

December 2020



a publication of
Audubon
of Southwest Florida

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Flyways

President's Message

“Stay safe and well” and “we’re all in this together” are just two of the familiar refrains of the last 10 months. While the important components of programs, meeting, and socializing are currently impossible, the chapter nevertheless continues to focus on its priorities and plan for the post-COVID era.

One bright spot? Despite pandemic worries, people are still eager to get out in nature. Field trip chair Jim Rodenfels has organized trips with safety guidelines and the response has been tremendous. Inside this newsletter (*page 3*), you’ll find a preview of this year’s schedule.

This fall, the chapter was fortunate to work, albeit remotely, with several FGCU Service Learning students, who donated their time and talent to assist the chapter with several tasks. For example, Caylee Weintraub and Stacy Sanderlin initiated the chapter’s bird-window collision project on campus, surveying and collecting data about the hazard that the library presents to birds. A similar project monitoring two government buildings in downtown Fort Myers is being conducted by the chapter.

Looking optimistically toward 2021 and the conservation work ahead, I invite you to become acquainted with Audubon Florida’s Southwest Florida Regional Resiliency Compact. The compact involves Charlotte, Collier, and Lee counties, as well as municipalities within those counties. It is an agreement between its members, county and municipal governments, some of whom have already signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), to collaboratively identify, prepare for, adapt to, and mitigate climate change impacts. Find out more at <https://fl.audubon.org>.

As 2021 approaches, I hope you’ll renew – or start – a chapter membership with ASWF. Membership in the National Audubon Society endows you with chapter membership through affiliation. However, because the chapter is a separate organization, your chapter membership adds even more much needed support for our work.

Happy New Year, and hoping to see you in 2021,

Gerri Reaves



Jose Padilla, photographer

Meetings and Programs

Our meetings and programs are open to the public. Board meetings begin before each program at 6 p.m., and programs begin at 7 p.m., unless otherwise noted. All programs take place at The Collaboratory in downtown Fort Myers, with ample free parking. The Collaboratory is located at 2031 Jackson St., Fort Myers, FL 33901.

Please note that there is a temporary hold on all programs, which will be resumed post-pandemic.

Our Board of Directors and Officers

Gerri Reaves, President

Dan Van Norman, Vice President

Michele Bellinger, Secretary

Jim Rodenfels, 2nd VP and Treasurer

Brad Cornell, Director

Wayne Daltry, Past President

Courtney Kern, Director

Sean McCabe, Director

Carol Newcomb, Past President

Pete Quasius, Past President

Carl Veaux, Past President

We are currently seeking to fill a few Director and Committee positions. If you are interested and willing to put in a few hours per month, we would like to hear from you. In addition, we have multiple committees that need volunteers, depending on your interests. Please reply to audubon.southwest.florida@gmail.com if you are interested.



Teddy Rodenfels, photographer

Our Chapter In History:

December 1964

by Gerri Reaves

December always means increased activity for the chapter, with human snowbirds migrating south, a roster of field trips and programs, and the holiday season to add sparkle. The December 1964 *Flyways* announced an event we can only envy in these COVID times of cancellations, physical distancing, and masking: The final meeting of the year would be a combination field trip, program, and Christmas party at the Nisbet's place on the Orange River. Attendees were to bring not only friends and family, a covered dish, silverware, and chair, but a prospective new member too. (After all, Florida Audubon's goal for 1965 was to double membership!) Hot and cold drinks would be "on tap." Gifts for the "His and Her bag of cheer" would add to the celebration. Let's hope that our chapter can plan an equally festive event in December 2021!

Audubon Southwest Florida Chapter's FGCU Scholarship 2020 Recipient

Audubon of Southwest Florida is pleased to announce the recipient of our 2020-21 scholarship at Florida Gulf Coast University: **Allison Ryun**. A junior honors student majoring in marine science, Allison has participated in Audubon Florida's conservation leadership initiative and has attended Audubon Assembly. She plans on adding a minor in biology and becoming more involved in academic research. She presented her research, *Air Pollution and the Industrial Revolution: Understanding Human Health During the 19th and 20th Century Britain*, at FGCU's honors research symposium.



Valerie Heldt, photographer

Keep an Eye on the Website!

Field Trips are subject to change of date, meeting time, and location. Be sure to check our website for updated information: www.audubonswfl.org

We provide educational programming, public outreach, community building, scholarship opportunities, and field trips. These promote a keener understanding of our relationship to the natural world, immediately from our own backyard, regionally along the Caloosahatchee River, or globally.

Audubon of Southwest Florida is in accord with the National Audubon Society's Statement on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and has adopted the general goals and principles it sets out.

We warmly invite you to join us, whether for a birding adventure, local lecture, community breakfast, shorebird stewardship program, or a board meeting.

