



### *President's Message by Randy McCormick*

How many of us have heard someone say, “I’m not sure I could live in Florida year round because I would miss the changing of the seasons.” I know I have heard this and I find it to be an interesting comment. Granted, our seasons display less contrast than some other places, but just because the distinctions are subtler does not mean they don’t exist. To my mind, all of Florida’s seasons are blessedly unique and rich. My appreciation of the seasons increases in direct proportion to the level of intimacy I allow in my relationship with Nature. The closer I am, and the more open I allow myself to be, the more I notice.

If you take some time to immerse yourself in a natural area right now, you will not fail to notice that spring has arrived in all her splendor. The climbing yellow jasmine is covered in lemon yellow flowers and crowded with bees and other insects. The laurel oaks, maples and willows are sending forth tender, brilliant green leaves. Walter’s viburnums are wearing petticoats of delicate white flowers. To see all this happening in spite of our current drought fills me with awe. Nature can be so sensitive and tough at the same time.

Then, of course, there are the birds of spring. Rachael Carson understood the power and influence that birds have over us this time of year. Can you even imagine a spring without dewy mornings filled with birdsong? Around my house right now the windows are flung open at night just to assure us front row seats for the symphony that will begin with the first hint of sunrise. The first to pierce the silence is usually either a

cardinal or a mockingbird. Later there will be a chorus of grackles, blue jays, and yes...starlings. From the top of the pine trees the great crested flycatcher will shout out his “WHEEEP” and from the thickets the white-eyed vireo will sing his scolding five-to seven-note phrase over and over again. In the pasture across the road we hear the meadowlark’s flute, and the primordial bugling of sandhill cranes.

Seasons in Florida? Oh yes, believe me, we have them all. The challenge is to get out into the forests and fields and bear witness to it all. We need to get out from in front of the television, out from behind the steering wheel (or in my case, from behind the desk) and sally forth. Spring is the season of renewal. Loren Eiseley put it so well when he said, “The human brain, so frail, so perishable, so full of inexhaustible dreams and hungers, burns by the power of the leaf.” From the magical mixture of chlorophyll and sunlight comes all biological life. But beyond this simple chemistry, we also need contact with sunlight for our psychological and emotional health.

Take some time... soon... to reconnect yourself to the natural world that sustains you, and of which we are all a part. Treat yourself to some immersion therapy. Get outside and soak yourself in springtime!



# CRYPTIC COLORATION:

## THE UNSEEN WILDLIFE OF FLORIDA

Steve DeCresie, Central Florida Zoological Park

March 15, 2001 7 PM—Social / 7:30 PM—Meeting

Ever wonder what you AREN'T seeing when you are out in the wild...well, now's the time to find out!

There will be a social time with coffee, soft drinks and refreshments beginning at 7:00 PM. The program will start at 7:30 PM. Bring a friend and enjoy an Audubon evening.

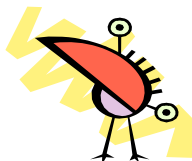
### IT'S SPRING.....

Spring has sprung and migrants have already arrived!

Martins are back in force, Swallow-tailed Kites were reported last week from all across the state, and the first Barn & Rough-winged Swallows are returning. Short-tailed Hawks have returned to their breeding areas in Central FL, and Barn Owls have fledged young in some areas.

Here is a list of early spring arrival dates for selected species on the Gulf Coast of Florida, retrieved from the internet (just a tiny part of the list):

LEAST TERN -- 17 Mar 93 Orlando  
CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW -- 16 Feb 93 Sarasota  
CHIMNEY SWIFT -- 28 Feb 91 Pasco County  
PHILADELPHIA VIREO -- 21 Mar 91  
Fort DeSoto  
BAY-BREASTED WARBLER -- 14 Apr  
80 Terre Verde  
BLACKPOLL WARBLER -- 16 Mar 97  
Polk County  
NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH -- 02 Mar  
96 Gainesville  
SUMMER TANAGER -- 04 Mar 95 Delray Beach & 04 Mar  
97 Pasco Co.  
BLUE GROSBEAK -- 11 Mar 93 Fort DeSoto  
INDIGO BUNTING -- 03 Mar 95 Alligator Point



Keep your eyes open—they are on their way! Jeff Bouton

### CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATURE FESTIVAL

**SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 2001**

**10 AM - 4 PM**

EXPLORE....

LEARN....

ENJOY....

These are the words in the Nature Festival's publications. Please join us as a volunteer or simply join us!

On-site at CHEC are exhibits, displays, live animals, nature crafts, artwork, guest speakers, slide shows, guided walks, children's activities, music and good food!

Off-site events are:

- Morning Kayak Tour 9:30-11:30, Grande Tours
- Charlotte Harbor Cruise 10-noon, Kingfisher Fleet
- Wilderness River Cruise 10-noon, Nav-A-Gator Tours
- Sunset White Pelican Tour 4-sunset, Grande Tours

Peace River Audubon's web-site address is:

<http://clubs.homeearth.com/peacriver->

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# SHARK VALLEY FIELD TRIP

by Jeff Bouton

Some 30 people met in a foggy parking lot at 7:00 AM on February 17 to make the run down to Shark Valley. Randy McCormick was the leader and brains behind the whole event. I offered my assistance as a self-proclaimed "avian savant" to do what I am constantly doing every time I'm within ear shot of an open window.....identifying birds. As we were car pooling, it is difficult to say what percentage of the group saw what percentage of the birds. From the lead car we saw or heard (in some cases) 74 species and at least 3 other could have been! Like any good fisherman, birders often have the "one that got away" (these are also typically the best birds)!

