



# Crested Caracara

## Hendry-Glades Audubon Society

October/December 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 2013 Schedule**

Nov 16 & 30  
Dec 14 & 28

### **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.

Nov. 11 – (LaBelle) Ken Burgener and  
Linda Warschauer Birding Down Under in  
Australia

Dec. 9 (Clewiston) Tyler Beck  
(FWC) Lake Okeechobee Birds

Jan. 13 (LaBelle) Tabitha M. Cole, PhD  
(Audubon Florida) "What Audubon Can  
Do For You"

Feb. 10 (Clewiston) B. J. Kattel PhD  
(SFWMD) "SFWMD Recreational  
Opportunities"



### **President's Message**

## **STORMWATER TREATMENT AREA 5 AN AUDUBON FLORIDA SPECIAL PLACE By Margaret England**

### **Florida Press Association, July-August 2013**

Before 2009 most people hadn't heard of STA-5 (Stormwater Treatment Area 5), until it was featured in the April 2009 issue of the magazine *Birder's World*. Mark and Selena Kiser, Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail (GFBWT) staff described the area as an "Oasis for Birds" and "one of the best birding spots of South Florida." This birding hotspot is located in the EAA (Everglades Agricultural Area) west of Rotenberger Wildlife Management Area in Palm Beach County and north of Big Cypress Indian Reservation in Hendry County. STA-5, approximately 4120 acres in size, is owned and operated by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD).

STA-5 was designed as living wetlands where plant growth and the accumulation of plant materials in the impoundments, remove and store nutrients in order to help improve water flowing into the Everglades. Bijaya "BJ" Kattel, senior recreational planner with SFWMD, says that "the excellent habitat created during cleaning nutrients from runoff water made these treatment areas magnets for waterfowl and special places for birding enthusiasts."

Most birders and wintering waterfowl visit STA-5 during the cooler months, but summer is also a rewarding time to visit if you want to see resident and breeding birds. During a June trip Kim Willis is the first to arrive at the Deer Fence Canal Public Access Area. She updates us on what she's seen so far, "no Florida Panther again...but from the comfort of the car I saw a bobcat, raccoon, many alligators, otter, a huge rat, rabbit, slider and lots of birds." Today, Kim wants to add Fulvous Whistling-Duck to her Hendry County "June Challenge" list. During this informal competition birders try to list every American Birding Association (ABA) countable bird that they see in a single self-designated county during June.

*Margaret*

863-674-0695 - cell: 863-517-0202

## Birding in Hendry County - BBA Updates

### Please Help!! Great Horned Owls are nesting.

Great Horned Owl and Barred Owls Breeding Bird Observations are needed for the Breeding Bird Atlas II. The BBA II ends in 2016 and only 3 blocks have reports of Great Horned Owls breeding in Hendry County.

Fledglings are usually seen from October throughout the winter and as late as June. Barred Owls will begin nesting next month.

Please e-mail location (GPS address, or general location), date, and kind type of evidence to confirm breeding behavior. Only 1 "confirmed breeding" is needed per block.

Here are the behaviors that are used to report Confirmed evidence of breeding.

#### CO Category - confirmed evidence of breeding

NB Nest building or excavation of nest cavity by any

species except wrens and woodpeckers, or adults

carrying nest material excluding far-ranging species

DD Distraction display or injury feigning, or attacking

humans or other predators.

NU Used nests or egg shells found. Must be carefully

identified, if they are to be accepted.

FY Recently fledged young or downy young incapable of

sustained flight.

CF Carrying food for young (not carrying food to a perch

for its own consumption).

ON Adults entering or leaving a nest site in circumstances

indicating occupied nest. To be used for nests which

are too high (e.g. the tops of trees) or enclosed (e.g.

chimneys) for the contents to be seen.

.FS Adult carrying fecal sac.

IP Incubating position of bird (brooding, on eggs, or

laying).

NE Nest with egg(s).

NY Nest with young seen or heard, or identifiable dead

nestlings found.

Cowbird egg or young also confirms the host species.

## STA 5 Update (Continued from President's Message)

At 8:30 am. Alan Murray and Jill Strickland lead a six car caravan through the gate. During the 12 mile drive they make frequent stops, in order to get unobstructed views of the birds on the open water and mudflats. Within the first hour the combined trip list for the group is totals 35 species, but no Fulvous Whistling-Ducks!

During the next hour the trip list tally reaches 45 species. Dori Sosensky tells the group that "every visit to STA-5 is different. I'm amazed to see the large number of American White Pelicans and American Lotus today." At the edge of a stand of cattails we find a Purple Swampphen. Just as we are getting ready to move on we see a Red-winged Blackbird chasing a large bird with a white band across its tail. "It's not a Northern Harrier, it's a Snail Kite!" Quickly, scopes are set up and everyone in our party gets good view of the kite, a female. Binoculars are used to view a male flying over the open water searching for snails north of the "restricted area" where there are eleven confirmed Snail Kite nests.

