



WELCOME TO THE
LAKE REGION AUDUBON'S
NEWSLETTER

Lake Region Audubon Society, Inc.
115 Lameraux Road
Winter Haven, FL 33884
www.lakeregionaudubon.org
A non-profit 501(c)(3) Corporation

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THE SCRUB JAY TIMES

A Quarterly Look Inside Lake Region Audubon Society



Circle B Bar Reserve

Nostalgia by Charles Geanangel

Over half a century ago when I first came to Florida, the Promised Land, I was a college kid from Ohio with a bad case of wanderlust. In 1957, the auto trip to Florida during spring break was a rite of passage for most of us in the northern universities. I remember the excitement of entering old A1A north of Jacksonville and the drive along the beaches south to Daytona Beach. White sand as far as the eye could see, soft, warm, breezes blowing, blue sky galore, and birds everywhere, perfect for someone from the still frozen north. Shifting over to old US 27 we drove through the endless citrus groves of central Florida, stopping only long enough to buy a bag of oranges to eat, merrily discarding the rinds out the window as we fled south. I can still smell the fragrant orange blossoms and taste the tangy oranges. Remember, back then, at Christmas time we used to get oranges in our stockings as a treat.

How the State has changed. The once beautiful beaches that flowed from coast to coast to coast are now covered with high rise apartments and strip malls, traffic is impossible, and signs of pollution are everywhere.

Here in Polk County the endless orange groves have been decimated by weather, sprawling housing developments and disease. We old-timers are truly strangers in a strange land.

But there is a bright spot and it is significant. Our Polk County's Environmental Land Program is the envy of the entire State. Since the passage of the environmental land referendum in 1994, where we decided to tax ourselves a small amount each year for 20 years, to purchase significant amounts of land to be preserved for future generations, we have added nearly 23,000 acres of pristine habitat in over a dozen reserves. My tax bill for this program runs less than a theater ticket a year, about \$7, which is a bargain by any measure. When added to the properties purchased by the State in the Forever Florida program, more than 1/4 of the County is now protected and in public hands. My intent is to describe in future Audubon newsletters some of these properties in order to encourage you to visit what you own. You will be pleasantly surprised.

Backyard Birding in the Winter by: Susan Schenk

The birds are here. Or are they? To bring them into your yard you must do several things. Planting for wildlife is a good start. All animals, including birds, need shelter, space, water and food. Birds may also require protection from the elements and perhaps nesting materials near at hand. Here are my steps to providing a protected habitat for all creatures, especially birds.

Get rid of the grass to some extent. I started small and gradually added more to the bird/butterfly garden and eliminated some of my patchy grass areas in both front and back. Plant native plants whenever possible. Non-native plants should bring food or shelter to your yard. Food could be plants that produce seeds, nuts, flowers (nectar) or berries. Shelter could be dense small to large trees, pine trees, some evergreen species and of course deciduous trees, which



make fine perches and produce seeds as well. Plant density is important; nature prefers a mixture or wildness to its habitat. Rows are great for veggies but a hap hazard planting of flowering plants provides something for everyone. Vary the heights, keeping the lower plants to the front.

Don't forget hedges, no matter what the species of plant - hedges are essential for wintering birds, blocking the winter winds and providing cover from predatory birds. Perching can be achieved with bamboo sticks in the ground, trellises, or none at all need be provided if you have enough small trees in your planting beds. A water source is necessary. It does not have to be a pond but if you construct one it does not have to be deep. I use water bowls, some with rocks, some without. Some of the bowls are positioned up off the ground; some

are nestled right on the ground. Make sure you change your water and clean your bowls often.

Supplemental foods are not always a requirement but they help wintering migratory birds to keep up their strength for the migration. Sugar water for hummingbirds can be an essential tool to having hummers in your yard at all. Since winter temps may prevent many flowering plants from producing, always keep hummingbird feeders clean and refill with fresh food at least every few days in winter, more often in summer.

