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This Month's Program: December 21, 2006 - 6:30pm
March of the Penguins

In the harshest place on earth, love finds a way. March of the Penguins illustrates a year of raising a chick by the Emperor Penguin against all odds in the frozen Antarctic.

For Orange Audubon Society’s holiday get-together, we will be showing this exquisite movie starting at 6:30 PM, so children can more easily attend. There will be plenty of refreshments, including popcorn.

Please join us December 21 for this inspiring nature program and holiday Audubon event.

Deborah Green, Vice President

December Field Trip - Join a Christmas Bird Count

No OAS field trips are scheduled for December. Please participate in a Christmas Bird Count. The 50,000+ birders that participate can’t be wrong. See details on page 3.

October Field Trip Report  Mary Keim, Field Trip Chair

Twenty attended the OAS field trip to Lake Norris Conservation Area on November 18th. This cool, clear day gave us beautiful lighting with Sweetgum and Virginia Creeper in bright fall color. Forty-five bird species were observed including Ruddy Duck, Red-shouldered Hawk, American Coot, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, Am. Crow, Eastern Bluebird, Am. Robin, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Am. Goldfinch.

Nine butterfly species were seen including Barred Yellow, Sleepy Orange, Ceranus Blue, Red Admiral, and Common Buckeye. In bloom were Wireweed (Polygonella gracilis), Climbing Aster (Aster carolinianus), Beggar-ticks (Bidens mitis) and Flattop Goldenrod (Euthamia caroliniana). Other sightings included wide-based Bald Cypress at Lake Norris and Whitetail Deer. It was a nice day to be outside!
Announcing OAS’ Beginning Bird Watching Class

Back by popular demand and just in time for spring migration! Orange Audubon Society’s (OAS) 2007 Beginner’s Bird Watching Class (BBWC), instructed by Tom Williams, will help you master the rewarding and fast-growing “sport” of bird watching. The course includes 2 classroom and 2 field sessions:

- Class Sessions: January 27th and February 3rd * 9 a.m. – noon * Rollins College.
- Field Session 1: February 10th * (Time TBA) * Mead Gardens.
- Field Session 2: February 17th * (Time TBA) * Orlando Wetlands Park.

Tom Williams, past president of OAS and retired education curator for the Central Florida Zoo, began birding in 1970 and has been sharpening his skills ever since. Through previous educational classes for OAS and Harry P. Leu Gardens, Williams has helped novice and experienced birders sharpen their skills and enjoyment of bird watching. You will learn to use sight, sound, behavior, habitat and other techniques of identification.

Registration fees, which include handout materials and parking at Rollins College, are:

- Audubon members - $25 registration fee,
- Non-members - $40 registration fee, or
- Non-members who join OAS concurrently when enrolling - $45 ($20 introductory membership rate includes annual 3-way membership in Orange and National Audubon Societies and Audubon of Florida) + $25 registration fee.

The course will be limited to 15 students. To reserve your space, send a check payable to Orange Audubon Society (marked for BBWC) to: P.O. Box 941142, Maitland, FL 32794-1142. Please include your name, address and contact information (and completed membership application if joining OAS). For more information, contact Tom Williams (407-332-5089); Teresa Williams (407-644-0796 or mwilliams@cfl.rr.com); or visit OAS’s website: www.orangeaudubonfl.org for membership forms and more. Hurry, you know what they say about the early bird!

Conservation News  PEGGY COX, CHAIR

Audubon of Florida has adopted several state-wide conservation strategies that were listed in the last Conservation Committee report in the OASis. One of the newest strategies is focusing on Global Warming and Climate Change. Several chapters around the State are also focusing on this issue, as it impacts all other strategies for preservation and protection of birds and their habitats.

In this area the Florida Renewable Energy Association is organizing a task force to work with Orlando Utilities (OUC) concerning the impacts of CO2 emissions from the new “clean” coal powered plant that OUC is building in east Orange County. This plant will be a U.S. Dept. of Energy demonstration project for the clean coal process. $235 million dollars are being provided by the Federal government to OUC for building the new plant. If you’re interested in helping with this task force in addressing the impacts of emissions and their effective on climate change, please let me know. The first meeting will be in mid-late January. You can learn more about this project and other climate change issues at the association’s website: www.cleanenergyflorida.org.

