Monofilament Cleanup

Five intrepid explorers set off into the face of a cold front (can you say wind, choppy seas, salt spray, rain, and cold) Saturday morning to clean monofilament fishing line from Island marker 26 which is an Audubon protected bird sanctuary in St Joseph’s sound. This island has nesting brown pelicans, cormorants, herons, and egrets. In the summer it is a roost for frigate birds. Due to navigational error (I’ll learn someday) we first landed at Island marker 24. After realizing our error we went to the correct island and proceeded to clean up quite a bit of monofilament line with ten bobbers, one sinker, and a couple of hooks. There was one residual wing skeleton attached to a piece of line. We also gathered up quite a bit of trash. By the time we were done the front had passed and all we had to contend with on the way home was the cold. All in all a successful outing.
Audubon Assembly 2013

The 2013 Audubon Assembly took place Oct 25-26 at Innisbrook and was attended by about 250 folks from all over the state. A number of Clearwater members attended. The event started with field trips Friday AM. I led one to Honeymoon Island assisted by Sid Crawford with his incredible knowledge base. The Friday noon welcome luncheon was followed by learning sessions on habitat stewardship, citizen science, conservation wins, and policy/advocacy. The evening awards banquet featured outstanding volunteers from around the state and an inspiring talk by Dr. Reed Bowman on Florida scrub jays and Jay Watch (headed by our own Marianne Korosy). Saturday morning field trips were led by Paul Trunk and Anastasia Steinbrunner followed by learning sessions on GIS mapping, storytelling, and conservation priorities. The event concluded with Saturday lunch, more awards and a talk by Dr. Paul Gray on the critically endangered Florida grasshopper sparrow (might be the next species in the U.S. to go extinct following its cousin the dusky seaside sparrow). CAS did receive a few awards which will be displayed and detailed at the December pot luck.

Left: John Hood receiving an award for service to the AF board, the William Dutcher award, and Best Chapter Display award.

Right: John raising an imaginary glass to toast Audubon

Photos were taken by Charles Lee.

Join Clearwater Audubon for a Trip to Israel

November 8-18, 2014
Click here for itinerary
Program Profiles for Clearwater Audubon Society (CAS):
Reef Monitoring Off the Pinellas Coast

-Cynthia Kluss

The November program was an evening under the sea with our guide, Dr. Heyward Mathews. We learned about the ongoing scientific research and discovery below the waters off the coasts of Pinellas County. A lot has been going on there over the past four decades. Dr. Mathews, professor emeritus of oceanography and marine science with St. Petersburg College, founded the Pinellas County Artificial Reef program and Clearwater Marine Science Center. The Science Center is now the Clearwater Marine Aquarium. In 2010, in response to the Gulf oil spill, he formed Reef Monitoring, Inc. Since then, the monitoring team has conducted about 140 surveys of the Gulf waters. These activities include debris round-ups of crab trap rope and other man-made items that cause life threatening problems for diving birds and sea turtles, among other life forms.

Over the past four decades, Dr. Mathews transformed and expanded underwater studies in our area by training students and sports divers to become skilled marine observers and collectors of scientific data. He expanded knowledge about Tampa Bay and the eastern Gulf of Mexico through the publication of numerous scientific papers on artificial reefs. To date, the artificial reef program, that he founded, built fourteen reefs.

Active impact analysis of the reefs are part of investigative studies comparing the robustness of artificial to natural reef habitats in the Gulf of Mexico. A lion fish round-up is also conducted through Dr. Mathews’ organizations. In addition, he provides students conducting research an opportunity to share their knowledge with experts and the public through annual symposiums. The next one is scheduled for April, 2014.

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Program Profiles (cont.)

For more information and ways to support Dr. Mathews’ work with the reef monitoring program, check-out www.reefmonitoring.org. Reef Monitoring, Inc. is a 501(c)3, tax exempt entity, with the mission as a “research organization dedicated to the scientific study of Florida’s natural and artificial reef systems”. The expertise provided by Reef Monitoring includes marine research; reef site mapping, planning, and analysis; and photography with videography.

Bottom: Our Light Trap studies are helping us to solve the age-old debate about whether artificial reefs actually increase biomass or simply concentrate existing.

Reef Clean-Up!

Our Reef Clean-Ups have been a huge success thanks to the participation of hundreds of fellow divers!

All photos in this article were provided by: Reef Monitoring, Inc.

Just a brief word about the October program; the scheduled speakers were unavoidably occupied on the day of the presentation. They have rescheduled and will share their experiences in Antarctica for the October, 2014 program. Instead, those attending in October viewed the film by Elam Stoltzfus, Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition: Everglades to Okefenokee 1000 Miles in 100 Days. For more information about the Florida Wildlife Corridor ongoing project explore www.FloridaWildlifeCorridor.org.

A big thank you goes out to the Hospitality Committee for their time and delicious contributions for the October and November meetings. Their attention to detail was expressed by being prepared for the change to the standard program model. The annual Pot Luck and CAS projects update meeting will be December 2nd. Ideas or programs you desire to share with the Clearwater Audubon Society membership for the October, 2014 to May, 2015 season are welcome. Just send your ideas along to programs@clearwateraudubon.com or call 727-539-1321. Help with programs and hospitality is always welcome. If you wish to participate in the planning and preparation process, just let us know.
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Winter Sparrow Drives 2014

Now accepting signups for volunteers for sparrow drives this winter:

Sat. Jan 18th - Weekiwachee Preserve, Hernando County
Sat. Feb 1st - Weekiwachee Preserve Hernando County

Volunteers will walk in lines through the grass and short shrubs, flushing sparrows and other grassland birds into a long line of mist nets for capture and banding. You will be able to see and photograph wintering grassland sparrows up close as birds are removed from mist nets and at the banding station on site. Terrain is uneven ground with grass and most shrubs not more than thigh-high on a 6’ tall person.

At the Weekiwachee Preserve site, likely captures are Henslow’s, Le Conte’s, Grasshopper, Swamp, and Savannah sparrows.

Email for more information and to sign up.

Marianne Korosy
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Download our 2013-14 Field Trip and Program Brochure.
Spoonbill Spotlight

These photos were taken by our own Lyn Sumerson at Belleair pond.

Scientific name: Ajaja ajaja
Rank: Species
Higher classification: Platalea
Organizations We Support

Audubon of Florida

St. Petersburg Audubon Society

Important Bird Areas in Florida

Great Florida Birding Trail

Florida Ornithological Society

Friends Of Brooker Creek Preserve

Dunedin Osprey Cam

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If you need a store room, see them and please mention Clearwater Audubon Society.