Check out what birds like to eat when it comes to seeds. A good mix will always have black oil sunflower seeds. Safflower seeds are really important to the finches, cardinals and others. Nyer seed is the main diet of the goldfinches.

Go online for more information and to view pictures of my yard in transition. at:

www.lakeregionaudubon.org/articles

Birding best kept secret: The Blue Ridge Parkway Fall Migration

by: Michael Chakan

After two months and 1500 miles of cycling and wildflowering in the mountains of north central Pennsylvania I was starting to get burned out when I received the first of three calls from Bill Haddad from his cabin in Spruce Pine, North Carolina. Bill informed me that he was starting to see small (what he calls pre-migratory) mixed flocks of birds there in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Two weeks after receiving his third call on how the flocks were increasing in size to hundreds of birds, I decided it was time that I migrated from PA to his cabin in NC. Over the

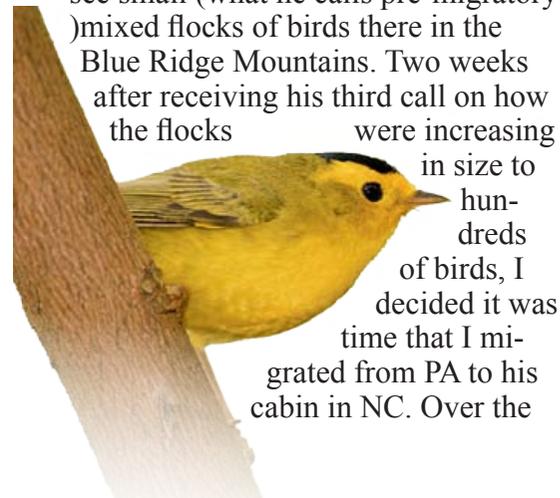
last twelve years, I've birded with Bill in the NC mountains, so I knew what to expect. I arrived at Bill's cabin on the evening of August 20. Below are some of the highlights of the week.

The next morning we got up early and headed out to his favorite spot, Heffner Gap, which is only a little over three miles from his cabin! Heffner Gap is one of many scenic lookouts overlooking the mountains and valleys of the Blue Ridge along the Parkway. Its elevation is 3065 feet but the best part is that it faces east so when the sun comes out at daybreak it's at your back and affords great views as the birds come over and forage in the trees on the west side of the Parkway.

We arrived at Heffner just at day-

break. Bill said they would arrive at 7:15. He was right. They started trickling over, then the groups got larger until 7:30 when groups of 20 to 50 birds flew into the trees across the Parkway from us. Unfortunately the skies were gray and the lighting was poor, making it very difficult to ID many of the birds. On this day we ID'd more species of wildflowers than birds. Of particular note was some late blooming Columbine as well as Purple Flowering Raspberry, Bladder Champion, Virgin Bower and beautiful Sourwood trees (which Bill pointed out). Altogether, even in this late season, we identified almost 50 species of wildflowers on this trip.

Read more about this topic online by visiting www.lakeregionaudubon.org/articles



Where Are The Birds? by: Reinier Munguia

In recent years, we have noticed a decline in the number of species that are seen during fall and spring migrations. Many birders have complained of the low number of warbler sightings this year, the absence of winter birds in their feeders, or how late the guests are arriving. While the numbers seem to have dwindled in well-known birding areas, other areas seem to have a new record number of bird sightings in places where few, if any, have been seen before. Yes, birds are complicated; the fact is that of all migratory animals, birds can migrate with much more ease and speed than any other animal. The complexity of migration is far from unveiled; even with all the modern technology, it's hard to predict what the future may bring. But one thing is for sure regarding birds: the dynamics of migration as well as their winter/summer ranges are changing. Climate change is here, not just to change climate and the weather patterns, but also those things that are ruled by it.

