BIRDATHON 2004

Our Third Annual Birdathon will span April 10-25, 2004, a period of two weeks and three weekends. You can count birds in any 24 consecutive hours during this period. You can bird solo, form a team, or join an existing team. You can even do your Birdathon on any of the TAS birdwalks during this period.

A Birdathon is like a walkathon. You collect pledges for birds species seen instead of miles walked (for example, $1 per bird, 25¢ per bird, etc.), or simply for a flat amount. Each participant needs to collect a minimum of $25 in pledges. Collecting $35 in pledges nets you a colorful TAS Birdathon 2004 t-shirt featuring J.J. Audubon's Key West Quail Dove.

Prize categories include highest pledge total ($), most bird species seen by an individual or a team and many more. Prizes in the past have included a birding trip to the Tortugas, binoculars, accommodations in New Orleans and the Keys, Audubon prints, restaurant meals, native plants and more. Everyone who counted birds last year won a prize. Stay tuned for a list of this year's prizes — look for updates on the TAS website or call the Doc Thomas House for info. Please contact us ASAP if your business can donate a prize.

To participate, simply get a pledge package and you are on your way!

• Go to the TAS website tropicalaudubon.org
• E-mail birdathon@tropicalaudubon.org and request the packet
• Call 305-666-2842 to request the birdathon packet; leave your name and mailing address

Then

• Get pledges from friends, neighbors, co-workers, strangers. (See the info sheet for ideas.)
• Count birds.
• Collect pledge donations and forward to TAS!

Prizes will awarded at a special Birdathon Bash at DTH in June. Doing the Birdathon is a lot of fun and every single dollar raised stays right here in south Florida to support Tropical’s work. Our goal for Birdathon 2004 is to exceed last year’s total of $5,500.

We need your help to do it!!

THE GREAT FLORIDA BIRDING TRAIL

The Great Florida Birding Trail (GFBT), a program of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, has recently opened the nomination process for the South Florida section of the Trail. This 2000-mile highway trail unifies existing and new birding sites throughout Florida. The project combines guides showcasing the wonderful birding opportunities with special highway signs identifying Birding Trail sites. More prominent birding attractions such as Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary and Everglades National Park will be combined with smaller local areas in a series of driving loops, each containing 5-10 sites and highlighting special ecosystems. Birdwatchers and their ecotourism dollars are spread into the surrounding communities.

The state is divided into four Birding Trail sections. East Florida and West Florida have already opened; the Panhandle will open this year; and finally, South Florida is projected for Fall 2005. The Birding Trail staff is making a special effort to contact all who are interested. Anyone is encouraged to nominate their favorite birding places.

Ultimately, conserving our state’s incredible wildlands and the birds that depend on them is the main focus of this project. Birders are a strong economic force, and can be an effective conservation constituency if we put our minds to it. By directing birders into communities for the purpose of ecotourism, the image of what tourists desire quickly changes – and land management practices will change also. The key is to let these communities know that their lands are valuable in a natural state rather than a developed one. If you would like to learn more about the GFBT and receive updates on its progress, or if you would like to be involved in the site nomination process, please visit the program’s website: www.floridabirdingtrail.com
INITIAL REPORT ON 2004 LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

The Florida Legislature convenes on March 2 and will meet through April 30. Here's a list of the eight key environmental issues affecting South Florida this session.

- Everglades Restoration Funding
- Everglades Water Quality
- Lake Okeechobee Cleanup
- Florida Forever Funding
- Rural Land Protection
- Water Policy
- Water Conservation, Rates and Reuse
- Reserving Water for the Environment

Actions Speak Louder than Words


Audubon of Florida will report on the status of these issue throughout the legislative session through its e-advocate network. To receive e-newsletters directly in your email, again follow the links from www.tropicalaudubon.org to the Audubon of Florida Advocacy Center to sign-up. You can use the online network to communicate with public officials, read Audubon policy statements, and network with other conservation minded citizens. No email? No worries. For more information about these important conservation issues contact Cynthia Guerra at Tropical Audubon Society 305-666-2842 or Shannon Mayorga, Audubon of Florida, 305-371-6399.

NEW BIRD TRIP!! NEW BIRD TRIP!! NEW BIRD TRIP!! NEW BIRD TRIP!!

