

# White Bird



November 10, 2001

Volume 25, Issue 4

## **NOVEMBER 15 MEETING - SCRUB-JAYS**

Our November meeting will be held on Thursday, November 15, with social time starting at 7 pm and a 7:30 start for the meeting. Location: Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 2565 Tamiami Trail in Port Charlotte.

"Charlotte County Scrub-Jays and the Habitat Conservation Plan" will be presented by Cathy Olson, who has a Bachelor of Science in Natural Resources Management, U. of Maryland and a Master of Science in wildlife ecology and conservation, U of Florida.

Cathy has conducted research on waterfowl, raptors, rails, quail, bluebirds, raccoons, opossums, etc. in bald cypress swamps, mangroves and freshwater wetlands. She currently works as an environmental specialist for the Charlotte County Natural Resources Planning Section,

## **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT - DECEMBER 15, 2001**

The 2001 Peace River Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count is set for Saturday, December 15, 2001. We will be counting the number of birds and bird species within an area defined by a 15-mile diameter circle the center of which is located at US 41 and Henry Street in Punta Gorda. To facilitate the count, the circle has been divided into ten (10) areas. A team will be assigned to each area. We are now in the process of appointing team captains and assigning team members to each of the ten teams. If you participated in the count last year, your name will already be on the list. Your team captain will be contacting you in late November or early December with details on when and where to meet. You will only need to call in if you want to change your area or cannot participate this year. If you did not participate last year and would like to be a part of our count this year, please contact George Marks at (941) 255-3318 or via email at gemmarks@aol.com.

Obviously, we will need to begin early if we are going to see lots of birds so most teams will begin counting by 7:00 AM. Hopefully, the weather will be better than last year and we will have a delightful day in the field counting and watching our local wild birds. As before, team captains will collect a \$5 fee from each participant which will be forwarded to National Audubon to fund the compilation of the results on a national basis and make the results available in published form. A beginner's birding identification class will be offered again this year—see the next article.



This year, there will not be a dinner after the count. Instead, we will hold a Christmas Social on Thursday, December 20, with desserts and refreshments. The social will be at the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church at 7:00 PM (the location and time of our regular meetings). At the social, the team captains will turn in their tally sheets and we will determine the number of species counted. All count participants and interested members are invited to the social. Please bring a dessert; coffee and soft drinks will be provided.

### **Birding Identification Class--An Introduction to Birding in Florida**

Here is a great opportunity to learn Florida birding basics. Randy McCormick, our chapter president, will share with us basic birding techniques, how to select and use binoculars and field guides and most of all, how to identify our local birds! The course will be held at the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC), 10941 Burnt Store Road, in the Caniff Visitors Center on Saturday, December 8. It will begin at 9:00 AM and end by 12:00 noon. Coffee, juice and donuts will be provided. The course will be free to Audubon members and Friends of CHEC. For all others, there will be a fee of \$15, which will include a one-year membership in the National Audubon Society and a one-year subscription to the Peace River Audubon Society, White Bird Newsletter. (A good deal all by itself.) To register for the course, please contact Bill Coombs at 639-4961 or email him at wecoombs@home.com.

## REFLECTIONS FROM THE 2001 AUDUBON ASSEMBLY

The 2001 Audubon Assembly was held in Orlando on November 1-3. It consisted of field trips, workshops, and events all dealing with the environment. Its importance can be gauged by the quality of the guest speakers: Senator Bob Graham and Governor Jeb Bush. The Assembly is a great way to get a better understanding of the Audubon priorities for the coming year, find out about and meet key Audubon people, and hear from some influential government folks.

We began on Thursday, November 1, with a field trip to Merritt Island with Rich Paul, Audubon Bird Sanctuaries Manager (also our driver)...saw lots of wading and shore birds, raptors, ducks, white pelicans. I forgot to get a species count, but it was high.

On Friday, Joy did two field trips to the Enchanted Forest Nature Sanctuary and Shingle Creek...not many birds were seen. In the meantime, I went to two workshops. The first, "Saving Land: Tools for Public Land Conservation," was presented by Eric Draper, Audubon of Florida (AOF) Director of Policy (read lobbyist), and Bill McQuilken, AOF board member. Some factoids:

1. Seven (7) million acres in Florida are in the public trust.
2. Documentation Stamp tax on real estate purchases helps fund land acquisitions.
3. \$300 Million per year for 10 years is earmarked to buy land.
4. Three major programs: CARL, Save Our Rivers, and Florida Communities Trust. The latter is used to augment funds committed by local communities.
5. Land Trusts protect lands by using conservation easements to restrict future use of the land.
6. The Rural and Family Lands Protection Act compensates farmers for keeping land in farming (as opposed to selling for development). Supported by both Audubon and the Farm Bureau. Needs funding this year by the Legislature.

The second workshop was "Influencing Land Use Decisions" with Steve Seibert, the Florida Secretary of Community Affairs, and Charles Lee, the Director of Advocacy of AOF in a panel format. One of the major messages was that you have to understand your communities' Comprehensive (Long Range) Plans to make sure they are at least trying to do the right thing, and that you have to stay involved to be sure they follow it.

