



Tropical Audubon Bulletin

The Voice of Conservation in South Florida...



5530 Sunset Drive; Miami, Florida 33143

(305) 667-7337

Nov/Dec 2009

AUDUBON MAKES CLIMATE A PRIORITY

The panel discussion that kicked off Audubon of Florida's annual assembly on October 23 set the tone for the entire weekend—climate change and sea level rise are now officially at the forefront of Audubon's work plan for the coming year. After the morning's discussion, it seemed these issues are also a priority for the state's leading water

Virginia Key Summary

There is still time to improve the Virginia Key Master Plan, now that the Miami City Commission has agreed to delay the redevelopment process. Collaboration between the environmental community, historical groups and numerous concerned residents led to many changes in the plan between June and October, including more green space and less parking facilities. However, the proposal the commission was faced with on October 8 was still unacceptable to many, due to elements such as a retail village and uncertainty about the scope of many of the permanent structures.

TAS participated in a charette hosted by the Urban Environment League on September 26, at which a consensus opinion was formed regarding the shape of development on Virginia Key. (Read a summary of the day's events on UEL's blog: urbanenvironmentleague.blogspot.com.) Some of the agreed-upon ideas follow:

(Continued on page 7)

and environmental regulatory officials. The discussion, moderated by Audubon of Florida Deputy Director Eric Draper, included input from Mike Sole, Secretary of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP); Nick Wiley, Assistant Executive Director of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission; David Moore, Executive Director of the Southwest Florida Water Management District; and Dr. Ellen Prager, author and Chief Scientist of Aquarius Reef Base.

Several themes surfaced that became central during the assembly:

1. Water conservation is critical. Finding ways to store storm water in the wet season, use it sparingly in the dry season and make management decisions that require less use

of our groundwater are key to a sustainable future in Florida.

2. In order to have resilient coasts, we must conserve and protect the intact coastal areas we currently have.

3. Maintaining and enhancing our current research and monitoring efforts in both our coastal and offshore waters is crucial to understanding how we are changing these ecosystems and what we can do to restore or maintain them.

Sec. Sole fielded the first question, regarding present actions being taken to protect the future of Florida's coastal resources. Sole cited House Bill 7135, signed into law in 2008, which authorized DEP to adopt a cap-and-trade system,

(Continued on page 8)

Tropical Audubon Plant Sale

Planting native species in your own backyard can attract birds during migration, while providing you with shade and a better quality of life. Increasing your greenery will also reduce the city's carbon footprint and connect fragmented habitats.

TAS will host its Native Plant Sale November 7 (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) and 8 (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) at the Doc Thomas House, 5530 Sunset Drive.

For a list of our current inventory, please see our website www.tropicalaudubon.org. Also, check out the Natives for Your Neighborhood tool at the Institute for Regional Conservation's website (www.regionalconservation.org). This online resource will help you identify ideal species for your home.

If you are interested in volunteering for the Plant Sale, contact Laura Reynolds at tropicalaudubon@gmail.com or call (305) 667-7337.

Southern California Birding June 13-21, 2009

Leaders: Brian Rapoza, Bill Boeringer

Participants: Rick and Nancy Blanchette, Roxanne Featherly, Nancy Freedman, Troy Henderson, Bob and Alice Pace, Jeanette Rawls, Carlos Sanchez and Davis Schaffter

Our trip to southern California began and ended in Los Angeles; conveniently, all participants arrived on the same flight. After picking up our rental vans, we headed south, ticking House Finch and Western Gull before reaching our itinerary's first destination, Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach, just south of Los Angeles International Airport. This is reportedly a good place to find Spotted Dove, an introduced species to California. As it turned out, Saturday afternoon was not a good time to visit. The place was packed with locals, leaving no place to park, so we moved on to the Palos Verde Peninsula in southern Los Angeles County. Our target species was California Gnatcatcher, a resident of severely threatened coastal sage scrub habitat. At our first stop, White Point Nature Reserve, singing Blue Grosbeaks greeted us at the entrance. During our hike through the reserve, we also spotted White-throated Swift, Common Raven and California Towhee. Heermann's Gulls were seen across the road at Royal Palms State Beach. Temperatures were comfortably cool along the coast. We next visited the Ocean Trails area, where in sage scrub surrounding the golf course, we found several very cooperative California Gnatcatchers. Also seen were Allen's Hummingbird, Black Phoebe, Bushtit and Lesser Goldfinch. We then headed north, through traffic-choked Los Angeles, to our first night's lodging in Ventura.

