

# White Bird



February 2, 2004

Volume 27, Issue 8

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2004

### Todd Campbell - "Nile Monitor Lizards in SW Florida"

Todd Campbell is an Assistant Professor of Biology at the University of Tampa since August 2003. He is an instructor for Ecology, Environmental Science, Conservation Biology, and Biological Diversity courses. He is performing research on introduced species in Florida, including a high-profile, funded project on carnivorous Nile monitor lizards in Cape Coral.

He was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute for Biological Invasions at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, TN. Todd is the author and photographer of "Exploring Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area," a trail guide for a 125,000-acre National Park Service unit on the Cumberland Plateau in Kentucky and Tennessee. Prior to that, he was a Graduate Teaching Assistant at the University of Tennessee. Among other things, Todd was a Scientist at the DOE Nevada Test Site in Las Vegas, Project Biologist in Orlando and an Environmental Specialist in the Wetlands Resource Management Division in Tallahassee and Orlando.

Everyone is welcome to join us at 7 pm for social time and to view members' photos of birds, flowers and wildlife, followed by a short meeting and our presenter. Meet at the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 2565 Tamiami Trail, Port Charlotte (on 41 just south of Midway.)

### FIELD TRIP REPORT: TIGERTAIL BEACH

On January 17, seventeen people traveled to Marco Island for a field trip primarily to Tigertail Beach. The weather couldn't have been better, although the tide didn't cooperate (high tide). At Tigertail Beach, we birded along the edge of the lagoon. Some of us then waded across for access to the beach, others took the long drier way around, and still others chose to just sit in beach chairs brought along for the occasion.

Birding was quite good, and the photographers had a field day. On the trip down, quite a few red shouldered hawks, a bald eagle and sharp shinned hawk were among the birds spotted. At Tigertail Beach, a variety of shorebirds and wading birds were seen. Five kinds of plovers were seen: Black bellied, semipalmated, Wilson's, piping and snowy, (the latter discovered upon examining trip photographs when we got home). Magnificent frigatebird, red knot and marbled godwit were identified, the last two with a lot of consultation. Other birds included commonly seen sandpipers, gulls, terns, osprey and brown pelican, and most of the expected wading birds including the reddish egret. A quick trip through neighborhoods on Marco Island with the group failed to find burrowing owls, hard to spot this month as they spend most of their time in the burrows incubating eggs or protecting chicks. (One car made a second attempt after the group split up and found a site with two owls).

The group continued on to Mackle Park where 5 kinds of ducks including northern shoveler and lesser scaup were seen. A killdeer completed the set of 6 expected plovers for the day. A highlight of the trip came when Lynn Bates identified a ringed turtle dove on a wire there. For a final hurrah, one car made a fast trip down Shell Creek Road in Naples on the way home and found a scrub jay. A total of **64 species** was compiled – not bad at all!

Eleanor K. Marr

## JAN 21 MINI BIRD-A-THON RESULTS

For those who aren't familiar with the term, a "birdathon" is a timed event where teams compete to see who can see the greatest number of bird species. I'm happy to report that my team won easily as there was really no competition..... and I mean that there was "no competition" very literally. Five of us showed up total, so we decided to still bird for three hours (or maybe even 3 hours and 5 minutes.... but who was counting?!?.....) and we figured we'd still make a run at it to see how many species we could post. We had a couple things working against us, we didn't start until 9:15 or so (so we were really not birding at peak hours) and without competition, we probably weren't driven as much as we could be. What were we thinking having fun out there?

So off we went at 9:15 from the Jones Loop rest area. Paul followed behind in his car with 2-way radios for communication. (I think he was tagging along as a referee to insure we didn't cheat... at least not too much!) First we pulled off at the pond across the way and the species began wracking up fast: Killdeer on the field, Sandhill Cranes further out, Grackles and Red-winged Blackbirds over top, Loggerhead Shrike on the bush, Mockingbird on the wire..... Pied-billed Grebes, Tri-colored Heron, Eurasian Collared & Mourning Doves, Ring-billed Gulls, Cooper's Hawk flashing across, and a Meadowlark calling. But where was it, hidden in the grass it wouldn't be counted as Paul had implemented the "No heard only birds" rule... Damn that referee! No worries though, we'd pick one up on the wires later on. Next we check the little rookery and add, Great Egret, Great Blue Heron, and Black-crowned Night-Herons. Fish Crows and Tree Swallows overhead, Palm Warbler.... the list grew. Driving out a small brown bird would lift off the road edge and drop back into the field giving a thin "Seet!" as it did, revealing it as a Savannah Sparrow, but it wouldn't co-operate for a view. This one won't make the list.

