

Eagle Audubon Society News

January 2023

Happy New Year

The Board of Eagle Audubon Society wishes everyone a very happy and healthy New Year.

Board of Directors

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Julie Stocksdale (President) | 727-418-5119 |
| John Stocksdale | 813-841-7227 |
| Anne Whitehall (Treasurer) | 413-364-6948 |
| Steve Burkholder | 206-786-7618 |
| Ned Kuehn | 248-467-4562 |
| John Warbach (Vice President) | 517-303-1791 |
| Joanne Finney (Secretary) | 954-540-5985 |
| Donna Blaha | 813-922-6555 |

Eagle Audubon Society President's Message

By Julie Stocksdale

We're midway through our 2022-2023 year here at Eagle Audubon Society and have had interesting speakers at our meetings, interesting field trips, and delicious snacks. Fortunately, there is more of all of this yet to come. Our Board of Directors has tried to bring in speakers who will address bird identification, a skill we all want to hone, but also broader issues of conservation. Since such topics as climate change, land preservation, and water quality affect the environment in which the birds (and people) live, it's imperative that we educate ourselves on these issues. And we all love to look at pictures of birds – that's not going away.

We also have tried to schedule field trips that visit a variety of environments and features, from the Ruskin weather station to a recovering preserve; from a honey farm to a historic homestead; and from a bottomland forest to a hilly scrub habitat. Some trips have been challenging hikes and some can include people of more limited mobility. In other words, we want something for everyone.

As he did last year, Steve Burkholder is leading birding trips on Tuesdays in and around King's Point up until the end of February. These are local, open to anyone, and lead by very knowledgeable birders (Steve and Jan). So, if you want to up your game, join in one of his Tuesday walks. And unless the venue requires a fee, for a tram or boat ride or docent for example, we aren't charging for the trips. While we no longer meet as a group in King's Point, we try to find rides for people who wish to carpool. We have included some trips that are open to non-members, so please invite your friends and neighbors. An upcoming treat will be "birds and brew," where we will meet for an afternoon hike at a

local park or trail and then retreat to a local watering hole (the human kind) for beverages and fellowship. Stay tuned.

EAS members participated in the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count in December at three locations. One team covered parts of Apollo Beach and logged 56 species. Another joined in the count in King's Point, for 50 species. Our own Window in the Woods brought 31 species to the count. The total for all of Sun City Center was 71 species, which is terrific for this developed area. This event is always fun and, as a citizen-science project, it adds to our knowledge of bird-dom. If you would like to participate in 2023, see me or Steve Burkholder and we'll find you a spot. If you're fairly new to birding, this is a great way to increase your knowledge, as we'll pair you with an experienced birder.

Our Board is looking forward to the future of our chapter and has formed a committee to address how we need to evolve in order to remain a vital organization. As such, this group is addressing our mission, vision, and membership. We are concerned that if we don't change with the times, we will gradually fade away. The members on the committee are Ned Kuehn, Steve Burkholder, and John Warbach.

The Board also just approved a draft revision of our Bylaws, which includes a number of changes to how we conduct our business. Among these changes is initiation of an annual meeting of members, which will be held during our regular membership meeting in March. During this meeting, members will, first, vote on approval of the Bylaws, and then vote for nominees to fill the offices of Secretary and Treasurer. This will be an important meeting so please plan on attending. The draft Bylaws will be available on the EAS website or in hard copy upon request.

One way in which all of us can benefit EAS is by signing up for Amazon Smile. If you order from Amazon (need I ask?), you can direct a percentage of your purchase price to a charity, in this case us. On your desktop or laptop browser (Google, for example), type in smile.amazon.com.

Click "sign in" then enter your login credentials (email or phone number, then password). Type Eagle Audubon Society as your charity and hit "search" then select Eagle Audubon when that comes up. Each time you want to order from Amazon, just go to smile.amazon.com and know that your purchases are helping our EAS budget.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of EAS and we plan on doing something special to celebrate this milestone during our first meeting in October, 2023. Forty years is quite an accomplishment, and we will move forward to even greater things in the next forty years.

