



Crested Caracara

Hendry-Glades Audubon Society

January/March 2013

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
Janet Falk, Treasurer*

Board Members

*Julie Jeffords
Martha Valiant
Rhonda Roff
Sonny Mowbray
Terri Lazar
Add Austin*

STA-5 2012 Schedule

January 19
January 26
February 2
February 16-18 (Great Backyard Bird Count)
March 2
March 13-16 (Big "O" Birding Festival)

Meetings - 7:00 p.m. second Monday

of the month September - May
Meetings held at the Dallas Townsend Bldg., located at 1085 Pratt Blvd., LaBelle or the Clewiston Museum 109 Central Avenue, Clewiston. (863) 983-2870.

February 11 Clewiston - Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest and Picayune Strand State Forest: An overview of state forest management in SW Florida" – Heather Ferrand, Florida Forest Service

March 11 Labelle - TBA



President's Message

Dear HGAS Members and Friends,

On January 15, 2013 Hendry-Glades Audubon Society celebrates its 7th year as an official Audubon Chapter. Our membership is nearly 100 members and their families who live in Hendry, Glades and Okeechobee Counties plus winter visitors and friends. HGAS participates in annual bird counts, leads trips to STA5, participates in the Big "O" Birding Festival, and is active in the community.

Forty volunteers participated in the 6th Annual STA 5-Clewiston FLSO Christmas Bird Count on December 29, 2012. Plans are underway to participate in 7th Annual CBC to be held on Saturday, January 4th 2014 plus The Great Backyard Bird Count will be held February 15-18, 2013. Count the birds from anywhere during the GBBC 4 day event for 15 minutes or more and submit the data online at www.birdsource.org/gbbc. For the past 5 years Clewiston has been in the Top 10 for reporting the most birds in the United States and Canada during the Count. Other communities around Lake Okeechobee have participated in this annual count. The Spring Migration Count will be held May 11th and Fall Migration Count on September 21st.

Over 6,000 birders or photographers have visited the successful STA5 birding trips since November 2005 with 199 confirmed species on the ever growing STA5 Checklist. The STA5 entrance has been moved to the New Deer Fence Trailhead where SFWMD is developing a public access area. Directions are posted on the HGAS website at www.hendrygladesaudubon.org

The Big "O" (and Photography) Festival will be held at the Port LaBelle Inn March 12-16, 2013. This year's featured bird will be the Snail Kite. Greg Miller of the "Big Year" book and movie will be joining the lineup of prestigious guides and presenters. The Big "O" registration form is online at www.bigobirdingfestival.com. To volunteer to help with registration or the welcome desk during the Festival contact Margaret England.

Hendry-Glades Audubon is a member of the LaBelle Chamber, Clewiston Chamber, and Glades County Economic Development Council. The weekly "Inland Birding Fun" column with birding photos is published in local newspapers.

Looking forward to Great Birding in 2013, *Margaret* 863-674-0695 - cell: 863-517-0202

Devil's Garden Bird Park in the News

On the December 13, 2012, the Ft. Myers News Press featured an article about Hendry County's very own Devil's Garden Bird Park as one of Southwest Florida birding "hotspots". Numerous birds can be seen on this 7,000-acre nature park and working ranch and many more winter here. Recently sightings of the White-tailed Kite and the five visiting juvenile Whooping Cranes have been seen here. For the full article click the following link: <http://www.news-press.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2012312130014>

CBC Update

Over forty volunteers joined with the Hendry-Glades Audubon Society as the group conducted its portion of the 113th Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 29 in Stormwater Treatment Area 5 (STA-5) in Hendry County.

During the 6th Annual STA5-Clewiston (FLSO) Christmas Bird Count, Audubon teams in STA-5 and the surrounding area documented a diverse array of 112 species, including 1 Whooping Crane, Fulvous whistling Duck, Blue-winged Teal, endangered Everglades Snail Kite, Crested Caracara 3 Cassin's Kingbird, Gray Kingbird, and rare Tropical Kingbird. A total of around 83,500 individual birds were counted over the course of the day.

