



Tropical Audubon Bulletin

Newsletter of the Tropical Audubon Society



5530 Sunset Drive; Miami, Florida 33143

(305) 666-5111

May/June 2003

The First Great George Washington Carver Bird Search

By Bertha Vazquez

As a science teacher at Carver Middle School in Coconut Grove, I recognize the importance of bringing real-life experiences to my students. The science program at G.W. Carver Middle School focuses on hands-on projects. Students carry out laboratories using the scientific method, then learn how to tabulate and graph the data. How could I make the data collection more meaningful, make it part of their lives? What part of the natural world lives around us every day? Birds! Using the Thayer's birding software, I designed a study project where the students would become familiar with the local species in the class room, then go out and see first-hand what they had learned. My work with the Tropical Audubon Society had taught me a great deal about birds and I was very excited to share this knowledge with them. After all, birds are one of our closest links to wildlife, living right outside our front doors. After learning to identify the 28 most common birds found in South Florida during the winter months, what they sound like, where they live, how

they behave, the sixth graders went on a month long quest to determine two things:

1. How many different species of birds are there in Miami neighborhoods?
2. Which species of bird is the most common?

The students and I began our field study on the school grounds, joyfully following kestrels in flight and chasing warblers from tree to tree. The project then moved to their homes and back yards where they identified birds in their own neighborhoods on a daily basis. Some students discovered birds not on their lists, such as loggerhead shrikes and spot-breasted orioles. A healthy competition slowly arose: Who could find a painted bunting, or perhaps a peregrine falcon?

At the end of the field study, the students compiled everyone's results together, which added up to thousands of

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~ Will Be Used To Improve TAS Offices ~

TAS Receives Grant From National Tree Trust

TAS was awarded \$5,000 by the National Tree Trust (NTT) for information technology infrastructure improvements, in order to further efforts to coordinate volunteers who are actively involved in TAS Native Tree Programs. TAS has a demonstrated history of commitment to native tree plantings and the importance of educating the public about native plant communities.

"We have always been successful engaging volunteers and TAS members in our programs," said Cynthia Guerra, Executive Director of TAS, "but we have found that we need to update our information technology infrastructure to further advance our goals." Volunteers to TAS currently

spend an estimated 1200 hours per year helping the organization towards achieving its mission. With the improvements made possible by the NTT grant, TAS estimates they can increase community involvement by twenty-five percent.

The NTT promotes healthy communities by providing resources that educate and empower people to grow and care for urban and community forests. Through its Partnership Enhancement Monetary Grant Program, NTT provides qualifying organizations, like TAS, with money for tree-related projects. To date the National Tree Trust has provided more than 2.4 million dollars in grants. Addi-

tionally, NTT has planted over 10 million trees with the help of its partners in all fifty states, and has provided resources to more than 783 thousand schoolchildren, so they can learn about the importance of environmental stewardship by growing trees in the classroom.

The NTT can be reached at 1120 G St., NW, Suite 770, Washington DC, 20005. They also have a website available at

www.nationaltreetrust.org



Whose Land Is It Anyway?

Whose Land Is It Anyway? a one-day conference on Friday, May 16, presented by the Tropical Audubon Society (TAS) and the Urban Environment League (UEL), will discuss the effectiveness of South Florida's growth management processes and the struggle for public space. The conference at the Miami Woman's Club, 1737 N. Bayshore Drive from 8 AM to 3:30 PM, will feature civic leaders, urban planners, environmentalists, journalists, parks officials, historians, and citizen activists. Cost of the conference is \$20 and includes lunch.

"Whose Land Is It Anyway? — a provocative question that demands that each of us think about our community and the urban planning and growth management needed to ensure a high quality of life in Miami-Dade," says Nancy Liebman, President of UEL. "We feel that it is in the best interest of our mission to help communities and planners make our urban areas more livable," says Cynthia Guerra, Executive Director of TAS, "By planning for public space as a priority, rather than an afterthought, we can reduce the pressure of expanding the urban footprint into our sensitive and diminishing natural areas."

Among the speakers and panelists are Miami-Dade Commissioner Jimmy Morales, Miami Herald columnist Jim Defede, South Florida Regional Planning Council Director John Hulse, Miami Commissioner Angel Gonzalez, Miami-Dade Parks and Recreation Manager Vivian Rodriguez, parks activist Bruce Matheson, and NBC-Channel 6 producer and reporter Jeff Burnside.


