



March 28, 2003—Volume 26, Issue 9



Peace River Audubon Society

26th Anniversary Banquet & Silent Auction

Thursday, April 24, 2003

Victoria Estates, 24000 Rampart Blvd, Port Charlotte

5:30 pm Cash Bar

7 pm Buffet Dinner

\$17 per person

Clyde Butcher will provide a slide show and book signing of his photographic works of art. He has agreed to donate a portion of his book signing profits to our Audubon chapter.

Throughout the evening, you may place bids on such things as theme park tickets, binoculars and birding field guides. Items will be sold at the end of the evening to the highest bidder and may be paid for by cash or check. Proceeds from the Silent Auction this year will go to support our Youth Environmental Education and Scrub Jay Habitat funds.

An awards ceremony will be held for the Birdathon teams and participants. The Birdathon photo contest will be held throughout the evening and you may vote to choose the winner.

Don't miss this exciting event. Call Peggy Kampert at 235-3160 to make reservations. Seating is limited, so call early. Payment for the dinner will be collected at the door.

Birdathon Photograph Competition - an alternative for those wishing to take part in and contribute to the Birdathon (April 5), but not able to spend the day counting bird species. The rules are simple:

- ⇒ The photograph must be taken on the day of the Birdathon and must have a bird as the subject.
- ⇒ The photograph may be any size, and should not indicate in any way the name of the photographer.
- ⇒ An individual may enter as many photographs as desired, an entry fee of \$5 should accompany each entry. This is considered a donation to the Birdathon.
- ⇒ Entries will be judged by popular vote of those attending the PRAS banquet on April the 24th.
- ⇒ The winners will receive a certificate.

For more information, contact Paul Holmes (941) 833-3337 pgholmes@comcast.net

ARCHBOLD BIOLOGICAL BIRDING TRIP - Norm Lappan and Gene Christensen

On Sunday, March 16, five (5) members of the Peace River Audubon Society met at 7 a.m. at the McDonald's on Peachland. Norm Lappan led Betty Dennison, June Hulde, Gene Christensen and Barb Treadway who drove, to Archbold Biological station near Lake Worth. During the trip we saw 49 species (June kept the tally) including a surprise of 48 white pelicans in a field who obligingly flew over us in formation; many cranes, burrowing owls, an immature black-crown night heron. On the way back to town, swallow tailed kites were spotted..

At the station, we were treated to a film on the Lake Worth Ridge (which was much higher than sea levels long ago) so was a series of islands that were the inland part of our peninsula out of water. The resulting flora and fauna are unique. Scientists from all over the world come to study them.

WHAT A DAY!!!!!!!

If you weren't there on Sat. 3/22/03 for the PRAS Field to the Babcock/Webb Wildlife Management Area in Punta Gorda, you missed a one of a kind outing!! At 6:45AM -- over one and a quarter inches of rain began to fall on South Punta Gorda. By 7:30AM the downpour had slowed to a drizzle and 30 undaunted PRAS members and guests (some from as far away as England) began our Nature excursion into "The Webb." As we slowly moved along in a convoy of 8 vehicles, we were enveloped with the calls and songs from Eastern Towhees, Coots, Moorhens, Boat-tailed Grackles, Mockingbirds and Meadowlarks. A Fox Squirrel darted across the road in front of us and we stopped to see him as he climbed up and then sat in a pine tree. Many of the group had never seen one of these squirrels before.

At the beginning of Oil Well Grade Road, the melodious songs from Bachman Sparrows were heard by two of our "birders extraordinaire" -- Jeff Bouton and Margaret Dunson. With binoculars and scopes almost everyone was able to view the bird in a distant tree and it was a first sighting for many. Thunder, lightning and then a brief shower slowed us down for a short time, but then we ventured on and stopped to walk the Crooked Lake Road, seeing a Common Yellowthroat, Double-crested Cormorants, Great Egrets, Wood Storks, Pine Warblers, Great Blue Heron, White Ibis and a Brown-headed Nuthatch.

At the intersection of Oil Well Grade and Tram Grade Roads we stopped for an "Auditory Experience" from at least ten different bird species! These were very ethereal moments as the only sounds floating through the trees were from the birds. Moving along Tram Grade Road, Jeff and Margaret spotted a group of birds flitting among a grove of trees. We stopped and shortly thereafter a Red-cockaded Woodpecker flew to a tree near us so that all could clearly view it. What a thrill, as the white cheeked, blackcapped, black and white striped elusive little bird became a reality for most of us. We have tried to spot this bird endless number of times here in the area.

In all we observed 43 species of birds, three white-tailed deer, a Fox Squirrel and a few Alligators before our break for a picnic lunch. About 15 group members spent another hour after lunch traveling along the Webb Lake Road where we had a fly-over by a huge Bald Eagle and heard a King Rail as well as seeing numerous groups of "Blue" Bluebirds.

This was a Field Trip to vividly remember as Nature showed us an array of her treasures with something for everyone.