Conservation and Legislation

The following bills with implications for conservation were being considered by congress at the end of 2022 and the results are noted:

- The Recovering America's Wildlife Act would provide \$1.4 billion from existing federal funds to states and tribes to support their proactive conservation efforts for vulnerable wildlife species to protect them before they become endangered. This passed the House and is up in the Senate as S. 2372. **DROPPED AT LAST MOMENT.**

- The Growing Climate Solutions Act is a farmer-centered proposal, empowering America's agricultural producers to play a voluntary role in mitigating the impacts of climate change and slowing habitat loss. This passed the Senate and is in the House as H.F. 2820. PASSED CONGRESS, SEE BELOW
- The Water Resources Development Act provides an opportunity to drive ecosystem restoration and climate resilience by ensuring that Army Corps of Engineers policies and projects provide maximum conservation and community benefits. Also known as WRDA 2022, this is included in the National Defense Authorization Act. PASSED
- The Migratory Birds of the Americas Conservation Enhancements Act would support conservation projects across the hemispheric ranges of migratory birds. The Senate version, S. 4187 is in the Committee on Environment and Public Works, and H.R. 9135 is in the House Committee on Natural Resources. DID NOT PASS
- The Strengthening Coastal Communities Act of 2022 will update and modernize the Coastal Barrier Resources Act, which provides safe undisturbed coastal bird habitat and removes taxpayer-funded subsidies for hazardous developments. S. 5187 has been referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

The Growing Climate Solutions Act (GCSA) was a multi-year effort that will support voluntary carbon markets for farmers, foresters, ranchers and other land stewards. Championed by Senators Stabenow (D-MI) and Braun (R-IN) and Representatives Spanberger (D-VA) and Bacon (R-NE), the version of the bill that passed in the omnibus spending package will create a new program to self-certify technical assistance providers and third-party verifiers for the agriculture and forestry sectors. The bill will also address barriers to entry for landowners trying to access voluntary carbon markets and encourages practices guided by science. (Source: Florida Audubon)

Florida Legislature Committees Beginning to Meet (Source: Florida Audubon)

Interim Committee week started off with a meeting of the Senate Agriculture Committee chaired by Jay Collins (R-Tampa). The committee outlined its priorities for this year with the goal of stabilizing, revitalizing, and growing agriculture in Florida, continuing to grow research and technology in partnership with UF/IFAS, and focusing on hurricane recovery. Members noted that since Hurricane Ian had affected our food crops as well as more than 60% of the state's grazing land, a lot must be done to help the struggling industry in the State.

The Senate Agriculture, Environment and General Government Appropriations Subcommittee chaired by Sen. Jason Brodeur (R-Sanford) also had its first meeting. This committee has oversight of appropriations for a broad scope of programs and agencies including the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and the Florida Department of Management Services.

Speaker Renner's priority for this year is to improve the state's environmental infrastructure. New to this session are three subcommittees that fall under the newly formed House Infrastructure Strategies Committee. The committee will be chaired by veteran House member Rep. Bobby Payne (R-Palatka) and will focus on developing sound policy to plan for Florida's growth, including transportation while protecting our water, building flood resilience, prioritizing land acquisition, and infrastructure planning. The subcommittees include the Agriculture, Conservation & Resiliency Subcommittee, the Transportation & Modals Subcommittee, and the Water Quality, Supply & Treatment Subcommittee.

All three committees met this week for the first time to introduce their members and to discuss their areas of focus. The Agriculture, Conservation and Resiliency Subcommittee chaired by Rep. Buchanan (R-Osprey) will focus on issues critical to Florida's agriculture and citrus industries, conservation of natural resources, fish and wildlife issues, water quality and supply, and transportation services. The House Water Quality, Supply & Treatment Subcommittee Chair, Rep. Stevenson (R-St. Johns), will focus on developing strategic solutions for the future of our water supply and water quality and lastly, the House Select Committee on Hurricane Resiliency and Recovery chaired by Rep. Michael Grant (R-Port Charlotte) will prioritize making Florida a more resilient state.

We will bring you more information as bills are introduced into committees.



Tuesday Morning Bird Walks

Led by Steve Burkholder

Since November, Jan and I've been leading birding walks on most Tuesday mornings, schedule and weather permitting. We've been inviting members of our Audubon club to come along with us on an informal basis. No need to register or pre-sign up to come with us. Just show up before 9:00 a.m. any Tuesday morning in the parking lot in front of the North Clubhouse. Since we get out quite often during the week, we thought we could show people some of the "birdier" spots around Sun City/Kings Point that are accessible by walking or by golf cart.

