



Tropical Audubon Bulletin

The Voice of Conservation in South Florida... 

5530 Sunset Drive; Miami, Florida 33143

(305) 667-7337

May/June 2006

UDB UPDATE

AN ALMOST COMPLETE VICTORY

by Cynthia Guerra

734 acres of agriculture, wetlands and open space spared from urban development !

By now you have probably seen, read, or heard that the county-wide debate over the immediate future of the Urban Development Boundary (UDB) has come to an end. On April 19th, the Miami-Dade County Commission denied 4 of the 5 remaining applications to extend the UDB. This action by the Commission is neither the beginning of the story nor the end, the next cycle for those who seek to

expand the UDB opens in April 2007. We have just enough time to catch our breath before it could happen all over again.

The UDB issue has become a lightning rod in the never-ending deliberation over whether the County is experiencing growing pains from uncontrolled development or improvement in our collective economic condition. As with most complex issues, it is extremely hard to boil everything down to sound-bites – yet that is probably what most folks have been getting. At TAS, we endeavored to participate in the dialogue by sticking to the facts and we are relieved that some of the Commission, for the most part, did as well.

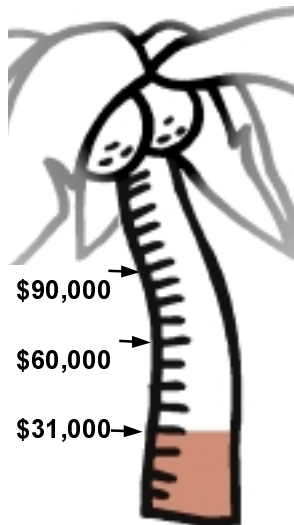
Here are the most relevant facts:

- * The County has enough developable land inside the UDB to accommodate residential development through the year 2018.
- * The County has enough developable land inside the UDB to accommodate commercial and industrial development through the year 2025.
- * The State of Florida recommended denial of all proposed developments inside and outside the UDB – based on the overarching concern that the County does not have the water supply to support an ever-growing population. Further, the County's increased demand for water could have a very

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Help Us, Help South Florida!

Many folks responded generously to our 2005 Year-End Annual Fund Appeal letter and for that we are extremely grateful. So far, our members and supporters have contributed approximately \$31,000 to support the organization in 2006. Our annual budget is less than \$90,000 per year: a relatively small amount



that supports all of our programs, pays for the production and distribution of this newsletter, helps us to maintain the historic Doc Thomas House and Botanical Garden (which we are still trying to restore after last year's hurricanes) and supports our one staff member.

Tropical Audubon may be a small non-profit organization, but we accomplish so much more than our little budget would suggest we can. Our leadership in the Hold the Line Campaign is a testament to how important we are as the "Voice of Conservation in South Florida..." We rely on our Board of Directors, and you – our members – to support the work we do.

Please take this opportunity to send your tax deductible contribution to TAS at 5530 Sunset Drive, Miami, FL, 33143. Every dollar you send to us stays with TAS to support our important conservation work in Miami-Dade County. As always, we are amazed by your generosity!

Costa Rica **ROCKED!**

The TAS-sponsored Costa Rica Highlights birding tour, a ten-day, nine-night tour arranged through Exotic Birding LLC and held April 7-16, provided participants with a sensational introduction to Costa Rican birdlife. Joining me were Dan Zuckerman, Susana Barciela and Annemarie and Lester Brockmann, all from Miami, Douglas and Lillian Wassmer from Tampa and Raissa Trend and Andrew Waltman, both chemistry postgraduates currently studying in Switzerland. Our guide was Marcos Soto, a native of Costa Rica who has been a master birding guide for twenty years. Not only can Marcos identify hundreds of birds by sight and voice, he is also able to imitate many of their calls, a skill which proved invaluable when attempting to spot skulking species such as tinamous, antbirds and wrens. He also shared with us his extensive knowledge of Costa Rica's other fauna and flora, and its fascinating history and culture.

