



# Hernando Audubon NEWS

A publication of the Hernando Audubon Society

January/February 2011

## Monthly meetings: location and time

The January and February meetings (see items this page for details) meet at the Community Activity Center, 205 E. Ft. Dade Ave., Brooksville.

The center is between the public library and the U.S. Post Office in downtown Brooksville.

Doors open at 6:45 p.m. for socializing, with coffee and light refreshments.

Programs start promptly at 7:00 p.m.

If you are a member, please consider bringing a guest. If you are not a member, you are welcome to join us at all meetings and on the field trips.

Please remember to bring your aluminum cans to the meetings. Our member, Jerry Olesen, takes them to the recycling facility for us.

## Look inside for:

	Page
January/February field trips .	2 & 3
President's letter .....	3
Raptors in this area .....	4 & 5
Field trip reports .....	5
Loggerhead Shrike research .	6
Conservation column .....	6
Great Backyard Bird Count.	6
Guest column: Florida Greenways in Hernando County .....	7
Editor's squawk box .....	7
and on the back cover: Membership application Please pass the application along to a friend if you're already a member !	

## January 27

### Speaker: Craig Pittman

### *Manatee Insanity: Inside the War over Florida's Most Famous Species*



Journalist and author Craig Pittman will discuss his recently published book, which chronicles the battle surrounding our state's iconic manatee. The cast of characters at war includes developers, boaters, scientists, environmentalists, lobbyists and lawyers.

The Florida Humanities Council recently added *Manatee Insanity* to their list of essential Florida books because, "In microcosm, the saga reflects

the decades-long struggle between development and wildlife, and how one has impacted the other during Florida's booming growth."

Mr. Pittman will recount how law, politics and science have all collided in the debate over how and to what extent or even whether manatees should be protected.

A native of Pensacola, Mr. Pittman graduated from Alabama's Troy State University where he worked on the student newspaper and earned a reputation as a muckraker. He has since covered many beats, including the Florida Legislature. He has reported on environmental issues for the *St. Petersburg Times* since 1998.

## February 24

### Speaker: Ken Meyer, Ph. D.

### *Swallow-tailed Kites and Short-tailed Hawks*

Dr. Ken Meyer, director of the Avian Research and Conservation Institute (ARCI) located in Gainesville, will discuss the behavior and ecology of Swallow-tailed Kites and Short-tailed Hawks.

Since 1987, Dr. Meyer has carried out research on the management and conservation of a number of rare species of Florida birds, especially Swallow-tailed Kites. Come learn how observations of nesting activity in our membership area during the upcoming breeding season can help Dr. Meyer and ARCI Research Ecologist Gina Zimmerman Kent in their studies and also aid in protecting these species.



Parent Swallow-tailed Kite feeding fledgling.

Photo: Bev Hansen

**Hernando Audubon Society  
2010-2011**

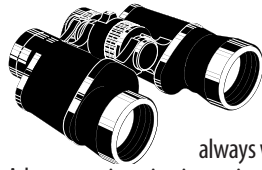
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**Do you have a story idea?**  
Call either of the editors, or  
e-mail [hernandoaudubon@yahoo.com](mailto:hernandoaudubon@yahoo.com),  
with "Newsletter" in the subject line.



**Field Trips and Special Events**

**GUIDELINES:** Field trips are open to everyone, and non-members are always welcome. To participate, contact the trip leader to confirm time and meeting place. Advance registration is required for all boat and overnight trips. Some trips require maps, which will be handed out at the monthly meeting prior to the field trip. Bring binoculars and birding guides. We suggest comfortable clothing, insect repellent, sunscreen and water or other suitable beverages. And remember: car pooling saves fuel, money and helps the environment. You can visit [www.hernandoaudubon.org](http://www.hernandoaudubon.org) for updates. Please contact the organizers about third-party events which we publicize because they may be of interest to our members.

**January 8 - Saturday  
Weekiwachee Preserve  
Salt Marsh Safari**

A strenuous hike into a harsh environment. Heavy shoes and clothes, sun hat and lots of water are necessary. Trip is limited to 12 physically fit hikers and reservations are required. Participants must sign a liability waiver.