Santa Cruz Island in Channel Islands National Park, home to the endemic Island Scrub-Jay, was our next day's destination. After a short drive to Ventura Harbor, starting point for the Island Packers ferry to Santa Cruz, we scanned the harbor, shoreline and jet-ties before boarding, ticking off Brandt's and Pelagic Cormorant, Bonaparte's

Gull, and Brewer's Blackbird. Several Sooty Shearwaters were sighted during our smooth (though chilly) passage to Santa Cruz, as were a group of California Sea Lions sunning themselves on a buoy. At Scorpion Anchorage, where most passengers disembarked, we spotted several Pigeon Guillemots, a pair of Black Oystercatchers and a Common Loon. We continued on to Prisoners Harbor, an area where scrub-jays are more common. We began our exploration of the island by joining a ranger-led

tour of an area managed by the Nature Conservancy. Along the way we found Northern (Red-shafted) Flicker, Black Phoebe, Bewick's Wren and Bullock's Oriole, but no scrub-jays, so we decided to head out on our own. We returned to our starting point and birded along a road leading to Eagle Canyon, in an area managed by the National Park Service. After a steep climb to about 600 feet in elevation,

(Continued on page 6)

*Tropical Audubon Society
Dade Chapter Florida Native Plant Society
Miami Blue Chapter, North American Butterfly Assoc.
and TREEmendous Miami*

5th ANNUAL HOLIDAY POTLUCK PICNIC

Sunday, Dec. 6, 2009, noon – 3 pm
Rain or shine

A.D. Barnes Park - Shelter #2
3401 SW 72 Avenue (Bird Road and SW 72 Ave.)
Miami, FL 33155

Bring family, nature-loving friends and your favorite dish! No glass beverage containers or pets, please.

Also bring your binoculars to discover wildlife at AD Barnes with friends, as we will venture out onto the trails together once the social hour is over.

Please RSVP by December 3 with the number attending, your potluck contribution (main dish, side/salad, or dessert) and phone number. "Non-chef" items are also possible. Contact: Patty Phares, 305-255-6404, pphares@mindspring.com.

Tropical Audubon Society (TAS) is a group of dedicated citizens who care about the quality of South Florida's environment. Established in 1947, we are a chapter of National Audubon Society and Florida Audubon Society. Our headquarters, the Doc Thomas House, is a Dade County Historic site on three sub-tropical acres of native habitat in South Miami.

Tropical Audubon's purposes are:

1) Conservation: to work toward protection of the natural world and to promote wise stewardship of natural resources, especially native plants and animals and their habitat.
2) Education: to promote, among members and the public of all ages, an understanding and appreciation of nature, the environment, and ecological relationships.

3) Enjoyment: as a society of members with compatible interests, to enjoy together the study and protection of nature. We believe in the wisdom of nature's design. We seek to foster and promote ecological conscientiousness in our community.

Editor: Jen Lindsley
Desk Top Publishing: Steven Mumford

Tropical Audubon Bulletin, the official newsletter of the Tropical Audubon Society, is published bimonthly by the Tropical Audubon Society, a non-profit, 501(c) (3) tax-exempt organization. Throughout this newsletter, "TAS" refers to the Tropical Audubon Society, while "DTH" refers to the Doc Thomas House, the site of our office located at 5530 Sunset

Drive; Miami, Florida 33143. The phone number is (305) 667-7337. Membership rate, \$20 per year. Please make your checks payable to Tropical Audubon Society, and mail to our office (address above). Articles, news of events, original drawings, and letters to the Editor are welcomed, and should be submitted to the TAS office 4 weeks prior to each bi-monthly publication. It would be preferable if your copy were submitted via the internet. See the "About TAS" section of our website for more information.

Visit Tropical Audubon on the internet at:

tropicalaudubon.org

CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS

There will be a meet-and-greet and appreciation dinner for current and prospective volunteers at the Doc Thomas House (5530 Sunset Drive) on Thursday, November 12 from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. We will have drinks and dinner followed by introductions, a brief overview of the many good things that are happening at TAS and an opportunity to tell us about your interests skills and ideas for improving TAS and how you can help. Bring a friend, and encourage others to get involved.

Here are some areas where TAS could use some help:

Hospitality: Do you have the gift of hospitality? During cooler weather, we hold the house and grounds open for picnic lunches on Wednesdays and Sundays. How about helping with the food and refreshments for the Annual Meeting, Environmental Immersion Day or a committee meeting? Or leading tours of the house and grounds?

Hands-on labor: Old houses (especially historic ones) need a lot of TLC. Persons with carpentry, electrical or plumbing skills are pure gold. It is OK to turn in your spouse or cousin.

Grounds maintenance: Are you cooped up in a condo? Do you need some dirt to scratch in? We have jobs from wielding a chainsaw, to

weeding, to improving bird and butterfly habitat, to planting native plants, to watering....Do you have a pickup truck? There is always a trip to the dump to be made.

Research jobs... done in air-conditioned comfort: Learn about the history of Tropical Audubon Society, Doc Thomas and the Doc Thomas House and put it in written form for tours of the house and grounds. Research and complete the application for designation as a State Historic Site (DTH has the County designation.) Work on the archives and/or help maintain the library.

Other special skills

Media relations: If you are an able writer or have media contacts, you could help us write and send press releases.

Public Speaking: Are you comfortable speaking at public meetings? The environmental community always needs representatives and spokespersons.

Written advocacy: There is a need for people to send persuasive, coherent letters to public officials and editors of local newspapers.