2021 Field Trips

RSVP to audubon.southwest.florida@gmail.com

(Tropical Travel Adventures)

Members and non-members / beginner to advanced birders – all are welcome!

Events are free, but donations are always appreciated. Depending on the nature of the outing, you may want to bring a camera, field glasses, sunscreen, water, or even a folding chair. Dress appropriately for the weather. Parking or rental fees sometimes apply. [Dates may be subject to change.](#) Visit www.audubonswfl.org for updated information.

Pop Ash Creek Preserve

Wednesday, January 13, 2021 – 8:00 am

Including a portion of Pop Ash Creek, this preserve is an ideal location to observe river otters, turtles, wading birds and alligators.

Kayak with the Manatees

Saturday, January 16, 2021 – 9:30 am

& Monday, January 18, 2021 – 9:00 am

One of our favorite annual outings, we launch onto the Orange River from Manatee Park and are almost immediately surrounded by manatees. Bring your own kayak, or rent from the on-site outfitter.

a tropical travel adventure to Wakodahatchee Wetlands / Loxahatchee NWR (Delray Beach, FL)

Tuesday, February 9, 2021 – 8:00 am (all day)

Constructed on 50 acres of a previous wastewater utility property, Wakodahatchee features a three-quarter mile boardwalk that crosses between open water pond areas and islands with shrubs and snags to foster nesting and roosting. We will lunch at a local deli, then visit Loxahatchee NWR which consists of Everglades ecosystems including a mosaic of wet prairies, sawgrass ridges, sloughs, tree islands, cattail communities, and a 400-acre cypress swamp that provides habitat for various wildlife species.

Bicycle Tour of Ding Darling

Sunday, February 21, 2021 – 8:30 am

Another annual favorite, we leisurely bicycle the 8 mile round trip on Wildlife Drive with incredible views of herons, egrets, ibises, storks and spoonbills.

a tropical travel adventure to Cayo Costa State Park

mid-March, 2021 – 9 am – 3:30 pm

This will be an all-day adventure to Cayo Costa where we will be hosted by the Friends of Cayo Costa. Accessible only by boat, this unspoiled Gulf Coast island evokes images of wind-shaped trees, dunes, beaches and freedom to explore. There will be a strict limit placed on the number of participants and there will be boat charter and park fees required in advance.

a tropical travel adventure to Venice Rookery (photo ops)

Tuesday, April 6, 2021 – 8:00 am

Bring your camera and enjoy a variety of nesting birds up front and close with several different types all nesting on one small nearby island.

Yellow Fever Creek Preserve

Saturday, April 24, 2021 – 8:00 am

Mostly pine flatwoods, Yellow Fever Creek sightings include hawks, Florida sandhill crane, and the gopher tortoise.

Galt Preserve

Saturday, May 15, 2021 – 8:00 am

Located on Pine Island, Galt Preserve is home to mangrove swamps, mesic flatwoods, and a variety of wildlife, including bald eagles, bobcats, and alligators.

Alva Scrub Preserve

June 19, 2021

Explore many diverse plant communities, including mesic and scrubby flatwoods, oak hammock, and cypress ponds. Gopher tortoises, great horned owls, and a variety of songbirds may be observed throughout the year.

Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve North

Saturday, July 24, 2021 – 8:00 am

Located north of Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve, this property contains pine flatwoods, oak hammocks and cypress swamps, as well as an abandoned railroad grade used to transport supplies to former Buckingham Army Air Field.

a tropical travel adventure to CREW's Bird Rookery Swamp

Wednesday, August 11, 2021 – 8:00 am

Birders will delight in the abundance of songbirds that frequent the cypress trees along the boardwalk, as well as the many raptors and wading birds found along the trails. Barred owls are common and swallow-tailed kites frequent the area in summer. CREW's Education Coordinator, Julie Motkowicz (expertise with plants) will help lead us.

a tropical travel adventure to Celery Fields in Sarasota

Tuesday, September 14, 2021 – 8:00 am

This county-owned flood mitigation area was built in the 1990s on a former agricultural site, and it has proven to be one of the premier birding hotspots on the southwest coast with over 240 species seen.

Hawk Watch

at the Sanibel Lighthouse

Sunday, October 17, 2021 – 8:00 am

led by Vince McGrath

This will be our 18th Annual Sanibel Lighthouse Hawk Watch. A short walk from the parking area to the lighthouse; you'll want to bring a folding chair as we watch overhead.

a tropical travel adventure to STA-5 in Hendry County

Saturday, November 6, 2021 – 8:00 am to 1:00 pm

Stormwater Treatment Areas (STAs) are constructed wetlands designed to aid in Everglades restoration. Located in eastern Hendry County, Stormwater Treatment Area 5/6 (STA-5/6) has become one of the premier bird-watching areas in Florida through a long-standing partnership with the Hendry-Glades Audubon Society.

