

White Bird

December 1, 2003

Volume 27, Issue 6

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2003 PRAS 2003 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The Peace River Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count will be held on Sunday, December 14. This will be our 17th annual Christmas Bird Count. We will be counting the number of birds and species within an area generally defined as 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 twelve areas with a team captain for each area. The boundaries this year will be the same as last year.

Team captains are now contacting participants with details of where and when to meet. A \$5 fee will be collected from each participant at the beginning of the count and will be forwarded to National Audubon Society to fund the compilation of the results on a national basis and make the results available in published form. If you would like to help and have not yet been contacted by a team captain, please call George Marks at 255-3318.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2003 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SOCIAL/MEETING

This year once again, there will NOT be a dinner after the count. Instead, we will hold a Christmas Social with desserts and refreshments. Team captains will turn in their tally sheets and the number of species counted will be shown with a whole new format.

All are welcome. Social time starts at 7 pm with the count beginning at 7:30 at the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 2565 Tamiami Trail, Port Charlotte. Please bring a dessert; coffee and soft drinks will be provided.

THE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT... By Malcolm Simons

The venerable Christmas Bird Count is older than I am! Anything that falls within that category is bound to be pretty old—actually quite a bit older in this case, as it passed its 100th birthday in the year 2000.



It started as something of a lark, when a small group of birders in Brooklyn and Central Park, New York, thought that it would be fun to see how many birds they could count on Christmas Day...instead of the then-popular pastime of seeing how many birds they could shoot in one day! Incidentally, the term "birder" originally applied to someone who hunted birds, rather than to one who merely observed or counted them.

The idea quickly spread to other groups of people interested in birds in Boston and other New England locations, and eventually to many parts of the country. Today it extends to all 50 states, all of the provinces of Canada, many Caribbean and Central American countries, as well as a few countries on the northern fringe of South America.

It was originally regarded by true Ornithologists as a harmless pastime, with little real scientific value, due to a lack of standardized protocols, uncertain reporting methods, and a wide variation of expertise among those taking part. These problems continue to plague it, but are being improved upon every year. Improved binoculars, scopes, tapes and field guides have greatly improved the accuracy of identification. But careful monitoring by leaders and compilers is still necessary in order to avoid wishful thinking in the reports.

But the scientists have gradually come to realize that its greatest strength lies in the fact that it is the longest running continuous census of any form of life on the face of the earth!

Over the long scope of more than a century, the little glitches inherent in such a widespread volunteer effort tend to even out, and we are left with a very valuable base of data. This value was greatly enhanced after the middle of the past century when computerized storage and analysis of data became available.

Today all of the Christmas Bird Count data is available to scientists from all over the world who may be interested in pursuing long-term studies of bird populations and distribution.

NOVEMBER 5 BUNCHE BEACH & FORT MYERS BEACH LAGOON FIELD TRIP

Submitted by Dave Smith

Lynn Bates, Paul Holmes and my guest, Jack Lyons, were the only folks to do this trip on a lovely fall day. Our very astute PRAS birders must have checked out the tide situation in advance and noted the 10:00 AM high tide—a liability when looking for shore and wading birds. However, we still managed to observe forty (40) species and enjoy lunch in a lovely spot at Boditch Point Park on the north end of Estero Island.

NOVEMBER 22 FORT DESOTO FIELD TRIP

Submitted by Tom Zinneman

Seventeen members and guests of the Peace River Audubon Society traveled north to Fort DeSoto Park for a very productive day of

NOVEMBER 22 FORT DESOTO FIELD TRIP (contd)

birding. We had a typical November day in Florida—sunny with the temperature in the upper 70s to low 80s. The Tierra Verde ponds yielded five duck species: Ring-necked Ducks, Blue-winged Teal, Redheads, Northern Shovelers, and Lesser Scaup. Additional birds observed on the ponds included Coots, Moorhens, Great Egrets, Herons (Great Blue, Little Blue, Yellow-crowned and Black-crowned Night), White Ibis, and Pied-billed Grebes. Several Black-hooded Parakeets flew over and landed nearby.

