



# Crested Caracara

## Hendry-Glades Audubon Society

January/March 2016

Audubon mission: To conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and their habitat for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.

### **Officers**

*Margaret England, President*  
*Butch Wilson, Vice-President*  
*Kim Willis, Secretary*  
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### **STA-5/6 2016 Schedule**

March 12, 19  
April 2, 16  
May 14

**Meetings** - 7:00 p.m. third Monday of the month September - May Meetings held at the Dallas Townsend Bldg., located at 1085 Pratt Blvd., LaBelle.

March 21, 2016 – Rhonda Roff  
“Climate Reality”

April 1/, 2016 – Julie Jeffers “Costa Rica Adventure”

May 16, 2016 – Mary Giddens & Sandy Woodall “Haines Alaska Bald Eagle Festival”



### **President's Message**

Since our last newsletter HGAS has been busy with bird surveys, bus trips, program presentations, and workshops. Over 500 birders or photographers attended the January and February 2016 driving trips hosted by Hendry-Glades Audubon. Participants register for these trips through the Eventbrite link at [www.hendrygladesaudubon.org](http://www.hendrygladesaudubon.org).

On January 2 HGAS held their 9<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count, participated in the February 5<sup>th</sup> Shorebird Survey plus the February 12-15 Great Backyard Bird Count and hosted monthly programs in LaBelle. Hendry-Glades Audubon organized a free US Sugar bus tour on December 8<sup>th</sup> for 45 South Florida Birders and others interested in learning about the Sugar and Citrus Industry. This trip included visits to the sugar mill, cane fields, and citrus processing plant.

Our chapter partnered with the Hendry County Agricultural Extension for 2 successful “Agricultural and Wildlife” bus tours lead by Gene McAvoy, Hendry County Extension Agent, on January 29 and March 3. Some of the highlights included visits to farms, ranches and the Ortona Indian Mound Park, touring blueberry patch, and observing the birds and wildlife. Watch for information about upcoming trips. The Clewiston Museum Friday van trips to STA 5/6 and Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum continue to be popular with visitors and residents alike for reservation contact Butch Wilson at [clewistonmuseum@embarqmail.com](mailto:clewistonmuseum@embarqmail.com) or contact him at 863-983-2870. Go to <http://clewistonmuseum.org/> to learn about the Clewiston Museum and its programs.

In January and February was invited to present programs on local birding at a luncheon at Crooked Hook RV Park, the Clewiston Garden Club, and Okeechobee County Library. Our chapter was asked if we would consider hosting programs during the day in Clewiston or Okeechobee on a regular basis. Please share your ideas or volunteer to help. Our chapter members live in Hendry, Glades, or Okeechobee County.

Add Austin and I attended the Audubon Academy held in Lake Placid. This was an opportunity to hear how chapters are engaging their communities in conservation education by learning about habitat, bird species, and migration. Through a 4-H grant I was able to attend Cornell's Habitat Connections Workshop on January 19 for K-12 grade student. HGAS will be partnering with 4-H the week after school ends in May to provide a 3-day camp using this curriculum which engages the students in learning about habitats and migration through games, obstacle courses, projects, exploration, and media. Are you interested in helping with this project?

Your ideas for programs and events or news articles and photos are needed.

*Margaret* [mleighthouse@embarqmail.com](mailto:mleighthouse@embarqmail.com), 863-674-0695 - cell: 863-517-0202, 380, Riverview Drive, LaBelle, FL 33935

# News You Can Use

## Project to restore Devil's Garden to natural state

**A \$150 million restoration project on land just north of Big Cypress Reservation is helping return 14,437 acres to its original state as a wet prairie with scattered cypress domes, tree-island hammocks, depression marshes and slough-ways.**

The land was purchased in 2010 and restoration of the first 2,800 acres is underway. Work on the remainder of the property, which is leased by U.S. Sugar's Southern Gardens Citrus for citrus production, will begin in 2018 when the lease ends.

Completion of the project is slated for 2021. Read the full story here: <http://seminoletribune.org/project-to-restore-devils-garden-to-natural-state/>



A street name sign addition has been placed at the entrance to STA 5/6 to better direct visitors. A nice addition indeed!