We continue driving slowly on the levee until 11 a.m., when we see Alan stop his truck. He jumps out and shouts "Fulvous Whistling-Duck!" and sets up his scope up on the side of the dirt road. Other species in this shallow impoundment include Blue-winged Teal, Roseate Spoonbill, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Mottled Duck, Snowy Egret, American Coot, Common Gallinule, American White Pelican, Glossy Ibis, and Great Egret. This brings the day's trip list up to 48 confirmed species before noon. Kim has 74 species on her "June Challenge" list. Even on a summer day this "Oasis for Birds" is a "Special Place."

## On The Road Again!

Members of the Hendry-Glades Audubon have been hitting the road lately with trips sponsored by the City of LaBelle to many fantastic places with other field trips planned for the future.

First was the local trip in the air conditioned comfort of the 21 passenger City of LaBelle bus to many of the local birding hot spots with a final stop at the Harold P. Curtis Honey Company, a landmark in LaBelle since 1954.

The next was a trip to the beautiful Marie Selby Botanical Gardens and the Crowley Nursery and the Florida Native Plant Nursery both in Sarasota.

Coming up November 1<sup>st</sup> beginning at Main Street and ending at Barron Park is the Caloosahatchee River Association's (RiverWatch) Wharf Walk, a celebration of downtown LaBelle.

Finally, November 12, members will once again hit the road to Clewiston (for those of us not already on this side of the county) to promote the Big O Birding Festival at the Clewiston Chamber of Commerce 2013 Business Bash. It's been a busy time for HGAS members!

Fall migration is in full swing. Locally many of fall visitors have returned. American Kestrels, Northern Harriers, Painted Buntings, Gray Catbird and a variety of warblers have been passing through our area. The Bald Eagles on Old 27 have also returned this year to raise another family.



# Bulletin Board

Do you have an interest in leading a trip, presenting a program, providing trip/tour opportunities or volunteering during the March 9-13, 2014 Big "O" Birding Festival or a pre or post event activity and/or workshop? A preliminary schedule is available. Please call or e-mail Margaret England, Big "O" Trip/Volunteer Coordinator if you have questions or suggestions. 863-674-0695 cell: 863-517-0202 [mleighthouse@embarqmail.com](mailto:mleighthouse@embarqmail.com)

## Hendry County featured this week on GFBWT (FWC's Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail)

Hendry County is featured in this week's "On the Trail" County Focus. Seven superb birding trail sites and one awesome birding festival [Big "O" Birding Festival March 9-13, 2014](#).

<http://onthetrailfwc.wordpress.com/2013/10/25/county-focus-hendry/>

Hello everyone! I am a current Master of Science candidate at the University of Georgia. My thesis project is looking at site fidelity and flock movement of urbanized White Ibises in south Florida. In July we captured, color banded, and radio tagged ibises in urban Palm Beach County. I am reaching out to anyone who birds in this area to keep an eye out for my banded birds. If you do see banded ibises in the area please let me know!

Visit the projects website for more information on the White Ibis, our project, and as the procedure for reporting your sightings to me: [www.hernandezlab.uga.edu/ibis.html](http://www.hernandezlab.uga.edu/ibis.html) I greatly appreciate your help with my project!

Happy birding!  
Catie Welch, Jupiter, FL

## Audubon Academy 2014

Audubon Academy 2014 will be held April 11-13, 2014 at the DaySpring Conference Center in Parrish, Florida, near Bradenton. <http://dayspring.dioswfl.org/> . DaySpring is located on the Manatee River and the program, planned by Audubon chapter members for Audubon chapter members, promises to be **exciting, informative and fun** (details will be sent out later).

The Big "O" Birding Festival committee has been hard at work out on the road promoting our event and regularly meeting to organize details. Rack cards are available to promote our event. If anyone has a place to distribute these cards, please contact Margaret England at 863-674-0695 - cell: 863-517-0202. Let's get the word out into our community to promote local tourism for this wonderful event!

Save the Date for the 2014 [Big "O" Birding Festival March 9-13, 2014](#)! The "roost" hotel will again be the Port LaBelle Inn. Plans are already underway for the 13<sup>th</sup> annual event! Mark your calendars early to attend!

# Species Spotlight



*Photo from All About Birds.com*

## Did you know...

Fledglings that fall into the water can swim well for short distances, using their wings as paddles.

They have an unusual mating system. Females locate their nests in a cluster or colony. Males compete for the right to defend and mate with all the females. This is known as harem defense polygyny.

The oldest Boat-tailed Grackle on record was nearly 14 years old when it was caught and released by a South Carolina bird bander in 2003.

Boat-tailed Grackles roost communally in tall grasses all year round.

The Boat-tailed Grackle was formally described in 1819 by the French ornithologist Louis Jean Pierre Vieillot, from a specimen collected in New Orleans, Louisiana.

## Boat-tailed Grackle (*Quiscalus major*)

We see them everywhere and often take them for granted. They make our hearts leap just a bit when we momentarily mistake them for the Smooth-billed Ani. That is until we get a glimpse of their shiny brilliance in the sunlight.

The Boat-tailed Grackle is a bird that has well taken advantage of human existence for quite some time; adapting very well to both urban and wild locals alike.