Birds of Puerto Rico

Join Tropical Audubon Society on March 27-April 1 as we journey to the beautiful island of Puerto Rico. Larry Manfredi will lead this 6-day tour to look for all of the endemic birds found in Puerto Rico, as well as many West Indian specialties. Areas we will cover and their target birds include: Maricao in beautiful mountain forests - Elfin Woods Warbler, Puerto Rican Emerald, Puerto Rican Woodpecker, Puerto Rican Tody, Puerto Rican Tanager, Puerto Rican Screech-owl, and Puerto Rican Pewee; the dry Guanica State Forest and Playa la Parguera - Yellow-shouldered Blackbird, Green Mango, Puerto Rican Flycatcher, Puerto Rican Vireo, Puerto Rico Lizard Cuckoo, Yellow-shouldered Blackbird, Puerto Rican Stripe-headed Tanager, Puerto Rican Bullfinch, and Puerto Rican Nightjar; tropical and rainy Caribbean National Forest, approximately 28,000 acres including 240 native tree species, masses of vines, epiphytes, giant ferns and mosses, and 26 species of plants found nowhere else - the very rare and endemic Puerto Rican Parrot, White-tailed Tropicbirds; Farjardo - Green-throated Carib and Antillean Crested Hummingbird, a subspecies found only in Puerto Rico; coastal marshes - White-cheeked Pintail, West Indian Whistling Duck. Most of the birds listed are the specialties of Puerto Rico; we will see many other birds native to the West Indies while searching for the endemics.

The complete itinerary for this trip can be found on our website at www.tropicalaudubon.org.

Cost is $1,200.00 double occupancy from San Juan, airfare not included. To reserve your space, or for further information, contact Larry Manfredi at birderlm@bellsouth.net or by calling 305-258-9607.

Visit Tropical Audubon on the internet at: http://tropicalaudubon.org
Christmas Bird Counts always provide unique opportunities to discover the avian unexpected. In 2002, for example, a Mountain Bluebird found on the Long Pine Key/Everglades National Park count became the first Florida record for that species. On that year’s first-ever Kendall area CBC, a Black-headed Gull was found at the Black Point sewage treatment facility. This past year’s Christmas Bird Counts produced several surprises as well. On the Miami area count, an American Oystercatcher was discovered at Morning-side Park, while a Great Black Hawk, a bird that has been seen sporadically over the past few years on Virginia Key, but whose origin remains unknown, was re-found for the first time in several years. A Burrowing Owl seen on Research Road was one of the highlights of the Long Pine Key count, while a Brown-crested Flycatcher at Matheson Hammock was the star of the Kendall area count. A small flock of Lark Sparrows at Larry and Penny Thompson Park made the Kendall area count for the second consecutive year.

Several hotline birds discovered in the fall continued to be seen through early winter. The Vermilion Flycatcher discovered at the South Dade Greenway in October continued to be an impossible to avoid diversion for birders heading to Everglades National Park. At Lucky Hammock, the Bell’s Vireo continued to be seen, and sometimes heard, but only by a lucky few. Yellow-breasted Chat and Least Flycatcher were also reported there during the period. The MacGillivray’s Warbler at Tree Tops Park in Broward continued at least into January.

Other early winter sightings in the area included a Purple Sandpiper, discovered at Convoy Point in Biscayne National Park in mid-December. Also that month, a Blue-winged Warbler was found, then later photographed at T-Y Park in Broward. The photograph was a first in winter in Florida for that species. Other Blue-winged Warblers were seen later in the season in at least two locations in Everglades National Park. A Nashville Warbler was an early winter find at Cape Florida State Park on Key Biscayne. Other birds seen there included Least Flycatcher and White-throated Sparrow. The season’s most exciting find at that park, though, was a Red-legged Honeycreeper, seen and photographed in mid-January. Just like last year’s twin sightings of this stunning tropical species, the origin of this bird will be the subject of endless speculation and debate.