The ad hoc committee promoting a long-term environmental land acquisition program for Orange County, the Orange Wild Lands Committee (OWL) will be meeting in January with the Trust for Public Lands to discuss a possible 2008 ballot referendum for an ad valorem tax to be used for acquiring environmentally sensitive lands in Orange County. If you’re interested in helping in any effort for better ways to preserve and protect our environmental land resources, please call or email me. The OWL meeting is January 11th, in the evening, location yet to be determined.

I would like to explore the idea of having a half day class on teaching OAS members about the process of growth management rules and how our cities and counties decide what lands are available for development and what should be protected. Another idea would be to have a class to teach how water resources are protected through the regulations of the Water Management Districts and the Dept. of Environmental Protection. If you’re interested in learning about either of these processes, I would really like to hear from you. Sensitive bird and wildlife habitat is directly affected by the decisions that all municipalities make in the process of designing their growth management plans and land development regulations. It is directly impacted by regulations that govern water use and protection of water resources. We can make a difference if we understand the processes and are able to participate in the public hearings and discussions that are required for any changes to a growth management plan and other regulations that affect environmental resources.

Please let me know your ideas on these issues and any others that are affecting the OAS area. (pegcox@att.net / 352-429-1042). Thanks.
Impractical Final Exam

When you attend Hog Island Audubon Bird Camp the final exam is a word puzzle originated by Birdlife Instructor Allan D. Cruickshank. Here are a few of the questions. Answers on p5.
  What bird is a letter? Answer: Jay!

  Get the picture? Okay what bird:
  Is fast?
  Is slow?
  Is a wizard?
  Is acrid?
  Is uneven?
  Is a clown?
  Is sad?
  Is forbidden?
  Is a fish?
  Is silly?
  Has been seen?

Fort DeSoto Field Trip

The Fort DeSoto Park Field Trip is scheduled for April 13-14, 2007. We hope you will include it in your calendar planning now. This park in St. Petersburg offers a premier location for birding during spring migration, offering a large variety of species in their spring breeding plumage. For many of us, it gives opportunity to view northern breeding birds as well. Bird species counts have traditionally been impressive for a one day excursion. The park itself is a beautiful location on the gulf coast, with lots of wonderful natural habitats to visit and explore.

Arrangements have been made for us to stay at the Continuing Education Center at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Friday night, April 13th. This will allow us to get an early start for birding Saturday morning. You will need to provide your own transportation to St. Petersburg. The cost is $80.00 per room, which can accommodate two persons.

Sign-up sheets will be available at each Audubon meeting beginning in December. We encourage you to sign up as early as possible, since there are a limited number of rooms.

If you have any questions concerning the trip, please contact Ted or Gaye Smith at (407) 249-3969 or email us at smith_ted_gaye@bellsouth.net.

Join in the 107th Annual Christmas Bird Count!

The 107th annual Christmas Bird Count season is rapidly approaching; compilers and participants are finalizing their plans and eagerly anticipating what birds, weather, and exciting times will come their way. Please consider joining your fellow birders who will be outside counting birds for the 107th Annual Christmas Bird Count, dubbed the oldest and largest citizen science event in the world! CBCs across the Americas will take place from December 14th, 2006 to January 5th, 2007. Local birders are needed to help in gathering data critical to our understanding bird population trends, species’ geographic expansions or declines and to aid in general avian conservation nationwide. Contacts for local CBCs are listed below so please contact them if you can help in any way or if you need details. It’s a great excuse to be out birding while helping collect valuable data.

