

Tropical Audubon Bulletin

Newsletter of the Tropical Audubon Society



5530 Sunset Drive; Miami, Florida 33143

(305) 667-7337

May/June 2005

University of Miami Plans Conversion of Pine Rocklands to Residential Development

In an effort to make money for their endowment, the University of Miami has proposed to develop a piece of land they own near Miami Metro-zoo. The plan calls for the construction and sale of 1200 homes, retail and office space and other community amenities on 136 acres of the Richmond pine rockland tract. It is the largest remaining tract of pine rockland in Dade county outside of Everglades National Park. There are 202 native plant species on the property, 21 of which are listed by the state of Florida as either Endangered or Threatened. Among those 21 species, two are listed as federally endangered by the USFWS – *Polygala smallii* (Small's milkwort) and *Chamaesyce deltoidea* var. *deltoidea* (Deltoid spurge). Additionally, *Zornia bracteata* (*viperina*) is listed by IRC as critically imperiled in South Florida.

While touting a smart-growth approach, those working to bring this development to fruition are ignoring the intrinsic natural values that currently exist on the site. The New Urbanist approach they are applying is certainly the way the growth should occur, but this is the wrong place to apply those principles. The current proposal does provide for the conservation of about 45 acres of pine rockland, but there will be other habitat impacts that will require mitigation if the project is approved as proposed. The environmental features of the site were one of the main reasons the County's Planning staff recommended denial of the land use change last August stating that the pinelands

were "the most significant upland natural habitat in Miami-Dade County outside of Everglades National Park." Other staff concerns focused primarily on the impacts of additional traffic in the surrounding roadways and neighborhoods.

The development of the site requires that Miami-Dade County change the land use designation that is currently assigned to the site. The change is also subject to a review by the state's Department of Community Affairs. On April 11th, the County's Planning Advisory Board recommended denial to the University of Miami's request. On May 9th, the Board of County Commissioners will hear the request and either approve or deny the application. The meeting will take place in Commission Chambers in the Stephen P. Clark Center located at 111 N.W. 1st Street, Miami, Florida 33128. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 9:30 am. It is imperative to communicate to the Commissioners that this request should be denied.

Please contact your elected County Commissioner and express your concern over the impacts to traffic and the loss of green space in the community. Urge them to consider acquiring the site for improving the existing network of parkland in the area. If you don't know who your commissioner is, visit the following website and type in your address: <http://gisims.miamidade.gov/scripts/esrimap.dll?name=CountyServices&Cmd=Map>

Use the following points in your calls,

letters and e-mails.

► Residential development nearly always restricts or prevents appropriate fire management of the remaining pineland. This would be the case both within the development and in the surrounding Richmond pineland tracts already in public ownership. There are, therefore, unintended consequences outside the footprint of the development and outside the footprint of the UM tract. Fire is needed to manage for the endangered and endemic plant species that occur in the complex as a whole.

► This tract is part of the largest remaining pine rockland tract outside ENP, therefore loss of any portion of this complex to development is a catastrophic loss. The pineland that has become degraded due to Burma reed invasion is restorable if appropriate management were applied. The tract should be turned over to a public conservation agency if the University doesn't want to manage it.

► Residential development is detrimental to natural areas in other ways. Trash, dumped landscape debris, escaped or dumped domestic animals, vandalism, and human-set wildfires are all impacts that occur to natural areas when residential development is in close proximity. Management in perpetuity is a promise that the University is probably reluctant to make.

- Cynthia Guerra

Spring Into Summer at the TAS Plant Sale

Sat.-Sun., June 4 & 5 Native Plant Sale
at the Doc Thomas House

Go Native! Kick-start conservation at home by purchasing some native plants at the next Tropical Audubon Society Native Plant Sale. Plants available for sale are perfect for creating bird, butterfly and wildlife habitat and

also help to conserve water. Experts will be on hand for advice. All proceeds support TAS. The gate opens both days at 9 am. Saturday we close at 5 pm, Sunday at 3 pm.

Rist Farewell

On a rainy evening in March, TAS Board Members, volunteers and friends gathered at the Doc Thomas House to bid farewell to Karsten and Carol Rist. The Rists have lived their convictions each day by sharing their time and wisdom – and each other – with the inhabitants of South Florida. They have dedicated their lives towards bringing civility and grace as well as passion to conserving the South Florida environment. Miami-Dade County Commissioner Katy Sorenson was on hand to present the Rists with a Proclamation declaring March 17th as Karsten & Carol Rist Day! The Rists were also presented with TAS' highest award, the Brookfield medal. Unbelievably, the Rists have moved away from Florida. We were so fortunate to have been the beneficiaries of their dedication to the environment and they are to be sorely missed.