Technology: Do you know how to navigate computers, their software and related gadgets? Tree huggers and bird watchers can use all the

help they can get!

Grant Writing: Do you have experience, time and the gift of grant writing? If so, we can use you!

Volunteers are an invaluable resource and we want to recognize all those who have put in countless hours over the years and give you a vision into the future needs for TAS from the volunteer and docent community.

A response by phone (305) 667-7337 or by email at tropicalaudubon@gmail.com by November 9th would be helpful for planning.

2009-10

Conservation Meetings

Wed. Nov. 25: Discussion of conservation issues. TAS members and guests are invited to attend this and other Conservation Committee meetings at 7:30 pm on the 4th Wednesday of the month. Meetings are held at the Doc Thomas House, 5530 Sunset Dr., Miami, 33143. Call 305-667-7337 for more information.

2009-10

Workdays at the Doc Thomas House

Want to learn about native plants, help Tropical maintain our native landscape at the Doc Thomas House and get your hands dirty? We need you! Show up anytime between 8:30-noon and you will find a host of hard workers. This is a great opportunity for students to earn community service hours. Call 305-667-7337 or e-mail volunteer1@tropicalaudubon.org for more information. The next Workdays will be held on Nov. 21 and Dec. 19.

The Dade Native Plant Workshop

The Dade Native Plant Workshop meets at the MDC Kendall Campus Landscape Technology Center November 17 and on other 3rd Tuesdays at 7 p.m.

The workshop is co-sponsored by the Institute for Regional Conservation and MDC, and is led by biologist Steve Woodmansee.

Bring at least 3 flowering/fruited plants of any species (even if not

the subject matter). Contact Steve, 786-488-3101, Stevewoodmansee@bellsouth.net, or see www.regionalconservation.org/ircs/aboutus/Outreach.asp for a map and the topic each month.

Whether you are a new learner or old hand at plant ID, there is something to learn, including how to use plants in your own garden. Free!

Everglades for All Survey

Does Everglades restoration include you? In order to find out, Clean Water Fund and community partners are distributing the Everglades for All Survey to explore public opinions about how Everglades restoration touches the lives of diverse communities spanning Florida's geographic, socioeconomic and cultural spectrum. We need your help reaching out to communities beyond traditional "environmental" groups.

Our goal is to challenge assumptions and identify gaps in understanding, access and communications to generate concrete suggestions and strategies for improving and restoring the public voice in Everglades restoration. To understand how discourse can be made more meaningful, inclusive and effective we need your help in distributing this survey broadly and get feedback from as many of our citizens, neighbors and friends as possible. Can you help us distribute this???

To participate in the survey, visit Tropical Audubon Society's website at <http://tropicalaudubon.org>, scroll down the page to "Everglades for All Survey" then "Click Here to take survey".

We are printing physical copies as well for those without online access. Please let me know how many you need and I will promptly send them to you and collect the completed ones at a later date. It shouldn't take folks more than 5 minutes to complete and all responses will be kept anonymous!

In advance, thank you so much for helping us spread the word!!

Dawn Shirreffs, Florida Program Coordinator
Clean Water Action/Clean Water Fund
www.cleanwater.org
190 Ives Dairy Road, Suite 106
Miami, Florida 33179
305.653.9101 / 305.653.9108 fax



What Our Friends Are Doing

FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

The Dade Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society invites you to the chapter's monthly meetings at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, 10901 Old Cutler Road (South entrance) on 4th Tuesdays at 7:30. Refreshments start at 7:15, followed by the program and plant raffle (lots of neat, hard-to-get stuff!). For more information about all activities, call 786-340-7914 or see <http://dade.fnpschapters.org>.

November 24:

"Weeds and Seeds: A History of Dining in Southern Florida" examines various plants utilized by early Floridians as well as some of the 'meatier' issues of early diet in South Florida -- Michele Williams, Ph.D., Director and Terrestrial Archaeologist for the SE Region of Florida Public Archaeology Network.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Join the Bird Counts! Every year since 1900 teams of interested birders have joined together across the country to count the number of individual birds within each species occurring on the same date in the same place. This huge task is coordinated by the National Audubon Society. The consistency of the count creates a viable set of statistics that can be compared and used to measure the effects that changes in the environment have had on the bird population. These measurements act as important warnings of environmental deterioration that should be heeded. In addition to the serious consequences of the bird counts, they are a fun way to spend a day with fellow birding enthusiasts. This is an all day event. Volunteers are needed for all areas.

Fri. Dec. 18 — Biscayne National Park CBC Coordinated by Max Tritt. For additional information, email Max.

Sat. Dec. 19 — Miami-Dade County CBC Coordinated by Brian Rapoza. For additional information, email Brian.

Sun. Dec 20 — Broward CBC Coordinated by Bryant Roberts. For information, email Mary Butterfield or BCAS field trips..

TBA — Long Pine Key CBC Coordinated by Robin Diaz. For additional information, email Robin.

