



Crested Caracara

Hendry-Glades Audubon Society

January/March 2014

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

Feb 15-17 (Great Backyard Bird Count)
Mar 8-9 (Big "O" Birding Festival)
Mar 22

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 10 - LaBelle - BJ Kattell
presents "SFWMD Recreational Lands"

March: 10 - LaBelle - Port LaBelle Inn
Big "O" Birding Festival Program

April 14 - LaBelle - Reed Bowman Scrub
Jays

May 12 - LaBelle - Meeting and Covered
Dish Dinner



President's Message

Ring in the New Year with Hendry-Glades Audubon!

Hendry-Glades Audubon (501c3) celebrated its 8th year as an official Audubon chapter in on January 15, 2014. Some of the past year's highlights include membership of over 100 individual and family memberships plus "chapter only" memberships. Gift memberships are available. Invite your friends and neighbors to become a member of HGAS.

Hendry-Glades Audubon is a member of the Clewiston Chamber, LaBelle Chamber, Glades TDC, and Big "O" Birding Festival Committee. Our chapter representatives attended the Florida Audubon Assembly, Everglades Coalition, and manned a booth at both Space Coast Birding Festival and the Wings and Wildflower Festival.

During the past year chapter volunteers participated in the Big "O" Birding Festival, LaBelle Area Earth Week Field Trips, and the Hendry County Fair. HGAS lead over 25 trips to STA5, organized the Fall Hendry North American Migration Count, Great Backyard Bird Count for inland Florida, and 7th Annual Clewiston-STA5 Christmas Bird Count. The Clewiston News, Okeechobee News, and Glades Democrat publish weekly articles Inland Birding articles featuring birds found in the inland region.

One of our goals this year is to nominate birding sites to be included on FWC's Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail. Anyone can nominate a site. If you need information contact I and I'll send you a nomination form.

Volunteers are needed to lead carpool trips to local birding hotspots, areas of interest, and restaurants during the Big "O" Birding Festival March 9-13. Please phone or e-mail if you can help.

If you have ideas, suggestions or would like to volunteer to help with HGAS events and projects contact me at the address below. Happy New Year!

Margaret

mleighthouse@embarqmail.com, 863-674-0695 - cell: 863-517-0202, 380, Riverview Drive, LaBelle, FL 33935

SFWMD Expands Recreation at Everglades Water-Cleaning Wetland

In a continuing effort to increase access to public lands, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has opened Stormwater Treatment Area 5/6 (STA-5/6) in Hendry County to the public for expanded recreation. Visitors to the wetland will arrive to a new parking area and trailhead with restrooms and an educational kiosk and a picnic shelter farther into the site.

The vast wetland that cleans Everglades-bound water is already popular with bird watchers and hunters during organized activities with District partners such as the Hendry-Glades Audubon Society. Now, large portions of the approximately 16,000-acre area will be open to the general public for activities such as hiking, biking and wildlife viewing. Outdoor enthusiasts can walk or ride bicycles along levees in the STA, framed by an array of wading birds, alligators and aquatic life. Existing features at the site include a boardwalk built for disabled veterans and residents.

The District has steadily increased access to the site south of Clewiston, with the first organized bird-watching program beginning in 2005 with a partnership with the Hendry-Glades Audubon Society. To date, Audubon volunteers, in coordination with the District, have hosted more than 6,700 bird watchers and photographers from across the globe on 183 individual tours at the site.

Since 2002, the District's partners at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission have led a series of organized waterfowl and alligator hunts at this wetland.

New Hours of Operation:

- Sunrise to sunset on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday.
- The area will be closed to the general public on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday for wetland management purposes.
- The area will be closed on Sundays starting the Sunday before Thanksgiving until the first Sunday in February to allow for hunting activities.

Throughout South Florida, the District provides recreational access to its public lands while continuing to manage them to support environmental restoration, water supply, water quality and flood control missions.

STA 5 Update

7th Annual Christmas Bird Count

Hendry-Glades Audubon hosted the 7th Annual STA-5 Clewiston (FLSO) Christmas Bird Count on Saturday January 4, 2014. Over 157,000 individual birds and 124 species of birds were recorded by 55 volunteer birders and photographers. Fourteen species of ducks, 16 species of raptors or hawks, 10 warbler species, wading birds, and shorebirds were found. Three species reported for the first time for this count were Sedge Wren, Yellow Warbler, and Downy Woodpecker. Wintering Great Crested Flycatchers and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were joined by a Tropical Kingbird, Cassin's Kingbird, and Gray Kingbird in the cypress trees on Deer Fence Road near the County Road 835 intersection. Four White-tailed Kites were seen on the Miami Canal Road near the Rotenberger Wildlife Management Area and one on the L1 Dike Road.