The *Whose Land Is It Anyway?* conference includes the following sessions:


 The Impact of Growth Management

 Who Is Managing Florida's Future?

Evolving Patterns of Growth in South Florida:
The Conflict Between People, Place and Resources

 Who's News? The Press and Public Involvement

 The Struggle for Public Space

 Shaping a future landscape – how can Florida's efforts become more effective at planning for public space?

TAS is proud to work with the UEL, established in 1996, a Miami-based non-profit organization with a mission of enhancing South Florida's quality of life by empowering neighborhoods to preserve parks, natural and historic resources. To register for the conference, please contact the UEL at 305-576-2553 or email to

uelmiami@bellsouth.net

DON'T FORGET TO SAVE THE DATE! THE AUDUBON ASSEMBLY 2003

Dates:

Thursday, 10/23/03: Exhibit Set-up only

Friday, 10/24/03: Assembly opens with Buffet breakfast

Saturday, 10/25/03: Assembly concludes at 3 PM after closing remarks.

Location:

The Rosen Plaza Hotel, Orlando

Come join us again this year and bring a friend! Our annual Assembly is the largest gathering of conservation-minded citizens in the State gathering together chapter members and leaders, wildlife professionals, environmental advocates, scientists, politicians, agencies, students and other citizens of Florida concerned with our Environment. Our program will offer field-trips within the central Florida region, expert speakers, education seminars and plenary sessions, which will set forth our work plan for the upcoming year. Please join the Audubon family and others to celebrate our "Culture of Conservation."

Look for additional information on registration and upcoming events via the summer edition of *The Naturalist* or our website:
www.audubonofflorida.org

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: Cathy Coates

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) 666-5111. 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:
<http://tropicalaudubon.org>

Whether you joined Tropical Audubon on one of our weekly road trips, our have been out there birding on your own, this past winter has provided an abundance of opportunities to see great birds.

For most south Florida birders, Everglades National Park is the place to be during the cooler, less buggy months, and this winter was no exception. It's not often that one can see a Greater Flamingo in the park without having to make the trek down Snake Bight Trail. This past January and February, an individual flamingo made multiple appearances on the mudflat directly in front of the (appropriately) Flamingo Visitor's Center. Possibly this same bird was also seen frequently from the end of the Christian Point Trail. In addition, Shiny Cowbirds were reported periodically feeding in the grassy areas in front of the visitor's center. Birders who stayed in the Flamingo area until dusk were treated to Lesser Nighthawks at Eco Pond. Those who joined TAS for a visit to the park in early March saw a Rose-breasted Grosbeak at the newly reopened Mahogany Hammock. This species is usually seen in south Florida only during migration.

Just outside the park, removal of brushy areas surrounding "Lucky Hammock" in Frog Pond Wildlife Management Area greatly decreased its birding potential. Nevertheless, species such as Least Flycatcher and Yellow-breasted Chat hung around for part of the winter. Notable sightings later in the season included Hairy Woodpecker, and a possible Bahama Mockingbird. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers continued to be seen in the area. Also in the Homestead area, a Warbling Vireo was reported from Castellow Hammock in January.

The few birders who attended the TAS overnight trip to Merritt Island enjoyed some great sightings, including Lapland Longspur, Purple Sandpiper, Common Eider, and Surf Scoter. Birders who joined TAS in January for its first north Florida trip in many years had a weekend to remember. Sightings included Pacific and Red-throated Loons, over 20 species of waterfowl, including Long-tailed Duck, Surf Scoter and Common Goldeneye, Short-eared, Great Horned and Barred Owl, Sprague's Pipit, Henslow's and LeConte's Sparrow, White-breasted and Brown-headed Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Winter Wren and Rusty Blackbird. A March trip to Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park in Okeechobee County, and Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area in Osceola County produced sightings of Bachman's Sparrow, Whooping Crane, and for those who waited them out, Red-cockaded Woodpecker.

TAS went international in March, cruising to Grand Bahama for a three day trip. Led by Larry Manfredi, with assistance from Bruce Purdy and Jeff Weber, the group sighted almost all of the expected Bahamian specialties, including Least Grebe, Key West Quail Dove, Zenaida Dove, Bahama Woodstar, Cuban Emerald, Loggerhead Kingbird, LaSagra's Flycatcher, Cuban Pewee, Bahama Swallow, Red-legged Thrush, Thick-billed Vireo, Olive-

capped Warbler, Bahama Yellowthroat, Bananaquit, Western Spindalis, Greater Antillean Bullfinch and Black-faced Grassquit. More unexpectedly, a pair of West Indian Woodpeckers were discovered, along with a nest cavity. This species was thought to have been extirpated from Grand Bahama. A bird believed to be a Common Grackle was also found. Not only has a Common Grackle never been seen on Grand Bahama, it's unknown anywhere in the West Indies!