Sat. Dec. 26 — Kendall CBC Coordinated by Bill Boeringer. For additional information, contact Bill via email.

Sat. Jan. 2 — Coot Bay / Everglades CBC Coordinated by Brian Rapoza. For information, email Brian.

Life List Review

The story of Phoebe Snetsinger, the woman who set the world record for bird sitings while facing a fatal cancer prognosis, is told with detail and insight in Olivia Gentile's *Life List* (Bloomsbury; \$26). Fellow birders may find a kindred spirit in the attentive and passionate Snetsinger, but *Life List* is accessible to non-birders as well. The book is not just a story about one obsessed woman determined to see more than 8,000 birds

(she saw 8,674); it is about the history of birding and of a generation of women who came of age in conservative, mid-century America.

After college, Snetsinger settled down and became a housewife, but like many housewives of her time, she needed an outlet for her intellectual energies. She found that outlet in bird watching. Later, when she was told she had a year to live, she decided to live her life in an of-the-moment manner and traveled to far-flung places in the search of rare species, surviving another 18 years. (Ironically, she finally died in a bus accident.)

The amateur, albeit intensely committed, ornithologist makes for an interesting character study. Through her poems and essays, Snetsinger's happiness and satisfaction in birding—something she apparently didn't find in domestic activities—is apparent. Her enthusiasm will leave readers wanting to pick up a pair of binoculars themselves. Her determination to live her life to the fullest is admirable, but one has to wonder about the ease with which she was able to

constantly leave her family. She even missed her eldest daughter's wedding to go to Colombia. And then there are the comments she wrote in a letter upon reaching her goal of 8,000 world-sitings: "So that's over--& now I can go birding for fun!" Did she consider her adventures work until then? And her statement, "Beat the dreaded Brits by over 200!" sheds light on the surprising ferocity of competitive birding.

Life List contains a number of illustrations of birds Snetsinger encountered, as well as photographs of her and her family, which remind the reader that such an extraordinary woman did truly exist. Of course, nonstop pursuit of one's passions is not feasible for everyone. Snetsinger's inheritance made her undoubtedly costly trips possible. It's still exciting, though, to read about a person who pushed her physical limits and the limits of society's expectations.

Miami International Book Fair November 14 and 15 (details to be announced.)

TAS LAUNCHES e-Newsletter

TAS recently launched its e-newsletter, a monthly publication delivered to your email that contains information about upcoming events and conservation issues. They include links to articles, talking points and action strategies for involvement in local environmental campaigns, as well as important field trip and plant sale dates.

If you have not received this publication, and you would like to, please email Caitlin MacLaren at marcaimac@gmail.com. This is an excellent opportunity for TAS to reduce the number of print newsletters it sends, saving paper and money. If you would like to remove yourself from the print subscription list (you may receive both publications), include that in your email.

Also, please make sure your email account is not filtering TAS correspondences into the spam box.

We hope you will find these emails useful and informative!

And will pass them on to friends and your networks to better help the conservation movement in South Florida.

What Our Friends Are Doing

MIAMI BLUE CHAPTER EVENTS

Field Trip: We will join the Deering Estate staff for a walk through the mangroves, hardwood hammocks, and butterfly garden in search of Dingy Purplewings and the Estate's suite of sulphurs. Located along the edge of Biscayne Bay, the 444-acre Deering Estate at Cutler is an environmental, archeological and historical preserve with multiple butterfly-productive habitats. Bring close-focus binoculars (necessary), snacks/lunch, lots of water, sun, rain and mosquito protection. Meet at the Deering Estate Visitor's Center at 10 a.m. (trip ends approx. 2 p.m.) Leaders: Deering Staff & MBC members

Program: "Butterflying Kern County, California and the southern Sierra-Nevadas" by Becky Smith, Linda Evans NABA-Miami Blue Chapter, and Barbara DeWitt, Broward Chapter. Our three presenters, along with our President Dennis Olle, traveled to the Biennial NABA meeting last June in Kernville, California. Butterflying was excellent and this program should tempt you to make this a destination. Local butterflyers in Kern County are active with summer counts and welcoming of visitors. This is also a destination that can be combined with visits to Yosemite, Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Parks. Come whet your interest! Come early to butterfly Castellow Hammock Preserve; program starts promptly at 1:00 pm.