## **Annual Everglades Wading Bird Report Shows Decline in Key Indicator Species**

Last week the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) released the annual South Florida Wading Bird Report, which showed another year of poor nesting efforts for key indicator species. Compared to the 10-year average, nesting by **Wood Storks** was down 36%, **Snowy Egrets** down 51%, and **Little Blue Herons** down 70%.

Audubon Florida science staff contribute to the report and conclude that this continued population decline for birds like Snowy Egrets and Wood Storks demonstrates the urgent need for Everglades' restoration.

Click here to download Audubon's latest fact sheet.

[http://fl.audubon.org/sites/default/files/documents/audubon\\_wadingbirdreport\\_factsheet\\_february2016.pdf](http://fl.audubon.org/sites/default/files/documents/audubon_wadingbirdreport_factsheet_february2016.pdf)

## **STA 5/6 Update**

STA 5/6 (Stormwater Treatment Area 5/6)

Walk or bicycle on over 20 miles of levee roads at SFWMD's STA 5/6 (Stormwater Treatment Area 5/6) during daylight hours four days each week on Friday, Saturday, Sunday (except for fall/winter hunting), and Monday. This popular site known for bird watching, wildlife viewing, photography, hiking, or bicycling is located 28 miles south of Clewiston. Park at the STA 5/6 public access area which is 2 ½ miles east of the CR 835 and Deer Fence Canal Road intersection. Watch for the directional signs on CR 835. Amenities at STA 5/6 include 2 shelters with picnic tables and dry vault toilets.

For schedule or registration for the free driving trips hosted by Hendry-Glades Audubon volunteers go to:

[www.hendrygladesaudubon.org](http://www.hendrygladesaudubon.org) Contact: [sta5birding@embarqmail.com](mailto:sta5birding@embarqmail.com)

## **2016 Christmas Bird Count Recap**

Fifty-eight volunteers surveyed 125 miles and logged 90 team hours in the 9<sup>th</sup> annual STA-5 CBC held Saturday January 2, 2016. Groups represented in the count included Peace River Audubon, Audubon of the Western Everglades, Highlands Audubon, Caloosa Bird Club, Vitambi Springs, and Hendry-Glades Audubon.

This year 119 species plus a Great White Heron and total 62,740 individual birds were reported.

Rarities included a Yellow-headed Blackbird observed by Nancy Price and Lauren Odlum and later relocated by Kim Willis. Wintering Kingbirds included Tropical Kingbirds (3), Western Kingbird (2), Gray Kingbird (1) were included in the count, but there were no reports of Cassin's Kingbirds this season. A few other birds of interest included Gray-headed Swamphen (77), Snail Kite (58), White-tailed Kite (4), American Coot (50,000), and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (13).

During the 116<sup>th</sup> Audubon Christmas Bird Count 2,278 Counts reported 55,353,162 individual birds in count circles. Thank you for your continued participation and interest in the Christmas Bird Count.

The link to the 17 page FLSO January 2, 2016 CBC report can be found at:

[http://www.hendrygladesaudubon.org/?page\\_id=10091](http://www.hendrygladesaudubon.org/?page_id=10091)

Mark your calendars for the 10<sup>th</sup> annual STA5-Clewiston (FLSO) Christmas Bird Count to be held Saturday December 31, 2016. Register online at

[www.hendrygladesaudubon.org](http://www.hendrygladesaudubon.org)

## 2016 Winter Shorebird Surveys

In early February Hendry-Glades Audubon volunteers participated in the 2016 Winter Shorebird survey at STA 5/6. The numbers of shorebirds was lower than expected but with the recent El Nino rain producing weather South Florida has experienced during the normally “dry” season it is understandable. Even still volunteer’s counted 1,682 inland shorebirds during this one week survey overall! Data collected during a wet year will be valuable to compare to “normal” or drought years in the STAs. Below are the overall numbers for the STAs. An unexpected highlight was a Ruddy Turnstone that was found in the A-1 FEB on Highway 27.