Mark your calendar for the January 3, 2015 and January 2, 2016 Christmas Bird Counts. Would you like to start a Christmas Bird Count at other inland locations? Information on how to establish a new count is available on the Christmas Bird Count website. One volunteer to submit the data and at least 10 volunteers are needed for the one day survey of the 15 mile diameter circle each year between December 14 and January 5th

Hendry Glades Audubon website at: www.hendrygladesaudubon.org

Get Outdoors and Make Nature Part of Family Time

Children are curious by nature so why not find ways to encourage them to get outdoors by using these games and activities to keep them interested.

I Spy: Draw your children's attention to the natural world whenever you can, whether you're walking outside or looking out the window. Simple statements like, "I see a bird making its nest" or "Do you want to chase after that butterfly?" will invite your young children to observe and engage in the natural world around them.

Moon Walk: Go for a nighttime walk. Take a flashlight and explore one area not lit up by electric lights. What do you see? Hear? Smell?

Bug Watch: Head outdoors and have your kids find as many different kinds of insects as they can. Bring a magnifying glass for a close-up look!

Home Tweet Home: Make a bird feeder and start feeding and watching birds out your window.

Puddle Stompers: The next time there's a major downpour, venture outside with your kids. Let them discover the joys of stomping in puddles and seeing what the wet world looks like.



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

Starry, Starry Nights at the Big Cypress Preserve and the DuPuis Management Area

Saturday, February 1, 2014, 7 pm Park Rangers from the **National Park Service at the Big Cypress Preserve** will lead an interpretive presentation focusing on the vast distances separating us from objects in the night sky after which telescopes will be set up for viewing. 33100 Tamiami Trail East Ochopee, FL 34141, behind the Big Cypress Visitor Center.

Saturday February 8, 2014 6 pm – 9 pm Treasure Coast Astronomical Society will be giving a presentation focusing on the moon and other wonders at the **DuPuis Management Area** after which telescopes will be set up for viewing. Feel free to bring your own! 23500 SW Kanner Hwy, Canal Point, FL 33438, at the DuPuis Gate 5 Visitor Center. For information call 561-924-5310 ext. 3339.

33rd Annual Hendry County City Farm Tour

The Hendry County Farm-City Tour Council will be holding its 33rd annual farm tour of the Hendry County agricultural industry, Saturday, March 8, 2014. Tickets for the tour cost only \$75.00 per person and the participants will be able to catch a modern air conditioned tour bus at the U-Save Supermarket Center on Palm Beach Blvd in Fort Myers or at the Hendry County Extension Office in LaBelle. This year's tour will feature a variety of interesting stops at some of Florida's most sophisticated agricultural operations including vegetable transplant and ornamental nurseries, citrus, sod, sugarcane and vegetable production as well as one of the largest beef cattle ranches in the state. There will also be fresh Florida orange juice breaks at strategic stops along the way. As an extra-added attraction, lunch will feature a delicious melt in your mouth steak lunch with all the trimmings served by the Hendry County Cattlemen's Association in a rural country setting. In addition to the opportunity to see Florida agriculture up close and personal – you will tour some of the most unspoiled wild lands in all of southwest Florida where each turn of the road will reveal natural splendor and a chance to see a variety of wildlife.

Deadline for ticket sales is February 28, 2014. For additional information about the tour and how to purchase tickets for the tour, stop by Hendry County Extension Service Office, which is located at 1085 Pratt Blvd, LaBelle, Florida. You may also contact the office as follows: Phone: (863) 674-4092 Fax: (863) 674-4637 Email: dcabrera@ufl.edu

Third Annual Wings Over Water Festival - February 28 - March 1 at Harns Marsh

The two-day festival helps celebrate southwest Florida's natural resources and includes an array of programs on local waterways and wildlife from Friday, February 28 to Saturday, March 1. We aim to encourage the public to get outdoors and celebrate healthy living while discovering the beauty of southwest Florida's water, land and wildlife. For information: Carla Ulakovic (239) 368-0044 ext. 17

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).

Our very own Hendry County was featured in the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's publication, Florida Wildlife Magazine. Check it out!

<http://www.floridawildlifemagazine.com/birding-florida%e2%80%99s-big-%e2%80%9co%e2%80%9d-region.html>

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 13th annual event! Mark your calendars early to attend!

Species Spotlight



Photo by Kim Willis

Did you know...

Although active throughout the day, the Black Skimmer is largely crepuscular (active in the dawn and dusk) and even nocturnal. Its use of touch to catch fish lets it be successful in low light or darkness.

At hatching, the two mandibles of a young Black Skimmer are equal in length, but by fledging at four weeks, the lower mandible is already nearly 1 cm longer than the upper.

The Black Skimmer is the only American representative of the skimmer family. The other two, rather similar, species are the African Skimmer (*Rynchops flavirostris*) found in Sub-Sahara Africa and the Indian Skimmer (*Rynchops albigollis*) found in southern Asia. All use the same unusual method of feeding.

A group of skimmers are collectively known as a "conspiracy", "embezzlement", and "scoop" of skimmers.

Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*)

The extraordinary large red and black knife-thin bill of the Black Skimmer sets it apart from all other American birds. The Black Skimmer is a medium sized water bird with a long red and black bill; the lower half being the longest. It has a black back and cap and white underparts. The legs are very short and red. Its wings are long and pointed. Juvenile birds are similar to adults but have a mottled black-and-white back and cap. They can be found on open sandy beaches, on gravel or shell bars with sparse vegetation, on mats of sea wrack, in saltmarshes and occasionally on inland lakes.

The Black Skimmer has a most unusual foraging style of any North American bird by gracefully flying low over the water with its bill open and its lower mandible slicing through the surface with ease. When the lower mandible touches its prey, the upper bill, the maxilla, snaps down instantaneously to catch it. Black Skimmers feed on small fish, herring, killifish, mullet, and pipefish and also may consume small crustaceans.

Black Skimmers are highly social birds, and nesting in large colonies that form large flocks outside the breeding season. Large, successful colonies usually occupy the same site from year to year, while small or failed colonies usually relocate. Colonies are generally located on beaches, gravel or shell bars, dredge deposition islands, saltmarshes, and rooftops.

The clutch size is typically four eggs and there is one brood. The nest is a saucer-shaped depression, similar to a resting scrape on the sand and takes only a few minutes to create, but the process of nesting may involve several scrapes. Males do more scraping and make larger scrapes than do the females. An average scrape is approximately 10 inches in diameter and 1 inch deep. The incubation period for the Black Skimmer is 21 to 25 days and the nesting period is 28 to 30 days. The chicks are covered in tan down and are soon able to move around. They are feed by the parents for 3 to 4 weeks after hatching. Black Skimmers may travel 5 miles from their breeding colony in search of food.

Although not federally protected, they are on several state lists that range from endangered to special concern as is the case in Florida. The main threat to Black Skimmers is development or other loss of their beach-nesting habitat, since they nest on the same beaches that people also like to vacation on. Keep this in mind when you take your next shore vacation.

Photos



The beautiful, native Purple Gallinule is battling for space in the wetlands against and invasive species. – Photo by Larry Frogge



The invasive Purple Swamphens have all but taken over the wetlands and are making life difficult for our native Purple Gallinule. – Photo by Larry Frogge



It was stunning and hard to take the eyes off of this Roseate Spoonbill in full breeding plumage at STA 5. I was glad his little friend didn't decide to make a meal out of him. – Photo by Kim Willis



Our beautiful Bald Eagle sits in regal beauty watching for its next easy meal at STA 5. – Photo by Kim Willis

Inland Birding: Tropical Kingbird (TRKI) by Margaret England

Tropical Kingbirds are a common breeding bird of the American tropics. Their normal northern range reaches the United States in south Texas and southern Arizona. Their winters are usually spent in Mexico or as far south as South America, but they will wander widely and are found occasionally in Florida.

This medium-sized songbird has a long, dark forked tail and a fairly large bill. Their wingspan is nearly 4 ¾ inches. Its head is pale gray with contrasting darker cheeks and a patch of reddish orange on its crown. It has grayish-olive upperparts, a pale throat, darker upper breast, and a bright yellow lower breast. Tropical Kingbird's plumage is not greatly affected by seasonal change. Juvenile Tropical Kingbirds have browner upperparts than an adult and have paler edges on their wings.

They are similar in appearance to Couch's Kingbirds, but can be distinguished by their call. Tropical Kingbirds communicate primarily through vocalizations and will make a high-pitched twittered trill throughout the day. They sing a song known as the Dawn Song, which they will start before sunrise, which is before most birds begin to sing. The Dawn Song is not repeated until the next morning.

Tropical Kingbirds prefer living near open woodlands near pond or flowing streams, avoiding densely forested areas. Their diet consists of mainly of flying insects. Its fruit diet consists of seeded fruits and berries.

Tropical Kingbirds timing for nesting varies from place to place. Their nest is an open-cup that is usually located on horizontal branch in the mid-story or in the canopy of trees. The male may show aggressive behavior when defending its territory during the breeding season. The breeding pair only has one brood per season. The female lays a clutch of 2 to 4 buff-colored eggs in one or two days which she incubates for 15 to 16 days. Both the male and female feed the nestlings insects and berries. These young birds fledge when they are about 18 or 19 days old, however the parents will continue to feed the young for at least another 2 weeks.

Wintering songbirds are returning to inland Florida. They are most active in the early morning, but can be observed foraging throughout most of the day. A solitary Tropical Kingbird returned to STA-5 located 27 miles south of Clewiston for the second year last month. . Scissor-tailed Flycatchers and Kingbirds have returned to County Road 835 near Deer Fence Road about 3 to 4 miles north of the 835/833 intersection in Hendry County. Local birds including juvenile Snail Kites are being observed near Lake Okeechobee and inland wetlands.



Photo by Judith Bird

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 member ship 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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