

Wing Beat

We represent Audubon Society members in Northern Pinellas County and provide services to all who are interested: free local field trips with expert birders; inexpensive extended field trips within the US and to other locales, free monthly programs, volunteer & networking opportunities within the local conservation community; scholarships to local summer camps and speakers for a variety of classrooms and groups.

-Florida Audubon Reminder



Audubon FLORIDA

Holiday Weekend Beach Tips

- Give colony islands a wide berth, and when fishing, be sure not to leave any equipment behind.
- Avoid disturbing groups of birds. If birds take flight or appear agitated, you are too close.
- If you must walk your dog on beaches, always keep them on a leash and away from the birds.
- Respect posted areas, even if you don't see birds inside them. Birds, eggs and nests are well-camouflaged within the beach environment, and a single disturbance can cause the abandonment of an entire colony.
- Refrain from walking dogs or allowing cats to roam freely on beaches during the nesting season.
- Do not let pets off boats onto posted islands or beaches.
- Do not bury or leave trash, picnic leftovers, charcoal or fish scraps on the beach. They attract predators of chicks and eggs, such as fish crows, raccoons, foxes, and laughing gulls.
- Leave the fireworks at home and attend an official display instead. Impromptu fireworks on Florida's beaches and waterways can have catastrophic effects for vulnerable chicks and eggs.



Photo by Mac Stone

Audubon Florida's Holiday Beach Tips

Clearwater Audubon Society

<http://clearwateraudubonsociety.org/>

February- March 2015

Vol. 63 No. 1

Supporting our community since 1959

Our Motto: Conservation through Education

For more information call us at 727-442-9140





CAS Programs Land Management and Great Horned Owls

-Cynthia Kluss

The December, 2014 program topic on Environmental Land Use and Management (ELUM) was provided by Katie MacMillen, a biological technician with the Pasco County Environmental Lands Division. Katie works in the ELUM of the Environmental Lands Division (ELD). The ELD reports to the Engineering Department of the Development Services Branch. Since Pinellas County contains limited parcels of undeveloped land, the closest comparable governing unit here covers zoning and/or land use permits.

In 2000 a settlement resolving a dispute between Pasco County government and a non-governmental organization led to the formation of the ELD. The dispute focused on the impacts of development on wetlands, environmentally sensitive lands, and listed species. The settlement caused revisions which protected some natural resources to be added to the Comprehensive Plan. The division carries out the “Enhance Quality of Life” goal and the “conserve, protect, and manage Pasco County’s resources” objectives.

Katie explained that the division staffing has increased to meet demand. In 2005 there were two employees; now there are seven. The division works with many Pasco organizations including the West Pasco Audubon Society and the Pasco chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society. Passage of the Florida constitution amendment for Florida Land and Water Conservation Initiative and the Penny for Pasco dollars will help the ELAMP (Environmental Lands Acquisition and Management Program) in Pasco County.

The ELAMP process was introduced by Katie and explained with several maps showing the target areas. Pasco County aims for three targets when buying environmentally sensitive lands: 1. in the critical linkages which allow movement among previously-conserved public lands; 2. in eight Ecological Planning Units; and 3. in the 96,000-acre agricultural reserve. Those components yield a conservation strategy for the ELAMP.

February 21, 2015
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CAS Programs (cont.)

Ecotourism is defined as visitors who come from more than 80 miles away to visit Pasco County natural resources. The phrase “heads in beds” helps make good business sense to the community. The location of Pasco County is considered a geographical link between the Green Swamp and Gulf beaches.