Around the Loop we add Bald Eagle on its nest, Cattle Egrets, Blue Jay, Yellow-rumped Warblers, DC cormorant and more en route to Babcock Webb. At the ponds at the entrance species are coming quickly, Glossy Ibis, Wood Stork, Common Moorhen, American Coot... Then what should appear overhead, a great treat, a female Purple Martin! Not that one wouldn't expect to see a martin at Webb, actually they are quite common at the entrance near the fee station. This one is special though as it signifies the winds of change. Each year the very first migrants to return to Florida are the Purple Martins, this one is right on time near mid January. By the first week in February the next species should show in small numbers, the beautiful Swallow-tailed Kite, but for now this Martin would have to suffice as a sign of things to come. A reminder that despite the cooler weather the miracle of migration continues.

It was now after 10:00 and the bird activity was already tapering off. We would miss many species at the Webb, but we were only giving enough time to sweep in to Crooked Lake and back out. Here we would add Pine Warbler, Swamp Sparrows, House Wrens, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Bluebird, Sharp-shinned Hawk, a flock of 8 White Pelicans sailing over, and more Bald Eagles. A Downy Woodpecker would elude counting as well as it kept creeping around the wrong side of the tree never allowing 2 people to see it. Amazingly we wouldn't hear a single Towhee, but it was getting warmer. Clearly we were having too much fun, as we let it get past 11:00 before heading out.

Next stop the little pond at Aquí Esta and Bal Harbor. Right away we add Osprey, Common Ground Doves, Mottled Ducks, Lesser Scaup, Hooded Merganser, Green Heron, Prairie Warbler, Common Grackle, and then as a parting gift two Northern Shovelers. On down the road I made a call to

head for Ponce De Leon, Paul wanted to head straight for Bayshore Park. We only added one bird at Ponce, a Common Loon which was also at Bayshore..... Oh man it hurts to admit he was right! :) At any rate, the move cost us 15 - 20 minutes overall and we were getting down to the wire with nary a shorebird save Killdeer, and no terns! We arrived at Bayshore and species began falling quicker than trees in the Pacific Northwest: Least Sandpiper, Red Knots, Semipalmated Plovers, Spotted Sandpiper, Black-bellied Plovers, Ruddy Turnstone, Willets, Forsters and Royal Terns. Looking at the watch we didn't have time to reach anywhere else. PC Beach would surely add Skimmers, Deep Creek would absolutely produce Scrub Jay, White-winged Dove, and Black-bellied Whistling Duck.... but alas the clock was our enemy this day, and the grains of sand had expired. What was the final tally?.... Double check our checks, count and re-count.... (this is Florida after all) the final tally is 71! Wow what a great day... oops look over there a Lesser Yellowlegs was here all along and our time has expired... (recount) like I said 72 species in three hours (and a couple minutes) an excellent mid-day count and a bunch of fun! (Plus there were the heard onlies which narrowly missed counting: Gray Catbird, Carolina Wren, and Savannah Sparrow; the aforementioned Downy Woodpecker, and the Rock Pigeons that came just a bit too late to count.) Surprisingly absent were: Brown-headed Cowbird, Ring-necked Duck, Dunlin, Goldfinch, Herring Gull, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks, Red-breasted Mergansers, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, American Robin, Black Skimmer, Sandwich Tern, Rufous-sided Towhee, White-eyed Vireo, and Yellow-throated Warbler among others. I'm thinking with an earlier start say 7:30 and running until noon one could conceivably pull off a century run (100 species) in Charlotte County... Who's game?!? Good Birding, Jeff Bouton

### CHARLOTTE HARBOR NATURE FESTIVAL DAY

Went to the Nature Fest Saturday (Jan 31) and had a great time despite cooler, windy weather and threat of rain. On the way there about 10:30, a



Merlin (left) posed on the



large dead snag behind the fruit stand at 776 and Toledo Blade. On the way back after 3:00 PM, it was still there squaring off with an adult male Cooper's Hawk (right). Sometimes Merlins in winter will find a favorite snag and use it often provided they can find enough prey locally. If you are zipping by be sure and check the snag and you may see this small falcon. Jeff Bouton

### JAN 15 MEETING FOLLOW-UP

Here is the list of bird names that one is likely to encounter on the Gulf Coast in winter. As I've said, I believe that if one works on this list of 36 species, they will be able to identify 90% of all bird sounds they hear.