Back in Florida, the string of remarkable avian discoveries that began last fall with Slaty-backed Gull, Mangrove Swallow and Mountain Bluebird continued throughout the winter. In January, a Harris's Sparrow was discovered at a fish camp in Seminole County, and stayed for weeks. In February, a Green-tailed Towhee was found at Honeymoon Island in Dunedin; this bird also cooperated for many weeks. Just north, in Pasco County, a Brewer's Blackbird stuck around in a farm field long enough to be enjoyed by many visiting birders. Also in February, a Bell's Vireo was seen periodically at the Flamingo Road Environmentally Sensitive Lands in Broward County. A pair of male Eurasian Wigeon, as well as a flock of Bronzed Cowbirds made Eagle Lake Park in Naples their home in February and March. A Dickcissel was also seen in Naples in March. The Slaty-backed Gull even made a return visit, making numerous appearances at a Key West shopping center. Late in March, a Thick-billed Vireo and a LaSagra's Flycatcher were also discovered in Key West. Another LaSagra's was reported from the Dry Tortugas.

Late February, and then late March would produce the season's two most remarkable discoveries. First came the report of a Eurasian Kestrel. Discovered in the Lake Apopka Restoration Area in Orange County, this first Florida record was viewed by hundreds of birders from around the country. Access to this usually restricted site was made possible through the cooperation of the St. John's River Water Management District. Birders descended upon Florida again in late March, upon hearing of the astounding discovery of a Red-legged Honey-creeper on Boca Chita Key in Biscayne National Park. Discovered by park ranger Toby Obenauer, this beautiful bird from Cuba, Central and South America was seen (and photographed) by a few very fortunate birders before disappearing after a storm passed through. If accepted, this will be Florida's second First North American Record in six months!

With spring now upon us, south Florida birders are hoping for a more productive spring migration than in the past couple of years. If hope springs eternal (or spring hopes eternal) for you, be sure to join us for TAS's weekly spring walks. And as always, for all the latest birding news, make sure to check the Bird Board on the TAS website at

<http://tropicalaudubon.org>

Thanks Ramada!

Tropical Audubon thanks Larry Cuddy and the Ramada Inn Dadeland for graciously hosting Ron Windingstad of Eagle Optics during the Optics Event in April. The Ramada is conveniently located off US1 in South Miami with easy access to the Everglades, Biscayne National Park and the Florida Keys. Please send your visiting friends and family to the Ramada! 7600 N. Kendall Dr., (305) 595-6000, www.ramadamiami.com.

Leapin' Lizards !

A few months ago, TAS was happy to host a visit to the Doc Thomas House & Botanical Gardens by Todd S. Campbell, Post-Doctoral Research Associate at the University of Tennessee Institute for Biological Invasions. Todd was here to do an inventory of our lizard population as part of his post-doc research. After many hours scouring the vegetation, Todd reported that we have the following scaly friends living on the property: *Anolis equestris* (an introduced Cuban knight anole), *Anolis sagrei* (an introduced Cuban brown anole), *Anolis porcatus* (an introduced Cuban

green anole), *Anolis carolinensis* (a native green anole), *Anolis cristatellus* (an introduced Puerto Rican crested anole, expanding their range from the Snapper Creek at Red Road site), and *Anolis distichusan* (an introduced Dominican bark anole). TAS is happy to welcome individual researchers and school groups to the wonderful native habitat in our Botanical Garden.

TO ALL ENP VISITORS

Everglades National Park announced the re-opening of the Mahogany Hammock Boardwalk. The new trail was officially re-opened by ENP Superintendent Maureen Finerty on Earth Day (April 21st). The boardwalk has been extremely popular with park visitors because it provides an accessible entrance to one of the most fragile and imperiled parts of the Everglades.

Portions of the boardwalk have been closed to the public for over three years. In addition to a newly restored structure, the Trail will display new outdoor exhibits explaining the natural history of tropical hardwood hammocks in the Everglades. These will be the first in a long-term project

to have all park wayside exhibits available with both English and Spanish signage.