Field Trip: Southern Glades Wildlife and Environmental Area/Frog Pond (L-31W Canal, just north of the entrance to Everglades National Park; Aerojet Road and Lucky Hammock; the South Dade Greenways Trail on C-111; Navy Wells. We will explore the native planted areas along L-31W, make a stop at Lucky Hammock, check out the South Dade Greenways Trail, and try to time our arrival at Navy Wells between noon and 1:00 pm, when the Bartram's Scrub-Hairstreak is apt to be nectaring. Bring close-focus binoculars (necessary), lunch, lots of water and sun, rain and mosquito protection. Meet at Glenn Garrett Park on the South side of L-31W. Leaders: Linda Evans, Elane & Ron Nuehring

Southern California Birding June 13-21, 2009

(Continued from page 2)

we were delighted to find a pair of very cooperative (and vocal) scrub-jays. Though others were later seen closer to Prisoners Harbor, everyone agreed that the strenuous hike was well worth it. Other land birds seen while on the island included Allen's and Black-chinned Hummingbirds, Pacific-slope and Ash-throated Flycatchers, Orange-crowned Warbler (*sordida* subspecies), Spotted Towhee, Rufous-crowned and Song Sparrows, and House Finch. On the return trip to Ventura, we had great looks at both Sooty and Pink-footed Shearwaters; a fortunate few spotted a pair of Xantu's Murrelets, albeit with less than satisfying looks. A Western Grebe was in Ventura Harbor, as were more sea lions and a Harbor Seal. Before returning to our motel, we hiked along the beach towards the mouth of the Santa Clara River. In this very birdy area, we found a pair of "Black" Brant, plus Gadwall, Ruddy Duck, Snowy Plover, Black Oystercatcher, Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Whimbrel, Marbled Godwit, Caspian, Elegant, Common and Least Terns and Great-tailed Grackle.

The following day, we drove north into Santa Barbara County. Our first stop was at Nojiqui Falls County Park. In and around the park, we found California Quail, Red-shouldered Hawk, Acorn and Nuttall's Woodpeckers, Pacific-slope and Ash-throated Flycatcher, Hutton's Vireo, Western Scrub-Jay, Purple Martin, Violet-green Swallow, Oak Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Western Bluebird, Yellow Warbler, Spotted Towhee and Dark-eyed ("Oregon") Junco. Yellow-billed Magpies were spotted along the highway on our way to our next stop, Los Alamos County Park, but were seen by only a few participants. The magpies, our second and final California endemic for the trip, were our target species at this park, but we failed to find any there. Birds we did see during our brief visit included Western Wood-Pewee, Wrentit and Black-headed Grosbeak. After lunch at an In-N-Out Burger in Santa Maria, we continued north to San Luis Obispo County. Our first afternoon stop was at Oso Flaco Lake, where we quickly found a Chestnut-backed Chickadee. Other species seen included Gadwall, Cinnamon Teal, American White Pelican, Least Tern, Nuttall's Woodpecker, Bushtit, Marsh Wren, Swainson's Thrush and Wilson's Warbler. After a fuel stop (where we found our first Anna's Hummingbird), we headed to the rocky cliffs at Shell Beach, where we had up-close looks at Brandt's and Pelagic Cormorants, Black Oystercatcher, Heermann's and Western Gulls (the latter with chicks) and Pigeon Guillemot. Also seen there were Harbor Seals, Sea Otters and, in the distance, breaching Humpback Whales! Our last stop before checking in at our motel in Arroyo Grande was at Lopez Lake County Park, where we found Wild Turkey (with chicks), Western and Clark's Grebes, Bald Eagle, California Thrasher and California Towhee. A Hooded Oriole greeted us at the motel at day's end.

Los Padres National Forest, in the Sierra Madre range of northern Santa Barbara and Ventura counties and home to reintroduced California Condors, was next on our itinerary. Though we saw no condors during our visit, we found plenty of other birds. On Cottonwood Canyon Road, the entrance road to Bates Canyon Campground, the entire group had great looks at several Yellow-billed Magpies. Other birds found along this road included Western Kingbird, Loggerhead Shrike, Warbling Vireo, Horned Lark, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Phainopepla, Black-headed Grosbeak, Lark Sparrow, Bullock's Oriole and Lesser Goldfinch. We continued east to Mt. Pinos and our first opportunity for high elevation species. Western Meadowlark and Brewer's Sparrow were found at low elevation stops. Our first Stellar's Jays were seen at our lunch stop in the town of Pine Mountain. At Mil Potrero Park, we saw Western Bluebirds and heard an Olive-sided Flycatcher. White-headed Woodpecker, Dusky Flycatcher, Mountain Chickadee, White-breasted and Pygmy Nuthatch, Yellow-rumped ("Audubon's") Warbler, Green-tailed Towhee and Fox Sparrow (thick-billed race) were all found during a walk through McGill Campground. At Iris Meadow, near the summit of Mt. Pinos, we added Calliope Hummingbird, Brown Creeper and Chipping Sparrow to our growing list. On our way back down the mountain, we heard, then spotted, a pair of Clark's Nutcrackers. Leaving the Sierra Madres behind, we then headed north and east to the Kern River Valley, near the southern terminus of the Sierra Nevada Range. Our route led us through scenic Kern River Canyon, where we encountered several maniacal speed demons whose tailgating and constant horn honking eventually forced both of our vans to pull over and let them pass. Once safely at our motel along the southern shore of Lake Isabella, we could once again enjoy the birds, which at the motel included Anna's Hummingbird and Say's Phoebe.

