

Apalachee Audubon

The Newsletter Of The Apalachee Audubon Society, Inc.

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January, 2005

Human Habitat as Bird Habitat

Eric Draper, Chapter President

In early December bird lovers in Manhattan were shocked when workers removed the nest of a Red Tailed Hawk thought to have fledged 23 young over the past decade. According to news reports the building's residents were tired of pigeon parts and bird poop soiling the property.

It is curious how some birds make human habitats their own. We've grown used to falcons, vultures and pigeons in our cities. And Osprey building nests on electric power lines seems common. These are examples of wildlife coexisting with human structures. What happens when a declining species becomes dependent on human habitat? That is occurring now with Least Terns.

Up to eighty percent of Least Terns along the gulf coast nest on gravel roofs. That amazing claim raises some quick questions. Who is counting? What happened to their preferred nesting sites? What happens when those roofs are replaced by newer roof technology?

So, who is making these claims about roof nesting terns? Audubon chapters in Bay County and St. Petersburg have developed volunteer programs to monitor rooftop nests, maintain records and in some cases replace fledgling birds that have fallen onto sidewalks and parking lots. Their stories of working with building owners to secure this habitat and take care of the birds are replete with fun. Imagine Audubon volunteers riding a hydraulic lift to inspect a rooftop and count nests. Imagine one enterprising person inventing a "chickaboom" – a telescoping pole with a basket

on the end that allows a fallen chick to be lifted from the ground and placed back up on the roof.

These citizen scientists and volunteer wardens in our sister Audubon chapters tell us that beach nesting birds are running out of beach. While gravel roofs are a temporary alternative for Least Terns, the long-term success of this handsome

little bird depends on natural habitat. Flat tar and gravel roofs are being replaced by newer and better roof technology. As that happens, the terns will have to turn elsewhere. What if there is no place left?

That raises the question of looking at our coastal habitats and making sure that some areas are still available for nests. Or if not available, restored?

Next time you see a Least

Tern swooping near the water, ask these questions? Where did you fledge and where will you nest? The future of the species depends on the answer.



Border sketches by Rosemary Bell

Program Highlight

Wednesday, January 26th

Social: 7:00 PM; Program: 7:30 PM

Saving the Least Tern

Bradley Smith, a fisheries and wildlife biologist with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, will discuss his work to save Least Tern breeding colonies working with volunteers from Bay County Audubon Society.

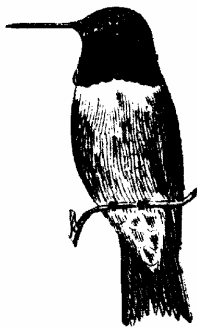
Community Service Day at San Luis Mission Park

Sally Jue, Chapter Vice President

Apalachee Audubon Society continues to work with the City of Tallahassee to protect the natural resources at San Luis Mission Park, a prime birding location in our community. Over 150 bird species have been documented at this park, which is described in *Great Birding Spots in Wakulla, Leon and Franklin Counties, Florida*, a publication available from the chapter.

The biggest threat to the park's native habitat is the widespread occurrence of invasive exotic plants that are rapidly displacing the native plant species. Julius Rios, a San Luis Ridge resident who works with Volunteer Florida, has arranged for AmeriCorps State Parks to spend the first week of February assisting Park Manager Chuck Goodheart with removal of some of the most problematic invasives. These include Chinese tallow, tung tree, and Japanese privet. The group of volunteers will physically remove the smaller exotic plants and treat the larger ones with herbicide.

In conjunction with AmeriCorps' efforts, Apalachee Audubon is sponsoring a **Community Service Day at San Luis Mission Park** on **Saturday, February 5th**, from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. We will follow up on the work completed by AmeriCorps volunteers with additional invasive exotic plant removal (using muscles, clippers, and shovels) and general trash cleanup around the lake and along the nature trails. There will also be opportunities to learn about the park's plants (both native and exotic) and diverse birds through guided walks. Please join us at 9:00 AM at the park entrance on San Luis Road, at the bottom of the hill (San Luis Road connects to Tharpe Street just west of Ocala Road). For more information, call or e-mail Sally Jue (386-1393 evenings; dsjue@earthlink.net). Watch for additional information in the *Tallahassee Democrat* and on the chapter's website –



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Mission
Protection
environment



Statement
of the envi-
through edu-
cation, appreciation and conserva-
tion.

