirds generate great excitement around my house. When one is spotted we spend a lot of time at the window hoping to get a look at this bundle of energy! Several species of hummingbirds spend the winter in our area. During this year's Tallahassee Christmas Bird Count, Rufous and Ruby-throated hummingbirds were recorded in several yards and during the week of January 10th, a Calliope and many Ruby-throated hummingbirds were identified. Read about our program and speaker below.

We also changed our regular meeting night to the fourth Thursday of the month because of the availability of the facility. So, how do you get there? The Fringe Benefits Management Company building is

at 3101 Sessions Road. If traveling out of Tallahassee, turn **left** off of North Monroe onto Sessions Road. This is at the second stoplight beyond the I-10 intersection and is directly across from the Sam's Club entrance. Follow Sessions Road down the curving road about a half-mile to where it ends in the Fringe Benefits Management Company parking lot. There will be someone at the front entrance of the building to direct you to the meeting room. I hope to see you there. Let's have a great beginning for our great new location.

Larry Thompson, President

Tallahassee Christmas Bird Count

The Tallahassee Christmas Bird Count was held January 1st. The complete report of the count is not yet complete but one surprise was the large numbers of Baltimore Orioles that were seen this year. More later. These counts are a significant contribution by citizen scientists to bird census data collected over the past hundred years. A successful count requires a lot of organizing, expert team leaders, and high-spirited participants. Special thanks to Rick West and Larry Thompson for coordinating the count and to team leaders Grayal Farr, Todd Engstrom, Wilson Baker, Dr. Fran James, Ed Woodruff, Jim and Ellen Shelton, Rob

Lengacher, and Dean and Sally Jue. Also, thanks to all those hardy birders who got up before daylight on New Year's Day to make the count a success.

Program Highlight Thursday, February 27

The Hummers are Coming!! Fred Bassett presents "Winter Hummingbirds of North Florida." The 4th edition of Peterson's *Eastern Birds* includes two species of hummingbirds: the Ruby-throated and the Rufous, the latter being a "rare but regular straggler." The new 5th edition includes 10 species showing the Rufous as almost a common winter bird in North Florida and a number of Black-chins are reported locally every year. Fred Bassett is an expert on hummingbirds in the southeast and travels through the area banding and identifying them at feeders. In mid-January of this year he banded sixteen hummingbirds in Tallahassee in one day! This will be a fascinating look at the migratory patterns and habits of these tiny creatures.

Note the new location and different evening for this and future programs. Programs begin with an informal social at 7:00 p.m., followed by the program at 7:30.

Call for Volunteers

Nuisance Wetlands - How the Feds Wrote Off Northwest Florida's Wetlands

Eric Draper – Conservation Chair

Late in the afternoon on a beautiful winter day, I rode my bike along the city power line that runs from Maclay to Timberlane Road. As city property goes, this area is ugly with nearly a mile-long and hundred-yard wide swath of bare and eroded hardpan. The line ends at a substation tucked between expensive homes and the sprawl around Wal-Mart. The most interesting features are deep stormwater craters that look like they were made by B-52s. The route is a favorite for mountain bikers as it links Overstreet Park to a challenging bit of trail near Timberlane.

I decided to explore the mature forest east of the substation, and not seeing any trespassing postings, I worked my way into the woods. The slanting winter sun revealed a treasure I could have never guessed existed so close to the clutter of the nearby commercial strip. A surprisingly large hardwood swamp occupied the upland where no wetland should be. And this watery gem was alive with birds.

The roller coaster flight of a Pileated Woodpecker caught my attention. Then warblers, kinglets and chickadees gave the woods life. Standing there in the cold afternoon's golden glow, I guessed that this was the spot of recent controversy - where the City Commission, led by the recently appointed Alan Katz - had approved, then denied an ill-considered proposal for an apartment complex. Somehow I remembered wetlands being part of the nuisance that kept the developer from cashing in.

As I rode out of the woods, I was saddened to think that short of public acquisition, there was little that could be done to save this little piece of nature. Even if the owners don't get permission for apartments, the swamp is so close to Thomasville Road and I-10, it is condemned by its location. A hundred truckloads of sand and "Presto, Uplands!"