**Trip leader:** Clay Black  
352-592-4949

**January 14 - Friday  
Merritt Island Wildlife Refuge  
Field Trip**

We strongly suggest you contact the trip leaders if you intend to participate in this field trip. From Brooksville, take State Road 50 east to Interstate 95. Take I-95 north one exit to Titusville. This will exit onto Garden Street. Go east across U.S. 1 and A1A directly onto the causeway. There is a park on the left, then a low bridge, then a picnic area on the left and a widening of the causeway. Then on the right is a pull-off parking area with a sign for Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. We meet in that parking area to carpool. We leave there at 8:30 a.m., so please be there earlier. The trip usually lasts until 2:00 p.m., without a lunch stop, so bring munchies and something to drink along the way. For more information, contact the trip leaders.

**Trip leaders:** Dan and Shirley Kohler  
352-683-9370  
[dkohler@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:dkohler@tampabay.rr.com)



**January 15 and 29 - Saturdays  
Weekiwachee Preserve  
Sparrow Drives**

Help Southwest Florida Water Management District officers and researchers from the University of Central Florida search for grasslands birds. There will be a ferry into the preserve at 8:00 a.m. To participate in the banding and for details,

**Contact:** Clay Black  
352-592-4949

**January 26 - Wednesday  
Mosaic Mines Field Trip**

**Reservations must be made  
with the trip leader no later than  
January 16.**

Mosaic Mines is located in Mulberry, along State Road 60, east of Brandon. Advance reservations are required since the mine owners provide our lunch as well as a professional guide. This trip is one of the highlights of our birding year.

**Trip leader:** Bev Hansen  
352-686-0460  
[bevalhansen@earthlink.net](mailto:bevalhansen@earthlink.net)

**January 29 - Saturday  
Weekiwachee Preserve  
Sparrow Drive**

Please see entry under January 15.

**January 29 - Saturday  
Cypress Lakes Preserve (ESL):  
Scrub and Sandhill Habitat  
Restoration (Third-party Event)**

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the gate on Ridge Manor Boulevard at Olancho Road. Following a short talk about the Preserve and the needed work, volunteers will cut small trees along fire breaks and in habitat restoration areas. Work will be completed by noon. An optional guided nature walk will be offered following completion of work. Volunteers should wear long pants,

long sleeves, and sturdy shoes with closed toes. Please bring your own gloves, eye protection, hearing protection, insect repellent, sunscreen, and drinking water. Useful tools might include pruning saws, bow saws, chain saws, and other tools for cutting small trees. Free oak firewood will be available to volunteers.

**Contact:** Jim King  
352-754-4057, ext.28020

### **February 5 - Saturday Hernando Big Day and Birdathon**

A daylong search for birds in the county to help raise funds for Hernando Audubon. Start early and end late, or join in at any time. See cream-colored insert for information on how to become a sponsor. To participate,

**Contact:** Clay Black  
352-592-4949

### **February 5 - Saturday Astronomy Night at Ahhochee Hill Sanctuary**

24268 Lake Lindsey Rd. (just east of U.S. 41)  
Brooksville, FL 34601

Volunteers from the M.A.R.S. Astronomy Club, sponsored by the Museum of Science and Industry, will bring their telescopes and vast knowledge of the night sky to Audubon's Ahhochee Hill. The sanctuary is a spectacular place to view the heavenly bodies because of its high elevation, large open field, and the low level of light pollution. At any time 30 of the 88 constellations may be observed in Florida. We'll learn to identify a few of them and hear about their folklore. We hope to get a great view of the Orion Nebula and perhaps some of the Milky Way.

**Contact:** Christie Anderberg  
352-797-3545

### **February 12 - Saturday Hernando Audubon Workday at Ahhochee Hill Sanctuary**

Starts at 9:00 a.m. Clean and repair birdhouses in preparation for the upcoming nesting season. Help with trail maintenance or with other sanctuary tasks. Bring a dish to share for lunch. Ahhochee Hill is located at 24268 Lake Lindsey Rd., just east of U.S. 41 and past the fire station. Follow the shaded driveway through the woods.