Mark your calendar and Join the next Christmas Bird Count on January 4, 2014.

STA 5 Update

The official STA5 Checklist has reached 199 species with the recent additions Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Northern Flicker, and American Goldfinch.

What do you think will be the species 200th confirmed species observed on the STA5 trips?

The Cassin's Kingbird's have been joined by a returning Gray Kingbird this season. The wintering waterfowl and Shorebirds have returned. Birders and photographers occasionally report seeing otters, bobcat, deer, and turtles. Hogs often forage in the STA5 cells. Red-shouldered Hawks have returned to nest in the cypress trees on the west side of STA 5.

The January STA5 trips have reached capacity. The best time to Invite your friends and visit STA5 will be February 16, 17, or 18th. Walking or bicycling access Friday through Monday during daylight hours will be available in about two months.

Watch for the official SFWMD announcement. **The Clewiston Museum offers the "Historical Eco-Tour" which includes STA5 on Fridays only**, Tour rates are \$20.00 per person with groups up to 12 persons. Reservations Required. Email Butch Wilson for tour schedules at clewistonmuseum@embarqmail.com or contact him at 863- 983-2870. Go to <http://clewistonmuseum.org/> to learn about the Clewiston Museum and its programs.

Upcoming Florida Festivals

January 23, 2013 - January 28, 2013 [16th Annual Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival](#)

One of the largest and best birding and wildlife festivals in the U.S. of A. Headquarters are located at Brevard Community College in Titusville. Trips and events held at various sites in and around the Space Coast area.

11th Annual Burrowing Owl Festival

Mark you calendars for the 11th Annual Burrowing Owl Festival to be held on February 23, 2013 at Rotary Park in Cape Coral, Florida.

March 12, 2013 - March 16, 2013 [Big "O" Birding Festival](#)

The Big "O" Birding Extravaganza is a Glades/ Hendry County cooperative event in South Central Florida on the Southwest shores of Lake Okeechobee, the state's largest lake. Glades and Hendry counties are becoming a Mecca for bird watching. We're home to more than 300 species of birds. Expect to see ducks such as the Fulvous Whistling-Duck and the Mottled Duck; shorebirds like Black-necked Stilt; waders such as Roseate Spoonbill, Wood Stork and Least Bittern; and specialty raptors including Crested Caracara, Snail Kite, and Barred Owl. Plus, we're always on a quest for that elusive Smooth-billed Ani. Come help us look!

Chapter Recognitions

Congratulations Marty Valiant!

WGPU Public Media Announces Makers:
Women Who Make Southwest Florida

*21 Women Selected as Makers from 200
Nominees*

November 30, 2012... WGPU Public Media announced today that 21 women have been selected to be highlighted in its multi-platform project *Makers: Women Who Make Southwest Florida*. Inspired by the [PBS national project makers.com](#), WGPU's project honors exceptional women residing in Southwest Florida who have left or are leaving a legacy in the arts, business, education, the environment, community-building and/or politics or through activism in social justice issues.

In partnership with the Southwest Florida Community Foundation and the Women's Fund of Southwest Florida, WGPU received 200 online nominations from the public. A committee of community leaders and WGPU staff members reviewed each nominee and selected the 21 Makers. The nominees were rated on these criteria: leaving a legacy, building community, affecting lasting change, defying social norms, and serving as a "first" in her field. The WGPU Makers: Women Who Make Southwest Florida are:

Healthcare

Dr. Martha Valiant, Public Health Officer (Ret.),
Hendry/Glades Counties

To honor these extraordinary women, WGPU will produce video and audio portraits to air on WGPU TV, WGPU FM and at [wgpu.org](#). WGPU will also feature written portraits in its member magazine, *Expressions*. WGPU will also produce a television documentary exploring how women have helped to shape our region. The documentary will air in spring 2013 on WGPU-HD in conjunction with the PBS Makers series highlighting trailblazing women.