Florida Shorebird Alliance



Illustration 1

The teams also collect data on nesting counts and occurrences and causes of any disturbances. The data provides important information regarding the conservation efforts of this vital habitat. Currently, our monitoring is inactive due to the virus-caused beach closures. We hope to return to our site at the southern end of Estero Island (just north of Lover's Key) at Big Carlos Pass.

Since 2011, **Audubon of Southwest Florida** has partnered with the state's **Florida Shorebird Alliance** to form voluntary shorebird stewardship teams. These teams work mostly on weekends and over holidays to inform the beach-going public about the presence of nesting shorebirds and of the steps they can take to minimize impact. They educate the beach-going public about the biology and life history of nesting shorebirds, and when possible (and without disturb the birds), they assist with the viewing of the birds' natural behavior at nesting sights.



Illustration 2

Protected birds nesting on Florida beaches include:

Black Skimmers, which nest in colonies. They have large orange and black beaks which they use to skim the water's surface for prey (illustration 3).

Least Terns are small yellow-billed birds with white "foreheads." They nest in colonies on beaches and frequently nest on rooftops as well (illustration 1).

American Oystercatchers have long red beaks which they use to dig for prey. They often return to the same nesting area each year.

Wilson's Plovers have thicker beaks than other plovers. They may pretend to be injured in an effort to lead you away from their nest.

Snowy Plovers are small, pale birds with short beaks. Snowy plover chicks begin to forage on their own just hours after hatching (illustration 2)



Illustration 3

Interested in joining the Board?

Come to a meeting!
Board meetings are held at 5 p.m.
before the membership meetings,
and programs begin at 7 p.m.

Contact us!
We would love to have you!

Bluebird Box photos at Babcock Ranch courtesy Dan Van Norman



Birding at Babcock Ranch

Audubon SWFL past presidents Pete Quasius and Dan Van Norman are actively involved with birding in the Babcock Ranch area. The Ranch includes Footprints Trail, which traverses pine flatwoods, live oaks, cypress strands, and open prairie where various species can be found.

For more information about the trail, and other birding in the area, please search the [Babcock Ranch Birding](#) page on [Facebook](#), or note additional information in a recent article in the *Babcock Ranch Telegraph*.

<https://www.babcockranchtelegraph.com/articles/scoping-out-thebirds-of-babcock-ranch/>

How to Reach Us

We invite you to stay in touch through our website, www.audubonswfl.org or on [Facebook](#). Just search under [Audubon of Southwest Florida](#).

Please send us your email address. That way you can be sure you receive advance notification of any upcoming events, programs, field trips, etc., and you will also receive our e-newsletter. Just send a note to audubon.southwest.florida@gmail.com

If you need to mail us, our address is:

Audubon of Southwest Florida
P.O. Box 61041, Fort
Myers, FL 33906-1041

**Audubon
Southwest
Florida
thanks you
for your
continued
support!**



Valerie Heldt, photographer

ASWF is a sponsor of Eco-Voice.org

<http://www.eco-voice.org/>

Every morning before 6 a.m. a selection of news items, great photos, and announcements of environmental events relevant to South Florida, along with links to sources and additional information, is emailed to subscribers and posted to our Facebook page.

Check it out!



Teddy Rodenfels, photographer

Membership

Audubon of Southwest Florida, while an affiliated chapter of the National Audubon Society, is, like all other local chapters, a separate organization (chapter code E33). We are including you in our annual mailing in the hope that you will consider joining our local chapter if you are not currently a member, or renewing your current annual membership. Annual calendar-year memberships may be renewed either on-line at our website, or by using the enclosed envelope. We appreciate your support; it enables us to continue the good work our chapter does to protect our local resources.



Jose Padilla, photographer



Teddy Rodenfels, photographer

Required Statements

Mission Statement and Required Charitable Solicitation Statement:

The mission of Audubon of Southwest Florida is to protect plants, animals, and their habitats and to promote environmental education and a greater community involvement with the natural world. ASWF is an affiliated chapter (E33) of the National Audubon Society and Audubon of Florida.

A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE WITHIN THE STATE 1-800-435-7352 OR BY VISITING WWW.FLORIDAConsumerHELP.COM. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE. THE FLORIDA REGISTRATION NUMBER FOR AUDUBON OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA IS CH30193

Tax Advice for Charitable Giving

Please remember Audubon of Southwest Florida. If you are 70 1/2 or older, you are eligible for a great tax break! You can give directly from a traditional IRA to a 501(c)(3) charity (such as Audubon of Southwest Florida) without declaring that amount as taxable income (as you would a regular IRA withdrawal). Contact your financial advisor and ask about making a Qualified Charitable Distribution before year-end if you are interested.