8th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count

By Fran C. Rutkovsky

This year's Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), a Citizen Science project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, will be on February 18-21. This year's theme is "North America's Great Backyard," chosen as a way to celebrate the beauty of birds found across the continent. Your data will help Cornell and Audubon learn more about bird ranges, populations, migration pathways and habitat requirements. Everyone is invited to count birds at birdfeeders, in yards, local parks, or other outdoor locations and report their findings online through the BirdSource website at www.birdsource.org/gbbc. Last year over 42,500 checklists reported 554 species and over 4.3 million individual birds!

It's easy to participate. You can count alone or as part of a group. You can count on only one or on each of the four days of the event. You can count for as little as 15 minutes or a full day. You simply make a separate list for each day and location and report your findings on the BirdSource website. If you do not have access to a computer, find a friend with one or go to the library (or get one for Christmas!).

For each species, track the highest number of a species you see at one time during the day. For instance, if you observe one chickadee in the morning and two in the evening at the same location, count them as two. When you input the zip code location, make sure it is the zip code for the count location. All of the instructions for reporting your tallies are at www.birdsource.org/gbbc. (Visit the site now to see last year's results.)

On the first morning of the count, when people start submitting their tallies, the map on the website will be updated periodically to reflect the entered data. You can watch the map grow; you can go to any particular state and watch the tallies come in; you can read what birds are being reported for each location all over the US and Canada. It's a lot of fun, so do join in and help our area become one of the Top Ten count areas for the state of Florida.

AUDUBON OF FLORIDA & ITS CHAPTERS ANNOUNCE AUDUBON ACADEMY 2005

(Apalachee Audubon needs skilled volunteers. This is a great opportunity to get those skills.)

Audubon chapter leaders and other volunteers are very generous with their precious time. The experience of being a volunteer in an Audubon Chapter should reward you by giving you the opportunity to accomplish something personally fulfilling while contributing to meaningful conservation goals. Chapters that are well organized and effectively led are much more likely to provide that experience. This is the underlying rationale for the Academy.

WHEN: March 18 – 20, 2005

WHERE: Eckerd College in St. Petersburg

PROGRAM: A selection of 11 participatory workshops on all aspects of chapter leadership plus great field trips and social events

WHO: Participation is open to Florida chapter officers and directors, committee chairs, other volunteers and future leaders

COST: \$25 plus travel and accommodations.

Complete details about the academy are on www.audubonofflorida.org. Contact Bill Lowrie (flaudubon@earthlink.net or 962-4138) if you have questions or would like a copy of the registration materials. If you want accommodations on the Eckerd campus or at economical motels **you must act quickly** as March is a busy season in St. Pete. There are camping facilities at a nearby county park as well.



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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 United Church at 1834 Mahan Drive. Most evenings begin with an informal social at 7:00 p.m. followed by announcements and the program at 7:30. Unless otherwise stated, field trips 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 www.apalachee.org

Saturday, January 15. Bird Walk. Meet at 8:00 AM at the Wachovia Bank for a casual morning bird-walk in the Tallahassee area.

Wednesday, January 26. Membership program. See page one for description.

Saturday, February 5. Community Service Day at San Luis Mission Park. See description inside.

Saturday, February 12. Fieldtrip. (Date change) Bradley Smith will show us important bird areas around St. Joseph State Park. This is one of his favorite areas and we should see good birds and other wildlife and match them to their habitat. To carpool, meet at the Wachovia Bank on North Monroe (across from Fairgrounds) at 7:30 AM or the St. Joseph State Park entrance on Cape San Blas at 9:30 AM EST.

Friday – Monday, February 18 - 21. Great Backyard Birdcount. See description inside.

Wednesday, February 23. Membership program. Pat Casselberry, former President of Citrus County Audubon, will describe efforts to protect Florida's growing flock of migratory and resident Whooping Cranes.

Saturday & Sunday, February 26 – 27. Field Trip. Payne's Prairie. Leaving early Saturday, returning Sunday night. Hiking and birdwatching. Camping or local motel. Details TBA.

Friday – Sunday, March 18 – 20. Audubon Academy 2005. See description inside.

Wednesday, March 23. Membership program. Jim Cox will discuss the current research findings at Tall Timbers on Bachman's Sparrow and the Brown-headed Nuthatch.

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