Mourning Dove	Eurasian Collared-Dove
Common Ground Dove	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker	Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker	Eastern Phoebe
Loggerhead Shrike	White-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay	Florida Scrub Jay
Tufted Titmouse	Carolina Wren
House Wren	Ruby-crowned Kinglet (call)
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	American Robin
Gray Catbird	Northern Mockingbird

Brown Thrasher	European Starling
Yellow-rumped Warbler (call)	Yellow-throated Warbler (call)
Pine Warbler	Palm Warbler (call)
Black & White Warbler (call)	Common Yellowthroat
Eastern Towhee	Northern Cardinal
Red-winged Blackbird	Common Grackle
Boat-tailed Grackle	Brown-headed Cowbird
American Goldfinch (call)	House Sparrow

#### References I mentioned:

"Bird Songs of Florida", by Geoffrey A. Keller: tape/CD available at most nature centers, etc. throughout the state. (perhaps CHEC ??!?)

"Flight Calls of Migratory Birds, Eastern North American Landbirds" by William R. Evans and Michael O'Brien

CD Rom, generally available online through Cornell, Buteo books, etc.

Can be sampled at the homepage: <http://www.oldbird.org>

Any of the "Birding by Ear" series by Dick Walton can be helpful as well.

#### Best Tips:

- 1) Use local recordings whenever possible to avoid confusion with non-local dialects.
- 2) Avoid overwhelming yourself by selecting a handful of birds to learn at a time.... learn these WELL before moving on to others.
- 3) As hearing is a personal affair, use YOUR OWN written descriptions of how the bird sounds.
- 4) Go in the field with a notepad (or mini recorder), and leave the guide in the car. Write (record) your observations of how the bird looks, acts, sounds, etc. Then pick up the guide and use your notes to aid you. This exercise reinforces your image of the bird seen and will make you a better birder.
- 5) Above all have fun.... when it becomes frustrating, quit right away and come back to it at a later date.

Any with additional questions/comments can feel free to contact me at [jbouton2@earthlink.net](mailto:jbouton2@earthlink.net). Best, Jeff

### FEB 18—PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

A trip to Lakes Park in Ft. Myers is planned for February 18 by the Peace River Audubon Nature Photography Group. The purpose is to sharpen skills in bird and scenic photography. The Group will meet at 7 am at the old Kmart shopping center parking lot, junction of Tamiami Trail and Burnt Store Road in Punta Gorda, to share rides. Anyone interested in joining the photo group which also holds free workshops, can call Bob Elliot at 637-6203 or email: [relliot@peganet.com](mailto:relliot@peganet.com). Non Audubon members are invited to join the Peace River Audubon Society at a cost of only \$10.

### February 21 Field Trip to Eagle Lakes/Sugden Park

Eagle Lakes and Sugden Park are located in the Naples area. One usually finds a large number of ducks, wading birds, and shorebirds at Eagle Lakes. In addition, a Great White Heron frequently visits the area and there is a resident population of Bronzed Cowbirds. Sugden Park also has a lake that is frequented by wading birds. There are usually a variety of landbirds, including raptors, to be seen in the surrounding woods. There are also picnic tables that provide a calm and peaceful setting to have our lunch. Bill and Eleanor Marr (941-624-4182) will lead this trip. 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.

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## March 8 – Field Trip to Fort DeSoto Park

On Monday, March 8, we will travel to Fort DeSoto, one of the premier birding spots in the state. This will be our second trip this season to this fabulous birding spot. As usual, we can expect to see a variety of shorebirds, including Curlews, Godwits, and Whimbrels. In addition, spring migration should have begun; so, hopefully, we may see several Warbler species. Lynn Bates (941-639-7277) will be leading this trip. We'll meet in back of McDonald's at the Peachland Mall at 7:30 am. Please bring a bag lunch.

## MOTE REQUESTING YOUR HELP

Researchers from Mote Marine Laboratory are seeking the public's help to record **live** sea turtle sightings in Charlotte Harbor.