† = groups of 50 or greater observed

### STA-1E (performed by Audubon of the Everglades on 2/6/16)

GRYE = 1  
 BNST (not on datasheet) = 38  
 BLSK = 200 †  
 CATE = 50  
 DCCO = 15  
 FOTE = 5  
 GBTE (not on the datasheet) = 12  
 AWPE = 4

### STA-1W (performed by SFWMD on 2/9/16)

GRYE = 1  
 KILL = 7  
 LBDO = 38  
 BLSK = 1  
 CATE = 1  
 DCCO = 72  
 FOTE = 15  
 AWPE = 145 †

### STA-2 (performed by Audubon of the Everglades on 2/7/16)

KILL = 1  
 BLSK = 4  
 CATE = 5  
 DCCO = 106  
 AWPE = 19

### STA-3/4 (performed by SFWMD on 2/11/16)

GRYE = 3  
 KILL = 14  
 LESA = 5  
 LEYE = 5  
 RUTU = 1  
 BLSK = 55 †  
 CATE = 7  
 DCCO = 72

### STA-5/6 (performed by Hendry-Glades Audubon 2/5/16)

Yellowlegs Sp. = 50  
 GRYE = 5  
 KILL = 23  
 LBDO = 90 †  
 BLSK = 200 †  
 CATE = 19  
 DCCO = 272  
 LAGU = 1  
 AWPE = 38

### Taylor Creek STA (performed by SFWMD on 2/8/16)

DCCO = 2

### Nubbin Slough STA (performed by SFWMD on 2/8/16)

GRYE = 2  
 KILL = 8  
 LEYE = 2  
 DCCO = 16

### Lakeside Ranch STA (performed by SFWMD on 2/8/16)

KILL = 21  
 DCCO = 31

Number of Species	Abbreviation = Common Name	Total for all STAs
1	GRYE = Greater Yellowlegs	12
2	KILL = Killdeer	74
3	LEYE = Least Yellowlegs	7
4	LBDO = Long-billed Dowitcher	128
5	LESA = Least Sandpiper	5
6	RUTU = Ruddy Turnstone	1
7	BNST = Black-necked Stilt	38
8	BLSK = Black Skimmer	460
9	CATE = Caspian Tern	82
10	DCCO = Double-crested Cormorant	586
11	FOTE = Forster’s Tern	20
12	GBTE = Gull-billed Tern	12
13	AWPE = American White Pelican	206
14	LAGU = Laughing Gull	1
	Yellowlegs sp. = Not IDed to Species	50

### 1682 Shorebirds Observed



Ruddy Turnstone photo by SFWMD

## Species Spotlight



Photo by Larry Frogge

## Did you know...

The Sora is the most common and widely distributed rail in North America. It is sometimes also referred to as the Sora Rail or Sora Crake.

Their greatest threat is the destruction of the Freshwater marshes where they breed: they have consequently become scarce in heavily populated areas.

Although shot in large numbers every year, their high reproductive rate enables them to maintain a stable population.

A group of soras are collectively known as an "ache", "expression", and "whinny" of soras.

## Sora (*Porzana carolina*)

The Sora, a small quail-sized rail commonly heard, but rarely seen, inhabits marshes with dense vegetation. This winter visitor to Florida is quite common. The male bird has a black face and throat with a short bright yellow bill. Its body is gray with white speckles. The female is similar with the black face being duller and covering a smaller area. The bill is stout and chicken-like, and has a dark tip. The males have upper parts that are mottled brown and white; they have barred sides and bellies. The female has more spots than the male and is generally less colorful overall. Juvenile birds do not have the black face or throat. The short tail is often cocked upward showing a creamy white underside. They have yellow legs and feet with extremely long toes topped with claws, with the middle toes being the longest.

The Sora are found in fresh water marshes, salt marshes and coastal estuaries, ponds, fields, creeks, brackish waters and rice fields. The Sora are highly migratory and travel in groups of 5-100 birds.

Being semi-nocturnal they are seldom seen during the day. The Sora has an unusual call that rises and descends in tone and sounds like a whinny. Their flight is short and weak, and not very coordinated. The feet dangle when they fly and drop suddenly into the reeds or water. Their diet consists of mostly mollusks and plant material like seeds, rice and algae. They also feed on insects, spiders, snails and small crustaceans. Dragonflies are a favorite dish. It sometimes can be seen feeding on mudflats close to the reeds.