Wekiva River Basin – Dec. 16th — Jay Exum [407-804-1331; jexum@glatting.com]
Merritt Island NWR – Dec. 18th — Jim Pedersen [321-267-4981; pedersenj@adelphia.net]
   or Ned Steel [321-452-1140; nedsteel@msn.com]
Econlockhatchee – Dec. 23th — Lorne Malo [407-659-4853(w), 407-349-2536(h)]

Past President’s Article: Introductions  by Greg Bretz, 1980–1982

My introduction to birding began in 1974 when I chauffeured my mother to and from a course on bird identification taught by Ira Weigly. Ira was an enthusiastic instructor who took an interest in me and is the one who sparked my interest in birds. For the course finale, Ira led the class on a field trip to Ft. DeSoto Park in St. Petersburg. It was in late April and it happened to be one of those magical “fall-out” days that the park is famous for. The many species of warblers, tanagers, buntings, orioles and grosbeaks were everywhere. On that day, the hook was set.

The following year Ira found out that I was observing a least tern colony that was located on the roof of a shopping center near where I lived. Ira introduced me to Herb Kale who was the ornithologist at Florida Audubon Society. Herb got me involved in the world of citizen science. He obtained a U.S.F. & W. banding permit for me and we had years of enjoyment banding least terns at half-a-dozen colonies in the Central Florida area. This led to helping with field observations for the Florida Breeding Bird Atlas, various Christmas bird counts and assisting with other Orange Audubon members in the compilation of data for creating bird checklists for a number of State Parks.

Herb introduced me to Becky Payne with Orange Audubon. Becky paved the way for my election to the OAS board of directors. A number of years on the board led to my term as president.

Becky also introduced me to my best friend, Ted Robinson. Ted introduced me to the “sport” of birding. For the last 18 years Ted and I have birded the 4 corners of North America and most of the spots in-between. Traveling to remote and fascinating areas, the fun and education in pursuing the astoundingly diverse avifauna around us (and the exhilaration of finding a rare one), meeting and enjoying the company of the people who live in as varied environments as the birds that we seek ……. I don’t believe that I could have found a more enjoyable pastime. My wife Dawn was a willing and eager accomplice from the start and the same aspects have provided us with many a memorable vacation.

This journey has taken me from learning about something new in the world of nature, to science and field research, to conservation and to travel and exploration. I believe that there are a lot of people out there in the world who could find something in that list to get excited about.

So my message is this. Do for others what others have done for me. If you see a young person with interest, help nurture it. Give someone an encouraging nudge if the opportunity presents itself. Take time to inspire the curious. Like me, it could start someone on a life-long adventure that they did not even know was there.
Valencia to Offer Florida Birds Class in the Spring

Are you looking for a supplement to OAS’ Beginning Bird Watching Class? Are you or do you know a teacher that could use recertification points? Or are you just looking for an outdoor, interactive, and fun way to earn 3 biology credits and learn about birds in our state? If either applies to you, check out the Florida Birds class that will be taught this spring at Valencia Community College’s Winter Park Campus by OAS VP Leesa Sward.

When:
- Fridays: Feb 16 & 23 6:00p-8:00p
- Saturdays: Feb 17 & 24 8:15a-12:15p
- Saturdays: Marc 3 & 10 8:00a-2:00p

Where:
- Winter Park Campus of VCC
- Area Parks (Leu Gardens, Mead Gardens, Merritt Island NWR, and more)

For more information on how to register for this class, please contact Patti Riva at 407-582-6845 (BSC 2933, CRN 23386). For more information about the class, please get in touch with Dr. Leesa Sward at L.Sward@valenciacc.edu or 407-582-6925.

Lake Eola Festival Results & Kudos to Volunteers

OAS wishes to thank Christine Brown, Milton Heiberg, Claire Hilliker, Cyndi and Michael Kay, Susan Ledbetter, Danielle Ponsolle, Richard Poole, Ellen Rocco, Dick Smith, Gaye and Ted Smith and Leesa Sward, without whom OAS’ participation on November 4th and 5th at the Lake Eola Fiesta in the Park Arts and Crafts Festival would not have been possible. Thanks also to Loretta Satterthwaite, who assisted with much of the preparations, but was out of town during the event, and to Mary Keim and Randy Snyder for the perpetual use of their tables.