**Contact:** Christie Anderberg  
352-797-3545

### **February 19 - Saturday Circle B Bar Reserve Field Trip**

4399 Winter Lake Rd.  
Lakeland, FL 33803  
Tel.: 863-534-7377

This will be Hernando Audubon Society's first field trip to the 1,267-acre former ranch acquired jointly in 2000 by Southwest Florida Water Management District and Polk County Environmental Lands Program. The former pastureland was restored to a marsh system, which has attracted a variety of wading birds and waterfowl, as well as Ospreys and Bald Eagles. At least 100 bird species have been photographed there, including the locally rare White-faced Ibis, that remained there for several weeks last winter. Walking trails pass through freshwater marshes, oak hammocks, hardwood swamps, and along the shore of Lake Hancock.

There are nine wide, interconnecting trails on the property, covering more than six miles. It is flat, easy walking affording great views of marshland with many varieties of birds. There should be plenty of photo opportunities. Admission is free. Bring your own lunch and beverages.

To carpool, meet at the Hess station at the intersection of U.S. Hwy. 41 and County Line Road prior to our 6:30 a.m. departure time so we can arrive at the property by approximately 8:00 a.m. Please contact the trip leaders for additional details.

**Trip leaders:** Wally and Lee Handeland  
352-835-7050 or  
757-373-0287 (Cell)  
idocvb@gmail.com

### **February 28 - Monday Honeymoon Island State Park Field Trip**

#1 Causeway Boulevard  
Dunedin, FL 34698  
Tel.: 727-469-5942

See shorebirds and maybe a Great Horned Owl or Bald Eagle on a nest.

To carpool, meet at Hernando West Publix (U.S. Hwy. 19, south of Spring Hill Drive) at 6:15 am. Otherwise, meet at 7:30 a.m. at pull-off on left just before the bridge on Dunedin Causeway (Curlew Road, State Road 586).

The state park entrance fee is \$8.00 per vehicle with 2 to 8 passengers; \$4.00 for a vehicle with one occupant.

**Trip leader:** Bev Hansen  
352-686-0460  
bevalhansen@earthlink.net



## **Activism is essential for conservation success; support our Birdathon**

A new year is here and with it come so many challenges: Who knows where to begin? How can we protect our wildlife in the present economic climate of cutbacks and unemployment?

One way is by publicizing how birdwatching and ecotourism can bring money to an area. More and more people are living in cities and suburbs. Many of these people want – and need – natural areas for relaxation and just for the pleasure that comes with being outdoors.

This is all the more reason we should support our recreational areas, our state lands, and programs that set aside land for wildlife corridors and buffer zones. Organizations such as Audubon get people outside to appreciate nature. We help to spark an interest in the outdoors in our schoolchildren *and* among adults. Audubon's advocates try to hold the line when special interests would take our natural areas for industries that profit a few people at the expense of wildlife and, ultimately, of human health and wellbeing.

So please, become active in your community. You can start by supporting our February Birdathon (please see the enclosed informational sheet and pledge form). This event helps raise money for the scholarships we offer high school seniors who will eventually go out into the world to work to conserve our natural environment. If we don't all act to preserve what we have, there won't be anything left to protect.

*Linda*

**LINDA VANDERVEEN  
CHAPTER PRESIDENT**



COOPER'S HAWKS have stout, rounded wings and a relatively long tail, characteristics that enable them to maneuver swiftly among forest trees. This one is feasting on Mourning Dove.

Photo: Bev Hansen

## Raptors often seen in this part of Florida during winter months

BY BEV HANSEN, ORNITHOLOGY EDITOR

Winter is a good time to look for hawks in Hernando and surrounding counties: many hawks that breed in the northern states spend the winter in Florida. In this article I will discuss the times when various raptors are most plentiful in our area. Raptors, also called birds of prey, are hawks, eagles, kites, falcons, owls, and their relatives. However, in this article I will exclude owls, and only discuss the diurnal raptors, that is, those that are active during the day.