The Sora breeds from southeastern Alaska, east to Newfoundland, and south locally to northwestern California, southern New Mexico, eastern Colorado, Iowa, central Ohio, and Maryland. Both the male and female birds build the nest, which consists of dead cattails and grasses loosely woven into a basket. The nest is suspended above the water, with a ramp made of plant material leading up to it. The pair shares 14 day incubation of the 10-12 eggs. The young leave the nest 3-4 days after hatching and are fed by both parents.



# Photos

One of many Peregrine Falcons that winter at STA 5/6. Photo by Kim Willis



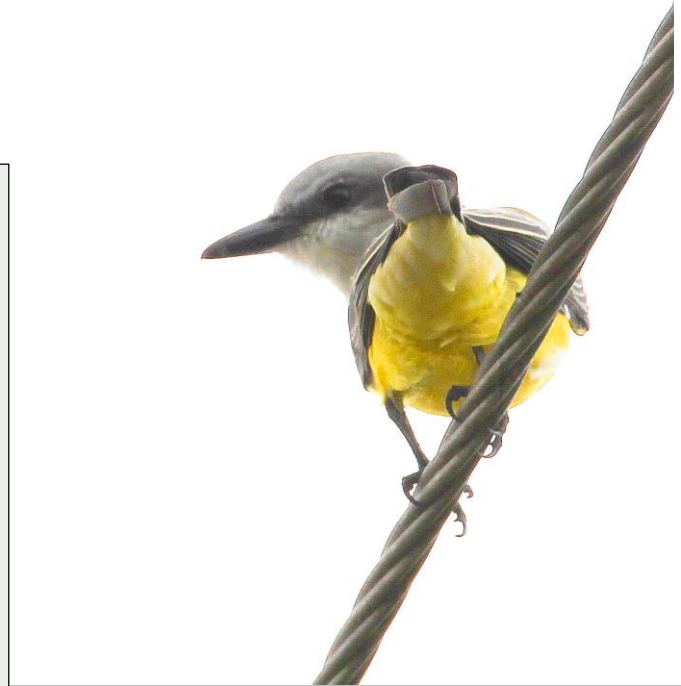
Definitely a highlight at STA 5/6 this season. Tropical Kingbird photo by Bill Marr.



Purple Swamphen, now known as the Gray-headed Swamphen. Photo by Bill Lang of Maple Creek, Saskatchewan, Canada



Such fascinating little birds to watch. Male Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Photo by Nancy Price



One of four Tropical Kingbirds that have been wintering at STA 5/6 this year. Photo by Bernard F. Master

## Join Hendry-Glades Audubon Society, Inc. (HGAS)

You may choose between two types of membership:  
"HGAS Chapter Only Voluntary Member" or both National Audubon and HGAS

1. "Voluntary" memberships receive the quarterly Crested Caracara newsletter by e-mail. Voluntary membership funds and donations support local educational and program opportunities.

YES! I want to become a "Voluntary" member of HGAS.

"Voluntary" Hendry-Glades Audubon Individual Membership \$10 Annually

"Voluntary" Hendry-Glades Audubon Household Membership \$15 Annually

Please send my Crested Caracara via e-mail.

Additional Tax Deductible Donation to HGAS (501c3) is enclosed.

Enclosed is my check payable to HGAS (Hendry-Glades Audubon Society)

2. You may join or renew your HGAS membership through the National Audubon Society using a print form or online at:

<http://support.audubon.org/> Select Chapter Code: E51 Hendry-Glades AS

With this type of membership, you receive the quarterly Crested Caracara (via e-mail), 6 issues of Audubon Magazine, the Florida Naturalist magazine and membership in the National Audubon Society and Hendry-Glades Audubon Society.

All dues for new memberships through the National Audubon Society and a portion of renewal dues are returned to HGAS if the Chapter Code E51 is on the membership form or the Chapter E51 Hendry-Glades AS is selected from online menu.

National Audubon Society Membership \$20 Annually E51  
Enclosed is my check payable to the National Audubon Society.

Mail to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Hendry-Glades Audubon Society Chapter Code E51**

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