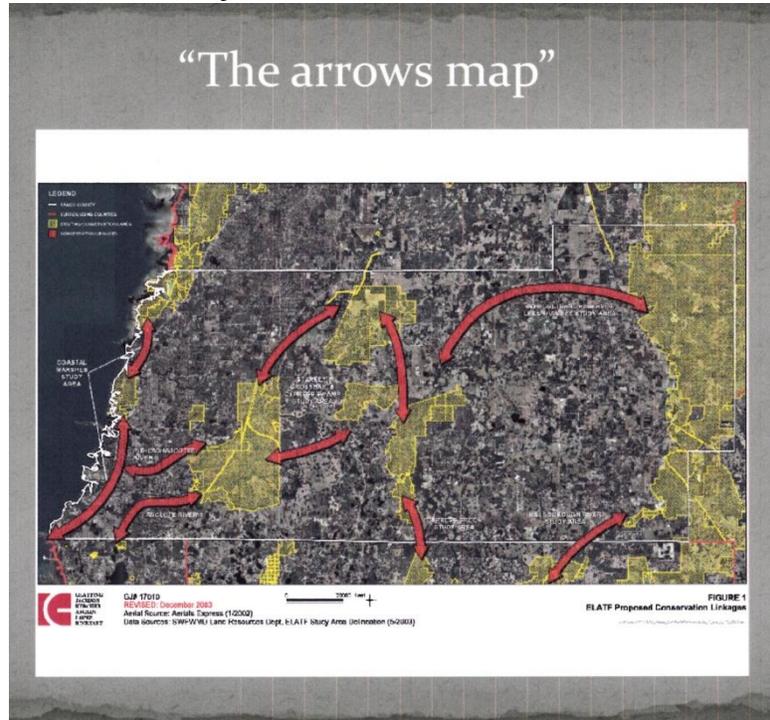
The “Arrows Map” (slide included with article) illustrates how critical linkages allow wildlife, seeds, and other organisms to move between larger public land tracts. Land corridors are recommended to be at least 2000 feet wide. The wildlife crossings are considered safer as overpasses since flooding occurs with enough frequency to make underpasses life threatening. Conserving larger land tracts decreases the edge or interior ratio, which reduces developmental impacts on ecosystems and on native species’ habitats.

More detailed information can be obtained from the following reports:

Glatting-Jackson Wildlife Habitat Protection Study report, 22 pages
<www.pascocountyfl.net/DocumentCenter/Home/View/359>, July 28, 2009; provides more information on the linkage mandate.

2013 Urban Land Institute Report, 50 pages,
<www.uli.org/advisory-service-panels/pasco-county-florida-advisory-services-panel>, October 6, 2013
another special guest, Archimedes GHO. For more up close Birds of Prey encounters, Boyd Hill Nature Preserve will be hosting its 2nd annual Raptor Fest on February 7 from 10AM – 4PM with free admission. For more information you can check at:
www.RaptorFest.org.

Presentation slides by: Katie MacMillen



9 Examples of Ecosystem Services (Ecoservices)

- Deep sands recharge aquifers.
- Natural communities provide essential forage, resting and roosting spots for local and migratory birds.
- One 40-year old tree can sequester 1 ton of CO₂ from the atmosphere.
- Plants hold soil, prevent erosion, soften both the vertical and horizontal force of storms.
- Plants slow down surface and ground water, filtering out disease, pollutants, sediments.

9 Examples of Ecosystem Services (Ecoservices), cont'd

- Pollinators, especially native bees and bumblebees, support large and small agriculture.
- Recreation such as hiking, birding, camping, kayaking and photography help destimulate humans.
- Salt marshes, mangrove forests and barrier islands protect coastal human structures.
- Wetland soils are sponge-like, soaking up waters during storms and releasing them slowly later.



CAS Programs (cont.)

The January program began with a brief photo and movie tour of Kapok and an introduction to the GHO family, parents and two owlets, residing there. The timeframe was from April into June (photos enclosed). There was also a movie of a Limpkin, which demonstrated the diversity found in Kapok along with that found in Moccasin Lake Nature Park and Cliff Stephens Park. The proximity of those three parks is worthy of being included in the Great Florida Birding Trail. We will find out soon if the application for inclusion in the Trail guide will be approved.