Editor's note: On a personal note, I just want to say being a parent of two children in the community, I used the services of Dr. Valiant both in her private practice and followed her into the county healthcare system. She personally treated my children for a variety of childhood illnesses and there were many. There is no one that I would have trusted with the care of my children more than this lady. She has done more for the healthcare community for the Glades than anyone before or since and is well deserving of this recognition. Thank you for your many years of service to the community.

Congratulations Margaret England!

The 2013 Everglades Coalition Conference gave well-deserved special recognition at the 28th Annual Everglades Coalition Conference to our assiduous HGAS President, Margaret England. The John V. Kabler award is presented to an individual who has worked to organize and educate the public and generate grassroots support for Everglades's restoration. Anyone who knows Margaret can agree that no one demonstrates this more than she. Congratulations Margaret!



New Grad Student - HGAS chapter member **Catie Welch** has recently started the next phase of her college career by entering the Master's program at the University of Georgia, Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources & Southeastern Wildlife Disease Cooperative in Athens, Georgia. Good luck Catie!



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT



Photos by Dan Tudor

Did you know...?

When alarmed young birds make a hissing sound that sounds like a rattlesnake.

The Florida burrowing owl is classified as a "species of special concern" by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

The Burrowing Owl collects mammal dung and puts it in and around its burrow. The dung attracts dung beetles, which the owl then captures and eats.

Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*)

A small ground dwelling owl, standing only 8 ½ to 11 inches tall, the sandy colored Burrowing Owl has a round head with no ear tufts, yellow eyes, white eye brow. They have creamy to tan colored barring on their chest and belly and long legs. They are often active during daylight hours and can be easily approachable. During their first summer, Burrowing Owls molt into their adult plumage. Females are usually darker in color than the male. Burrowing Owls are found in open, dry grasslands, agricultural and range lands, and desert habitats often associated with burrowing animals.

Highly terrestrial they are often seen perched on a mound of dirt or fence post, often on one foot. They bob up and down when excited or threatened. Flight is with irregular, jerky wing beats and they will frequently make long glides, interspersed with rapid wing beats. They hover during hunting and courtship, and may flap their wings asynchronously. They very vocal, and have a wide range of different calls. The main call is given only by adult males, usually when near the burrow to attract a female.

Burrowing Owls feed on a variety of prey, changing food habits to coincide with location and seasonal availability. Large arthropods, mainly beetles and grasshoppers, comprise a large portion of their diet. Small mammals, especially mice, rats, gophers, and ground squirrels, are also important food items. Other dietary delights include: reptiles and amphibians, scorpions, young cottontail rabbits, bats, and birds, such as sparrows. These Owls are quite resourceful in the ways they capture prey. They pursue grasshoppers and beetles on the ground, use their talons to catch large insects in the air, or hover in mid-air before swooping down on the unsuspecting prey. They also watch from perches, and glide silently toward their target. Burrowing Owls are primarily active at dusk and dawn, but will hunt throughout a 24-hour period, especially when they have young to feed. Unlike other Owls, they also eat fruits and seeds.

Nesting season takes place in late March or April. Mostly monogamous, the male performs fight displays; rising quickly to 100 feet, hovering for 5 to 10 seconds, and then dropping 50 feet. The sequence is repeated many times with circling flights also occurring. Nests are underground in abandoned burrows dug by mammals. If soil conditions allow they will dig their own burrows. They will also use man made nest boxes placed underground. They often line their nest with a variety of dry materials. Adults usually return to the same burrow or an area nearby each year. One or more "satellite" burrows can usually be found near the nest burrow, and are used by adult males during the nesting period and by juvenile birds for a few weeks after they emerge from the nest. Clutches usually number 3 to 12 white eggs are laid a day apart, which are incubated for 28-30 days by the female only. The male brings food to the female during incubation, and stands guard near the burrow by day. The care of the young while still in the nest is performed by the male. At 14 days, the young may be seen roosting at the entrance to the burrow, waiting for the adults to return with food. They leave the nest at about 44 days and begin chasing living insects when 49-56 days old.