My appreciation goes to those who helped TAS pull together such an elegant, albeit last-minute, going away party: Jim & Amy Murley, Elaine Nuehring, Joe & Helen Barros and Gary Hunt. TAS would also like to express thanks to Alan & Sue Steinberg for underwriting the event. Finally, special thanks go to those who made a contribution to the newly created TAS Rist Fund: Patty Phares, Rock & Heather Salt, Kate Elliot, The Swetlands, Nancy Lee, John Parker, Loly Espino, Anonymous, Karsten & Carol Rist, Dick Pettigrew, David Wright and Tom Lodge.

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!

Roseate Spoonbill (\$1000 to \$4999)

Karsten & Carol Rist
James Kushlan

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

Rick Cohen

Purple Gallinule (\$250 to \$499)

James Sigsbee

Painted Bunting (\$100 to \$249)

Georgina Pardo
Neanderthal Ecotours & Expeditions
Cathy Coates

White-Crowned Pigeon (\$59 to \$99)

Freda Tschumy

Other donors:

Lyman Martyn
John Asgeirson
Raul Urgelles & Robin Gray-Urgelles
John Atkinson
Dita Teitelbaum

Special thanks to Ilene & Phil Barocas for their contribution in memory of Mrs. Ann McKay.

Thank You!

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.

Editor: Cynthia Guerra
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

Rare birds are often “one day wonders,” seen by a lucky few who just happened to be at the right place at the right time. Fortunately for birders that can’t chase a bird at the drop of a hat, just as many rarities seem to stay in the same general location for days, weeks or even months. Such was the case with many birds first discovered earlier this winter. If you didn’t drop everything in January and drive down to Key West or Long Key State Park to see any of the Western Spindalis wintering in the Keys, at least one was being seen into early April. Also spending the rest of the winter were the Vermilion Flycatcher at South Dade Greenway, the Groove-billed Ani at Greenbelt Park in Broward, the Black-throated Gray Warbler at Seacrest Scrub Preserve in Palm Beach, the Eurasian Wigeons at Eagle Lakes Park in Collier, and the Brown-crested Flycatchers and up to forty Greater Flamingoes in Everglades National Park. At A. D. Barnes Park in Miami Dade, the Wood Thrush first found in December continued, as did the Tufted Titmouse first discovered in October. Other out-of-place titmice were reported this winter from Pinecrest and Deerfield Island Park.

Reports of Bell’s Vireo continued this winter, with new sightings at Bill Baggs State Park in early February and from Flamingo in mid-March. Sightings of Nashville Warbler continued as well: another was found in mid-February, this time at Fern Forest in Broward. Blackpoll Warblers seen at Bill Sadowski Park in south Dade were considered to be early migrants. A Swainson’s Warbler found at A. D. Barnes Park the first week in March was also assumed to be an early migrant. Later in March a female Wilson’s Warbler was being seen regularly at A. D. Barnes. Dickcissels were reported this winter from both Castellow Hammock in south Dade and Research Road in Everglades National Park. In mid-February a Glaucous Gull made itself at home for several days on the jetty at Black Point in Biscayne National Park. In Collier County during February several Yellow-headed Blackbirds were being consistently seen at a farm near the Fritchey Road Wetlands.

As winter turned to spring, bird sightings heated up, especially in Miami-Dade. In late March, a Buff-bellied Hummingbird was discovered at Fairchild Tropical Garden. Several Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were also present at Fairchild, though one was believed by some to be a Black-chinned Hummingbird. Back at A. D. Barnes Park, the discovery of a Carolina Chickadee was completely unexpected. Both the Buff-bellied Hummingbird and Carolina Chickadee were firsts for Miami-Dade County. A Dark-eyed Junco was reported from Matheson Hammock, but was never confirmed by others. Farther afield, in early April a Surf-bird was being seen with a Purple Sandpiper on the Jetty at Ponce Inlet in Volusia County. Early reports from the Dry Tortugas included sightings of Black Noddy, Roseate Tern, Antillean Short-eared Owl, Lesser Nighthawk, Shiny Cowbird and twenty-six species of warblers, including Blue-winged, Cerulean, Kentucky, Nashville and Bay-breasted. It’s shaping up to be an exciting spring migration. As always, stay apprised of the latest sightings by monitoring the TAS BirdBoard at www.tropicalaudubon.org

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Hold the Line

Have you heard of the Hold the Line Campaign? As a founding member, TAS has been instrumental in working with over 45 campaign partners to get the message out to elected officials to Hold the Line.