The itinerary allowed us to sample a variety of habitats in and around the country's midsection, including montane cloud forest, high elevation paramo, Carib-

bean lowland rainforest, Pacific lowland transitional forest and coastal mangrove forest. Transportation to all locations was by air-conditioned bus, professionally driven by the infectiously cheerful Guillermo "Bigotes" Hernandez-Quesado.

In addition to the amazing 355 species of birds seen or heard by participants (*a complete trip report and bird list is on the TAS website*), we also saw a number of mammals, including Northern Tamandua (a type of anteater), Central American Agouti, Collared Peccary, two species of sloth, three species of monkeys (Howler, Spider and Capuchin), Crab-eating Raccoon and Red-tailed and Variegated Squirrel.

We also saw numerous lizards, snakes (none venomous), turtles and frogs, (including several colorful species of poison arrow frogs), plus untold numbers of butterflies and other insects.

Many thanks to Laura Fellows and Jim Wittenberger of Exotic Birding LLC, both of whom accompanied us on this trip and seamlessly handled all logistical details, including lodging, meals, transportation and entrance arrangements. I look forward to working with them again to provide TAS members with other opportunities to explore and bird the remarkable American tropics.

Native Plant Sale

at the Doc Thomas House
Saturday & Sunday, June 3 & 4

Our native plant sales are famous and fun. We have a great selection of South Florida plants, and knowledgeable sales people to help you choose the best ones for your yard. Plants available are perfect for creating bird, butterfly and wildlife habitats and also help to conserve water. All proceeds support TAS. Hours are 9 – 5 on Saturday and 9 – 3 on Sunday. Come early for the best selection, stay late to enjoy the company.

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 subtropical 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.

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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 by-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

UDB UPDATE : AN "ALMOST VICTORY"

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detrimental impact on important natural resources like the Everglades and Biscayne Bay.

Why an "Almost Victory?" When the application cycle opened in April of 2005, 9 different development proposals to expand the UDB were received as well as a text amendment that would have resulted in rapid and uncontrolled movement of the UDB. By the time these applications worked through the process and returned to the Commission in April of 2006, 4 of the development proposals and the

text amendment were withdrawn.

These withdrawals happened, in part, because of the activism of TAS and the leadership of TAS and Audubon of Florida (and other partners) in the Hold the Line Campaign. The Campaign galvanized a cross-section of county residents, businesses, organizations, elected officials and municipalities. These entities believe in the core tenets of the Campaign: the needs of current taxpayers and residents must be fully accounted for and met, before allowing new development that will add to our overburdened traffic, transit, school, and park systems, and our drinking water supply and the environment must be fully protected.

As noted, the Commission finally denied 4 out of the 5 remaining applications. As expected, Commissioner Sorenson voted to deny all of them. Commissioners Gimenez, Heyman, Moss and Sosa voted to deny 4 projects. These four Commissioners, along with Commissioner Sorenson formed a critical voting block that effectively stopped approval of most of the projects. TAS appreciates their thoughtful consideration and willingness to make the difficult decision to deny and we encourage you, our members, to thank these commissioners for making the right decision. Commissioners Barreiro, Diaz, Jordan and Seijas seemed to respond to every conceivable justification for sprawl development, they voted to approve all but one.

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Save The Date!

Audubon Assembly 2006
October 19 – 21

Due to its cancellation last fall, we are gearing up for a great event this October! Plan on joining us for a weekend of networking, education, advocacy and birding at Holiday Inn Cocoa Beach Oceanfront Resort - Special rate: \$89.99/night (good through September 27). Reserve rooms now at 800-206-2724. Plan to attend Florida's largest gathering of conservation-minded citizens. Join chapter leaders and members, Audubon staff, wildlife professionals, environmental advocates, scientists, students, agency and elected officials, and other Floridians to network and learn about the environment. Details will appear in the summer *Naturalist* and are available online at www.audubonofflorida.org in July.

Thanks to our Donors!

The following generous individuals and organizations have contributed to TAS since the last Bulletin. As always, we **GREATLY** appreciate your support!