Reported by Trip Leaders Lynn Bates & Tom Zinneman

A Special Thanks...

*to Kirk DeVries and Peggy Kampert
for spearheading the 1st Annual
CHEC 5K Run.*

*There were 143 runners/
walkers; netting a total
of \$1,666.36!*

Great job!



SESSION I - June 29 — July 5, 2003

TITLE: FIELD ORNITHOLOGY

THEME: ECOLOGY BEGINS WITH BIRDS

This field camp experience is intended for beginning and intermediate birders, educators and resource managers and stresses avian identification outdoors. The AVES method of bird identification, as it is called, was developed by Gene Wilhelm, former Vice President of Education, National Audubon Society, over decades of active birding. The concept is simple: remove oneself from the daily routine and responsibility of human endeavors, escape for a time to a milieu conducive to learning and immerse oneself in birding.

SESSION II - July 6 — July 12, 2003

TITLE: EARTH LITERACY

THEME: RESTORING CONNECTIONS: HUMANS WITHIN NATURE

Natural history and the local environment once provided the basic foundation from which the education discipline emerged. Restoring those connections is what environmental education today is about and what makes it so compelling for cross-curricula teaching in an outdoors setting. This weeklong experiential session is intended for science and non-science educators.

PRICING:

Early Bird registration (payment must be received by April 30, 2003) = \$875

Late registration (payment must be received by June 15, 2003) = \$975

Space is limited so early registration is encouraged. For more information or registration forms, contact Audubon Wyoming at 307-235-3485.

PLEASE SEND ANY ADDRESS CORRECTIONS, CHANGES, ETC. TO:

Betty Coombs, Membership Chairperson - 639-4961 or email at: wecoombs@comcast.net

BIRDING AT BABCOCK WEBB.....Austin and I joined the Peace River Audubon group on March 22 for an enjoyable day of birding. We all started at the fee station at 8 am under cloudy skies. There were 8 vehicles in all, and in my haste I left my backpack behind with my family radios so I was second to last with no way to communicate with the group. We made our way into the Webb with windows down listening for the tell tale calls of any of our target species. Just after the cattle guard at the beginning of the drive I pished at a familiar call note and a very cooperative Grasshopper Sparrow sprang up and perched on a thistle 20 feet away. I stopped and managed to show this bird to the one carload behind me. It was now on the barbed wire with a Savannah Sparrow for nice direct comparison.

Moving on we easily caught up with the rest of the group as we all crept along listening for birds. One by one the expected pinewoods birds made themselves known: Eastern Meadowlarks sang, Eastern Towhees chewinked, Pine Warblers trilled, and Common Ground Doves tooted at us from the roadsides. At our first official stop, we heard and then saw our first of many Bachman's Sparrows. There were two singing here (at the intersection of Tucker's and Oilwell Grades). After this I had Bachman's singing at what seemed like every stop (conservatively 25 birds). I have never heard so many at the Webb, and I suspect this may be due in part to the weather keeping the temps cooler, allowing birds to be active later in the day. A little farther up Oilwell Grade (which is now open again—the gates have been removed and the shooting range fixed so people shoot more straight North to keep stray bullets from coming over Oilwell) we stopped at the small deciduous hammock to view another pocket of birds. We had mostly Palm and Pine Warblers, but added our first Bluebirds and Brown-headed Nuthatches of the day before moving on. Austin was as shy and reserved as always and was entertaining any who would listen or sit still long enough for him to catch with stories from one of his Shark or Bug books.

We arrived at the first "RCW" sign near 10 AM, and while we didn't find any Red-cockaded here, I explained what I knew about their biology. I noted some new implanted artificial cavities and spoke about the characteristics of an active cavity including the telling, oozing sap. I also explained that this would be the spot to be at first light or in the evening if you hoped to see one of these birds, but at this hour we'd have to find them out and about. In my experience the best way to accomplish this was to find the large roving flocks of feeding warblers because the gregarious RCW's often join these flocks. So we set off with that in mind and made our way up to Crooked Lake. Here we had to sit out a short shower but when we got out we were treated to stunning views of a Brown-headed Nuthatch among others. There were also more Bachman's and House Wrens singing here. A cooperative male Towhee provided the opportunity to talk about the yellow-eyed Florida race vs. the red-eyed northern birds. We had Downy, and Red-bellied here again but no sign of our main target at Crooked Lake proper we added a number of wading birds to the ever growing list. I was far behind the rest of the group as Austin and I had to (naturally) wade through all of the larger puddles. Austin also made a new discovery here as he noted some baby "Lubbers" had red stripes on their backs while some had yellow stripes. Just great another mystery that Dad has to solve. Any entomologists out there have an answer to why on that one for a very curious four year old?