We are working to persuade Miami-Dade decision-makers to Hold the Line, the Urban Development Boundary (UDB) that separates urban areas from environmental and agricultural lands. Currently, Miami-Dade County decision makers are experiencing extreme pressure to move the UDB and accommodate new development proposals that harm our diverse communities. Miami-Dade County Commissioners must Hold the Line and fund and implement solutions that improve our quality of life, our communities, and our environment.

The first decision coming before the County Commission in May concerns

the request for annexation by Florida City of several thousand acres at the intersection of US 1 and Card Sound Road. While county commissioners are only considering annexation at this time, there is a development plan at the state level for 6,000 homes within the area of annexation. It is believed that this annexation is a step toward this development for Lennar Homes which has optioned the land for purchase—on the wrong side of the UDB. Other builders, like Texas-based Horton Homes, have applied for approval by the South Florida Regional Planning Council for plans to build a major development in west, west Kendall, also outside the UDB.

Over 45 organizations have signed on to the campaign and 6 municipalities have adopted resolutions urging the County Commissioners to Hold the Line:

Bay Harbor, Miami Beach, Miami Lakes, North Miami, Pinecrest and South Miami. You can find ways to get engaged at our website, and also on the campaign website - www.udbline.com. If you are working with an organization that would like to sign a resolution in support of the campaign, please contact Gilberto Osorio, Program Director, at 305-213-4348 or gil.osorio@gmail.com



FLORIDA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Dade Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society meets on fourth Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden for a program, plant raffle, refreshments and socializing. The meeting is free and open

FAIRCHILD TROPICAL BOTANIC GARDEN EVENTS

Afternoon Tea at Fairchild - May 5, 3:00 p.m. in the Ballroom at the Visitor Center
Reservations 305/667-1651, ext. 3391

Flowering Tree Sale - May 7-8, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., presented by the Tropical Flowering Tree Society.

Mother's Day Brunch at the Veranda Restaurant - May 8, reservations recommended 305/667-1651, ext. 3345.

Bougainvillea Sale - May 21-22, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., presented by the American Bougainvillea Society.

Cactus and Succulent Show and Sale - May 27-29, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., presented by the South Florida Cactus and Succulent Society.

to the public. On May 24, Christina M. Casado-Acorn of Miami-Dade DERM will discuss the Miami-Dade County Environmentally Endangered Lands Program (EEL). On June 28, Dr. Scott Zona of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden will talk about the flora of Cuba. Other activities include a chapter workday in the native plantings at the Coe Visitors Center in Everglades National Park on June 11 and monthly field trips. Call 305-255-6404 for more information or visit www.fnps.org/chapters/dade.

TAS FUN DAYS

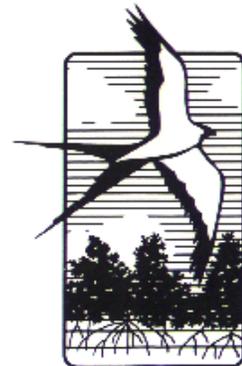
Want to learn about native plants, help Tropical maintain our native landscape at the Doc Thomas House and get your hands dirty? We need you! Show up anytime between 8:30-noon and you will find a host of hard workers. This is a great opportunity for students to earn community service hours. Workdays will be held May 28 and June 25.

Tropical Audubon Society - Membership Volunteer Questionnaire

Tropical Audubon Society (TAS) has been active through the years in conducting various bird walks and we've seen many of you on these field trips. But we also are active in other conservation and recreational activities. For those of you interested in participating in other TAS projects and activities, we offer this questionnaire to learn more about your interests.

Simply take a few moments and check off the areas which interest you and send it to the address at bottom. Check the activities in which you have participated in the past or in which you might like to participate in future as a volunteer:

- | Have participated: | Would like to participate: | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Gardening at the Doc Thomas House
In the Pineland and Hammocks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Participating in a other TAS restoration projects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Helping with Native Plant Day Sales |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Helping with Used Book Sales |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Participating in the Birdathon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grant Writing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Participating in conservation activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Participating in public hearings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Letter writing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Meeting with elected officials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Adopting a fishing line recycling station |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Conducting Tours of the Doc Thomas House & grounds |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Assisting in bird walks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Assisting with other TAS social activities |



- I've had no volunteering experience with TAS in the past
- I am a National member and receive the Audubon magazine
- I am a TAS only member and do not receive the National magazine

Have you ever used the TAS website? Yes No

Do you have any comments on the TAS website:

(Continued on page 6)

We're Going Birding in Exotic Costa Rica!

