



Tropical Audubon Bulletin

Newsletter of the Tropical Audubon Society



5530 Sunset Drive, Miami, Florida 33143

(305) 666-5111

tropicalaudubon.org

March/April 2002

BIRDATHON

On April 27th we are holding our first annual birdathon. You don't have to be a hardcore birder to participate. You don't even have to be a birder. In fact you don't even have to leave your yard to have fun, compete for prizes, and help TAS in its important conservation work. We see the birdathon becoming a major fundraising event for TAS, just as it is for Audubon chapters across the country. We are assembling a tempting array of prizes – check the TAS website for updates.

A birdathon is like a walkathon. You collect pledges for bird species seen instead of miles walked (for example, \$1 per bird, 25¢ per bird, etc.), or simply for a flat amount. Birds must be counted during the 24-hour period beginning at midnight (12 AM) April 27th (you don't have to count the entire 24 hours). Prize winners and high totals will announced at the TAS Annual Picnic the afternoon of the 28th. It is fun and every dollar raised goes to further Tropical's work. Remember that we are leaders in protecting the birdy rural areas of south Florida.

Each participant needs to collect a minimum of \$25 in pledges. Collecting \$35 in pledges nets you an official birdathon T-shirt (see the TAS website for our color birdathon logo). Collecting higher totals puts you in the running for some nice prizes: A trip to the Tortugas with TAS in 2003. Binoculars. The list of prizes is growing daily.

We will be distributing pledge packets and updated prize information in mid March.

Prize categories include

- Most bird species seen by an individual/team
- Highest pledge total collected
- Most bird species seen in a yard
- Most bird species seen from a boat
- Most bird species seen from a bicycle
- Couch potato birding: most bird species seen on broadcast TV (no videotapes)

Prizes include

- A trip to the Dry Tortugas with TAS
- Binoculars
- TAS Native plants (\$100, \$50, \$25 certificates)
- Dinners for two at local restaurants
- Gift certificates from local merchants

To participate, simply get a pledge packet and you are on your way:

- Go to the TAS website tropicalaudubon.org
- E-mail birdathon@tropicalaudubon.org and request the packet
- Call 305-666-5111 to request the birdathon packet; leave your name and mailing address

Then,

- Get pledges from friends, neighbors, co-workers, strangers.
- Count birds on April 27th.
- Collect pledge donations and send to TAS.

Inside...

Don't miss this year's Annual Picnic

New Walk Schedule

Eagle Optics comes to Miami

Tropical Audubon Society
5530 Sunset Drive
Miami, FL 33143

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Birding Recap: December 2001–February 2002

Birds that come to south Florida in the winter often stay for the season (why would they want to go anywhere else!), providing birders with multiple opportunities to add them to their sightings lists. Such has been the case with the Bell's Vireo discovered in early December at "Lucky Hammock," the remnant hammock in the agricultural area just outside the entrance to Everglades National Park. The bird has made itself at home in the brushy area across the street from the hammock, scolding all onlookers for weeks on end. Several species of warblers, including Wilson's and Black-throated Green have also wintered at this new hotspot.

Equally cooperative has been a Vermilion Flycatcher found in early January on Government Road in Hendry County. Birders journeying to catch a glimpse of this jewel among flycatchers discovered that this little-traveled road is actually quite birdy. Sightings in the area included White-tailed Kite, Crested Caracara, Sandhill Crane, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and Western Kingbird. A second Vermilion Flycatcher was discovered at the Belle Glade campground in Palm Beach County; this bird was somewhat less cooperative than the Government Road bird, though it was seen by birders on the TAS carpool trip to Archbold Biological Station in mid-January.

In the category of completely uncooperative was a Ruddy Quail Dove seen in mid-January at Hugh Taylor Birch State Recreation Area in Broward County. Locally common in Cuba, and native to the Caribbean, Central and much of South America, this dove is rarely seen in North America, and is high on the wish lists of most south Florida birders. Unfortunately, this bird remains just a dream for most of us; seen by a handful of lucky birders the day after its discovery, the bird could not be relocated, despite a dawn to dusk vigil the next day, and additional searches in the days to follow. Congratulations to those who were there to witness this outstanding sighting!

Unattractive in name, but apparently very attractive to waterbirds this winter has been another new hotspot: "Dump Marsh," the wetlands area opposite the equally unattractive "Mount Trashmore" in south Miami-Dade

County. A wide variety of waterfowl (including Northern Pintail, Gadwall and Hooded Merganser), shorebirds (including American Avocet) and even raptors (among them Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon) have called the wetlands home for much of the season. A large flock of American White Pelicans has also wintered in the wetlands, as have thousands of gulls; sightings have included Lesser Black-backed and Franklin's Gull. Other notable south Dade sightings this winter have included up to seven Lark Sparrows at a nursery on SW 217 Avenue. Along the railroad tracks off Krome Avenue at the C-1 Canal, Dickcissel, Blue Grosbeak, Indigo and Painted Bunting, and Clay-colored Sparrow were reported in early February.

Several of the Christmas Bird Counts in south Florida produced sightings of note. On the Dade CBC, a Purple Sandpiper was found under the Powell Bridge on the Rickenbacker Causeway. On the Long Pine Key CBC, an American Golden Plover was seen on Research Road, while the Royal Palm-Homestead counters discovered a Western Tanager. TAS winter carpool trips also produced notable discoveries; the early January Everglades trip had Clapper Rail at Eco pond, while the Merritt Island overnight trip a week later included sightings of Purple Sandpiper and Black-chinned Hummingbird. On an early evening visit to St. John's National Wildlife Refuge, birders on the Merritt Island trip had the pleasure of hearing (but not seeing) both Black and King Rails. Birders on the early February trip to Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area in Osceola County saw Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, American Pipit and Wild Turkey, plus seven of the introduced Whooping Cranes.