We then proceeded into the Park with stops at the East turn-around, North Beach, North Beach lagoon, the Gulf fishing pier, and the radio tower area. More notable water birds observed included Long-billed Curlews, Marbled Godwits, Short-billed Dowitchers, Dunlins, Killdeer, Kingfisher, Red Knots, Red-breasted Merganser, Oystercatchers, Brown and White Pelicans, Plovers (Black-bellied, Semipalmated, and Wilson), Sandpipers (Least, Spotted, and Western), Black Skimmers, Ruddy Turnstones, Gulls (Herring, Laughing, Ring-billed), Terns (Caspian, Forster's, Royal, Sandwich), and Willets. Land birds observed included Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers, Kestrel, Merlin, Osprey, Monk Parakeets, Eastern Phoebe, Shrike, tree Swallows, and Palm and Prairie Warblers. Overall a very satisfying day with between 70-80 species observed by most persons.

Thanks to Dave Mathewson for leading the trip and providing us with his expertise on identifying some of the species.

DEC 9 - Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary Truck Trip

On Tuesday, December 9, we will travel south to Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary for what should be an exciting day. Our field trip will be divided into two parts, a truck ride through the northern part of the swamp in the morning and a walk around the boardwalk in the afternoon. The truck ride is limited to a maximum of 20 persons (a minimum of 10 is needed). The cost is \$20 per person. Reservations are required, so please contact the trip leader, Tom Zinneman (941) 505-8826, to reserve a seat. The truck ride will be from 9:00 to about noon.

After returning to the parking lot, we will eat lunch. Then, we will walk around the boardwalk. The entrance fee for the boardwalk is \$5 for Audubon members and \$8 for others. If you can't make the truck ride in the morning, come for the afternoon walk, which will start about 12:45. We'll meet in the parking lot of the old K-Mart located on the northwest corner of US41 and Burnt Store Road junction at 7:30 am. Don't forget to bring a bag lunch.

AN EMAIL FROM JEFF BOUTON ON NOV 28:

Our January membership meeting speaker, Jeff Bouton, and his son Austin, do many birding adventures and here's one of his notes:

On the outside shot anyone will be vacationing in old Charlotte County, last night Austin and I made a trek out to see if we could get a picture of any of the hundreds of Hooded Mergansers that wing

into the Aqui Esta roost pond (located behind the small strip mall at the intersection of Aqui Esta and Bal Harbor in south Punta Gorda). For the 3rd year running, we located a female Common Goldeneye mixed in with the hundreds of Hooded Mergs. Surprisingly the bird can be very difficult to pick out amongst the hoards of female Mergs as they typically don't arrive in numbers until the sun is at or below the horizon and a scope is very helpful for a good view. Also mixed in were a handful of Ring-necked, Lesser Scaup, and Mottled Ducks. I was unable to pick out any Ruddy Ducks which typically file into the pond each year as well.

Great Florida Birding Trail

At long last, the Birding Trail is ready to open nominations for its final section, South Florida. Forms will be available on the Birding Trail's Web site after December 1. Anyone can nominate a site—birders, tourism professionals and land managers—and sites can be many things—quick stops of all-day affairs, public parks or private ranches. A series of public meetings will be held in South Florida in January and February to help solicit nominations.

Everglades BirdFest, January 17-19, 2004

A 3-day birding and ecology festival in Everglades National Park, including naturalist guided birdwatching in Main and Shark Valley sections of the park. Included is luxury coach transportation to sites and trails, 2 nights lodging at Flamingo Lodge, 7 meals, full use of park facilities, exhibitors, evening seminars on birdlife, wildlife, habitats, comparative ecology, natural history, and conservation and restoration of the Everglades. Optional boating, canoeing, kayaking, biking, fishing, back-country hiking are available. Contact: Broward County Audubon Society, PO Box 9644, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33310 954-776-5585, <http://birdfest.browardaudubon.org/>