TAS is offering a professionally organized and conducted international birding tour to Costa Rica April 7-16, 2006 in conjunction with Exotic Birding (see www.exoticbirding.com), an environmentally sensitive birding tour operator based in Tucson AZ. The tour will be led by a master Costa Rican birding guide and cover 3 of the best birding destinations in Costa Rica, namely the Talamanca Mountains south of San Jose, La Selva Biological Station and surrounding areas on the Caribbean slope, and Carara Biological Reserve in the Pacific lowlands. We should see many tropical specialties on this diverse tour, including Resplendent Quetzal, Sun-bittern, Scarlet Macaw, a wide variety of parrots, parakeets, hummingbirds, manakins, honeycreepers, tanagers, and more. The tour is priced at \$2575 from San Jose, of which \$257.50 will go to TAS as a fund raiser and is tax deductible. For additional information contact Brian Rapoza at fieldtrips@tropicalaudubon.org (or by phone at 305-388-1544) or Laura Fellows of Exotic Birding toll-free at 877-247-3371.

Tropical Audubon Society - Membership Volunteer Questionnaire

This next area is to learn what direction TAS should pursue regarding activities & volunteerism:

Do you think we should offer tours of the Doc Thomas House and its grounds?

Yes _____ No _____

Comments:

If the Doc Thomas House had regular "open" hours, would you be interested in using its Library (books on birds, other animals, nature, environment, Florida history) to check out books?

Yes _____ No _____

What "open" hours would suit you?

_____ 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. on certain weekdays

_____ 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. on Saturdays

_____ Other

Comments:

How do you acquire books on birds and other nature / environmental topics?

Library _____, Book Store _____, Web-site Store _____,

Other: _____

Are you aware that purchases made using the Amazon.com link on our web-site generates proceeds for TAS? Yes _____ No _____

Will you use the link now that you know? Yes _____ No _____

Would you be interested in buying used books from TAS? Yes _____ No _____

- At a used book sale at the Doc Thomas House _____

- Want to be notified by email of various books for offer _____

- Are willing to pick books up at the Doc

Thomas House _____

- Do you have books to donate to TAS for a used book sale? _____

How to contact me:

Name:

Telephone number(s)

Email address:

Thank you for taking the time to respond and for your interest in becoming a volunteer.

Please send this completed form to us at Tropical Audubon Society, 5530 Sunset Drive, Miami, FL 33143

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 tas007@tropicalaudubon.org, or see our web page <http://tropicalaudubon.org> for more information.

Sun., May 1 — Kendall Indian Hammock Birding Brian Rapoza will lead a group through Kendall Indian Hammocks at 11345 SW 79th Street. The entrance is on the west side of SW 112th Ave. at SW 79th Street. The group meets in the parking area adjacent to the baseball field at 7:30am, returning at approximately 11:00am.

Sun., May 1 — Tropical Audubon Annual Meeting, 4-7pm, Doc Thomas House. We will beat the heat this year and meet under the chickee hut later in the afternoon. Same fun people, same fun program. More to follow!

Thurs.-Sun, May 1-4 — Dry Tortugas Spring Migration Boat Trip Larry Manfredi leads birders aboard the Playmate out of Key West. This trip is every birder's dream! Reservations and fee required. Call 305-258-9607.

Sat., May 7 — A. D. Barnes Park Spring Migration Count Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day with Gigi Pardo at A.D. Barnes Park. Enter on SW 72nd Ave. just north of Bird Rd. (SW 40th St.) and take the first left to park near the baseball fields. Meet at 7:30am, returning at approximately 11:00am.

Sat., May 14 — North Key Largo State Botanical Site. Birds, Butterflies and Native Plants Joe Barros 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.

Sat., May 21 — Biscayne National Park Snorkeling Trip Jeff and Linda Weber, and Brian Rapoza will lead this trip out of Convoy Point in Biscayne National Park. Meet at the Dante Fascell Visitor's Center at 1:00pm. There will be an entrance fee and snorkeling equipment provided by the National Park. Reservations are required. Call Biscayne National Park at 305-230-1100 for reservations and more information.

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