

# Apalachee Audubon

The Newsletter Of The Apalachee Audubon Society, Inc.

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www.apalachee.org

January & February 2004

## Happy New Year!

We hope you survived the holidays in good form. Please note that this newsletter is for two months, January and February, and that the details of the programs for both of these months are below. As you can see, we are starting the new year with two great speakers and we are particularly pleased to have Senator Al Lawson. Let's have a good turnout for these two important programs.

### Program Highlights

#### **Thursday, January 22<sup>rd</sup>**

Eric Draper: Everglades – Beauty and Abundance Restored

The great flocks of wandering wading birds may get a chance to come back if Everglades restoration can be transformed from a promise to a workable plan. The challenges of rerouting water, maintaining and recovering scores of protected species and winning the race against South Florida population growth and development make Everglades restoration an ambition that seems too big even for its advocates.

Eric Draper is conservation director for Audubon of Florida. He directs Audubon's Everglades team and lobbies the Legislature for funds and policies to restore the great ecosystem. His presentation will describe the progress and challenges of achieving Audubon's goal of making abundant birdlife the true measure of restoration.

#### **Thursday, February 26**

Senator Al Lawson: Guarding North Florida's Water for our Future

The Tallahassee area is fortunate to be represented in the Florida Senate by Al Lawson. Unlike many other legislators, Senator Lawson has spent his life near and in our community. His service reflects a deep-felt sense of place. It is that sense of place that led him to author, as then Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, one of the most important pieces of environmental legislation ever crafted—Preservation 2000. That single act raised \$3 billion and resulted in the protection of over 1 ½ million acres of Florida conservation lands. He also authored and passed the Apalachicola Bay Protection Act. He has been a champion of state employees, public school teachers and the working people of rural communities. He has fought hard to win pay raises and benefits for state employees, and has been instrumental in improving the quality of life for children and the elderly. He also played a major role in the Rosewood legislation, providing retribution to survivors of the infamous Rosewood massacre in the 1930's.

Senator Lawson now chairs the Senate Natural Resources Committee and in that capacity has taken a stand for the environment in face of recent water supply controversies. He has made good use of his committee role to reach out to citizens across the state with public hearings that rallied opposition to the recent Council of 100 proposal to allow water to be taken from North Florida to stimulate new development in South Florida. He has now sponsored SJR 488 (a companion bill by Representative Curtis Richardson has been filed in the House) to set a uniform tax rate for water management districts. This will allow the Northwest Florida Water Management District to have a budget up to the task of managing and protecting the Panhandle's valuable water resources.

Please join us for these important presentations.

## Welcome New Members

Karen Wensing – Membership Chair

Apalachee Audubon welcomes the following new members: Barbara Ahringer, Don Axelrad, Ernie Barnett, Kathie Beck, Victoria Brisend, Turner Browne, Shelby Bryant, Kay Christensen, Jamie L. Christoff, Jean C. Crombie, Nancy H. Dennis, Jim/Donna Dunkin, Vernetta Fairley, Pamela E. Flory, Richard Gragg, Elliott D. Healy, G.B. Kadzis, Chris Kelsch, Chelsie Levitan, Glenn Mayne, Maralee Miller, W.W. Mulherin, Mary Lou Rajchel, Irene Rodriguez, Kim Sash, Joseph L. Shea, Kirsten Simonsen, Bridget Warring, Eric/Ellie Westbrook and S.R. Withrow. In addition, we are pleased that Mia Adreani, Glenn E. Bayfield, Kent/Melissa Griffin, Ada Pugh and Henry Woodward have recently transferred into our chapter. Thank you also to those who have recently renewed their memberships.

We hope that you will enjoy the chapter's programs and field trips this year. Check the back of the newsletter for details. Remember that Chapter board meetings are open to the membership. Call or email a board member if you are interested. (Phones and email addresses are listed in this newsletter.)

Please share any ideas you have for chapter activities with any of the officers or board members. The chapter is (always) recruiting volunteers from a wide range of interests and talents. No special training is required. If you would like to attend an association orientation session, please call me.