Winter sightings to the west included Black Scoters and Western Grebes in Ft. Myers Beach, and a Harris’s Sparrow on County Road 858 in Hendry County. To the north, Brant were being seen at Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge in Sebastian. In Brevard County, Lapland Longspur were reported from Viera Wetlands, while both Iceland and Glaucous Gulls were spotted at Jetty Park in Cocoa. To the south, a Brown-crested Flycatcher was reported from north Key Largo, while a Western Spindalis was enjoyed by many birders at Windley Key (Continued on page 4)
Wednesday, March 10

Stuart McIver: "Death in the Everglades: the Murder of Audubon Warden Guy Bradley" Stuart B. McIver, who has been described as "South Florida's tribal story teller," is the author of "Death in the Everglades: The Murder of Guy Bradley, America's First Martyr to Environmentalism," published by University Press of Florida. McIver's book tells the story of the Audubon bird warden killed while trying to arrest an illegal plume hunter in 1905. "A lively account of one of the most dramatic episodes in South Florida history," writes author Peter Matthiessen. McIver's fascination with the Everglades dates back to the 1960s when he was active in writing and producing documentary films. Six of these were shot in the Everglades and three addressed the subject of endangered species.

Wednesday, April 14

Ron Nuehring: "Birds, marine mammals, and terrain of the Antarctic Peninsula, South Georgia and the Falkland Islands" Ron Nuehring has been photographing the outdoors for decades and modestly admits his pictures are "OK." Several TAS Board members, present and past, think he vastly understates his work and have insisted he share some of his studies of the penguins, albatrosses, skuas, caracaras, and marine mammals of the Falkland Islands, South Georgia, and the Antarctic Peninsula with our members. Ron volunteers time and woodworking talents for occasional TAS projects and currently is involved in efforts to activate the Miami Blue Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association.

Our monthly meetings are free and open to members and non-members alike. The doors open to the Doc Thomas House (5530 Sunset, Miami) at 7:30 PM with the presentations beginning at 8 PM.

Deering Estate at Cutler Events

Archeology Fair, March 28, 2004, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm
Learn about Florida's history from the people who have spent years studying it. This annual Archeology Fair co-sponsored by the South Florida Archeology Society will provide tours, hands-on activities, lecture, exhibits and more. Bring a small picnic and enjoy the all-day event. Free with Park admission. Call 305-235-1668, Ext. 242

Walk with the Butterflies, April 21, 2004, 2:00 - 3:30 pm
Join a Deering Estate naturalist for a butterfly program designed for beginners and experts. Explore various habitats of the Park while finding and identifying numerous butterfly species. Free with Park admission. Call 305-235-1668, Ext. 242

Shakespeare in the Park - Romance! April 25, 2004, 1:00 and 3:00 p.m.
Celebrate Will Shakespeare at the Deering Estate with students from Florida International University's Theater Department. Scenes from several plays will be presented in an incomparable setting. Tickets, must be purchased in advance, $10 per person. For ticket reservations call 305-235-1668 ext. 233

Fairchild Tropical Garden Event

International Orchid Festival, April 2-4, 2004, 9:30 am - 4:30 pm
The International Orchid Festival features more than 8 acres of orchid vendors from around the world, educational lectures and demonstrations, exotic food and entertainment, American Orchid Society Juried Show and the unmatched beauty of Fairchild Tropical Garden. Admission $10 Adults, $9 Seniors, $5 Children 3-12, Free for Garden members and children under 3. For information call 305-667-1651, ext. 3383.

Brian Rapoza’s Birding Report

(Continued from page 3)
Geological Site in Islamorada.

Vagrant hummingbirds made news this winter in various parts of the state. In December, a Broad-billed Hummingbird was discovered at a feeder in Gainesville. This would be a first for the state. Also attracted to that location was a Calliope Hummingbird. Participants on the TAS trip to north Florida this January were rewarded with great looks at Broad-tailed and Black-chinned Hummingbirds, both coming to a feeder in Pensacola. A Rufous Hummingbird was also being seen there. A Buff-bellied Hummingbird was being seen at yet another feeder in Pensacola. Unusual hummingbirds seen in our neck of the woods included a Rufous Hummingbird in Pinecrest, and a Black-chinned Hummingbird reported from Mary Krome Park.