NOV 25 CHEC WADING TRIP by Joan Froman

It was a bright sunny morning Tuesday, Nov. 25, with a light breeze blowing off Charlotte Harbour and a lovely low tide just made for wading in the clear water. Twenty-plus PRAS and friends met at the shelter at Ponce De Leon Historical Park for a morning of wading and scooping with Monica Dorken of CHEC. We were greeted by four gopher tortoises grazing in the grass carefully watched over by a volunteer from the Charlotte Wildlife Center. We then unloaded all the goodies for lunch and settled in for our entrance into the land of the "mudflat" or estuary. Paul Holmes greeted us in the shelter and introduced Monica. We received a lovely pamphlet explaining the life of the estuary and what we might encounter on our wade. After some instruction and a lesson in how to successfully scoop, we headed for the water. As the kids would say, "Awesome." When we all brought our buckets to the large tub Monica was pulling, we had some pretty impressive life forms to look at and enjoy. We found everything has its place in the scheme of things. We brought in algae, grasses, baby shellfish, a variety of adult snails, several types of shrimp and even baby fish. One of the most interesting things was a moon snail making her nesting collar in which her eggs are laid. Monica's high school assistant found it and she stated it was only the second time one had ever been found during this program. It's an A for that young man! One of the cutest fish were the smooth puffer. Even though they are no bigger than the end of your little

finger, they huff and puff themselves up until they look like little kernels of puffed rice floating around in the water. Pipefish, lizard fish, flounder, sea robin as well as several kinds of crabs found their way into our buckets. It's hard to imagine how much life is out in the grass and mud until you've been out wading. We finally said goodbye to all the creatures in the tub and they were all returned to their habitat. We enjoyed a lovely picnic with old friends and new friends and headed home much wiser about life on the Mudflat.

WHAT YOUR BOARD HAS BEEN DOING:

- Reviewed letter to be sent to various non-profit groups seeking funds and support for PRAS Scrub-Jay habitat acquisition.
- A Board vacancy (Cyndi Marks is moving out of the area) will occur in the next month or so, so a replacement individual is being sought.
- Columbus McLeod Memorial update: George Marks discussed the memorial in the Bayshore Park with Laura Kleiss Hoeft. The theme of the park is a historical timeline walkway so placement of the memorial will be critical. Audubon of Florida staff sent \$145 in donations for the memorial.
- Paul Holmes presented a bird book sample that could be done by PRAS, maybe jointly with other chapter(s) or tourist group.
- Paul also discussed a grant received for boat trips up the Peace River to rookery islands—a 3 1/2 hour-round trip at a potential cost of \$5/person—the Board approved a March 1 date.
- Paul prepared an example of how the Christmas Bird Count will be presented showing a picture of each bird, the number seen this year, and a graph to show its count over the past several years (decline vs increase in numbers)—challenge to bird photographers to provide personal photos rather than those out of a bird book.
- The need for a digital projector was discussed for the Bird Count and any potential bird ID classes PRAS might offer.
- Audubon experts are still needed for the website—if interested, members are asked to contact Bill Coombs 639-4961.
- Paul showed a Babcock Webb brochure of trails, etc. Hiking trails do not exist and he recommended PRAS members push for completion of them (not actual work groups, but emails or letters lobbying for it). The Board agreed that any “work groups” should be for Audubon Pennington Park.
- Board approved the purchase of Adobe Writer by Larry Linn so the White Bird can be easily placed on the PRAS website.
- The Annual Banquet/Silent Auction as a dinner was discussed because of the cost—question whether it should be a luncheon to reduce the cost for members and guests. PRAS will keep this year's Annual Banquet on March 16 with the dinner and caterer as listed.
- Dennis Hungerford is the liaison for the photography group.

PRAS Calendar of Events



(Meetings start at 7pm for social time/7:30 meeting at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Port Charlotte)



(FT = Field Trips meet at 7:30 am; “N” meet at McDonald’s in Peachland Mall;

“S” meet in old Kmart parking lot at Burnt Store Road & 41)

- Dec 9 FT to Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary (see page 2)
(Tom Zinneman 941-505-8826) (S)
14 Christmas Bird Count (George Marks 941-255-3318)
18 Christmas Bird Count Social
- Jan 15 General Meeting - Jeff Bouton
“Learning Florida Bird Sounds”
17 FT to Tigertail Beach (Bill/Eleanor Marr 941-624-4182) (S)
21 Between 8 & 9 am, Mini Bird-A-Thon starting at Jones Loop rest area (Originally was on Jan 7)
31 Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival
- Feb 4 FT to Shamrock Park & Venice Rookery
(Bill Havill 941-625-8096) (N)
19 General Meeting - Todd Campbell
“Nile Monitor Lizards in SW Florida”
21 FT to Eagle Lakes/Sugden Park (Marrs 941-624-4182) (S)
- Mar 1 Kingfisher Trip to Peace River Rookeries
8 FT to Fort DeSoto Park (Lynn Bates 941-639-7277) (N)
16 “An Evening with Audubon” (aka Annual Banquet/Silent Auction/Talk: “Florida Scrub-Jays” by Jim Beever) at Maple Leaf Estates; catering by Cap’n and the Cowboy (“The Best All-Around Restaurant” in Charlotte County...consistently for 6 years in a row 1998-2003!!)
20 Birdathon (Cathy Olson 941-613-6753)
- Apr 6 FT: Babcock/Webb WMA (Dillys Randall 941-627-4090)(S)
15 General Meeting - Kathi Rader-Gibson
“For the Love of Butterflies”
17 FT to Emerson Point Park (Tom Zinneman 941-505-8826)
- May 20 Annual Member Meeting—“Stump Pass Birds” Jeff Bouton
22 FT to Lakeland (Tom Zinneman 941-505-8826) (N)