This two-day weekend event plus setup Friday and tear-down Sunday nights, requires many volunteer-hours, of which there was a shortage. Despite a skeleton crew, the event was successful, yielding about 27% of this year’s budgeted gross special events’ revenue. Thanks again to those who made it possible.

Teresa Williams, Treasurer

Second Hawk ID Class Review

On November 11th, twenty five people participated in another excellent session at the Lake Apopka Restoration Area (LARA). Weather was once again very favorable for hawks and people. Temperatures were warm, the sky was clear to partly cloudy and there was virtually no wind. We covered the area from the Lust Rd. gate to the lake and over to Hooper Road.

Including vultures, ten species of raptores were seen. As in October, we had many excellent opportunities to study hawks. Highlights and points of interest:

- Harriers, harriers, and more harriers! Northern Harriers were literally everywhere (I estimated as least 150). Immature birds were still the most numerous but this time several adult females and males were seen. We observed them sitting on the ground, hunting, feeding on prey, flying around, harassing turkey vultures and each other, and soaring at altitude.
- At least 20 to 30 Bald Eagles are still there.
- 10 or more Ospreys.
- 1 Sharp-shinned Hawk.
- 3 Cooper's Hawks.
- At least 20 Red-shouldered Hawks.
- At least 15 Red-tailed Hawks.
- About 10 American Kestrels (alas, no Merlins or Peregrines this time).
- 50 Black Vultures and 200 or more Turkey Vultures.
- About 50 other bird species were also seen including: Black-crowned Night Heron, Ruddy Ducks, Purple Gallinule, House Wren, and Brown-headed Cowbird.

Our next Hawk ID Class is scheduled for January 13th. I can’t wait!

Peace.

Bob Sanders

Ecological Restoration ‘On-Track’ at Genius Reserve

OAS extends thanks to volunteers who participated in its second workday at the Genius Reserve, Winter Park on November 12th. Before work began, Bruce Stephenson, Rollins College professor who is leading the restoration effort, gave a brief overview of the reserve, noting that the ten-year ecological restoration plan, now in year four, is right on schedule.

Stephenson answered burning questions such as: “What is a weed?” and “Which weeds should be removed?” Afterwards sixteen OAS volunteers, about a dozen Rollins students and others armed themselves with garden tools and made history of bad weeds; mulched; and planted native grass, wild coffee, and cedar plus non-native milkweed plants (many raised on-site from the reserve’s seed/seedling stock) in the newly restored cedar grove along Lake Mizell.

One could not have asked for a nicer day or setting for outdoor work. A Red-shouldered hawk’s cries carried on the refreshing breeze. Mary Keim, one of several native plant aficionados present, identified Cat’s-claw vine, which is a very bad weed (to remove, dig deep else it creeps back on little subterranean cat’s feet). Fire ants launched surprise attacks, but all victims survived and were reminded that plants are not Florida’s only invasive species.

As restoration transforms the Genius Reserve back into a scene of old Florida, the reasons Winter Park became a winter retreat for Charles Hosmer Morse, a Chicago industrialist who bought the land in 1921, become more evident. The reserve remains a vital winter retreat for “northerners” of another kind — migratory birds such as the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and winter hummingbird spotted near our work site. Black-and-white Warbler, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Tufted Titmouse and Yellow-throated Vireo were among the other species seen as we left the reserve.

If you wish to help on OAS’ next restoration workday (in February or March), contact me (407-644-0796 or mwilliams@cfl.rr.com) and watch for details in upcoming issues of the OASis. Teresa Williams
You drive down a country road near Bremen in mid coastal Maine and finally see lobster boats. A stone's throw across the water is Hog Island, a 300-acre island owned by National Audubon since the mid 1930s. Bungalows and a dining room from an earlier camp are where you will stay, eat, and learn. But the gorgeous forest of red and black spruce and white pine covering the majority of the island with its nesting warblers, nuthatches, and kinglets, and its setting in Muscongus Bay with its loons and surf scoters, is what makes this place so unique. You are greeted by camp staff, your bags tagged with the number of your camp quarters, and soon head to the island in the Puffin IV to settle in for a fabulous week.