We stopped once again at the intersections of Oilwell and Tram Grades where another cluster has been of late, but here again we had only banded trees, Bachman's Sparrows, Pine Warblers, a Brown Thrasher with an incredible Bluebird impression, Great Crested Flycatchers, but no RCW's. Further along Austin was able to enjoy an Oak Toad, while the rest of us scanned through a sizeable flock of birds including more nuthatches, Pine & Palm Warblers, Bluebirds, and a fleeting glimpse of a Red-eyed Vireo on the move. I never saw the latter but heard it in full song when we first stopped the vehicle. Also, another Brown Thrasher posed beautifully for all to admire.

Once again we were on the move and we stopped at the second "RCW" sign in hopes of spying the elusive Red-cockaded Woodpecker. There were many skeptics among us this day, folks who had chased the hopes of this promised bird enough times that they were convinced it was another great urban legend. "Sure a white-cheeked woodpecker that nests in gooey-fronted cavities in pine flatwoods, how gullible do you think we are?!?..." Now after 11:00 these same people would sooner believe bigfoot sightings than the silly RCW.

Eagle-eyed Margaret Dunson had been carefully noting a distant feeding flock of birds when she spotted an RCW way out. We all scrambled to see the bird and I was able to get one quick view of it, but it was actively feeding and the flock was on the move. We tried to get closer to the flock but to no avail. After 15 minutes of anxious anticipation, the skeptics were convinced it was another clever hoax and were ready to move on as the waves of passerines began streaming back by us: lots of Pines and Palms, nuthatches, bluebirds, and then woodpeckers. There were two woodpeckers flying from tree to tree, there were two birds but the only one showing itself was a Downy Woodpecker. Then the call, "There it is!" and a Red-cockaded swept out and perched prominently on a dead snag just off the road for all to see. There was celebration throughout, and after all was over. Austin took full credit for all stating the he was the good luck charm.

We spent the next 2 hours assisting a couple who lost their serpentine belt on Airport Grade (AAA to the rescue!) and then made brief stops at the Aqui Esta ponds and Ponce DeLeon park. Aqui Esta was not loaded up yet as it was too early for the evening roost crowd, but it was nice to see the Ruddy Ducks. They were in near full breeding plumage with ruddy backs, prominent white cheek patches, and sleek dark caps. The Burrowing Owls near Ponce DeLeon were absent from their tall grass home on the left side of the road. I was looking so intently for them there that I didn't notice their new burrow until I'd turned around and were driving back out. They have dug a new burrow in the short grass area just across the street. They are much easier to see now, but I'm concerned that their new location is only about 8' from the road and without markers I'm afraid they aren't mower proof here either.

All in all, I recorded 68 species at Webb, and 85 species overall.

Jeff Bouton, Port Charlotte, FL jbouton2@earthlink.net

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

Non-profit organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Punta Gorda, FL 33951
Permit No. 100

APRIL
White Bird



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Min-it Print Shoppe (folding donated)

Here are some events and dates that you may want:

Big 'O' Birding Festival: Lake Okeechobee: www.glsadescountyeo.com
April 11-13
Welcome Back Songbirds Festival: Merrit Island NWR
www.floridaconservation.org/festivals/ April 26
Welcome Back Songbirds Festival: Chinsegut Nature Center, Brooksville
www.floridaconservation.org/festivals/ April 26
Wakulla Birding and Wildlife Festival: Wakulla Springs:
www.floridaconservation.org/festivals/ April 26-27

2003 Audubon Calendar

4/19 Field Trip - Stump Pass State Park, Leader TBA
4/24 Banquet/Silent Auction, Victoria Estates w/Clyde Butcher,
Artist, Photographer - Kathi Radar-Gibson 941-475-0329
Meeting site: Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 2565 Tamiami Trail, Pt Charlotte.

PRAS website: www.audubon.org
Then, link to our Chapter website

Peace River Audubon Society:

President: Cathy Olson.....613-6753
Vice President: Kathi Rader-Gibson..... 474-3065
Secretary: Peggy Kampert..... 235-3160
Treasurer: Larry Linn..... 637-8160

Other Directors: John Aspiolea, Betty Coombs,
Chuck Froman, Joan Froman, Dennis
Hungerford,

Joy Linn, Cyndi Marks, George Marks
Editor: Joy Linn 637-8160 linn59@comcast.net

When you are finished with this Newsletter, please give it to a friend, leave it in a doctor's office or on a table where you work. It could help us grow our Chapter.

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 plus 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:
Peace River Audubon Society, PO Box 510760,
Punta Gorda, FL 33951-0760.

The following information must now appear on all solicitation requests: "The Peace River Audubon Society is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. Our Federal tax ID number is 59-2190872. We do not engage a professional solicitor and 100% of the funds generated by this request will be used to support our Chapter programs. Our registration number with the FDA Division

**WELCOME TO THIS AUDUBON FUNCTION
PLEASE JOIN OUR PEACE RIVER CHAPTER
(AND/OR PLEASE ENCOURAGE A FRIEND TO JOIN)**

Audubon Membership Application

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City, State, Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ Email: _____

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Boulder, CO 80323-1003

OR B....

- Please enroll me as a

One-year White Bird subscriber ONLY for \$10

Then, send the above \$10 application to:

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