The slender males are a beautiful glossy black all over with a long keel-like tail that makes up half of their body length, while the less brilliant females are dark brown above and russet below, with a subtle face pattern made up of a pale eyebrow, dark cheek, and pale “mustache” stripe. The eye color ranges from dull brown along the western Gulf Coast to bright yellow along the Atlantic Coast. The reason for the difference in eye color is unknown.

These cantankerous blackbirds are extreme omnivores, feeding on everything from seeds and human food scraps to crustaceans scavenged from the shoreline. They breed in abundance in salt and freshwater marshes along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, marshes along rivers, lakes impoundments & ponds. They are closely associated with saltwater and are rarely found more than 30 miles from saltwater except in the Florida where they occur across the peninsula. They forage in city streets and plazas (in search of a French fry hand-out), cultivated fields, open beaches, and saltmarshes. They remain in these same types of habitats during their nonbreeding season.

Nest building is done by the female herself in about 8 days. She chooses a site in cattails and other grasses of freshwater or brackish marshes, about two feet off the ground in an area secure from ground predators and out of the reach of floodwaters. The clutch size is one to five eggs. The incubation period is thirteen days as well as the nestling period, thirteen days. She may raise one to two broods. She does this all alone.

Gregarious, noisy and often thought of as a pest the Boat-tailed Grackle is quite an exuberant bird indeed.

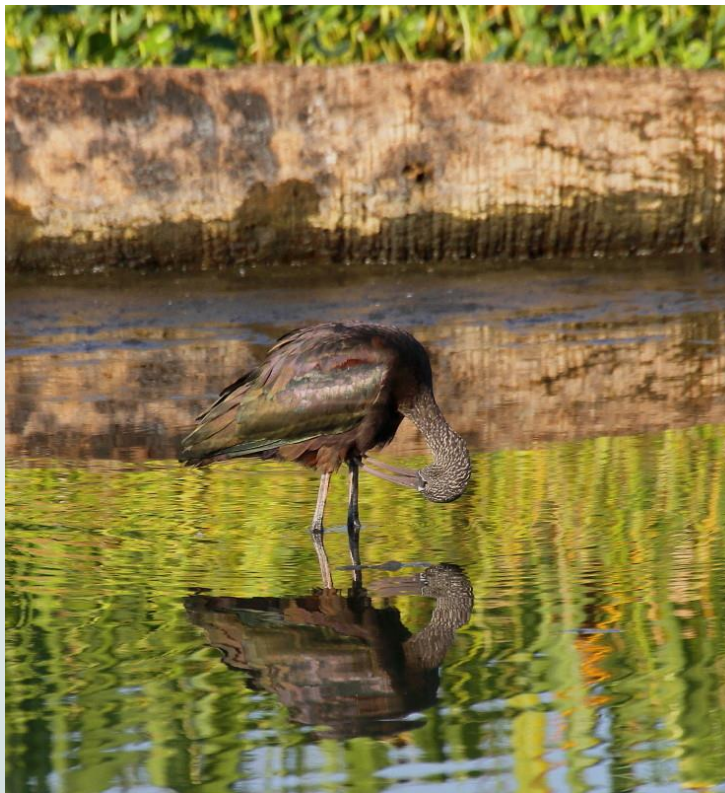
# Photos



Secretive and alluring are the Yellow Crowned Night-Heron. Photo by Larry Frogge



The male Red-winged Blackbird displays his shoulder armor with pride. Photo by Kim Willis



This preening Glossy Ibis is a beautiful mirror image of himself without a care in the world. Photo by Larry Frogge



I wonder if this Tri-Colored Heron sees how beautiful he is. Photo- by Larry Frogge

## In Other News...

### [International Crane Foundation](#)

After five months of constant care and training, it took just over a minute to release ICF's nine Direct Autumn Release Whooping Cranes at Horicon National Wildlife Refuge last Thursday, October 24. View Tom Lynn Photography's video of the release, and read our update at

<http://www.savingcranes.org/whats-new/2013/10/dar-whooping-cranes-released-at-horicon-national-wildlife-refuge/>



Dates to Remember...

## **The 3rd Annual Florida Panther Festival November 16 - 17, 2013** [Click here for more information](#)

### The Florida Forest Service Invites You to the First Annual Festival in the Woods at Picayune Strand

Saturday, January 25, 2014

10:00 am to 3:00 pm

Picayune Strand State Forest

Sabal Palm Hiking Trail Trailhead

3.3 Miles East of Collier Blvd. on Sabal Palm Rd.

→ Guided Hikes\*

→ Wildlife Presentations\*

→ Guided Bicycle Tours\*

→ Children's Activities

→ Local Environmental Exhibitors & Vendors

\*Space is limited, please register in advance. Participation will be on a first come, first served basis, space permitting, on day of event.

To register for an activity or for additional information, please contact: Heather L. Ferrand, Forester

Caloosahatchee Forestry Center

(239) 690-3500, Ext. 121 or [heather.ferrand@freshfromflorida.com](mailto:heather.ferrand@freshfromflorida.com)

## 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 C3ZE510Z is on the membership form or the Chapter E51 Hendry-Glades AS is selected from online menu.

National Audubon Society Membership \$20 Annually C3ZE510Z

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 C3ZE510Z

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