

# Apalachee Audubon

The Newsletter of the Apalachee Audubon Society, Inc.

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January, 2008

## January Program Meeting: Audubon of Florida's Roseate Spoonbill Banding & Resighting Project

Rob Heath, Audubon Spoonbill Technician and current President of Tampa Audubon, will share information with our chapter about Roseate Spoonbill behavior, biology, and conservation. The purpose of Audubon's Banding & Resighting Project is to explore the natural history of this unique species, and compare breeding populations from Miami's Florida Bay and Tampa Bay. Researchers hope to use project results to help guide restoration of the Everglades ecosystem, with the spoonbill being one of a handful of "indicator species", extremely sensitive to seasonal water level cycles. Rob will describe details of this project and outline some preliminary results. Join us for this fascinating presentation.

**Informal social begins at 7PM, January 23rd, Wednesday, at the United Church  
in Tallahassee, 1834 Mahan Dr. Program follows from 7:30 – 9.**

## January 12th, Saturday: Field Trip Tall Timbers Research Station (TTRS) Bird Banding with Jim Cox

Jim Cox, Vertebrate Ecologist at TTRS, promises that we can expect to see 2–4 species like we've *never* seen them before (i.e. **in the hand!**)! Nets will be set up at 7AM and run until approximately 10:30 AM. Learn more about bird banding & the long term study of winter birds in our region. Banding has helped scientists learn about migration, survival, and behavior among birds.

**Meet at:** Carpool at Books-A-Million on Thomasville Rd. or come directly to TTRS. Come any time from 7–10:30. (contact Melissa Forehand if you wish to carpool). Banding conducted at the Henry Stevenson Bird Trail, located in front of the Beadel House at TTRS. (TTRS is 13 miles north on Thomasville Rd. past the I10 interchange & left on County Rd. 12).

**Expect to be done by:** approximately 10:30 AM

**Level of difficulty:** very light

**Be sure to bring:** binoculars, water, insect repellent

**Cost:** Free, but donations for the bird trail & mist nets are always appreciated

**Further information, contact:** Melissa Forehand, [birdingtreefrog@gmail.com](mailto:birdingtreefrog@gmail.com) about carpooling or Jim Cox, [jim@ttrs.org](mailto:jim@ttrs.org)

## January 26, Saturday: Workshop Birdhouse Building With Fred Dietrich

Learn how to attract more birds to your backyard! Fred Dietrich will assist you in building at least one birdhouse. The workshop will be held at 1309 Piedmont Drive. Adults and children are welcome. So that adequate supplies will be available, please RSVP to [fdietrich@gmail.com](mailto:fdietrich@gmail.com) by Monday, January 21st. You can see some of Fred's masterpieces at <http://www.pbase.com/fdietrich/image/42084275>. Many thanks to Fred for sharing his expertise!

**Meet at:** 10 AM, 1309 Piedmont Drive

**Expect to be done by:** Noon

**Cost:** A \$5 donation to defray costs is appreciated.

**Level of difficulty:** Fred will make it *EASY!* Don't be shy.

**Be sure to bring:** Your enthusiasm & interest!

**Please RSVP or receive further information, from:**  
Fred Dietrich, [fdietrich@gmail.com](mailto:fdietrich@gmail.com)

## January 19, Saturday: Field Trip St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Birding with Jim Cavanagh

Enjoy outstanding St. Marks NWR winter birding with volunteer Jim Cavanagh. First, we will visit ponds and the lighthouse area including the dike marsh. Expect to see shorebirds, ducks, sparrows, and raptors. For those who wish we'll then move on to walk an 4 additional miles around Stoney Bayou 2. Jim says a Vermillion Flycatcher usually appears soon after starting this portion of the walk! Participants may depart the group at any point.

**Meet at:** Wachovia Bank on S. Monroe St. at 7:30 AM to carpool. Or meet about 8 AM at NWR between Stoney Bayou 1 and East River Pool.

**Expect to be done by:** 11 AM or 1 PM for extended walk

**Cost:** \$5 per vehicle. No extra cost for passengers.

**Level of difficulty:** Easy until 11 AM. Moderate last 2 hrs

**Be sure to bring:** Binocs, field guide, insect repellent, water, comfortable walking shoes, light lunch if desired.

**Further information, contact:** Melissa Forehand, [birdingtreefrog@gmail.com](mailto:birdingtreefrog@gmail.com) about carpooling or Jim Cavanagh, [jim.cavanagh@med.fsu.edu](mailto:jim.cavanagh@med.fsu.edu), 850-562-1533

## FEBRUARY Preview: First Apalachee Audubon Yard Tour/Fundraiser & Great Backyard Bird Count

Our first Yard Tour/Fundraiser to benefit Apalachee Audubon takes place on February 23, so please mark your calendar now. We have 6 yards that will be open to ticket-holders that day. You will not see formal gardens nor highly manicured lawns. You will see wildlife-friendly habitat, especially for birds. Maybe you'll also get to see some of the hummingbirds and other species (Western Tanager, Baltimore Oriole, Pine Siskin) that call Tallahassee home in winter. Tickets will be sold through Native Nurseries and Wild Birds Unlimited.