Climate change is a natural occurrence that will continue its path, regardless of what we do. The problem lies on how quickly these changes are occurring. The last ice age is an example of how climate change works. It's believed that the origins of migration were established even before the last ice age, yet many scientists are debating if some of the North American migratory species that we know today originated in the tropics and later moved up north to take advantage of the surplus food during spring. Regardless of the origins, we now know that migration dynamics are changing as a result of the accelerated climate change. Here's when we humans become the center of attention. We have contributed to these changes through carbon emission. For the past 150 years, the amount of carbon produced by human activities has contributed to the degradation of the atmosphere. Almost everything that we do emits carbon; things such as driving a car or leaving the lights on are good exam-

ples. Carbon dioxide as well as other greenhouse gases, including methane and nitrous oxide, trap the heat produced by the sun, increasing the overall temperature of our atmosphere. These effects get progressively worse as the heated atmosphere becomes more unstable, producing extreme weather systems such as heat waves, windstorms and hurricanes. Forest fires become more prolific and harder to control and intense drought destroys precious wetland systems used by birds. The melting of the permafrost releases large amounts of trapped methane gases, and the uncontrolled fires add to the levels of greenhouse gases, thus accelerating the climate changes.

Unlike amphibians which seem to be at higher risk due to their sensitivity to these changes, birds are currently changing their patterns to cope with the climate change. Many species of birds are nesting farther north than ever before, while others are delaying their fall migration and some are not even migrating anymore. Can this all be connected to climate change? The latest studies show a correlation between bird pattern changes and the increase in temperature in their range. Even in tropical rainforests the effects can be seen. Birds that used to nest in lower elevations, such as the keeled-billed toucan, are moving to higher elevation during breeding time to take advantage of cooler temperatures and the resulting food supplies. In the United States, the number of non-migratory Canada geese are increasing to the point of causing water pollution problems in some northern states. A 2006 report on Bird Species and Climate Change warns of bird loss and shrinking ranges that are causing disruptions of the natural communities all around the world. The long term effects of climate change are yet to be seen, but the changes that we have witnessed so far are dramatic enough to get our attention.



LRAS to join efforts with Eagle Watch.

LRAS Citizen Science Project

The Lake Region Audubon Society will be recruiting a support team to assist this year's Eagle Watch Program in Polk County. Those interested in participating can send an email to eaglewatch@lakeregionaudubon.org.

Participants will be trained on how to collect and submit nesting observations. Lynda White with the Eagle Watch Program will provide the necessary training. LRAS will host additional presentations on the biology of the bald eagles and the laws that protect them.



Pond under construction

We are currently working on a pond with a waterfall feature to attract more birds to the property. When finished, the pond will provide running water for the birds as well as a refuge for frogs and other creatures. The pond will be located on the west side of the Howe House and will serve as a Memorial for Virginia Adler. Her daughter Melinda Correl funded the project.



Saddle Creek Park Fall Migration 2010

By *Bob Snow*

Another fall migration has come to an end at Saddle Creek and there were some notable bird species.

The total number of warbler species observed this season was twenty-five. This is two more than last year, which was one of the slowest seasons in my memory. We observed and heard several warbler species singing, which is somewhat unusual for the Fall. Louisiana and Northern Waterthrushes were heard singing on several occasions, as well as Ovenbirds and Hooded Warblers. Unusual for the park was an adult male Cape May Warbler, observed by Cole Fredricks.

We did not record any Bay-breasted Warblers, Golden-winged War-

blers, Canada Warblers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Scarlet Tanagers or Summer Tanagers. Only one Cerulean Warbler was observed, by Paul Fellers, which is not all that unusual, due to the rapidly declining population. There were several sightings of Cerulean Warblers around the state, though.

We did see the Short-tailed Hawks on several occasions. Both light morph and dark morph birds were observed.

The flycatcher and thrush families were not well represented this year either. We had only three Veerys and one Swainson's Thrush reported. Just a few Empidonax, Eastern Wood Pewees and Acadian Flycatchers were observed. Paul Fellers did report two Willow Flycatchers and one Yellow-bellied Flycatcher calling.