"We're interested in hearing from anyone who has accurate information on turtles swimming in Charlotte Harbor, around Matlacha, San Carlos Bay or Pine Island Sound," said Dr. Tony Tucker, staff scientist in the Sea Turtle Conservation and Research Program.

Since studies started in February, Mote has identified Charlotte Harbor as an important habitat for three sea turtle species:

- \* Loggerheads (listed as threatened)
- \* Green turtles (listed as endangered)
- \* Kemp's ridleys (listed as endangered)

"Charlotte Harbor is important development and foraging habitat for juveniles of all species," Tucker said. Information about Kemp's ridley turtles spotted in the harbor is especially important...."....a vital part of their non-reproductive life is in Florida waters, virtually everything we can learn about them here is crucial to document."

What researchers need to know from you:

- \* Latitude and longitude for where the turtles were spotted;
- \* Time and date a turtle was spotted;
- \* Species seen (green, loggerhead, Kemp's ridley or unknown)

How to get the information to researchers...

\* Call Dr Tony Tucker at 941-388-4441, ext 470 or 1-800-6683, ext 470; OR email [tucker@mote.org](mailto:tucker@mote.org)

**REMEMBER: LIVE TURTLES ONLY**...report dead or injured turtles to the Florida Marine Research Institute at 1-888-404-3922.

## PRAS Calendar of Events

(Social time start: 7pm; meeting start: 7:30 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 lot at Burnt Store Road & 41)

- Feb 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
- 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 (N) 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)

## "AN EVENING WITH AUDUBON"

Plan to spend the evening of March 16 with one of Florida's most well-known and respected biologists and help support your local Audubon Chapter by joining Jim Beever of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at this year's Annual Banquet. Mr. Beever will discuss the State and Federally listed Florida scrub-jay and how local conservation efforts can help protect this true Florida native.

In addition to Mr. Beever, the evening will feature a silent auction where you can bid on many wonderful items with the proceeds going to help support your Audubon Chapter's continuing conservation efforts. This will be our primary fundraiser for this year, so your generosity is greatly appreciated. Throughout the evening you will also enjoy the efforts of many talented photographers displaying their best pictures in our second photo contest - a new tradition of the Peace River Audubon Society.

The Banquet will be held at a new location this year: The Clubhouse of the Maple Leaf Estates Golf and Country Club located at 2100 Kings Highway just north of the intersection of Kings Highway and Midway Boulevard. The evening begins with a cash bar at 5:30, with **Cap'n And the Cowboy**, one of Charlotte County's finest restaurants, catering dinner at 7:00 pm.

**Reservations and payments** (caterer requires early guest count):

Please make reservations **by March 5** by sending \$19 per person (includes gratuity) with this form to: PRAS, PO Box 510760, Punta Gorda, FL 33951-0760 **OR** call Peggy at 639-7791 or Joy at 637-8160 to make a reservation. Provide the guest(s) name(s) for name tags:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:** Cost is \$20 per person at the door if you do not pay early.

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

www.peacriveraudubon.org

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*February 2004  
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**KEYS TO PRAS SUCCESS ... WELCOME TO  
 NEW JAN MEMBERS:**

M/M George Bibens	Jackie Zimmerman
Ronald Bissett	Leo Brule
Dorothy A Blakey	Anne F Moeller
Dorian Casemore	
Joseph H Dixon	<b>Transfers back:</b>
Bob & Cindy Goodwin	Nelson Dawley
Roswell Greene Sr	Troy Dueboay
Chuck & Betty Keller	G Knapp
Natalie Krasik	Stuart Lewis
Richard Linden	Helen ONeil
Curt Lundeen	John Pell
Patricia A Mousley	

**2003-04 OFFICERS:**

President	Cathy Olson '05	613-6753
Vice President	Kathi Rader-Gibson '04	474-3065
Secretary	Peggy Kampert '05	639-7791
Treasurer	Larry Linn '05	637-8160
<b>Additional</b>	John Aspiolea '04	575-7788
<b>Directors:</b>	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
	Cvndi Marks '04	255-3318

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 SC-040701.

**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 be 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 breath, 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.peacriveraudubon.org](http://www.peacriveraudubon.org)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Organization/Business: \_\_\_\_\_  
 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  
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 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 Audubon Society and receive those benefits.

Check here if you do not wish to receive "Audubon" Magazine