The 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count will take place February 15-18, 2008. Despite the title of "Backyard", the counts can take place anywhere that weekend--parks, fields, yards, coasts, refuges, etc. This "winter snapshot" of birds is a joint project of Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon. Read all about "Count for Fun, Count for the Future!" at: <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>

## President's Letter

Dear Audubon members and friends,

As we begin a new year with Apalachee Audubon, I wish for each of you good health, happiness, and time to go birding! As we face the new year, still unsatisfied that our national leaders are not making energy and the environment top priorities, we at the local level can nonetheless celebrate the new year by being leaders ourselves. One way is to personally respond to state and national initiatives made known through our activist networks. Another is to participate in the many AAS upcoming activities, each of which is planned to illustrate how to do our part to save the planet, one bird at a time!

The first activity of the year will be bird banding with Jim Cox at Tall Timbers. Holding a tiny bird in our hands is one of the most effective ways to experience both the wonder and fragility of nature. Our January program will feature Rob Heath, an expert on the Roseate Spoonbill, who will describe his research program and suggest ways you can help with that research.

In late January Fred Dietrich hosts us for birdhouse building at his home, a precursor to its companion activity in late February, AAS's first Backyard Wildlife Tour. The tour will help us not only learn more about attracting birds to our own yards, but also raise much-needed funds for AAS educational and outreach goals. And the Cornell University-sponsored Great Backyard Birding Count in mid-February can help each of us become bird researchers!

During our February program Richard Gragg, a toxicologist at FAMU, and Charlie Clark, a microbiologist in the Florida Department of Agriculture, will talk about toxics in our environment and how we can avoid using them. And our field trips, with Jim Cavanagh in mid-January, and with Melissa Forehand and Merry Ann Frisby in mid-February, will inspire us to appreciate what a wonderful corner of the world we live in. You are also urged to participate in one of Don Morrow's tours in our very own St. Marks NWR.

**Happy winter birding – and conserving!**  
**Elizabeth Platt, AAS President**

## AUCTION UPDATE & ReGIFTING OPPORTUNITY

We sincerely apologize to anyone who may have arrived between 4–5 PM on Dec. 9th to participate in the Silent Auction at World Traffic Books. The auction closed at 4 PM, not at 5 PM. We weren't able to reach everyone with the correct 4 PM closing time after a mistake in some of our publicity was discovered. We regret any inconvenience this may have caused.

We are rescheduling a Silent Auction to take place at our monthly Program meeting on February 23rd. If you would like to "regift" a holiday present or donate any new or lightly used items to benefit Apalachee Audubon, please contact Melissa Forehand at [birdingtreefrog@gmail.com](mailto:birdingtreefrog@gmail.com)

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## Mission Statement

Protection of the environment through education, appreciation, and conservation.

**Franklin County and the Road to Nowhere**  
**Report from Ben Fusaro [fusaro@math.fsu.edu](mailto:fusaro@math.fsu.edu)**

A road-building authority with the formidable title, Northwest Florida Transportation Corridor Authority (NFTCA) held a meeting at the Carrabelle Senior Center on November 13th. Labeled as a "Public Kick-off" meeting, the panel in the front of the room did not include any of the Corridor Authority board members, only engineers and technical staff. The stated goal was to discuss the feasibility of building a road roughly parallel to the coastal highway, US 98, that would run across Tate's Hell State Forest. The motivation for this drastic bit of environmental destruction was to provide safety for hurricane evacuation. There were about 80 people in attendance.

The presentation lasted almost an hour but it was soon clear that this was far from a feasibility study. The panel made clear that this parallel road was their target as the only way to provide safe passage for hurricane evacuees. They then opened the floor – not to commentary – but to questions.

I was fearful that this mostly down-home audience would be taken in by the expert presentation and would tend to also follow the imposed rule of only asking questions. There were about 25 speakers and all except one (whose comments were neutral) spoke against the proposal.

Here are the main points that were raised repeatedly – often with heat -- about this proposed parallel road :

- It was a threat to eagles, black bears and other wildlife that they cherished.
- It would draw traffic from US 98 and undercut an important economic base for the county.
- A second road would lead to less maintenance and eventual degradation of US 98.
- Another E-W road made no sense – hurricane evacuation required roads that go north.
- The motivation for this road was not safety for residents – its goal was development.

As the 20th speaker, most of my items had been covered, and very well. The panel had referred to mitigation to offset the damage to Tate's Hell, so I asked how, as engineers, they planned to construct an ecological source to mitigate the ecological sink of a 50 mph road through wildlife habitat [No answer]. Since no one had presented specifics on Franklin County's unique habitat, I mentioned that the Panhandle in the region of the Apalachicola River had the highest concentration of species in the country – There are over 2000 native plants and 780 native vertebrates. The audience applauded this evident outsider and several of those in the audience shook my hand as I left the speaker's stand.