While various groups of raptors have different body shapes and sizes, they all have good eyesight and good hearing, and are hunters that locate their prey by sight and capture it with their talons. Buteos are a genus of hawks characterized by broad wings and short, wide tails, a body build that is advantageous for soaring. Our most common buteo is the Red-shouldered Hawk, which is a resident here year-round, although in the wintertime the population is greatly increased by more of this species, who spend the summer breeding in the northern states but the cooler months in our state. The northerner has a redder breast than does the Florida subspecies. Though Red-shouldered Hawks

are frequently in woodlands, in Florida they often appear in open areas, where they perch on trees or poles and even power lines.

A larger buteo is the Red-tailed Hawk. A few of these remain in Florida to nest in the summer, but most of them breed in the northern states, and spend the winter here. They prefer open habitat, such as open woodlands, prairies, and pastures. They frequently hunt by soaring, but also spend time perched on dead snags and poles.

Another buteo, the Short-tailed Hawk, breeds in our area in the summer in small numbers. They arrive from southern Florida by March and leave our area by November. This bird is misnamed, since its tail is not particularly short. They spend most of the day soaring high, and are seldom seen perched. Their preferred habitat is woodlands near water, so they occasionally can be seen soaring near the Withlacoochee and Weeki Wachee rivers. It is a very lucky sighting when other buteos, such as a Broad-winged Hawk, are seen migrating through our area in the spring or fall.

Cooper's Hawks and Sharp-shinned Hawks are also more frequently seen in the winter. They are members of the genus *Accipiter*, which are hawks that have a long tail, and short, rounded wings, which enables them to maneuver through woodlands as they hunt for birds. A few Cooper's Hawks remain in our area to breed in the summer, but most of them, and all of the Sharp-shinned Hawks, head north to their breeding territories.

The member of the falcon family that is most frequently seen here is the American Kestrel. A few nest here in the summer, using cavities or nest boxes, but many more arrive to spend the winter here. They are frequently seen perched on power wires above the edge of a highway, as well as on poles in open country. They often hunt by hovering in midair.

Other falcons, such as the Merlin and Peregrine Falcon, are seen infrequently in our area, most often during spring and fall migration. The Crested Caracara, a surprising member of the falcon family because its body shape is so different, was reported once in Hernando County on the Brooksville Christmas Bird Count in 1984. The Northern Harrier is a winter resident that has long wings and a long tail. It frequently hunts low over a pasture or other open area. This species spends the summer throughout much of the northern United States and Canada.

The Osprey is a year-round resident in our area, and their conspicuous nest is



WATCHING THE PHOTOGRAPHER. Merlins are feisty predators. They are most likely to be seen in spring and fall migration.

Photo: Bev Hansen

## Field Trip Reports

### OCT. 23 - FORT COOPER STATE PARK

by EILEEN RICCIO

A morning of birding and hiking was enjoyed by 15 of us who began by scoping the lake. Park Ranger Diane Otten then led us along the oaks and up into the sandhill for a 2-mile loop among the grasses and wildflowers, with Bruce Vanderveen contributing information about the various plants. Diane gave us insight into the ecology of the lake and park and then led us off trail to demonstrate the positive results of a recent controlled burn there. We totaled 41 species (many of them early in the morning, by the lake) including Wood Ducks, Sora, Western and Least Sandpiper, Glossy Ibis, Swamp Sparrow and, in the uplands: Eastern Towhee, three woodpecker species, Yellow-throated Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Pine Warbler. Afterwards, we picnicked under the oaks with a cooling breeze drifting in from the lake. Great birds, great company.

### Nov. 13 - STARKEY WILDERNESS PARK

by JIM MCKAY

We had a great time in spite of all the runners and people on bikes. There were 12 of us, including one visitor from Utah and one from Nova Scotia. We walked about 3 miles and saw a total of 35 bird species. Highlights were: Osprey, Bald Eagle, Eastern Phoebe, Blue-headed Vireo, House Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, Gray Catbird, Yellow-rumped, Palm, and Black-and-white Warblers, Chipping Sparrow, and American Goldfinch. Also seen: an Armadillo, Green Tree Frog and Butterflies (Sleepy Orange, American Lady and Red Admiral).