Photo by: Wendy Hoogsteden

Gabriel Vargo shared some general knowledge about the Great Horned Owl (GHO), Bubo Virginianus. The species is wide ranging on the North and South American continents. There are over 20 subspecies including color morphologies. Adult lengths and weights vary between 45 – 63 cm and 800-2500 gms respectively. The wing span averages between 91-152 cms. Prey species include insects, small mammals, and other large birds. The GHO is one of the few predators that find skunks as the makings for a fine meal. Their sense of smell is nonexistent. Flight speeds clocked to 40 mph make GHOs highly successful hunters. Nesting begins in January or February. The owlet development generally follows the stages of branching in 6-7 weeks and fledging in 9-10 weeks. The owlets remain close to parents through late September of their birth year. Wild species studied live from 20-30 years. The National Audubon Society climate report found limited concern with GHO extinction due to climate change. The GHOs are still vulnerable to habitat decline.

Archimedes was introduced to the CAS membership by Nora Gaunt (photos included with article). Nora provided more details on the GHO eating, flight, and grooming habits. Overtime she has built a strong handler trust with Archi, as he is called by his friends. Nocturnal hunting adaptations are enhanced by sighting capacity, hearing, and silent flight.

The GHOs have been observed raising young in Kapok for almost a decade. This provides an amazing opportunity for Citizen Science projects. Those interested in organizing and participating in such a study can contact a CAS board member or check with the following Citizen Science groups Audubon of Florida Eagle Watch or the National Wildlife Federation www.nwf.org/Wildlife/Wildlife-Conservation/Citizen-Science.aspx

Thank you to those excellent chefs that shared their hospitality with the CAS members in December and January.



CAS Programs (cont.)

All photos courtesy of Cynthia Kluss

December program with Katie M



January program with Gabriel V, Nora G.,
and Archimedes



Below: Kapok owlets, 2014





Officers of Clearwater Audubon Society

Membership

[Membership Application](#)

Size : 141,717 Kb

Type : pdf

Monthly Meetings

October – May

The first Monday of each month at Moccasin Lake Nature Park:

Meet and Greet @ 6:30PM

Public Program @ 7:00PM

(Unless otherwise noted)

First meeting is October 6

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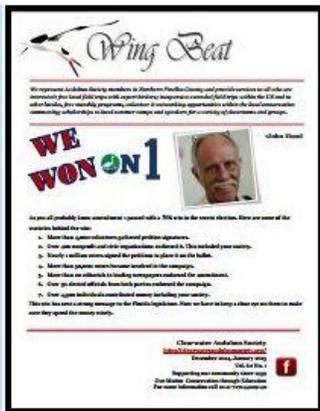
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Did you miss the last WingBeat?
Click above to read it online.

"A Boater's Guide to Clearwater Harbor & St. Joseph's Sound including Three Rooker Island, the Anclote Keys and Anclote Bar" is now available online.



click picture to view



Moccasin Lake Work Day

-John Hood

On Saturday Jan 10th under the auspices of Tampa Bay Estuary Program about 35 volunteers participated in a work day. They were divided in to 3 teams and ventured forth to clean up and kill.

One team went out on the paths and boardwalk and picked up an amazing amount of trash, litter, and debris. Since it was a bit chilly they couldn't venture into the water above the weir but did clean up around the edges.

A second team did weeding and plant removal in the native and non-native butterfly gardens. The native plant butterfly garden in front next to the classroom is being augmented by a non-native butterfly garden behind it. A large amount of biomass was removed from these areas. The non-native garden will now have more sunlight and should do better.



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Moccasin Lake Work Day (cont.)

The third team went out to the bird blind area and tackled large beds of Caesar weed and an infestation of rosary pea. This involved hand pulling of the young plants and the stripping of seeds from the mature ones and then pulling them. The rosary pea seed pods were removed and the vines pulled.

All teams collected air potatoes as they were found. The air potato beetle is present in the park so as time passes the biomass of the potato should decrease.