Clear warm weather, changes in the habitat (increasing exotic vegetation such as air potato, Japanese Climbing Fern, etc.), might be some of the factors in our light migration. We have also seen feral cats at the park for the last few years, which is not a positive sign for the bird population.

The total number of birders participating in the walks was 165, which included three visitors from England and one from California. We hosted members of Tampa Audubon, Orange Audubon, Kissimmee Valley Audubon, Manatee Audubon and the Sun City Bird Club. The total number of species observed this fall was 107.

It has been a pleasure and privilege to play host to the various Audubon Societies and individuals interested in the Fall migration at Saddle Creek for the last ten years. This is my last year as leader of the walks, and hopefully some other members of the bird watching community will offer their services to lead and record the future sightings.

Update from the Audubon Assembly *by: Susan Schenk*



Audubon

As the President of Lake Region Audubon, I recently attended the annual Florida Audubon Assembly in St. Pete, FL, representing our chapter. I had the opportunity to meet others like myself, (new presidents) at the President breakfast where we were able to share our hopes and dreams for Florida Audubon's future and the future of our individual chapters. Many of the chapters find themselves in the same position we are in; seeking new members, trying to attract

a new generation and finding that funding and altruism are in short supply during these tough economic times.

I would like your input on the types of programs you would like to see utilized to attract new membership, while not forgetting the current generation of members whose dedication and volunteerism got us to where we are today. We all stand on the backs of the previous generation's works, but today, life is so different for young people and Audubon sometimes gets generalized as a retired person organization. We are seeking to serve all

age groups but find that even our long term members' children and grandkids want little or nothing to do with membership in outdoor organizations such as Audubon. Please e-mail me or call me with your input. We need a vibrant organization with members of all ages in order to continue our tradition of service to the conservation of wild birds and the protection of healthy environments for all wildlife. I challenge you to remain involved in creating the next generation of earth's stewards. Hope to hear from all of you.

Purring Prowlers

By Steffanie Munguia

Millions of households across America include a cat, if not several. My own neighbors have eight. It's hard to resist those beautiful round eyes, soft fur, and slinky body. It's even more difficult to see how these cats that you play with on the couch or on your bed, or hear scratching at your bedroom door at night because they feel alone in the big dark house, could possibly be bad.

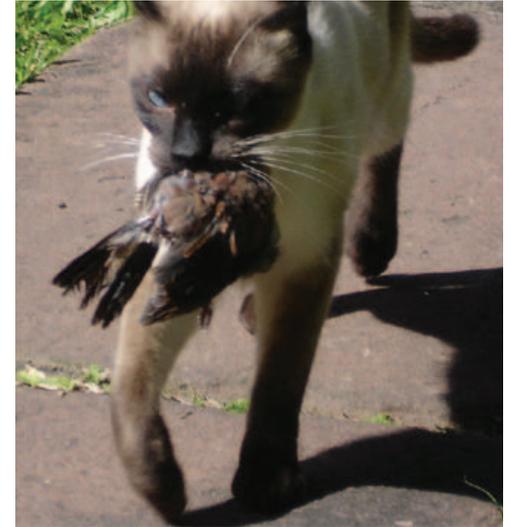
From tigers to bobcats to domestic tabbies, cats are natural-born hunters. Anything that moves and is not too large is fair game; this is why you buy little furry, feathery balls to tug around for your feline friends. This is actually good for them; lazy cats get fat, and family members should always be kept in top shape. But consider this: if this is how your cat acts in your own home, what are they like in the wild? People who keep their

cats in their screen porches know that a lizard or two shows up at the door from time to time, sometimes even daily. This behavior is second nature to a domestic cat – it's a sort of tribute to you for taking care of them. Obviously, domestication hasn't made these felines any less capable of hunting than their wild cousins.