### Dec. 4 - BROOKSVILLE HOTSPOTS

by MARY DOWDELL

We had an excellent trip with 17 participants and approximately 50 species identified. This was good preparation for the Brooksville Christmas Bird Count held later in the month. There was no time to see all of the "hotspots" that had been planned, which is a reminder of the importance of scheduling and timing on these trips.

Jim McKay located an American Bittern on the grounds of Brooksville Regional Hospital. It was a great way to start the morning. The Bittern seemed confident that it was perfectly camouflaged by its plumage, so we had ample opportunity to view it. Two Loggerheaded Shrikes were also seen



A NORTHERN HARRIER, photographed in its summer range, flying over Francis Road Dike, Richmond, British Columbia, Canada.

Image by courtesy of Alan D. Wilson, [www.naturespicsonline.com](http://www.naturespicsonline.com)

frequently seen near water. However, some of the Ospreys that breed in the United States migrate south in the fall to spend the winter in the West Indies or Central America.

Kites are also birds that spend the winter south of the United States. The species that we see most commonly here is the Swallow-tailed Kite. It arrives at its breeding grounds in our area in February and March, and leaves in August to begin its long journey to its wintering grounds in South America. Its black and white plumage, with a long, forked tail, is a stunning image that often makes us pause to watch it soar. The other kites, Mississippi, Snail, and White-tailed, have only been seen in Hernando County a few times, though a pair of Mississippi Kites did nest here in 2004.

Bald Eagles have a migration pattern that is different from all the raptors previously described. They nest here in December and January, but by late May, Bald Eagles of all ages leave our county, and spend the summer months in the northern states and Canada. They return here in September. Incidentally, a program called "Eagle Watch" monitors Bald Eagle nests. If you would like to participate, contact Lynda White at [lwhite@audubon.org](mailto:lwhite@audubon.org) or by phone at 407-644-0190. There are two volunteers in our area who participate in this program, but more are needed.

A Golden Eagle, which is a very rare winter visitor in Florida, was reported in Hernando County once, but I don't have any details. One was captured and photographed in adjacent Pasco County in January 1984.

Next time you're out in the field, be sure to be on the lookout for these fascinating birds.



WAITING. A Red-shouldered Hawk keeps a silent vigil in woods along the Hillsborough River.

Photo: Wally Handeland



AMERICAN KESTREL

Photo: Bev Hansen

See REPORTS, page 7 ►

## Loggerhead Shrikes with colored breasts?

Wildlife Preservation Canada is asking birders to report sightings of marked Loggerhead Shrikes to help collect data for a study to determine exactly where the birds spend the winter, and to better define migration routes. The researchers have colored the breast of released young, produced from a captive breeding program, to make them more detectable by observers.

The birds were released in Ontario, Canada, during July and August 2010, and have an extensive area of their breast colored in red, blue or purple. All released birds, and a large proportion of the wild migrant population, are also color-banded.

Loggerhead Shrikes are declining across much of their range. In Canada, the Eastern subspecies is considered critically endangered: fewer than 35 pairs were found in 2009.

If you see a shrike with a colored breast and/or wearing leg bands, report it to:

Wildlife Preservation Canada  
e-mail: [iessica@wildlifepreservation.ca](mailto:iessica@wildlifepreservation.ca)  
Tel.: 519-836-9314  
Fax: 519-836-8840

Please include the following details: specific location of the sighting (GPS coordinates are ideal, but not essential) and color of breast and/or leg bands seen.



A LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE enjoying a snack. The hooked bill, grey cap and black mask make this species easy to identify.

Photo: Lucille Lane



BY BOB KEIM, CONSERVATION CHAIR

## Our continuing commitment to the environment

American voters made plain their anger and concerns on Tuesday, Nov. 2, and the resulting tsunami swept away legions of incumbents on Capitol Hill – some of them longtime friends of the natural environment. Their voices will be sorely missed. But members of the House and Senate would be making a huge mistake if they think this cresting wave of economic fear and ire gives them a mandate to roll back environmental safeguards, as some have been threatening.