We typically see between 20 to 25 species on any given Tuesday. Special sightings have included Green Herons, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Black and White warblers, nesting Great Horned Owl, and a mating pair of American Kestrels.

The club owns several pairs of binoculars so you can borrow them for the trip if you need them. We plan to continue these walks through the end of February.

Happy birding everyone.



Involve your senses at Camp Bayou Nature Center Butterfly Garden

The winter cold snap that Central Florida just experienced during the holidays was a surprise due to its timing, but fortunately its impact on the native plants in our Butterfly Habitat was minimal. The Firebushes and Blue Porterweed showed some leaf damage along their tops, and some of the Spanish Needle plants drooped under the cold temperatures, but otherwise the plants survived. Which is one of the great benefits of growing Florida native plants: even if their leaves and branches die down to ground level in the longer cold snaps that usually happen in January/February, most healthy natives will shoot up new growth once the Spring warmth arrives.

That's how natives survive and flourish...they can continue their own seasonal life cycles in the right climate, and you have the pleasure of watching them grow back, bloom, and seed from Spring through Fall. The natives provide food and shelter to birds, animals, pollinators and other insects all year long. And if we are lucky, with a mild winter, we can get a head start on our host and nectar plants growing early and strong, which our native butterflies depend upon.

Come take a walk through the Butterfly Habitat at the Camp Bayou Outdoor Learning Center to appreciate its beauty even in the winter. Start your New Year off by walking the trails through Camp Bayou's Nature Preserve and resolve to be familiar with its flora and fauna during each season.



Thistle and Swallowtail



Muhly Grass



Shell Path

Window in the Woods

Window in the Woods (WITW) is a bird blind and feeding area along a nature trail on the Freedom Plaza property. It sits on a pond in the woods and has several bird feeders and bluebird nest boxes. A small building with benches inside and outside on a deck provides a place for quiet viewing of the birds who come to feed, nest, and visit the pond. EAS members volunteer to periodically sweep the building and fill the feeders with seed that is stored inside the building.

All of our members and the general public are encouraged to spend some time enjoying nature at WITW, and we are asking for someone to step in and take over coordination of the volunteers. Vicky Bergeman has done this for years and wants to step away, so she needs a replacement. The effort is

easy – just line up volunteers to tidy and fill and occasionally get in touch with Freedom Plaza. Vicky reports that she already has volunteers for January and is working on February, so there's a head start for the new person. Contact Julie Stocksdale at 727-418-5119 or Vicky at 609-280-2973 or speak to one of us at the membership meeting. Let's not let this wonderful resource fall by the wayside. **DO IT FOR THE BIRDS!**



Window in the Woods Bird Blind

What is eBird?

eBird is an easy-to-use app for your phone that can record the birds you see. In addition, you will help science by participating in a public project that supports migration and other ornithological studies of birds by Cornell University.

Remaining Meetings

Monday, January 16, 2023

Nature Conservancy

Beth Lewis

Resilient Lands & Waters Strategy Director

the Florida Chapter of The Nature Conservancy

Beth will share information about our land and water protection work in Florida, some of our recent successes as well as the goals TNC Florida has set within the context of our recently completed Strategic Plan. Beth's work is focused on conserving a network of resilient and connected lands, oceans, and waters as this is critical for both carbon sequestration and for the preservation of biodiversity, by creating a connected landscape for wildlife to move and adapt to a changing climate.

Monday, February 20, 2023

Florida Sandhill Cranes

Barbara Walker

Moccasin Lake Nature Park

Come and learn about Florida Sandhill Crane populations, their life cycles and their sensitive habitats. Florida Sandhill Cranes easily meet the criteria for a threatened species. Their population has declined 37.5% since 1997 and 2 – 3 times more managed land is needed, primarily in Central Florida

in order to meet guideline goals of increasing the population by 10%. It all starts with us, so please come and join us to discuss this well-loved species.

Monday, March 20, 2023

Sun City Center Bluebird Project

Melanie Higgins, Project Manager, SCC Bluebird Project

This project demonstrates the impact of providing nesting boxes to birds who have lost their traditional nesting habitat of natural cavities.