Clearwater mayor George Cretokos was present and was down on his hands and knees pulling Caesar weed.

At the end of the work day a very nice presentation was given by Barb Walker with Patch a grey morph eastern screech owl and Lindsey Day with Taka a red shouldered hawk.



Cedar Key, November 2014

-Madeleine Bohrer

Have you ever closed your eyes after a day's worth of birding and just let the images of your day fly through your mind? On an overnight trip to Cedar Key in mid-November, we drove into town at sunset Friday evening, started birding at 6:30am the following morning and didn't stop until 5:00pm. We sadly drove away leaving the same alluring sunset that had greeted us 24 hours earlier. The birding on such trips is so intense that I have to take notes so that I do not forget the images of the scenery—birds, terrain, people—the works! There is so much to see, all of it precious and beautiful.

Close your eyes with me and picture the first sight of our birding day: an orange-pink sunrise over an open bay, two sailboats in quiet repose, flock after flock of Black Skimmers dark against the new light, threading their way in waves through the icy sky. Sanderlings, Willets, and Semipalmated Plovers, feeding on the beach. It was freezing cold...well to us it is freezing in the 40's. If I had ended my day at that very moment, I would have been perfectly contented. The key curves around in such a way that we could see the sun, pulling itself out of the bay, confusing us as we didn't expect such a glorious sunrise on the west coast.

Wintering Common Loons fly overhead, pale and ghostly, dangling their feet behind them. We had five dove species—Rock, Collared, Mourning, White-winged, and Common Ground. Bald Eagle after Bald Eagle, soaring, sharing the skies with Ospreys and Black and Turkey Vultures, watching the world twirl below from hundreds of feet. Is it any wonder that we are humbled and awed by birds?



Dale Goebel organized this trip and asked Rex Rowan, our inveterate guide from Payne's Prairie near Gainesville, to escort us through this unique area: shallow waters perfect for harvesting oysters and clams and feeding scores of birds: White Pelicans, American Oystercatchers, Great Egrets, Dunlins, American Avocets, Western and Least Sandpipers, Willets, White Ibis and, in more recent years, Reddish Egrets.

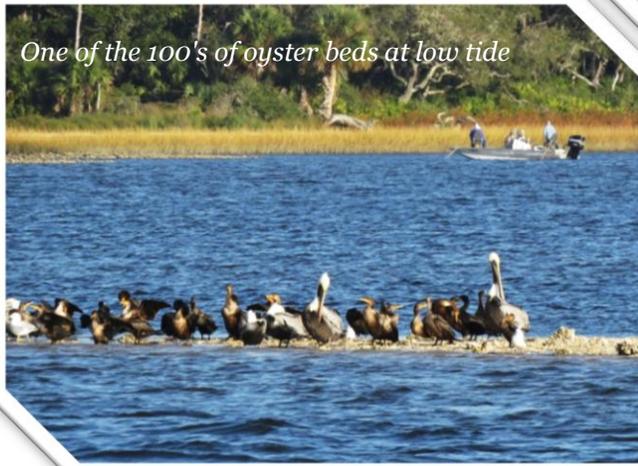
All photos courtesy of Dale Goebel



Cedar Key Sunrise



House Wren



One of the 100's of oyster beds at low tide



Brown Pelican (immature)

Cedar Key Group minus Mariella Greenan and Liz Drayer





Cedar Key, November 2014 (cont.)