For proof, look no farther than Election Day results. Most representatives who supported the House Clean Energy bill won their races. In California, voters soundly thrashed Proposition 23, an industry-backed measure that would have undone the state's visionary global warming law. And across the country, polls revealed an America more committed than ever to a clean energy path. Nearly 90 percent of us want more renewable

### Have fun! Join the Great Backyard Bird Count

From February 18 through 21, tens of thousands of volunteers in the United States and Canada will be watching birds, tallying their counts, and recording the data at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

The “watchers” will be participating in the 14th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). The four-day event is free and is open to people of all ages and skill levels. The volunteers watch birds for any length of time on one or more days of the count.

When the results are tallied, researchers

energy from our utilities. Meanwhile, 80 percent want measures that will improve our automotive fuel mileage and build in more energy savings in homes and offices.

We want these politicians to ignore our numbers at their peril. Come January, the National Audubon Society will be working hand-in-hand with other environmental organizations to build a bipartisan coalition in Congress to help ensure the key aspects of clean energy for our future. For this work, Audubon is calling on its community of educated citizen-scientists, qualified staff, and eloquent spokespersons. We're prepared to stand up for our Earthly home, and to muster the voices that let politicians know that we're paying attention to our issues – and that we have no intention of stepping back or going away. (You can read Florida Audubon's Conservation Action Agenda at [http://fl.audubon.org/conservation\\_agenda.html](http://fl.audubon.org/conservation_agenda.html).)

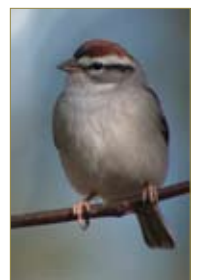
Protecting our environment is a bedrock American value, and it is our intention to make sure that our children and grandchildren have a future still filled with wonder and beauty. And in this struggle, we're counting on you to stay the course with Hernando Audubon. We need your idealism. We need your activism. We need your support. If we have all of these things, we will prevail.

We continue to seek to establish regular Conservation Committee meetings at Ahhochee Hill Sanctuary. Be ready for the upcoming 2011 kick-off meeting, January 12. Should you wish to volunteer to be a part of this great work, you may e-mail me at [rbkeim@gmail.com](mailto:rbkeim@gmail.com) or join us at 6:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of the month. I look forward to hearing from you.

*Bob*

will have a snapshot of the whereabouts of more than 600 bird species. The GBBC is a joint project of the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology with Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada.

The 2010 GBBC was another record-breaker, with more than 97,300 bird checklists submitted by an estimated 63,000 volunteers from across the United States and Canada. These volunteers found connecting with nature to be great fun.



## Guest Column:

# Hernando County important to Florida's network of ecological greenways

by Patricia L. McNeese, AICP, Planner II  
Hernando County Planning Department

They don't call it the "Nature Coast" for nothing. Most of us are aware of the presence of some of Florida's most valuable natural resources within the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge and the Withlacoochee State Forest. But were you aware that these resources are a vital part of an ecological highway of major proportions?

The Florida Ecological Greenways Network is a statewide network of ecological hubs and linkages designed to maintain landscape-scale ecological functions including wildlife habitat and ecosystem services. The corridors considered most important for protecting the Network are called Critical Linkages. They represent the best opportunities to protect a large connected landscape throughout Florida from the Everglades to the western tip of the Florida panhandle.

When conservation scientists study the life cycle and movements of one native animal or plant, this often reveals a cohesive functioning ecological unit. In the early 1990s, scientists used Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to analyze and graphically represent the cumulative relationships of individual species. This effort, called "Closing the Gaps," sought to identify ecological gaps in statewide habitat needs. This included common species that could, by virtue of their habitat use, indicate ecological function on a landscape scale.

For example, the Southeastern beach mouse is very specialized to one habitat type and has a home range of only a few acres. The indigo snake selects preferences in an expanded suite of habitats and has a home range of perhaps 400 acres. The bobcat is a wide-ranging animal using multiple habitats and ranging up to 20 square miles. "Closing the Gaps" sought to combine this information and identify landscape-scale connections which eventually became a statewide map of Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas.