Breakfast the next morning included muffins freshly baked by the motel's gracious owner; a tasty treat before our first stop at Audubon-California's Kern River Preserve. During our exploration of this bird-rich property, we found California Quail, White-tailed Kite, Black-chinned and Anna's Hummingbirds, Nuttall's and Hairy Woodpeckers, Willow and Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Scrub-Jay, Oak Titmouse, Bewick's and House Wrens (the latter abundant), Western Bluebird, Summer Tanager, Bullock's Oriole, Tricolored Blackbird and Lesser Goldfinch. Several bird banders working their mist nets gave us in-the-hand looks at Bewick's and House Wrens. As morning temperatures began to warm, we headed next to the Greenhorn Mountains, bordering the western shore of Lake Isabella. On a forest road near Greenhorn Summit, we saw Red-breasted Sapsucker, White-headed Woodpecker, Steller's Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, Mountain Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Townsend's Soli-

taire, Western Tanager, Fox Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco. Steep grades on the way down the mountain caused the brakes on both vans to smoke, and Bill's van to briefly ignite! After a leisurely lunch in Kernville, allowing Bill's brakes to cool sufficiently, we drove north to Sequoia National Monument, in Tulare County. Along the way, Black Swifts were spotted by some in a canyon over the north fork of the Kern River. At Holey Meadow Campground, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Hammond's Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, MacGillivray's and Wilson's Warblers and Green-tailed Towhee were seen, and Golden-crowned Kinglets were heard. At the Trail of 100 Giants, we strolled through a grove of enormous sequoias; here we found yet another Red-breasted Sapsucker, plus White-headed Woodpecker, Steller's Jay, Brown Creeper, Townsend's Solitaire, Hermit Warbler and Purple Finch. We returned to Lake Isabella for a quick dinner and to restock on supplies, then drove to our motel in Ridgecrest, arriving after nightfall.

Our first stop the next day was outside the town of Inyokern, at the home of Ed and Terri Middlemiss. Their property attracts a wide variety of desert birds, including elusive Le Conte's Thrashers, which they entice to their feeders using mealworms! Terri informed us that her resident thrasher had stopped singing after apparently failing to find a mate; in spite of her attempts to call the bird in, it never made an appearance. Other birds seen during our visit included California Quail, Black-chinned and Costa's Hummingbirds, Verdin, Phainopepla, Black-throated Sparrow and Hooded Oriole. Next, we drove north to Chimney Peak National Backcountry Byway, in Inyo County. Shortly after we began our drive down this unpaved mountain road, we spotted a family of Mountain Quail by the side of the road! At Chimney Peak Campground, we flushed a large covey of Mountain Quail, but all scurried from sight before we could obtain satisfactory views. Also seen during our hike through the campground were Plumbeous Vireo, Steller's and Western Scrub-Jay, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Spotted Towhee and Sage Sparrow. Lots of reptiles were seen in this area, including a Southern Desert Horned Lizard; bushwhacking Bill also had a too-close encounter with a Northern Pacific Rattlesnake! We returned to the Lake Isabella area for lunch; some participants spotted a family of Ring-necked Pheasants before reaching the restaurant. Before our long drive through San Bernardino County to Indio, our destination for the next two nights, we made two more stops along the road between Lake Isabella and Ridgecrest. In a small canyon across from Bert's Park, we found both Rock Wren and Scott's Oriole. At Walker's Pass Campground, we quickly located a flock of at least fifty noisy Pinyon Jays! We arrived at Indio just before sunset, discovering White-winged Dove, Costa's Hummingbird, Verdin and nesting Cactus

(Continued on page 7)

Southern California Birding June 13-21, 2009

(Continued from page 6)
Wrens right at the motel.

A circumnavigation of the Salton Sea was on our next day's itinerary. With some trepidation, based on reports of a foul stench around the sea, we headed south along the eastern shore of the sea, stopping along the highway to scope flocks of birds congregating along the shoreline. Seen here were Eared and Western Grebes, American White Pelican and both California and Ring-billed Gulls, plus large numbers of flies, many of which hitchhiked with us throughout the day. To our relief, though, there was no olfactory assault from the sea. Black-tailed Gnatcatchers were found in a brushy area near Wister State Waterfowl Area. Before arriving at the headquarters of Sonny Bono Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge, the first of many Burrowing Owls were spotted on dikes surrounding adjacent agricultural fields. Flocks of Long-billed Curlews, along with a few Marbled Godwits, fed in the fields while Gull-billed Terns hunted over canals paralleling the road. Around the headquarters building we found Gambel's Quail, Common Ground-Dove, Verdin and Abert's Towhee. On the Rock Hill Trail, which began at the headquarters, we saw Greater Roadrunner, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Cliff Swallow and Great-tailed Grackle. The trail led us to the seashore as well as an adjacent impoundment teeming with Black-necked Stilts, American Avocets, Caspian and Common Terns and Black Skimmers. In the sea itself, we found Western and Clark's Grebes, as well as our first Yellow-footed Gull. At nearby Obsidian Butte, participants examined and photographed a Yellow-footed Gull at close range. At the Red Hill boat launch, a Lesser Nighthawk flew by, then perched right on the beach. On our way down to our lunch stop in Brawley, at the sea's southeastern end, we stopped at a marshy area that held