New Year is upon us; why not try something different this coming year. **Bird A Day is FUN and** offers a personal challenge that will cause you to see and enjoy more bird this year than you might if you don't participate. **Bird A Day** challenges you as you see how many days in a row you can add to your list a different bird species that you see or hear on each new day.

The **Bird A Day** website helps you track your effort and allows you to share how you are doing with others as they do the same. It cost you nothing, but the time you put into listing your birds.

Go to the website and **register** yourself. Then you can begin adding your Bird A Day observations. Once logged in you can enter some observations to see how it works. On New Year's Day 2013 those test observations will be listed under 2012 and your new observations will be recorded for everyone to see in the 2013 data. It's a friendly competition, mainly against yourself and maybe others in your area, since it would almost be impossible to have similar circumstances to make the competition even. So we all encourage one another and hope for the best. We have a great group of birders that have participated over the past few years.

So, you are invited to join us and I encouraged you to invite your birding friend to participate with you this year.

Invasion! Did you see a Razorbill in Florida?



December was Razorbill invasion month for Florida. Beginning mid-December and continuing still, reports of the northern ocean-going Razorbill were being reported all around the state in coastal waters. Most of the sightings were being reported on the east coast but some were being seen on the west coast with some reports as far south as Naples. Other southern reported sightings were coming in as far south as Miami and the Florida Keys.

Normally preferring the frigid waters of New England and Canada, these birds normally do not venture further south than North Carolina waters during winter.

There has been speculation that Hurricane Sandy is to blame for the Razorbill landing in Florida, pushing them off course, but no one knows for certain. What is certain is the future of the Razorbill in Florida is very grim.

Photos



One of the five juvenile Hendry County wintering Whooping Cranes that was sighted during the HGAS Christmas Bird Count in Southern Hendry County. Photo by Rhonda Roff



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher perched on the wire on CR 835. (top photo) Seldom seen in the open; often heard. A Marsh wren at STA 5 (bottom photo) (Photos by Tom Rauch).



A Red-shouldered Hawk (left) and another seldom seen, secretive bird, the American Bittern (right). Beautiful photos by Don Hamilton Jr.



Bulletin Board

February 9, 2013: 7:30-9:30 a.m. “**Special Opportunity for Early Birding**” at the **Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum Boardwalk (Big Cypress Reservation)**. Guided Bird/Photography Walk Free to Museum Members, Non-Member Admission is \$9 for adults, \$6 for students, children, seniors and members of the military. Children under four are free. Cost includes admission to the Museum, and parking is free.

Recent highlights of the walks have been: Baltimore Oriole, Black and White Warblers, American Robins, Northern Waterthrush, Hermit Thrush, and American Redstart.

Mark Your Calendars For The 12th Annual Big “O” Birding Festival

March 12-16, 2013

Explore with us! Experience Birdwatching and Photography in rural South Central Florida!

Workshops and events at the Port LaBelle Inn (Bed and Breakfast in LaBelle, Florida)

Registration and lodging information available on Big “O”

Website: <http://www.bigobirdingfestival.com/>

E-mail for information: bigobirdingfestival@gmail.com

Phone: 863-674-0125 Fax: 863-675-6160

Keynotes, Classroom Presentations, Workshops, Field & Boat trips with Greg Miller “Big Year”, Mark and Selena Kiser, Dr. Paul Gray, Paddy Cunningham, David Goodwin, John J. Lopinot, Connie Langmann, Rae Ann Wessel plus other local talent.