It's still hard to picture our small cats as mini versions of the big cats of the world, but that's really what cats are, much like dogs are just a series of genetically altered wolves. However, as more and more house cats are finding their way out to the wild, even if this "wild" is only your own backyard, we're starting to realize just how little they have changed through domestication. Cats don't stop at lizards – snakes, birds, squirrels, mice, and many other species often find themselves pinned down by one paw while the other teases and pokes them. One thing, however, has changed through domestication. Once the animal has

been annoyed and ripped to pieces, the cat walks away, moving to the next "toy". They often don't kill to eat – they do it just for the thrill of the fight – if you consider angry submission to be much of a fight.

Read more about this topic online by visiting www.lakeregionaudubon.org/articles



Upcoming Events

Check our website's calendar for more events. All events are held at the Street Audubon Center, Winter Haven unless otherwise specified.

Climate Change: Effect on Birds (Dec 2nd, 7:00pm)

Learn what effects the changes in temperature are having on species around the globe. These changes have affected feeding patterns, breeding cycles and geographic range of many species.

LRAS Annual Christmas Party (Dec 5th, 2:00pm)

Come and join us for a great time among fellow members of the LRAS. Let's have fun!

Bird Migration (Dec 7th, 6:30-7:30pm)

Learn how birds cope with the long flights associated with migration, as well as what triggers them to em-

bark on such journeys. This presentation includes videos and images of various migratory species and discusses some of the effects caused by humans.

LRAS Christmas Bird Count (Dec 18th)

Our traditional CBC will be directed by Paul Fellers; please contact Paul at 863-293-0486 if interested in participating.

LRAS Bird Trip-Mosaic Phosphate Mines (Jan 8th, 8:00am)

Join Paul Fellers on this visit to the mines. (863-293-0486)

Bird Identification Classes (Jan 10th, 17th, 24th, 31st, 7-8:30pm)

Paul Fellers will have 5 classes plus field trips on Mondays. These classes are for all levels of birders. Fee: \$30.00

The Wild, Wild West Dinner Presentation (Jan 13th, 6-8:00pm)

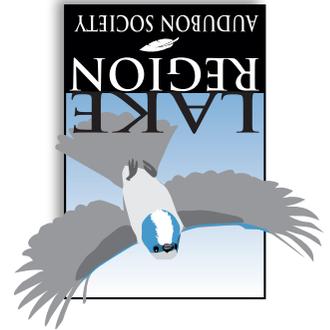
Join us for a celebration of wild-life and landscapes of the American Southwest. Join our in-house naturalist and photographer on his journey through some of the most breathtaking landscapes and wild-life of NM, AZ & UT. Full Dinner (RSVP) Fee: \$10.00

Hummingbirds (Jan 16th, 6:30-8:30pm @ Circle B Bar)

Fred Basset, a Master Bander and Hummingbird Researcher, will present a special program on Wintering Hummingbirds and the research conducted locally and throughout the South to help determine their migratory strategy and distance traveled.

For more info on events contact: events@lakeregionaudubon.org

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AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

[make check payable to National Audubon Society]

This membership automatically enrolls you in the National Audubon Society, Audubon of Florida, and Lake Region Audubon Society.

You will receive these publications from each organization:

- National Audubon Society - Audubon Magazine
- Audubon of Florida - Florida Naturalist
- Lake Region Audubon Society - The Scrub Jay Times

Cost: 1st year - \$20.00* Yearly Renewal: \$35.00

*Lake Region will receive all of the first year's dues. Thereafter it receives no direct portion of your annual dues.

LOCAL MEMBERSHIP ONLY [make check payable to Lake Region Audubon Society]

- This membership enrolls you in Lake Region Audubon Society.
- You will receive the local newsletter, The Scrub Jay Times, which is published 5 times a year.
- Cost: 1st year - \$20.00 Yearly Renewal: \$20.00*
- * Your first year's dues and each renewal goes 100% to support all Lake Region Audubon's programs and the publication of the newsletter, The Scrub Jay Times.

Save costs: send newsletter by e-mail.

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