large numbers of White-faced Ibis. After lunch we visited Cattle Call Park in Brawley, nearly 200 feet below sea level, where we added Gila Woodpecker to our trip list. From there we headed south to Sunbeam Lake Park, in El Centro, near the border with Mexico. Here we found the Greater White-fronted Goose and Cackling Goose that had been reported from this location. We also spotted an Inca Dove and a Monk Parakeet while at the park. We then backtracked to the southern tip of the sea, stopping first at Unit 1 of the National Wildlife Refuge. From an observation platform, we scoped distant waterfowl along the seashore, hoping for the Ross's Goose that had been reported there earlier. Unfortunately, most of the open water had dried up, and birds were scarce. We hiked a short trail along a cattail marsh and heard "Yuma" Clapper Rails calling along the way. At our day's last stop in the refuge, on nearby Poe Road, we saw two more Lesser Nighthawks as well as a Northern Harrier.

Our last full day in southern California began at Big Morongo Canyon Preserve, near the western end of Joshua Tree National Park. We birded adjacent Covington Park first; the trees in this small park were filled with Vermilion Flycatchers! Also seen were Cooper's Hawk, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Cassin's Kingbird, Western Scrub-Jay, Bewick's Wren, California Thrasher, and Lesser Goldfinch. At the preserve, we hiked both the Desert Willow and Marsh Trails, where we found Willow Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo, Bushtit, Yellow-breasted Chat and Summer Tanager. In the preserve's parking area, a Botta's Pocket Gopher was observed at close range, scurrying in and out of its many burrows. From there we headed into the San Jacinto Mountains; as we drove the winding road leading to the mountain resort village of Idyllwild, some participants spotted a Golden Eagle, perched on a distant rock. Acorn Woodpecker, Steller's Jay, Mountain Chickadee and Western Bluebird were around the Lake Fulmar picnic area. After lunch in Idyllwild, we made a

quick stop at the Idyllwild Nature Center; a flock of Band-tailed Pigeons was conveniently perched in pines surrounding the parking area. For a last attempt at high elevation species, we drove the impossibly narrow and winding dirt road up Black Mountain, adding White-headed Woodpecker, Violet-green Swallow, Pigmy and White-breasted Nuthatch, "Audubon's" Warbler, Western Tanager and Dark-eyed Junco to our day list. At nearly 9000 feet, Black Mountain was quite a contrast to our below sea level birding just 24 hours before! Returning to Los Angeles County after dropping off participant Nancy Freedman at her brother's house in Redlands, we made one last stop before checking in at our motel. At Anita Canyon, in the San Gabriel Mountains, we hoped to hike the trail to Sturtevant Falls to find both Black Swift and American Dipper, but a combination of difficulty finding the right trail, fading daylight and an earlier-than-expected closing time for the gate at the canyon entrance forced us to abort the hike. Swifts were flying over the parking area, but all were White-throated. We also had several Red-crowned parrots fly over; many more were seen once we reached our motel, along with numerous Black Phoebes.

Before heading to Los Angeles International Airport the next morning, we made another attempt to visit Sand Dune Park in Manhattan Beach. Parking was readily available on this visit. Though we failed to find any Spotted Doves, we did see our last Western and Heermann's Gulls, Allen's Hummingbird and Western Scrub-Jay, plus a pair of Mitrred Parakeets, before boarding our plane for the return flight to Miami. During nine days of birding, total of 193 species of birds were tallied. Every participant, and both leaders, ticked life birds on the trip, most with 50 or more, and several approaching the century mark! The combination of good weather, great birds and the camaraderie of the group made for a memorable trip; many have already started making arrangements for the next TAS Road Trip!

TAS

MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Nov. 11 - Status of the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow in Everglades National Park

The fate of the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow, a subspecies endemic to southern Florida, is but one of many issues inexorably tied to Everglades restoration. ENP biologist Oron "Sonny" L. Bass, Jr. will discuss the sparrow's natural history, historical distribution, present status and recovery efforts as they relate to the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

Membership meetings are open to the public and held at the Doc Thomas House, 5530 Sunset Drive, near Red Road. The doors open at 7:30pm and the show begins at 8pm. Call (305) 667-7337 for more information.

Virginia Key Summary

(Continued from page 1)

1. The Marine Stadium should be restored to its original condition and put to use once more.
2. Any athletic fields that are built must avoid harmful chemicals and must be for daytime use only. Lights are frequently implicated in leading newly hatched turtles away from the water.
3. The North Point should be a place for biking, primitive camping and beach access; construction needs to be very limited (i.e., no corporate facilities).
4. Strong buffers should surround all public access sites.

5. A public boat ramp should be built in an environmentally sensitive manner. The marine basin has been suggested as a site for such a ramp.
6. A Virginia Key Welcome Center should be established.