MEMBERS, PLEASE NOTE:

Take a minute and look at the first line of your address label, which shows something like: Exp: 1103. This example would tell you that your membership expires on November 2003...it is the “best” date I have for you...it reflects (a) your Peace River White Bird only membership; or (b) the date National Audubon has for your membership, which includes the White Bird mailings.

PRAS NO LONGER sends reminders for expired memberships; **National Audubon** sends repeated requests. **If the date on your White Bird label is expired, PLEASE renew accordingly—either with Peace River Audubon or National Audubon using the application form on the back of this newsletter.**

Please call Joy Linn at 637-8160 or by email: linn59@comcast.net with any corrections, etc.

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

www.peaceriveraudubon.org

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

November 2003
 White Bird

HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY
 HOLIDAY SEASON!



Printed on Recycled Paper
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**KEYS TO PRAS SUCCESS ... WELCOME TO
 NEW OCT AND NOV MEMBERS:**

<u>OCT:</u>	<u>NOV:</u>
Don Allocco	Roger Blackmore
Robert Carlier	R E Brown
Carol Hutt	Robert Dickson
Tom Johnson	Laura Kleiss Hoeft
Jerry & Linda Waters	Bobbie Hull
	Khamner
	Barbara & Larry Rendell
	Bert Rodgers
	Christiana Scott-Hansen
	Frank Tschirhart
	Jacques Turner

2003-04 OFFICERS:

President	Cathy Olson '05	613-6753
Vice President	Kathi Rader-Gibson '04	
	474-3065	
Secretary	Peggy Kampert '05	235-3160
Treasurer	Larry Linn '05	637-8160
Additional	John Aspiolea '04	575-7788
Directors:	Chuck Froman '04	743-5204
	Joan Froman '04	743-5204
	Paul Holmes '05	833-3337
	Dennis Hungerford '05	627-5405
	Joy Linn '05 (editor)	637-8160

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 of Consumer Services is

2003/2004 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE (Choose A or B below)

**(A) YES, I want to join/renew my membership in
 PEACE RIVER AUDUBON now for \$10!**



If you are concerned with what is happening to Southwest Florida's Environment, please become a member of Peace River Audubon Society and help us protect our area. As individuals we can do very little, together we can do much more. Join us to protect the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the wildlife we love. In short, help us protect the Florida lifestyle. Members receive ten (10) issues of the "White Bird" newsletter with local news articles, local meetings, field trips and bird walks.

Visit our web site: www.peaceriveraudubon.org

Name: _____
 Organization: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: ___ Zip: _____ - ____
 Phone: () _____ E-mail: _____

MAIL \$10 CHECK WITH THIS FORM DIRECTLY to:

PRAS, P O Box 510760, Punta Gorda, FL 33951-0760.

OR, (B): Yes, I want to join National Audubon *...

- ___ \$15 - 1-year Student/Senior Rate (62+) ___ \$1,000 Individual Life
 - ___ \$20 - 1-year Introductory National Audubon Rate ___ \$1,500 Dual Life
 - ___ \$30 - 2-year Special National Audubon Rate
- ___ My check is enclosed. ___ Please bill me.

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 Phone: () _____
 City, State, Zip _____ **E14-7XCH**

Please make checks payable to National Audubon Society and mail to:

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

* A National Audubon member receives 6 bi-monthly issues of "Audubon" magazine/year, and some discounts at Audubon Centers across the USA. As a National Audubon member, you are automatically a member of Peace River