We made our way south through the fog which only started to break as we reached Naples near 8:30 AM. Many Red-shouldered Hawks were perched along the way with wings outstretched trying to dry in the morning sun. Our first surprise came shortly thereafter with the sighting of a female Snail Kite over the canal North of 41 (near the Big Cypress Boardwalk in Fakahatchee Strand). We all met at the office area on Janes Scenic Loop (N of 41 off 29) in Fakahatchee Strand and after restroom breaks and a few birds: Tree Swallow, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Northern Flicker, Brown Thrasher, and Swamp Sparrow (seen by a lucky few) we were off into the strand.

The affects of the record drought were readily apparent and the only water we found was along the trail at gate # 7. Here we had a feeding flock of songbirds in dense brush which included: 4 White-eyed Vireo, a Blue-headed Vireo (formerly Solitary Vireo), a female type Northern Parula, an Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, and numerous Yellow-rumped Warblers. Unfortunately, despite the melee of activity, the dense brush didn't allow for very good views and I think many (myself included) left with frustratingly poor looks. Upon returning to the restrooms, we were treated to a rather cooperative adult light morph Short-tailed Hawk soaring over, it later joined a dark morph adult and the two were in sight together for direct comparison.

A quick run down Turner River Road produced few birds but more views of alligators than one could ever hope for. At lunch we were treated to the full repertoire of American Crow calls and a singing Northern Parula from across the canal. After eating, it was on to Shark Valley for our 1:30 appointment.

We boarded the Tram and made our way around the loop seeing many waders, including Glossy Ibis, Wood Storks, and Yellow-crowned Night-herons among others. We saw many gators of all sizes and ages and were entertained by the tram operator along the whole trip.

Randy spotted the tail end of a rail that we would never identify to species as it disappeared into the marsh grass. On the back side of the loop we saw at least 4 Purple Gallinules among the more common species like Green Herons, Common Moorhens, and Anhingas. Half of the group got out to explore the hammock trail while the other half of us went back across 41 to a well-known spot for Snail Kites. We had excellent views of as many as 11 Snail Kites, some very close and had a handful of Limpkins here as well. A "Florida" Grasshopper Sparrow was an added bonus in the tall grass here. All in all, it was an excellent trip and I had a great time.

## BIRD LIST:

Pied-billed Grebe, Brown Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Anhinga, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Tricolored Heron, Little Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, Cattle Egret, Green Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron (1 immature at lunch stop), Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Least Bittern (heard at Shark Valley), Wood Stork, White Ibis, Glossy Ibis, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Snail Kite, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Short-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Sandhill Crane, Limpkin, unidentified Rail, Purple Gallinule, Common Moorhen, American Coot (along Turner River Road), Killdeer, Lesser Yellowlegs, Ring-billed Gull, Laughing Gull, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Mourning Dove, Common Ground-Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher, Tree Swallow, Carolina Wren, Cedar Waxwing, Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, American Robin, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Loggerhead Shrike, American Cow, Fish Crow, European Starling, White-eyed Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo (formerly Solitary Vireo), Northern Parula, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Palm Warbler, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat, Eastern Towhee, "Florida" Grasshopper Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Boat-tailed Grackle, Common Grackle, and House Sparrow. (3 possibly include the odd Myairchus flycatcher at Janes Loop, a possible Greater Yellowlegs among Lessers at Shark Valley, and a different wren species calling at the Shark Valley tower).



KEEPING CATS INDOORS ISN'T *JUST FOR THE BIRDS!*

*Indoor cats are safer, healthier and live longer than free-roaming cats. Cats who roam kill hundreds of millions of birds and other wildlife in the US each year. Protect cats, birds and other wildlife by keeping cats indoors!*

**2001 Calendar of Events:**

- 3/15 Cryptic Coloration: The Unseen Wildlife of Florida—Steve DeCresie,  
Central Florida Zoological Park
- 3/17 Cecil B Webb Wildlife Management Area—Dillys Randall
- 3/31 Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival—see article!
- 4/7 Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary—Bill & Eleanor Marr **624-4182**
- 4/19 Meeting 7:30 (Refreshments at 7): “Gardening for the Birds”—  
Laurel Schiller, FL Native Plant Nursery
- 4/21 Shell Key Pres & Ft. Desoto Pk—Randy McCormick **863-993-3288**
- 4/5 Mote Marine Aquarium & Selby Gardens—George Marks
- 4/17 Annual Banquet (The end)

**AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (optional) (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Please enroll me as a National Audubon Society and Peace River Audubon Society member. I will receive Audubon and The Florida Naturalist magazines and the White Bird newsletter.

One year - \$20      Two years - \$35

Please send this application with your check to:

The National Audubon Society  
 Membership Data Center  
 P.O. Box 51003  
 Boulder, CO 80323-1003      7XCH      E14

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Please enroll me in the Peace River Audubon Society only. I will receive the White Bird newsletter.

One Year - \$10

Please mail this application with your check to our local address.