The Ecological Greenways Network connects these individual habitat units that remain throughout the state and completes the functional integrity of the system. The network has a very robust and significant presence in Hernando County especially along the Chassahowitzka to Green Swamp

Connection, one of the richest storehouses of remaining natural resources in our state.

The Hernando County Comprehensive Plan, the County's growth and development blueprint, is the primary means by which the County recognizes greenways. Publicly owned lands are generally designated as Conservation on the Future Land Use Map. The primary tool available to the County and to other public agencies to preserve the corridor is to bring additional lands into public ownership through acquisition. The County's Environmentally Sensitive Lands Program, due to sunset in 2018, is the County's land acquisition funding mechanism. Other less effective protection tools include conservation easements, purchase of development rights and regulatory tools such as development standards.

By our nature as human beings we judge our resources on the values they provide, both tangible and intangible. The level of natural resource conservation we strive to achieve is dictated by those values. Natural areas in Hernando County provide multiple benefits. Some major ones are maintenance of wildlife populations, groundwater recharge and flood control, preservation of economic and cultural values (recreation, hunting and fishing) and climate change adaptability. To ensure protection of the public investment in our natural resources, scientists continue to help us identify and prioritize those ecological units that provide the benefits we value. It is up to us to decide the extent of the return we will get on the public's investment.

The Hernando County Comprehensive Plan is being updated now. The fifth in a series of public workshops will be held at the Hernando County Government Center on January 10, 2011. The session will be about future land use, and is very important. Your attendance at these workshops and your comments are vital to the process. Visit [www.hernandocounty.us/plan/ear](http://www.hernandocounty.us/plan/ear) to view more information, submit your comments via e-mail, or to read monthly newsletters, and more.

The Florida Trails Network web page is the best place to view maps and other information about Florida's greenways:  
[www.floridatrailsnetwork.com](http://www.floridatrailsnetwork.com)

## The Squawk Box:

an occasional  
commentary  
by the editor



We are fortunate to live where government processes are fairly transparent. The Comprehensive Plan is a powerful tool. The public workshops referenced by our guest columnist, Patricia McNeese, are an opportunity to let appointed and elected officials know where we stand on issues that are of vital importance to our community. Regrettably, past workshops have been poorly attended, and public input by e-mail or other means has been negligible. The January 10, 2011 workshop is about future land use. What could be more important for natural habitat conservation? If you can't attend the workshop, please let your views be known. You can send or drop off written comment at the Planning Department

Attn. EAR Public Comments  
20 N. Main St., Room 262  
Brooksville, FL 34601,  
or e-mail to Patricia McNeese, AICP  
[pmcneese@hernandocounty.us](mailto:pmcneese@hernandocounty.us)  
**Don't be silent! When we speak out,  
we encourage others to do likewise.**

Lucille

## ► REPORTS, from page 5

at the hospital. We looked to see if they had coloring on their breasts. The coloring is from a dye used by researchers who are studying where these birds winter (see the item on page 6 for more information about this project).

Though many small ponds were dry, elsewhere we saw more than one hundred Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Ducks, and American Coots, along with a few Redheads, Hooded Mergansers, Mottled Ducks, Common Moorhens, Pied-billed Grebes, Great Blue and Little Blue Herons, Glossy Ibis, Snowy and Great Egrets, Least Sandpipers, and Killdeer. At a retention pond behind Lowe's, two Lesser Yellowlegs had a territorial dispute. Greater Yellowlegs were also there, allowing us to compare the two species. We ended the day at the property of Helen Johnson and Terry Smith watching for their hummingbird to come to the feeder. We saw a *Selasphorus* species – probably a Rufous, but possibly an Allen's Hummingbird. Our hosts were very gracious. We really appreciate that private landowners allow access to their properties for bird surveys.



**Hernando Audubon Society**

www.hernandoaudubon.org

# Hernando Big Bird Day/Birdathon February 5, 2011

Please join us to support a fun and unique event that helps to protect Florida's natural places, birds and wildlife – the **Big Bird Day Birdathon!** A birdathon is a fundraising event like a walkathon or a telethon, but its focus is on birds.