National Audubon let its four other camps go back to the state chapters but has held onto Hog Island in recognition of its historical legacy. Roger Tory Peterson was an early bird life instructor here, as was Rockledge's Allan D. Cruickshank. Today you may be taught by bird bander and natural history writer Scott Weidensaul or superbirder Kenn Kaufman and a handful of lesser known but outstanding Maine birders.

The kitchen is functioning early, so you can grab a cup of coffee or tea and join the instructors and fellow campers for early morning "bird stand," which is like a bird walk, but the birds come to us, high in the apple trees or spruces. All meals are fabulous and are a time to "pick the brains" of the instructors. Each instructor sits at the head of a table, and each meal you sit at the table of the instructor you want to talk with at that time. This results in a wonderful spontaneous shuffling around of the students, so everyone gets to know each other and has plenty of time to talk with the instructors. One person is "hopper," clearing the dishes, and voila! we are back to the cabins to gather our stuff for the next outing. Following a quick hop by boat to shore, the instructors take us by van to birding hot spots, including a hill traversed by migrating raptors and a marsh, with a distant coyote on the prowl.

We also explore Muscongus Bay looking for sea birds and learn about Audubon's successful efforts to restore populations of Atlantic Puffins. "Seabird Sue" Schubel, who twenty years ago began overseeing the nesting puffins on two rocky islands, tells us about the project. In fact, she lives across from Hog Island with her husband, Anthony, our boat captain and little naturalist daughter, and is the one who keeps an eye on things during the off season when ice covers parts of the bay.

Aside from meals, the day is spent in birding, but on our break time we have "Mystery of the Day" learning puzzles to solve. The Queen Mary lab is where the Mystery is laid out, and the library of books allow us to hopefully solve it. The lab has animals in aquaria and keeps an eye on things during the off season when ice covers parts of the bay.

A week flies by, and with good friends made, our concentration and appreciation of nature deepened, and our creative juices flowing, we sadly say goodbye. We automatically become members of the Friends of Hog Island, and many of us will be back. To see this year's camp schedule and prices, visit www.maineaudubon.org and click on "Hog Island" or call 1-888-325-5261 #215 for information. If you are a young birder wishing to attend the kids or teen session, contact your local chapter for availability of scholarships.

Answers to Impractical Final Exam

If you come up with any additional answers, email Deborah Green at sabal@cfl.rr.com. More next month.

Is fast? swift
Is slow? Brown creeper, snail kite, turtle dove
Is a wizard? merlin
Is acrid? Bittern, sulfur-bellied flycatcher
Is uneven? ruff
Is a clown? Harlequin duck, bobolink
Is sad? Mourning dove, bluebird
Is forbidden? Barred owl, robin
Is a fish? Kingfisher, herring gull
Is silly? Booby, loon, goose
Has been seen? Spotted owl, sawhet owl

See you at the Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival!

Once again, the Brevard Nature Alliance's festival organizers have outdone themselves in assembling one of the most outstanding line-ups ever for the upcoming Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival that will run January 24-28th, 2006. I, for one, scheduled time off from work months ago so as not to miss any of the festival events and activities and just can't wait for it all to start.

For those of you who've attended the festival in the past, you've probably noticed that the event moved from it's usual November to January. Although I heard some weather-related grumbling from a few, the date change will no doubt allow for all of our "wintering" species to be found, especially the ducks which were a hit-and-miss group in November. So bring a fleece and get ready to see MORE BIRDS!

To accommodate the incredible number of offerings to choose from this year, the festival will officially run five full days instead of four, from Wednesday through Sunday. Our challenge as attendees will be to choose which of the concurrent sessions and field trips to attend - argh! Wouldn't it be great to be able to be in two places at once? I certainly would appreciate knowing how that trick works as I'm having a hard time deciding how I'll fit all the field trips, seminars, workshops, and lectures I want to attend into those 5 days. At least there's only one Keynote per day...

For more information and for scheduling details, please visit their web site at www.nbbd.com/fly. See you in January!!!
Claire Hilliker, OASis editor.
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