Advertise in the Bulletin! We have great rates, a great audience, and a darned good cause. For more info contact Cathy at tas002@tropicalaudubon.org

Our Mailing List: Want to receive the plant sale fliers? Have we misspelled your name? Is your mail sent to the right address and wrong name? Do you receive two of everything? Have we left you off the list? We want to make it right! Contact tas002@tropicalaudubon.org.

TAS Thanks!

Tropical Audubon wishes to thank the following people and companies who have made donations in addition to membership since the beginning of the year. We wouldn't be able to do it without you!

Carole J. Cholasta
Philomena Hausler
Ronald McKirdy
Womans Club of Hialeah
Kerry & Jeff Guerra
Joseph D & Florence B Swain
Jerrold/Jane Goodman
Heinz Luedeking
Adorno & Yoss

Oops, Our mistake!

Tropical Audubon would like to apologize to

Eleanor Quinn

for having mistakenly omitted her name from the list of donors in the last issue of this Bulletin. All donors are greatly appreciated. If any other names were missed, please contact us at

director@tropicalaudubon.org

🍏 #1 GWC Birding Class 🍏

(Continued from page 1)

the more common birds, such as rock doves, starlings, and turkey vultures. The students graphed their data and analyzed the results. Many students went above and beyond what was asked, composing poems, videotaping their birding experiences, and creating portraits of their favorite birds. These students were rewarded by a guided bird walk, led by Tropical Audubon Society Board members.

The philosophy of teaching that inspired me to carry out this bird project comes from something that my father once told me as a child,

*"For in the end, we will save only what we love,
We will love only what we understand,
And we will understand only what we are taught."*

Baba Dioum, Senegal

As students enthusiastically raised their hands to share their birding experiences and one little girl exclaimed, "This is the coolest thing I have ever done in school," I felt that my kids were one step closer to this truth.

Knee Deep in Florida's Backyard

By Rick Cohen

As part of the effort by Tropical Audubon to introduce the public to the natural wonders of the south Florida outdoors, native plant oriented nature walks have successfully been added to the field trip schedule for 3 seasons now. Two of these popular walks have been to the Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, and the Florida trail in the Big Cypress National Preserve.

This past February, nineteen enthusiastic participants ventured into the coffee colored waters of the Fakahatchee. The group waded in the knee to mid thigh deep sloughs to view the botanical rarities that make the Fakahatchee Strand so famous.

On this mild mid winter day, nine species of orchids were observed. Those flowering included *Epidendrum anceps*, the "Dingy Flowered", or "Brown" orchid. The highlight of the day was the terrestrial orchid, *Habenaria odontopetalata*, or "Tooth Petal" orchid in full resplendent bloom.

Many species of fern and bromeliads, including *Guzmania monostachia* were seen along with Royal palms, Red maples, and Pond apples.

A month later, Tropical Audubon hiked in the Big Cypress along a portion of the Florida Trail. Nineteen also partici-

pated on this walk to observe the profuse spring wildflower bloom. Joining the group was wildflower expert Chuck McCartney who provided invaluable identification information on the plants we saw. No one was disappointed as we observed over 80 species in bloom.

This portion of the trail covers 3 typical Big Cypress habitats, Muhly grass prairie, pine flat woods, and tropical hardwood hammock. The group also skirted several small Cypress domes.

Among the highlights observed in the Big Cypress in bloom were three terrestrial orchids, *Bletia purpurea*, the "Pine Pink", *Calopogon tuberosus*, the "Grass-Pink", and *Spiranthes vernalis*, "Spring Ladies' Tresses". Many species of asters, the largest family of flowering plants in south Florida were also seen. An exceptional specimen of *Vitaria lineata*, or Shoe String fern was observed in the hammock.

All participants had a fine time on these two nature walks, and were able to increase their knowledge and appreciation of Florida's rich botanical life. Future field trips are being scheduled for next season. Check the TAS bulletin or website and plan to join Tropical Audubon on these interesting opportunities to experience the exceptional natural resources of south Florida.

Florida Breeding Bird Atlas is now ON-LINE

The Florida Breeding Bird Atlas, a collaborative study of Florida's birdlife, now is available to the public on the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission's website at www.wildflorida.org/bba. The Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) documents breeding distributions of all bird species in Florida between 1986 and 1991. The study confirms 196 bird species were breeding and cites another 19 bird species as probable or possible breeders.

"This is an enormous accomplishment and a tribute to the passion and energy of Florida's birdwatchers," said FWC's Frank Montalbano, director of the Division of Wildlife. "They provided a wealth of data that will fuel ornithological research in Florida for years to come."