Cedar Key in the winter is seemingly lost in time, narrow one-way streets lined by old wooden structures with teetering, ornately scrolled porches. One of these was our hotel—so inviting and old-fashioned with photos from the early 1900s on the walls and tales of ghosts haunting the hallways. A mere 700 people call Cedar Key home. A few minutes from town by the airport and graveyard, you can see a variety of warblers, woodpeckers, kinglets, wrens, chickadees, kingfishers, dunlin, avocets, egrets and herons. One House Wren perched on a stick, chattering away. Do you think he realized a dozen people were watching him? A lone Spotted Sandpiper plucked a crustacean from among the jagged oysters. Every place we stopped was a stone's throw from mudflats and water and views of the many island outcroppings from the National Wildlife Refuge. Some of our group's keen ears heard Sandhill Cranes calling and sure enough, three flew overhead—apparently the first our guide had seen here in 25 years. This, along with the recently seen visiting Reddish Egrets, points to a healthy, enticing bird environment. One roadside gem gave us a Clapper Rail, a Sora, and my new favorite Sparrow: the Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow—its golden brown and gray feathers blending so sweetly with the fall reeds.



Madeleine Bohrer



*Nelson's
Sharp-tailed
Sparrow*



American Avocet

Even our lunch was special: we had an award-winning clam chowder and believe me, it was necessary. It stayed icy cold until after noontime and we had to thaw out before our pontoon boat ride through the oyster flats—the essence of the water world at Cedar Key. One key was packed with White Pelicans; another with Oystercatchers and Skimmers; others with Cormorants mixed with terns and gulls. In the far, far distance there was a pearly string of easily thousands of White Pelicans, appearing and disappearing as they turned through the sky. We saw two diving Common Loons, a Horned Grebe, and a small flotilla of male and female Buffleheads. Dolphins followed our wake and one made a huge arching jump completely out of the water! It must have picked up on the pure joy we all felt for being in such a uniquely beautiful place. Now, what do you see when you close your eyes?



North Pinellas Christmas Bird Count 2014

-Paul Trunk

58 participants braved the near perfect temperatures birds on the 27th of December. We found a total of 149 species. Highlights include a Rusty Blackbird at Brooker Creek Preserve, 40+ White-winged Doves, Common Goldeneye and Broad-winged Hawk were also seen. A big thank you to those that participated this year.

To learn more about the Florida Audubon Christmas Bird Count:

<http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>



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Gulls vs. Terns: Skim or Dive?

-Shutterbug: Lynn Sumerson

The loudest and most noticeable birds on the beach are typically terns and gulls. If you have not considered them at all, you probably cannot tell the difference. Lynn Sumerson can tell the difference from a distance, and here is why.



In a feeding frenzy, there is one major difference: Terns typically dive straight into the water from 20 to 50 feet in the air to catch fish. Gulls do not dive.

They may swoop down and scoop a fish from the surface, but not dive beak first like terns.

Large fish here (green) are driving smaller feeder fish to the surface where terns, gulls and pelicans can feed.



[Click here to download](#)  a copy of CAS Field Trips and Programs for 2014-2015



2nd Annual

Raptor Fest

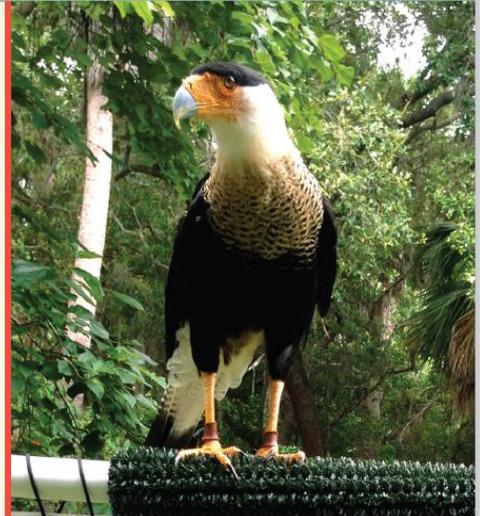
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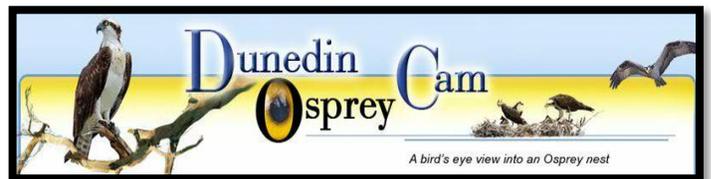
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