## Help Scientists Track

## Birds in the Big Bend

The 2004 Great Backyard Bird Count will be conducted from February 13<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup>. This count, organized by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, is a snapshot of where the birds are throughout North America during the coldest period of the winter. Everyone's contribution is valuable whether it is a few birds or many, because it all contributes to the big picture. Last year more than 47,000 checklists were submitted!

So how do you participate? Simply count the birds in your backyard, local park, or any natural area on any of the four count days. Watch your bird feeders, or take a short walk (less than 1 mile) in your neighborhood or park. To avoid recounting the same bird as they make repeated visits to your feeder, for each species you identify, record the highest number of individuals seen at any one time. You should devote at least fifteen minutes on the days you participate but we recommend doing it longer.

Details and background on the count can be found on-line at [www.birdsource.org](http://www.birdsource.org). This is where you enter your results by using the checklist for Florida. It also provides a map-room to see the results across the entire continent. And remember, have fun!

## Officers

**President:** Open

**Vice President:** Eric Draper 222-2473  
[edraper@audubon.org](mailto:edraper@audubon.org)

**Treasurer:** Harvey Goldman 385-5222  
[Goldman@hep.fsu.edu](mailto:Goldman@hep.fsu.edu)

**Secretary:** Jim Crews 577-0051

**Past President:** Larry Thompson  
942-0058 [lvthompson@earthlink.net](mailto:lvthompson@earthlink.net)

## Board Members

Marvin Collins 224-9549

[mcollins@nettally.com](mailto:mcollins@nettally.com)

Sally Jue 386-1393

[dsjue@earthlink.net](mailto:dsjue@earthlink.net)

Bill Lowrie 962-4138

[blowrie@mindspring.com](mailto:blowrie@mindspring.com)

Karen Wensing 386-7766

[kwensing@mailier.fsu.edu](mailto:kwensing@mailier.fsu.edu)

Bonnie Wright 386-3500

[Bwright@electro-net.com](mailto:Bwright@electro-net.com)

## Committee Chairs

**Conservation:** Eric Draper

**Chapter Rep to State Board:** Larry Thompson

**Education:** Ellen Shelton

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**Membership:** Karen Wensing

**Newsletter:** Val Weeks 925-7981

[vweeks@comcast.net](mailto:vweeks@comcast.net)

**Publicity:** Judy Goldman 385-5222

[judygoldman@hep.fsu.edu](mailto:judygoldman@hep.fsu.edu)

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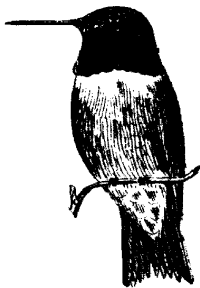
**Webmaster:** Open

**Ex-Officio, Sierra Liaison:** Grayal Farr-385-5732

**St. Marks NWR Liaison:** Robin Will-877-9058

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## High Stakes for North Florida's Water – Time for a New Panhandle Boosterism

Eric Draper – Conservation Chair

The very notion that economic growth in Atlanta and Tampa is more important than North Florida's rivers and springs rubs me the wrong way. There is a certain arrogance that is expressed in the idea that big growth economies are more desirable than those organized around hunting, fishing, boating and birdwatching.

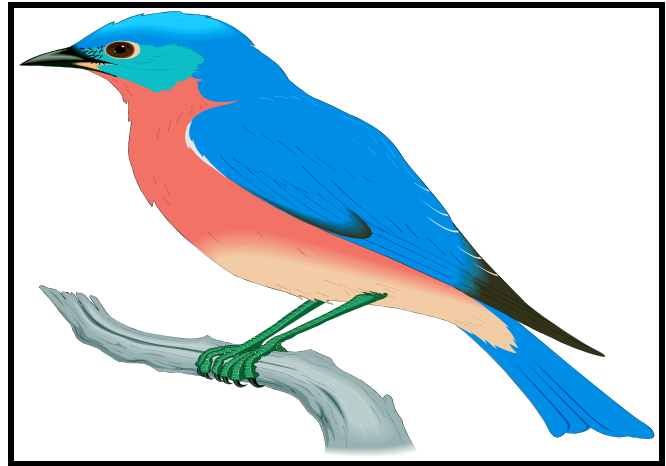
Here is how the logic works. Atlanta is big and growing, and lots of people are making lots of money. North Florida is still mostly rural and, while pretty, doesn't have a lot of get-rich opportunities. Therefore, Atlanta should have first claim on most of the water that eventually drains into the Apalachicola River. Apply the same logic to Tampa and you get a similar conclusion, except with a pipeline to our springs.