The Big “O” Birding Extravaganza is a Glades/ Hendry County cooperative event in South Central Florida on the Southwest shores of Lake Okeechobee, the state’s largest lake. Glades and Hendry counties are becoming a Mecca for bird watching.

We’re home to more than 300 species of birds, including limpkins and migratory swallow-tailed kites, and painted buntings which pass through during October and April.

Nine Great Florida Birding Trail (<http://floridabirdingtrail.com/>)

sites are within the region: Dinner Island Ranch and Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest both are Wildlife Management Areas, and Stormwater Treatment Area #5 (STA5) in Hendry County, and Fisheating Creek Wildlife Management Area—East & West in Glades County. Four new sites will be announced before March 2013. Expect to see ducks such as the Fulvous Whistling-Duck and the Mottled Duck; shorebirds like Black-necked Stilt; waders such as Roseate Spoonbill, Wood Stork and Least Bittern; and specialty raptors including Crested Caracara, Snail Kite, and Barred Owl. Plus, we’re always on a quest for that elusive Smooth-billed Ani. Come help us look!

Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary

See an ancient forest under a bright moon; thrill to the musical cacophony of chattering bats, hooting owls and croaking frogs; check a telescope to glimpse planets and stars, and glimpse glowing alligator eyes and night herons.

It’s all part of Corkscrew after Hours, a new series of monthly night events beginning Thursday, Oct. 18. For this inaugural event, Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary’s environmental educators will offer guided and independent excursions through the Sanctuary’s Blair Audubon Center, and its 2.25-mile boardwalk will stay open until 9 p.m. on each month’s After Hours event.

Working with the Everglades Astronomical Society, Corkscrew scheduled After Hours on nights when the moon is close Earth and appears brightest. The 10-month series extends through July 12, 2013. There is no additional charge beyond the regular admission of \$12 per adult, \$6 for college students with ID, \$4 for children 6 to 18 years old and free for ages 5 and younger.

“After Hours” themes over the season will be as follows:

- Wednesday, Jan. 23: Stars and planets
- Wednesday, Feb. 20: Stars and planets
- Wednesday, March 20: Stars and planets
- Wednesday, April 17: Bird migration
- Wednesday, May 22: Reptiles and frogs
- Friday, June 21: Summer solstice
- Friday, July 12: Moths, fireflies and the ghost orchid

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

When you become a member of Hendry-Glades Audubon Society (HGAS) using the form below, all of your membership fees are put to use supporting local projects: Educational programs, Christmas Bird Count, North American Migration Counts, field trips and conservation activities

”Voluntary

”memberships receive the quarterly **Crested Caracara** newsletter either e-mail or in print if requested. Make check payable to Hendry-Glades Audubon Society, Inc. (HGAS)

YES! I want to become a member of HGAS.

“Voluntary” Hendry-Glades Audubon Individual Membership \$10 Annually.

“Voluntary” Hendry-Glades Audubon Household Membership \$15 Annually

Enclosed is my check payable Hendry-Glades Audubon Society.

I would like to save HGAS postage and printing costs. Please send my **Crested Caracara** via email.

Additional Tax Deductable Donation to HGAS Enclosed

National Audubon Society Membership \$20 Annually Enclosed is my check made payable to National Audubon Society or online select chapter code **E51**.

<https://ssl.palmcoastd.com/pcd/app/index.cfm?iXz=C3607BFDBDC71347DF4DC9FDE3E204C6>

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

National Audubon Society Membership

When you join HGAS through the National Audubon Society, you receive the quarterly **Crested Caracara via e-mail unless print copy requested** 6 issues of **Audubon Magazine**, Florida **Naturalist** and membership in Hendry-Glades Audubon. Membership dues sent to **NAS** for new members are returned to HGAS if Chapter Code C2ZE51OZ is on the form and portion of renewal fees.

Mail the completed form and check to:

Hendry-Glades Audubon Society Chapter Code C2ZE51OZ

380 Riverview Dr. LaBelle, FL 33935

863-674-0695