7. Ongoing funding should be provided to Virginia Key Beach Park Trust so that a museum can be built.

The North Point is a place of particular concern to TAS, as it includes a critical wildlife area. TAS would ultimately like to see a plan that includes minimal construction and maximizes natural areas.

TAS CALENDAR

CALENDAR OF WALKS, WORKDAYS, FESTIVALS, SALES, CLASSES - EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO DO WITH TROPICAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
The specifics for Tropical's ongoing activities are indicated below. In some cases, the trip leader has included his email address and phone number for direct contact. Otherwise, please call TAS at 305 667 PEEP (7337) or email fieldtrips@tropicalaudubon.org, or see our web page <http://tropicalaudubon.org> for more information. {ES} denotes events with Spanish language leaders

Sat. Nov. 7 — Everglades National Park Birding John Boyd will lead this all day carpool trip. Meet in the parking lot of the Coe Visitor Center at Everglades National Park at 7:30am. There is an entrance fee to the park. Bring lunch.

Sat. Nov. 14 — STA-5 Birding Hendry Glades Audubon Society invites TAS to join them for a tour of Stormwater Treatment Area-5 in Hendry County. For those planning to carpool, this trip is limited to 20 participants and reservations are required. Contact Brian Rapoza for details, including meeting place and time.

Sat. Nov. 21 — Wakodahatchee / Green Cay / Okeehchee Birding John Hutchison will lead this carpool trip. Meet at 7:30am at Wakodahatchee Wetlands (13026 Jog Road, about 1.5 miles north of Atlantic Avenue in Delray Beach, Palm Beach County.) Bring lunch.

Fri.-Sun., Nov. 27-29 — Merritt Island Birding Brian Rapoza and John Boyd will lead this three day, two-night van trip to the Merritt Island area in Brevard County. Costs (\$300.00 per person double occupancy; \$100.00 single supplement) include hotel and van/gas. Reservations are required by November 7. Email Brian

Sat. Dec. 5 — South Florida Exotics Trip Paul Bithorn will lead birders in search of parrots, bulbuls, mynas, and other introduced species in this carpool trip. Meet at 1:00pm at the east parking lot of Baptist Hospital (8950 N Kendall Drive).

Sat. Dec. 12 — Snake Warrior Island Birding Broward Audubon Society's Paddy Cunningham invites TAS to join her for a tour of Snake Warrior Island Natural Area in southern Broward County. The park is at 3600 SW 62 Avenue in Miramar. From I-95, take US 441 north to County Line Road, drive west to SW 62 Avenue, then north to the park. Meet Paddy at 8:00 AM, return is at about 12:00 PM.

AUDUBON MAKES CLIMATE A PRIORITY

(Continued from page 1)

among other things. In addition, The Florida Action Team on Energy and Climate Change submitted to Governor Crist a report with 50 policy recommendations. Sole stated that in his 18-year tenure there has never been more sweeping directives set forth by DEP to protect the environment. When asked how priority will be placed on climate change and sea level rise, the state's leading environmental regulator stated that coastal resiliency is key to allowing coastlines to adapt to such changes.

Meanwhile, Prager emphasized that research and monitoring will help us understand the kinds of decisions we need to make. She stressed that a heightened public awareness and involvement will be necessary to bring about the scale of change needed to thwart the climate crisis.

While the themes and ideas that came out of the panel discussion are a meaningful start in addressing climate issues and environmental conservation, the leading environmental, wild-life and water conservation agencies represented still seem to be lacking concrete solutions. Having a goal of changing public opinion and behavior is an important strategy in water conservation, but what remains unclear is what tactics will be em-

ployed to achieve this goal.

While environmental agencies now recognize that climate change and sea level rise are threatening the coastline and offshore waters of Florida, our legislators at the state level lag behind in providing the mechanism for these agencies to affect real change. For example, regulatory agencies currently do not have the authority to consider climate issues when making decisions on coastal construction projects; this must be changed. Legislators also need to fund existing bills that are designed to take Florida from a development-driven economy to a much greener, more sustainable one.

It is imperative to secure the funding and commitment for Everglades restoration that will increase the freshwater head along our coastlines and stave off saltwater intrusion. Because of this, steps should be taken to reduce the amount of groundwater removed and increase storm water storage.

The attendees from Tropical Audubon left the meeting feeling that we should all put pressure on our state legislatures to pass laws in the next session that will enable agencies to consider climate change in their coastal and land management decisions.

BBB (Breakfast, Birds and Butterflies) at TAS!

Sunday, November 15, 8-noon. Bring your binoculars and bambini to TAS for bagels, bananas and beverages by the TAS barista (and other stuff that does not start with "b") while we watch nature wake up. Bird and butterfly experts will be there to help us spot the wild-life. Free and open to the public, but donations for breakfast will be gratefully accepted!! There will be a historical tour at 11am for those of you who want to know how this wonderful location came to be Tropical Audubon's center and more about, who Doc Thomas was.

Tropical Audubon Society
5530 Sunset Drive
Miami, FL 33143

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Miami, Florida
Permit No. 3677