Monday, April 17, 2023

Halle Goldstein

Audubon Florida

Natural Climate Solutions: Audubon's Work Toward a More Resilient Florida

The Presentation will focus on Audubon Florida's Conservation Action Agenda, including their strategies for bird-friendly communities, coastal conservation, water, and working lands. It will also touch on the Tampa Bay Regional Resiliency Coalition which includes USF and area municipalities.



Remaining Birding Trips

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| Wednesday, January 18 | Robinson Preserve 10299 9th Ave. NW Bradenton | Meet Elena in the Robinson Preserve parking lot at 8:30 | Donna Blaha 813-922-6555 donna.blaha@gmail.com | We will be led on a 1-hour tour by a preserve employee. We should see white pelicans and some migratory ducks. Cost: \$3 per person, Limit: 20 |
| Tuesday, January 24 | Cockroach Bay Nature Preserve 3839 Gulf City Rd Ruskin | Meet in the parking lot at 9:00 | Steve Burkholder 206-786-7618 steve@steveandjan.com | Moderate hiking, including a hill. Free No limit. Open to non-members Trip lasts 2.5 hours. |
| Tuesday, February 7 | National Weather Service Weather Station 2525 14 th Ave SE Ruskin | 9:45 | Anne Whitehall 413-364-6948 | Wheelchair accessible Limit 20 Free |
| Saturday, February 11 | Sawgrass Lake Park 7400 25 th St N St Petersburg | 9:30 to 11:30 | Julie Stocksdale 727-418-5119 | This urban park is an oasis of bottomland forest, creek, and lake. Wheelchair accessible, Observation tower optional. Free, Limit 20. |
| Tuesday, February 28 | Exum's Honey Farm 1418 14th Ave SE Ruskin | 9:35 | Anne Whitehall 413-364-6948 | Meet at the honey farm. Wheelchair accessible. Limit 20. Free |
| Monday, March 6 | Tampa Bay Watch 3000 Pinellas Bayway South Tierra Verde | 8:45 | Joanne Finney 954-540-5985 | Boat tour with Eric Plage Must be able to step onto boat You will see shorebirds on the sandbars, terns, gulls, and other water birds. Limit 20. Cost is \$25. Lunch TBA. |
| Wednesday, March 22 | Latitudes Boat Trip 580 Bahia Beach Blvd, Slip F10, Ruskin | Meet at 5:45 p.m. at the dock | Anne Whitehall 413-364-6948 | Limit 22 Cost: \$36 for 2-hour sunset cruise |

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| Wednesday, April 12 | Fort DeSoto 3500 Pinellas Bayway S Tierra Verde | 9:00 to Noon Meet in front of Flagpole at Park Headquarters | Steve Burkholder 206-786-7618 steve@steveandjan.com | \$5.00 Park Entry Fee along with road tolls. Accessible, no limit, Open to non-members Trip lasts 3 hours Come join us at this world-renowned birding site during the height of migration. Email me at steve@steveandjan.com and I'll send you a birding map of this fascinating jewel of Florida's parks. |
| Wednesday, April 19 | Caladesi Island State Park Dunedin | Meet at 9:00 For a 9:30 Ferry from Honeymoon Island Park to Caladesi | Steve Burkholder 206-786-7618 steve@steveandjan.com | Caladesi Island with a boat trip. Recommend carpooling. \$8:00 entry fee per car to Honeymoon Island State Park + \$16 per person ferry cost. A park ranger will show us a portion of the park. You can bring lunch or there is a snack bar and tables. There are restrooms on the Island. There is a four-hour limit on Caladesi Island, so at the latest, you can leave it on the 2:00 ferry. Limit 20. |

Unless noted, trips are for members only. Dues of 15 dollars need to be mailed to Julie Stocksdale.

Sign-ups for the February thru April trips can be made by calling the trip leader.

From Florida Audubon

The dedicated Audubon Eagle Watch volunteers are the heartbeat and lifeblood of our program, monitoring roughly half of the active nests in the state. This season, 480 community volunteers donated 7,530 volunteer hours for nest monitoring, data reporting, and in some instances, the rescue and transport of Bald Eagles in need of medical attention.

Volunteers submitted more than 14,900 nest observations, despite broad shelter-in-place mandates to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Volunteers also play a key role in protecting nests and reported 90 potential nest disturbance violations this season due to development, recreational activity, and other human encroachment issues.