Friday afternoon was a working session to get a list of Conservation Resolutions to be presented the next day. These resolutions were developed by the Regional Conservation Committees. George Marks presented the resolution on developing an Audubon position on Phosphate mining. All Resolutions were accepted (some with minor changes) for the list to be submitted for approval by the Assembly attendees on Saturday.

Late Friday afternoon, Bob Graham spoke; then we went to Disney's Animal Kingdom for a private show and dinner. A Caribbean combo at the dinner was probably surprised when several of us got up to dance (including a conga line) after the meal.

Saturday's workshops started with "Roseate Spoonbills: A Pink Canary in a Coal Mine" presented by Dr. Jerry Lorenz, the Director of Research of the Tavernier Science Center (AOF). He discussed how the spoonbills are a good indicator of the health of Florida Bay, and how the Bay was really messed up by the digging of canals and by the periodic pumping of fresh water. The health of the ecosystem depends on alternate periods of high and low water.

The second workshop covered three Regional Conservation Initiatives. "Indian River Lagoon" was discussed by Joe Carrol and Jens Tripsen covering why the area is in trouble, what is being done and what needs to be done. The second part covered "Phosphate Mining Issues"—Bill Byle of Charlotte County gave the anti-mining side, while Jim Sampson of CF Industries gave the mining side. Bill basically said mining ruins the environment, and Jim said it doesn't. Julie Byrne was the 3<sup>rd</sup> part of this session discussing the "Water Initiative Collaboration," and how to get parties together to solve the water availability problem.

Saturday afternoon was the General Assembly to approve the Conservation Resolutions—all were approved. The message here is that if it makes it through the regional committees, it stands a good chance to be approved at the Assembly.

We went to Sea World Saturday evening for a talk by Governor Jeb Bush, dinner, and a private Shamu show. I expected the pro-environment positions of Bob Graham (on Friday), and was pleased to confirm in my own mind that Jeb Bush is also taking pro-environment stands.

There were many other workshops besides the ones I have described, but I had to choose between them. In summary, the Audubon Assembly was a very worthwhile experience.

### **SPECIAL FALL GIFT OFFER (SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER) . . .**

Give a gift and support your Audubon Chapter! Your Chapter receives \$15 for each gift you give!

An Audubon membership is a wonderful gift for the holidays or any time of the year! Why not share the discovery of Audubon with your friends and family? They will be reminded of your thoughtfulness throughout the year when a new issue of AUDUBON arrives. Use page 3 of this newsletter as an order form and make sure you include your name and address and mail that page to the address on the bottom right of the form. Once Audubon receives your gift orders, gift cards will be sent to announce your gifts. Must be received no later than December 15.

***THERE'S NO BETTER GIFT YOU CAN GIVE***

The Peace River Audubon Society  
 PO Box 510760  
 Punta Gorda, FL 33951-0760

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*White Bird*

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**CALENDAR OF EVENTS:**

- 11/15 Meeting 7:30 (Refreshments at 7)—"Charlotte County Scrub-jays and the Habitat Conservation Plan" with Cathy Olson, Charlotte County Environmental Specialist
- 12/1 Fisheating Creek Field Trip - Leader: Norm Leppan 624-3916
- 12/15 102<sup>nd</sup> Christmas Bird Count -Contact George Marks 225-3318
- 12/20 Christmas Bird Count Tally and Social (Note this change)
- And in 2002:**
- 1/5 The Celery Fields/Sarasota Field Trip - Leader: Dillys Randall 627-4090
- 1/17 Meeting 7:30 (Refreshments at 7)—"Population and Habitat" with Corry Westbrook, National Audubon Society
- 2/2 Caspersen Beach Field Trip- Leader: Charlie Sample, Venice Audubon Society
- 2/21 Meeting 7:30 (Refreshments at 7)—"Oystercatchers" with Nancy Douglass, Nongame Regional Biologist, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- 3/2 Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival
- 3/9 Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary Field Trip - Leaders: Bill & Eleanor Marr 624-4182
- 3/28 Annual Banquet—Celebrate Peace River Audubon's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!
- 4/6 Tippecanoe Scrub Field Trip - Leader: Cathy Olson 613-6753
- 4/18 Meeting 7:30 (Refreshments at 7)—"Warbler Migration" with Lee Snyder, St. Petersburg Audubon Society
- 5/16 Member's Night—Annual meeting, election of officers, and special presentations by our own talented members!

**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 as well as the Peace River White Bird newsletter.

One year - \$20 Two years - \$35

Send this completed application with your check to:  
 The National Audubon Society  
 Membership Data Center  
 P.O. Box 51003 E14  
 Boulder, CO 80323-1003 7XCH

**OR . . .**

Please enroll me for a 1-year White Bird subscription.

Please mail this application with your \$10 check to:  
 The Peace River Audubon Society, PO Box 510760,  
 Punta Gorda, FL 33951-0760.