The project was a joint effort between Audubon of Florida, the Florida Ornithological Society and the FWC. Nearly 1,900 participants, including volunteers from TAS, were involved in conducting the surveys and compiling data for the BBA.

An FWC final report is the basis for the information on the website. This is the first time that BBA data have become widely available to the public. The website will provide a custom search engine, which enables anyone to search and download BBA data. Other website features include an introduction, a discussion of methods and results, species accounts and species distribution maps for 215 bird species.

CAPT. ED DAVIDSON'S

FLORIDA KEYS BED AND BREAKFAST

efficiency apartments; kitchens, washer/dryers, A/C, cable TV, gas BBQ in flowered butterfly courtyard; walled compound, gated, secure, private; capacity 16 total
 Capt Ed, Chairman Emeritus of Florida Audubon, and longtime Tropical Audubon Board Member, lives on site and is available for interactive discussion -- including of his 168 page "Top Gun" memoirs of the Journey from 200 combat missions in Vietnam to the environmental battles of Everglades and the Keys
 web site www.DiscountDiversBandB.com
 e-mail CaptEcoEd@aol.com, call 305-743-6054 anytime

www.wildflorida.org/bba

TAS Schedule of Outings & Walks

Sat., May 10 - Spring Migration Bird Count for Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties

Join the Bird Count! This is an all day event covering Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties. 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. Volunteers are needed for all areas. Call 305 666 5111 for more information and team assignments.

Sun., May 11 - A.D. Barnes Park Bird Walk

Mickey Wheeler and Jill Rosenfield will lead birders through 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 11am.

Sat., May 17 - North Key Largo State Botanical Site. Birds, Butterflies and Native Plants

Joe Barros will lead this trip. 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.

Wed., May 28 - Conservation Committee Meeting

Please join us for the Conservation Committee meeting at the Doc Thomas House, 5530 Sunset Dr. near Red Rd. at 7:30pm. These meetings take place the 4th Wednesday of every month. Tropical members and interested citizens discuss environmental issues fac-

ing South Florida and how Tropical is working to affect changes.

Sat., May 31 - Workday at the Doc Thomas House

We need you at the Doc Thomas House! Come get some dirt under your fingernails raking, trimming, digging and planting. Bring your family and friends. There will be plant experts and plenty of learning available for those who ask questions. 5530 Sunset, 8am until around noon.

Sat - Sun., June 7-8 Native Plant Sale at Doc Thomas House

The Tropical Audubon Society Botanical Garden will be open for its quarterly Native Plant Sale, 9-5 on Saturday and 9 until the last plant is gone on Sunday.

There will be knowledgeable sales people to help determine the best plants for your home and garden. You should plan to arrive early for the first pick. TAS is located at 5530 Sunset near the intersection of Red Rd.

TAS NOTES * TAS NOTES

TAS is undergoing major information management improvements. This means that we are now ready to maintain a database of people who would like to be TAS volunteers. Over the next year, we will be asking for people to volunteer in specific areas. Right now we are looking for the following:

Volunteers to staff the Doc Thomas House - As we go through the spring season, many out-of-town visitors and Miami residents enjoy coming to our property. We would like to make it as accessible as possible for everyone interested.

Volunteers to help coordinate membership recruitment events - Do you like to organize and host parties? We could use your help as we try to reach out to potential new members.

Volunteers to help raise money in support of our programs - We are looking for individuals with fundraising and grant-writing experience.

If you would like to volunteer, please send an e-mail to

director@tropicalaudubon.org

or call 305-666-5111. Please provide your name, phone numbers, e-mail address, and tell us which of the above efforts is most interesting to you.

Updating your Will or thinking about an estate plan for the first time? Leave something to Tropical Audubon Society and your legacy will live on in the birds, other animals and habitats that are so special. Please consider remembering Audubon of Florida and its important work in the Everglades and throughout the state as well.

AND IS YOUR INTEREST LAGGING?

If low interest rates have you concerned, (and you are 65 or over), consider a charitable gift annuity. In exchange for your gift, you will receive a fixed income for life. After your lifetime, Tropical Audubon Society and Audubon of Florida will benefit from your foresight and generosity. If you have any questions, need details on bequests or would like confidential information on how a charitable gift annuity could work for you, please contact Linda Solash-Reed, Audubon's planned giving officer for Florida at 407-644-0190 ext. 103 or lsolashreed@audubon.org

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