Eagle Audubon Society's Beginnings

In October 1982 a small group of Sun City Center residents gathered with a speaker from National Audubon at an AARP meeting in Kings Point. They watched a film on Eagles and were told the procedures for becoming a Chapter of Audubon. They'd need 38 membership applications, elected officers, a constitution, bylaws, a territory and committee chairpersons. In this same year, our first newsletter, The Eagle, was published.

They began planning trips immediately like retirees often do. In 1983 they were accepted as a National Audubon Chapter. Their first trips were by bus to Bok Tower with an overnight by bus to Merritt

Island and Cape Canaveral for members only. Birding trips to Simmons Park and Fort Desoto were for anyone, with members receiving priority.

In 1984 Eagle Audubon Society was Incorporated in Florida and approved by the IRS as a 501 (c)3. Their board had members from Kings Point and Sun City Center and met in Kings Point. Also, in 1984, the Window in the Woods building was moved from Cypress Creek to its present location on land owned by Freedom Plaza. This land was going to be destroyed by a developer for new homes. Carl Yedinack, an ornithologist, and his wife, Jeannette were both among the founding members of Eagle Audubon Society, and he donated Window in the Woods as a memorial to his wife.

Over the 40 years since we have had members pushing for restoration of the Everglades, opposing a controversial power plant, building a Butterfly habitat, maintaining a nature sanctuary, planting beach grasses, helping in National bird counts, and spending money and effort on educating children about the environment at Camp Bayou. We have publicized Florida's outdoors and given thousands of dollars' worth of grants to Florida Environmental organizations. All this while enjoying trips to the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, hikes, boat and tram rides, preserves, museums, boardwalks, ranches and historic sites. We have laughed and learned together about the beauty of the lands and wildlife of Florida.

COME JOIN US IN THIS ONGOING ADVENTURE!

Visit our website at: <https://eagleaudubonflorida.org>

The Eagle Audubon Society is a 501c-3 organization
#85-8012681268.

We gratefully accept any donations or bequests.

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family about this, too!

EAS also has a Facebook page. Go to: <https://www.facebook.com/Eagle-Audubon-Society-105396738009471>
and log into Facebook and follow us.

A resource for nature preserves may be found at the following website:

<https://www.google.com/maps/search/Nature+preserve/@27.4345721,-82.7066346,10z/data=!3m1!4b1>



EAGLE AUDUBON SOCIETY
YEARLY MEMBERSHIP \$15 PER PERSON – OCTOBER 1 – SEPTEMBER 30

Please complete the following information 2022-2023

Name(s) _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email address _____

Areas of interest (feel free to add comments on the back of this form):

Conservation _____ Trip coordination/leading _____ Speaker _____

Window in the Woods _____ Butterfly Habitat _____ Meeting snacks _____

Christmas Bird Count _____ Fund raising/grant writing _____

Membership _____ Promotion _____

Please mail completed membership form and check for \$15.00 per person payable to Eagle Audubon Society to: Julie Stocksdale, 256 Silver Falls Dr, Apollo Beach, FL 33572

If you wish to make an additional contribution to EAS, it would be greatly appreciated. You can leave it undesignated, in which case we will use it for general operating expenses; or you can designate it for one of our programs, such as Window in the Woods or the Butterfly Habitat. EAS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit charity.

LIABILITY AND PHOTO RELEASE

By this agreement, I the undersigned, have voluntarily applied to participate on field trips sponsored by the Eagle Audubon Society. I expressly assume the risk of any harm that might occur directly or indirectly from travel to and from the field trip site and from any harm that might occur directly or indirectly from any forces of nature or wildlife that I may be exposed to that causes me injury.

In addition, on behalf of myself and my assignees, heirs, personal representative and legal representative, in consideration of the opportunity to participate and attend the field trips organized by the Eagle Audubon Society and being eighteen (18) years of age or older, I hereby agree to release and hold harmless the Eagle Audubon Society, and the National Audubon Society.

I grant the Eagle Audubon Society, its representatives and members the right to take photographs of me and my property in connection with field trips or other activities of the Eagle Audubon Society. I authorize the use of same in print and/or electronically.

Member Signature _____ Date _____

Member Signature _____ Date _____