Great White Heron (\$500 to \$999)

Amy Kimball-Murley
Nancy Freedman
Craig Woodland

Purple Gallinule (\$250 to \$499)

James Sigsbee
Bob Kelley

Painted Bunting (\$100 to \$249)

Alan Mishael
Charles W. Butler
Georgiana Hall, made to honor the memory of her mother Elizabeth Hall

White-Crowned Pigeon (\$50 to \$99)

Daniel Suman
George & Kathy Wheeler
Wendy Cook
Miriam & Helmut Jockel
Anonymous, made in honor of Susannah Troner's Birthday

Other Donors

John Atkinson
John Hutchison
Joyce DeCarbo
Ruth Householder
Nancy Lee
Sandra Baer, made in honor of Susannah Troner's Birthday

Special thanks to Roger Hammer for donating copies of his fabulous books on wildflowers in support of our special events, Brian Rapoza for his donation to support the Christmas Bird Count, and Gary Hunt for his numerous donations in support of our special events and for repairing hurricane damage.

Thank You!

“One good tern deserves another...”

Birdathon Update

by Cynthia Guerra

As this newsletter goes to press, several talented birders (and not so talented ones, like your truly) are out looking for birds as part of this year's TAS Birdathon! Teams and individuals have taken the opportunity to take part of a great day of birding while at the same time helping to support the important conservation work of TAS. The following teams and individuals registered in time to be recognized in this Bulletin:

- ⊕ **King Boyds** : Nancy Freedman, John Boyd and Alex Harper
- ⊕ **Life is Good...** Paul Bithorn and Brian Rapoza
- ⊕ **Hey, this isn't Sailing!** : Cynthia Guerra and the Stewart/Sheldon Family
- ⊕ Roxanne Featherly
- ⊕ Dolora Batchelor

TAS FUN DAYS

Want to learn about native plants, help Tropical Audubon 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 for more information.

**Fundays will be held
May 27 and June 24**

Take A Walk!

Sat., May 6 — Matheson Hammock Park Bird Walk

John Boyd will lead birders through Matheson Hammock on Old Cutler Rd. immediately north of Fairchild Gardens. The group meets in the parking area on the left inside the park entrance at 7:30am. Return is at approximately 11:00am.

Sat., May 13 — North Key Largo: Birds, Butterflies and Native Plants

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day with Joe Barros. Joe will lead this trip to the largest remaining tract of coastal tropical hardwood hammock in the Florida Keys. Meet at 7:30am in the parking lot of the Burger King on US1 in Florida City (just after the end of the turnpike). Bring water and insect repellent.

If you didn't do a Birdathon this year – stay tuned for next year's event. Great prizes are always awarded. This year's top prizes include a \$500 gift certificate to American Airlines, a pelagic birding trip with professional bird guide Larry Manfredi, binoculars from Eagle Optics, and more! Our appreciation goes out to Birdathoners, folks who made pledges, sponsors and prize donors.

UDB UPDATE

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Four out of five denials and five withdrawals may seem like a stunning victory, but one project was approved to allow the City of Hialeah to develop an industrial park. This approval is a major disappointment for TAS. To be fair, the Hialeah proposal had attributes that made the application more appropriate than the others, but now is just not the time - remember, there is enough land for this type of development already within the UDB until 2025, the application should have been denied until land inventories were exhausted. The approval of Hialeah did not completely shut the door that was opened in 2004 when the last UDB amendment for development was approved. The 2004 approval set precedent for a huge push to move the UDB in 2005, and we are concerned that Hialeah's approval may encourage future ill-considered and overly aggressive proposals.

A very special note of appreciation goes out to TAS members who reached out to their Commissioners and showed up to the hearings. You were all an important part of this critical moment in history. Perhaps the denials will change the complexion of land consumption in Miami-Dade County. Perhaps we have bought a little time to allow Everglades and Biscayne Bay restoration to be fully and completely implemented. Perhaps we have helped the County be more thoughtful about seemingly inconsequential land use and zoning changes that can be harmful to everyone's quality of life. Perhaps. Then again, perhaps we will be back in the fight next April, or sooner if proponents of other projects keep pushing to move the UDB... No matter what, TAS will be there!

Tropical Audubon Society
5530 Sunset Drive
Miami, FL 33143

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