Ironically, the very birds I saw were once thought to give special protection to isolated swamps. Until a few years ago the federal Clean Water Act and Migratory Bird Treaty gave a special double protection to wetlands that were not directly linked to rivers and streams, but provided habitat for birds. Then Chicago needed a new dump and sued to get permission to use a former quarry that had collected water and become an important bird area. The birds lost to trash and a federal court told the government that they could no longer protect isolated wetlands for birds. The Clinton Administration fought the decision and retained federal protection.

Last week the Bush Administration folded under pressure from developers and announced that it is now up to state and local governments to

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Mission
Protection

Statement
of the environment through education, appreciation and conservation.

protect isolated wetlands. That brings us back to Tallahassee and Leon County where we have minimalist rules. It sometimes appears that all you have to do to get permission to build in a wetland is to give the development a wet sounding name like *Heron Roost*, *Frog Pond* or *Cypress Place*. As though the name magically retains the wetland values.

The rest of Florida has stronger rules, but that is because they have functional water management districts supported by property taxes. When Florida's Constitution was amended to create regional agencies to protect water resources, Northwest Florida was short-changed. Our district has, per capita, 1/20th of the budget of the other four regions. The result is that the Northwest Florida Water Management District does not bother with wetlands protection.

What does that mean for Tallahassee's isolated wetlands? They are for now up for grabs. The loss of wildlife and the extra stormwater will be dismissed by those for whom wetlands protection is a nuisance they would as soon avoid.

We would like you to volunteer some of your time and energy to your chapter's programs and projects by becoming a member of one of our standing committees. Call or email the chair of the committee that interests you. You shouldn't be concerned about lack of experience – we are all learning on the job and you can learn with us or, more likely, teach us something. And it's fun!

MEMBERSHIP AND HOSPITALITY REPORT

By Karen Wensing – Membership Chair

Address Changes

I need your help. If you have a friend who is a member, lives in a rural area, and has not been receiving Audubon publications, please have them contact me at 386-7766. Postal regulations now require a specific street address for rural areas and we haven't been able to track down everyone who has had their address changed for this reason.

By the way, if you need to change or correct an address or name at any time, you can contact National Audubon Membership Services by calling 1-800-274-4201 or by email: CHADD@audubon.org.

New Members

The Chapter welcomes the following new members: Lazzaro Aleman, Pattie Coleman, Mr. and Mrs. John Epperson, Anna Marie and Brad Hartman, Mr. and Mrs. Mel Hedick, M. Levi and M. Ricchi and George and Kathy Merritt. John and Ellen Lenaerts recently transferred into the Apalachee Chapter. Welcome all of you and thanks to everyone who recently renewed their membership.

Hospitality

Finally, we are pleased to announce that Elizabeth Platt has agreed to be Hospitality Co-Chair. Thank you, Elizabeth. If there is another friendly person who would enjoy offering this service to our members and guests at our meetings, please contact me. It isn't necessary to attend every meeting. You would share the responsibility and be a 'Co-Chair.' Call President Larry Thompson or me for more information.

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 Fringe Benefits Management Company at 3101 Sessions Road. Most 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 Wachovia Bank at 3400 S. Monroe Street (opposite the Fairgrounds). Note the time of departure in the description for each trip. For more info check out our web site at <http://www.apalachee.org/calendar.html>.

Saturday, February 22 — Bird Walk. Have a preview look at some of the areas to be featured in our soon-to-be-published birding guide to local sites. Meet at the Wachovia Bank (formerly First Union) on South Monroe across from the fairgrounds at 8:00 AM. We'll check out the Alberta Crate (Church's Chicken) storm water pond as well as the Black Swamp Nature Preserve.

Thursday, February 27 — Membership Meeting. Fred Bassett presents "Winter Hummingbirds of North Florida." Note the new location and evening for our programs.

Saturday, March 22 — Bird Walk, time and place TBA. Let's start getting ready for the Birdathon!

Thursday, March 27 — Membership Meeting. Thom Lewis, Wildlife Biologist with the St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge, will present a program on Red Wolf restoration on St. Vincent. Note the new location and evening for our programs.

April - Join us for our Birdathon. Have fun with expert birders while raising money for our important programs. More details will be provided next month. There's gonna be a heap of birdin' this month.

Thursday, April 24 — Membership Meeting TBA.

Thursday, May 22 — Apalachee Audubon Annual Banquet at Wakulla Springs with guest speaker Stuart Strahl, President of Audubon of Florida. Final plans will be announced next month.

Apalachee Audubon Society, Inc.
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