One issue that unites residents of North Florida as much as any other is the claim made by our more populous northern and southern neighbors on the water that makes this area so special. That may be because many of us live in North Florida for very specific reasons that have little to do with the economic imperatives of the cities to our north and south.

For me bicycling, birding and boating make Tallahassee nature based recreation ground zero. I can access the solitude of water and woods in almost any direction. Yes, there is a trade-off in reduced opportunity. No Underground Atlanta or theme parks for me. No problem.

North Florida is richer in culture, history and natural history than in investors and philanthropists. We are also richer in water. Thus, the water envy. Many of us want nothing of Atlanta and Tampa. Yet, their boosters want cheap, accessible water that can continue their endless growth. A report by the major developer-led Florida Council of 100 even suggested paying North Florida communities for the water that the Council proposed taking to promote South Florida sprawl. How generous!

The recent water debate reminds me of Killearn developer J.T. Williams' decision to abandon Tallahassee for Atlanta. After turning 8000 acres of swamps and woods into sprawling subdivisions - congesting roads, crowding schools, and polluting lakes in the process - Williams left unsatisfied with Tallahassee's business climate. Some people think Atlanta is a better fit for a company that takes credit on its website for "changing the way people live."



Atlanta-Tampa logic says sprawling, congested growth and the opportunity it provides is the ideal ultimate goal. That type of economy takes a lot of water from nature and gives it back as polluted runoff and sewage effluent. The economic boosters' logic of growth at all cost defies common sense.

Fortunately, Florida's laws guard our springs and rivers from both overuse and from long-distance transfer. The principle "local sources first" has become a rallying cry for North Florida. If you listen to the people making the noise, the reason becomes obvious. They will say that you can't fish in a dry river or drink from an empty spring.

That is Panhandle boosterism. Live here or visit for the natural beauty and outdoors recreation, but leave our water alone.

*You can help protect Florida's water for nature. Visit the Audubon of Florida site [www.audubonofflorida.org](http://www.audubonofflorida.org) and sign up to receive the excellent Florida Conservation Action Network's Advocate reports.*

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*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. Leaving Tallahassee on North Monroe, turn left at the second stoplight beyond I-10 onto Sessions Road, directly across from Sam's Club and drive to the end of the 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, January 17.** Field trip to the Springhill Road Sewage Treatment Plant. Since the parking at the plant is very limited, meet at 8:00 AM at the Wachovia Bank at 3400 S. Monroe to carpool. With a little luck we should have an assortment of ducks and shorebirds and maybe a real rarity.

**Thursday, January 22.** Membership Program. Everglades – Beauty and Abundance Restored. See page one.

**Saturday, February 21.** Field trip to St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Meet at the Refuge Visitor's Center at 8:00 AM.

**Thursday, February 26.** Membership Program with special guest speaker, Senator Al Lawson. See page one.

**Saturday, March 20.** Field trip. Details to be announced.

**Thursday, March 25.** Membership Program. "Freshwater Mussels of the Ochlockonee River". Holly Blalock-Herod of the US Fish and Wildlife Service will present the fascinating and unique life history and ecology of freshwater mussels, their status in the Ochlockonee River, and actions to recover these species.

**Thursday, April 22.** Membership Program. "Troubled Waters" - The Ochlockonee River and its interaction with the lakes of Leon County presented by Dr. Sean McGlynn of the Ochlockonee River Soil and Water Conservation District.

**Thursday, May 27.** Annual Banquet. Details to be announced.

**Apalachee Audubon Society, Inc.**  
P.O. Box 1237  
Tallahassee, FL 32302-1237

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