It was hard not to feel a little sorry for the engineers and others on the panel. They maintained their composure through the endless criticism and challenges. Instead of audience approval, or at least acquiescence for their road through (Tate's) Hell, they caught hell.

More details on NFTCA, the parallel road plan, and forthcoming meetings are at <http://www.nwftca.com/>

### Join AAS!

For \$20 a year you can be a member of both National Audubon & our local chapter. You can join by contacting the National Audubon Society by mail or online. See links at our chapter web site at [www.apalachee.org](http://www.apalachee.org) or by mail to: Member Data Center, PO Box 51001, Boulder, CO 80322-1001. Be sure and specify our chapter ID: E19 on your membership form. This ensures that you will be added to our local mailing list for Apalchee Audubon.

### Field Trip Follow Up

On December 1st, nearly thirty folks turned out for the field trip to Bottoms Road and Mashas Sands in Wakulla County, led by Andy and Julie Wraithmell. Scoping from the end of Bottoms Road, the group was excited by such winter highlights as Common Loons, Bufflehead and Horned Grebes, and then walked the road back to the culvert, enjoying the songs of Marsh Wrens, Kingfishers and Willets along the way. At Mashas Sands County Park, shorebirds and seabirds like Black-bellied Plovers, Dunlin and Royal Terns peppered the flats. Great scope views of a Bald Eagle nest, as well as long lines of migrating White Pelicans and a foraging juvenile Northern Gannet, closed the day out with more than forty species! The enthusiastic group was a great combination of seasoned Apalachee Audubon regulars as well as several newcomers to our chapter and the area.



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### CAN YOU GIVE SOME HOURS IN 2008?

We need several volunteers to staff an AAS display and hand out brochures at 3 forthcoming events:

- Sat., Feb. 2 - Wildlife Heritage Festival at St. Marks
- Sat., April 5 - Wakulla Wildlife Festival at St. Marks
- Sat., April 12 - Pinewoods Bird Festival at Pebble Hill Plantation,

If you are willing to help at a display for an hour or more, please call our president, Elizabeth Platt, at 385-9043 or email her at [ejplatt@embarqmail.com](mailto:ejplatt@embarqmail.com).

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Your membership expiration date is shown at top right above your name. For problems with membership, call the National Audubon Society Office at 1-800-274-4201. For problems with mailings, contact Pam Flynn at [pflynn@us.ibm.com](mailto:pflynn@us.ibm.com)

## **AUDUBON CALENDAR**

### **Monthly meetings, field trips, conservation activities, and bird walks**

Monthly programs are free and open to the public. They are held on the fourth Wednesday of each month from September through May, at the United Church of Tallahassee, 1834 Mahan Dr., unless otherwise noted. Most evenings begin with an informal social at 7:00, followed by the program at 7:30. For more info, check out our website at [www.apalachee.org](http://www.apalachee.org).

### **JANUARY**

- 12:** Field trip – Bird banding with Jim Cox at Tall Timbers Research Station
- 12:** Related field trip – St. Marks NWR sponsors winter bird and wildlife tours with birder/biologist Don Morrow. At 9AM and 1 PM. Reservations required. Call 925-6121 for details.
- 18:** Related meeting – Wakulla Springs Basin Working Group, 9AM-3:30PM, Douglas Bldging, 3900 Commonwealth Blvd., Tallahassee. For further information, see web site <http://wakullasprings.org/>
- 19:** Field trip – Birding at St. Marks NWR with Jim Cavanagh
- 23:** Monthly Program – Roseate Spoonbill banding and resighting project by Rob Heath
- 26:** Event – Birdhouse building with Fred Dietrich at 1309 Piedmont Dr.

### **FEBRUARY**

- 9:** Related field trip – St. Marks NWR sponsors final winter bird and wildlife tours with birder/biologist Don Morrow. At 9AM and 1 PM. Reservations required. Call 925-6121 for details.
- 10:** Friends of Wakulla Springs annual mtg. Further info, contact Madeleine Carr at [moreinfoxy@wakullasprings.com](mailto:moreinfoxy@wakullasprings.com)
- 16:** Field trip – Dixie Plantation tour, Monticello, Jefferson County with Merry Ann Frisby and Melissa Forehand. Limited to 10 participants. Contact Melissa for reservations at [birdingtreefrog@gmail.com](mailto:birdingtreefrog@gmail.com) or 850-510-4877.
- 15-18:** 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count sponsored by Cornell Lab of Ornithology & National Audubon
- 23:** Yard tours/Fundraiser event – Wildlife-friendly backyard tours of 6 special Tallahassee yards. Tickets available at Native Nurseries and Wild Birds Unlimited.
- 27:** Monthly Program – Toxics in the home and yard by Richard Gragg & Charlie Clark