As more Floridians put out hummingbird feeders in winter, these unusual sightings are bound to multiply. For south Floridians, the odds of discovering a Bahama Woodstar or Cuban Emerald would increase measurably if hummingbird feeders were used more often in this part of the state. If you're wondering what you should do should such an international vagrant show up at a feeder in your back yard, what I would suggest you do is share your sighting with the rest of the birding community! The best way to do that, of course, is to post your sighting on the Tropical Audubon Bird Board, found on the Tropical Audubon web site, tropicalaudubon.org.
TAS receives grant from the Elizabeth Ordway Dunn Foundation

In December, the Directors of the Elizabeth Ordway Dunn Foundation approved a grant for TAS’ Biscayne Bay Conservation Program. The program’s goals are to influence public and private processes to protect and preserve Biscayne Bay’s natural resources ecosystem, and advocate for sustainability in the choices individuals, government and businesses make. TAS uses its mission to educate, conserve, and enjoy as a guide to direct its activities and strategies toward Biscayne Bay conservation and to keep it a beautiful and lively place to live and experience.

We at TAS greatly appreciate the support that we have received from the Elizabeth Ordway Dunn Foundation. With their support, and the continuing support of you — our members — we are able to continue our important work on behalf of Biscayne Bay.

-Cynthia Guerra

CALL TO ACTION

The County is currently holding public hearings to gather input on what issues should be included in the new General Obligation Bond after the Decade of Progress Bonds retire. TAS encourages you to participate and support those efforts which will help preserve our environment and protect diminishing open spaces. Attend a bond hearing and let the County know you support the Parks Department’s efforts to expand and enhance open space and that you support initiatives to retain agricultural land through a PDR program. Or, you can visit www.miamidade.gov to tell County Administrators what you think. Scroll down in the “News” column and click “more”. Then scroll down to “Townhall meetings will discuss upcoming bond issue” to see the dates and locations of the meetings. Use the “Make a suggestion” link on the left to send your comments electronically. When commenting on Parks issues, use the “Parks” category. Your voice counts!

-Cynthia Guerra

TAS UPDATE

In our last Bulletin, we challenged you to make a “new” New Year’s Resolution. The task at hand was (and is) to get to know your elected representatives. Spurred on and supported by Audubon of Florida Conservation Coordinator Shannon Mayorga and Everglades Policy Coordinator April Gromnicki, a delegation from TAS including members, a Board Member and the Executive Director, visited with Debra Zimmerman, District Chief of Staff for Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. The purpose of our visit was to stress the importance of getting two critical Everglades Restoration Projects authorized, funded and implemented. Together, these projects will restore over 250 square miles of Everglades ecosystem, and are immediately necessary due to encroaching urban development and impending estuarine collapse. We are thankful that we have members that recognize the value of these direct communications with their elected officials, and we look forward to engaging in more of this type of grassroots action in the future!

-Cynthia Guerra

WORKDAYS

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. We hope to see you

Sat., Mar. 13 AND Sat., Apr. 17

TAS ANNUAL MEETING

Sun., May 2 – 4-7pm, Doc Thomas House Mark your calendars!! We will beat the heat this year and meet under the chickie hut later in the afternoon. Same fun people, same fun program. More to follow!

OVERNIGHT TRIPS

Sat.- Sun., Apr. 17-18 Fort DeSoto Birding Trip – NEW! Brian Rapoza will lead this overnight carpool trip to Pinellas County. There will be hotel and shared gasoline costs. Reservations are required.

Thur.-Sun., May 6- 9 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.

Contact Larry at 305 258 9607 or email birderlm@bellsouth.net

Fri.-Sun., May 14-16 Bahama Islands Birding Larry Manfredi will lead this three day, two night trip to the Bahamas. Reservations and fee required.

Contact Larry at 305 258 9607 or email birderlm@bellsouth.net

TAS NOTES – TAS NOTES

NATIVE PLANT DAY

Native Plant Day, Saturday, March 20, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at Castellow Hammock Nature Center. Park admission: $2 for adults (18 and under free). The Dade Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society and Miami-Dade Park and Recreation Department present a day of programs about native plants, educational displays, nature walks, and a huge native plant sale. Programs topics include landscaping for wildlife; how to select and care for native trees and shrubs; butterfly conservation; native palms; interesting and beneficial lawn weeds; and more! Come early at 8:30 for a bird and butterfly walk led by members of Tropical Audubon Society.