On Saturday, February 5, a group of birders will awake before the dawn chorus. They will spend the day trekking around Hernando County, sighting common birds such as the robin and goldfinch, and maybe getting lucky enough to spot a Great-horned Owl or Peregrine Falcon. By the end of the day, they hope to have seen or heard between 120 to 130 species of birds.

We hope you will make a pledge to support the **Big Bird Day Birdathon.** As a sponsor you are assured that 100% of your contribution will help Hernando Audubon provide assistance to projects such as:

- Area conservation and environmental education programs

- Natural resource college scholarship funds
- Protection of wildlife habitat

There are several ways to participate: You can pledge a given amount per bird species that the Big Bird Day group sees or hears, for example 5, 10 or 20 cents or perhaps even \$1 per species. Or, you can contribute a fixed amount (for example, \$25), regardless of the number of birds identified. You can even offer a bonus donation per unusual, rare, or endangered species noted. To become a sponsor, simply fill out and mail the form below. **Sponsor contact information will be used only to acknowledge gifts.** This information will not be shared or added to the Hernando Audubon mailing list. Birdathon sponsors should make checks payable to Hernando Audubon Society. If your employer will match your contribution, please include a matching gift form.

If you are not currently a member of

Hernando Audubon, for a minimum donation of \$20 you can become a member for one year, if you want to join. Members receive the National Audubon Society's magazine, Audubon of Florida's *Florida Naturalist* and our own *Hernando Audubon NEWS*. Please check the appropriate box in the form below if you wish to become a member.

When the Big Bird Day group has completed the Birdathon, we'll update you on their success, send you a list of the birds that were seen and heard, and let you know the amount of your tax-deductible contribution. Please support this fun and worthwhile event that reminds us all of the value and beauty of Florida's diverse birds, other wildlife, and their homes.

If you need more information, please call Linda Vanderveen at 352-428-2629.

**Thank you!**

## Donor/Sponsor Pledge Form

*(Sponsor contact information will be used only to acknowledge gifts.)*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address (street) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ (city) \_\_\_\_\_ (zip) \_\_\_\_\_

(1) Donation amount dollars and/or cents per bird \_\_\_\_\_

**OR**

(2) Donation amount in dollars for the Big Bird Day event \_\_\_\_\_

**If you want to challenge the team even more you may pledge a bonus amount:**

"I will give an additional \_\_\_\_\_ for this species \_\_\_\_\_ (insert name of species) if logged by the team." (For example: I will give an additional \$5.00 if the team logs a Brown-headed Nuthatch.)

Check here if you are not currently a member and want at least \$20.00 of your donation to pay for a 1-year membership in Audubon. Be sure your name, mailing address and telephone are printed clearly in the space above.

Checks should be made out to Hernando Audubon Society. *If your employer will match your contribution, please include a matching gift form.*

Please return this form to Hernando Audubon Birdathon participant \_\_\_\_\_ (please print name)

**OR**

mail to Hernando Audubon Society, P.O. Box 1678, Brooksville, FL 34605

For more information about Hernando Audubon Society, please visit our Web site: [www.hernandoaudubon.org](http://www.hernandoaudubon.org)

**Feel free to make copies of this letter and form to pass along to family and friends!**



**Hernando Audubon Society, Inc.**  
P.O. Box 1678  
Brooksville, FL 34605

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The mission of  
**Hernando Audubon Society**  
is to promote an  
awareness and  
appreciation of nature;  
to preserve and protect  
wildlife and natural  
ecosystems; and to  
encourage responsible  
environmental  
stewardship.



Yes, I want to become a member of the Audubon Society! Enclosed is my check  
for \$20, payable to the **National Audubon Society**.  
(New memberships only - Please do not use for renewals)

Chapter Code: C1ZE220Z

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please enclose check made payable to **National Audubon Society** and mail to:  
Membership, Hernando Audubon Society, P.O. Box 1678, Brooksville, FL 34605

As a member you receive: *Audubon*—the publication of the National Audubon Society,  
*Florida Naturalist*—Audubon of Florida's magazine, and our chapter newsletter, *Hernando Audubon News*.

To receive our chapter newsletter **IN COLOR**, check the box below.

Yes, please send my copy of NEWS by e-mail as a PDF file.