The park is located at 22301 SW 162 Avenue (go west on SW 216 Street from US1 or the Turnpike, then 1/2 mile south on 162 Avenue). For more information, visit www.fnps.org/chapters/dade or call the Native Plant Society at 305-255-6404.
TAS WALK SCHEDULE

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.

Sat., Mar. 13 - Everglades National Park Birding This is an all day carpool trip with John Boyd. 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.

Sun., Mar 14 - Florida Trail, Big Cypress National Preserve Nature Walk This section of the Florida Trail passes through open prairie, pineland, and a hardwood hammock. Spring wildflowers and other plants of the Big Cypress will be featured on the trip. Wear sturdy shoes, bring water, snacks, a hat, bug spray. A walking stick can be helpful. Long pants advised. Rating: moderate. Leader: Rick Cohen. Reservations are required. E-mail rickc@tropicalaudubon.org or call 305-667-7337 Fee: $13.00 members, $15.00 nonmembers

Sat., Mar 20 - Wakodahatchee Wetlands Birding Kevin Sarsfield and Jeff Weber will lead this carpool trip. Meet at 6:30am at the east gate (SW 55th Ave.) of the Doc Thomas property (5530 Sunset Drive, South Miami). Bring lunch.

Sun., Mar 21 - Spring Wildflower Walk with Roger Hammer Well known South Florida plant expert, Roger Hammer, will lead this walk down Long Pine Key trail in Everglades National Park. See the wildflowers, butterflies and birds that share the varied habitat of pine rockland. Everglades prairie and upland hammock communities. This is an excellent chance to see the grass orchids in bloom. Meet at the Coe Visitors Center at 8am, return approximately 11:30am. Reservations and fee required: $40 members/$45 nonmembers includes a autographed copy of Roger’s recent book, Everglades Wildflowers.

Sat., Mar 27 - Shark Valley/Loop Road Birding Paul Bithorn and Juan Villamil will lead this carpool trip. Meet at 7am at the east gate (SW 55th Ave.) of the Doc Thomas property (5530 Sunset Drive, South Miami). Bring lunch.

Sat., Apr. 3 - Matheson Hammock Bird Walk Juan Villamil, Kevin Sarsfield and Joe Barros 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.

Sun., Apr. 4 - A.D. Barnes Park Bird Walk Gigi Pardo will lead birders through A.D. Barnes Park. Enter on SW 72nd Avenue 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., Apr. 10 - Virginia Key / Key Biscayne Bird Walk Ellen and Todd Snow will lead birders through Virginia Key and Key Biscayne. Meet in the west end of the Seaquarium parking lot on the Rickenbacker Causeway at 7:30am. Participants will carpool to the Bill Baggs / Cape Florida State Recreation Area, and other destinations on both Virginia Key and Key Biscayne. There will be entrance fees to the park and a causeway toll.

Sun., Apr. 11 - Charles Deering Estate Nature Walk Rick Cohen will emphasize the botanical and geological features found in the 420 acre park. The park entrance is located just east of Old Cutler Rd. on SW 168th Street. Wear sturdy shoes. Bring water, hat, and bug spray. Rating: easy to moderate. Reservations required! Contact rickc@tropicalaudubon.org and include your phone number or call 305 667 7337. This is a popular outing and is limited so call early! Fee: $10.00 members, $12.00 nonmembers includes Deering entrance.

Sat., Apr. 17 - Matheson Hammock Park Bird Walk Juan Villamil and John Boyd will lead. See April 3rd for more information.

Sun., Apr. 18 - A.D. Barnes Park Bird Walk Gigi Pardo and Jill Rosenfield will lead. See April 4th for information.

Sat., Apr. 24 - Virginia Key / Key Biscayne Bird Walk Jeff Weber will lead. See April 10th for information.

Sun., Apr. 25 - Elaine Gordon Enchanted Forest Park Bird Walk Joel Abramson will lead a group through the Elaine Gordon Enchanted Forest. Meet at 8am in the first covered picnic area just inside the park entrance at 1725 NE 135th St. west of Biscayne Blvd.

Sat., May 1 - Matheson Hammock Park Bird Walk Juan Villamil and John Boyd will lead. See April 3rd for information.

Sun., May 2 - 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.

Sat., May 8 - A. D. Barnes Park Spring Migration Count Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day with Mickey Wheeler and Jill Rosenfield, who will count birds 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 15 - 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.