With spring just around the corner; the wintering birds will soon bid us farewell and head back north (even the Bell's vireo, I'm sure!), only to be replaced by migrants from the south. Join us if you can for our full schedule of spring birdwalks, and don't forget to check the Miami bird board at tropicalaudubon.org for all the latest sightings.

— Brian Rapoza

TAS members and guests are invited to attend the Conservation Committee meetings **the 4th Wednesday of every month** at the Doc Thomas House. We discuss environmental issues facing South Florida and how Tropical is working to effect changes. This is the core activity of TAS. The meetings are educational and informative. Call DTH for more information: **(305) 666-5111**.

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 Audubon of Florida. 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.

Editorial Staff:

Cathy Coates
Mary Ellen Ahearn
David Wright

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 four weeks prior to each bimonthly publication. If possible please submit copy via the internet. See the "About TAS" section of our website for more information.

Visit Tropical Audubon on the internet at:
<http://tropicalaudubon.org>

TAS Annual Meeting and Picnic

Come one, come all to our annual gathering at the Doc Thomas House and Botanical Garden, Sunday April 28th. As always, we will meet in the chickee out back, with food and festivities starting at noon. It is a potluck affair. Please bring a dish! This year we will have several distinguished guests and three awards to give. Eric Draper, Conservation Director for Audubon of Florida, will introduce Representative Carlos LaCasa, recipient of the TAS Governmental Award. Juanita Greene will introduce Lloyd Miller, recipient of the Charlie Brookfield Award. The Brookfield Award is a special award given at appropriate times to individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the protection of or understanding of our south Florida environment. We will also honor the prize winners of Tropical's First Annual Birdathon. More about our honorees appears below. Come help us celebrate!

Eric Draper is Conservation Director for Audubon of Florida. He recently led efforts to pass the Rural and Family Lands Protection Act. Last year he helped secure legislative and federal support for Everglades restoration. He organized the 1998 campaign to amend the Florida Constitution to authorize the Florida Forever bonds.

Previously, Mr. Draper served as staff director for the Florida House of Representatives Majority Office. Before that he was with The Nature Conservancy, where he led campaigns to win legislative approval of Florida's \$3 billion Preservation 2000 program and voter approval of 11 county bond programs valued at \$770 million. Mr. Draper served as Chairman of Partners for a Better Florida, which proposed the current Environmental Resource Permit, and he sat on the Florida Water Management District Review Commission. From 1983-89, Mr. Draper worked on Superfund and Clean Water Act reauthorization in Washington, DC. Before that he worked for the Florida Legislature.

Carlos LaCasa, State Representative for District 117, will be presented the Tropical Audubon Governmental Award. He is an attorney elected to the House of Representatives in 1994 and subsequently reelected. He received a BA from UM in 1987 and his JD from Nova University School of Law in 1990. Carlos has served on the Board of Directors at the Camillus House and at the Coconut Grove Playhouse. Most importantly to Audubon members, he has been instrumental in his efforts to restore the Everglades, purchase critical buffer lands around Biscayne Bay and Biscayne National Park, and properly allocate Forever Florida funding to maximize conservation efforts.

Juanita Greene is currently the president of Friends of the Everglades (the organization founded by Marjory Stoneman Douglas in 1970). A former board member of TAS, she was for many years in the '70s and '80s the environmental writer for The Miami Herald. After retirement, she lived in the Keys for several years until she was "driven out by the jet-skis." She now lives in Coral Gables.

Lloyd Miller is being honored by Tropical Audubon for his many years of effort on behalf of the South Florida environment. In 1961, he was president of the Mangrove Chapter of the Izaak Walton League when asked by a group of local activists to oppose a plan to construct an oil refinery on south Biscayne Bay. That group became the Safe Progress Association and eventually included Lloyd, Philip Wylie, Jim and Polly Redford, Juanita Greene and Art Marshall, among others. When this effort caught the eye of then Secretary of the Interior, Stewart Udall, the idea of a national park was born. Dante Fascell sponsored the bill to create Biscayne National Monument which was signed by President Johnson in 1968. Were it not for the efforts of Lloyd and the Safe Progress Association, Biscayne National Park would not exist today.

Tortugas 2002 with TAS

10-13 April. As of press time we have room for a few more participants. Don't miss this unique experience. Birding, snorkeling, stargazing, wandering the passageways of a historic 19th century fort, and just plain relaxing on a subtropical isle make this a fantastic getaway. \$635 includes all meals and lodging on the boat. We leave at 11 PM on the 10th and return at 4 PM on the 13th. For more info, visit the TAS website tropicalaudubon.org, email tortugas@tropicalaudubon.org, or call 305-666-5111.

TAS Walk Schedule

Sun, Mar 17 – Tour the Botanical Garden at the Tropical Audubon Society David Lysinger, native plant expert and Botanical Garden architect, will lead a tour from 9 AM to 12 PM. Learn about our botanical heritage and visit the historic garden. Call 305-666-8074 for more information.

Tues, Mar 19 – General Meeting see page 5.

Sat, Mar 23 – South Dade Birding This is an all-day carpool trip, which may include stops at the Chekika area of Everglades National Park, Mary Krome Park in Homestead, and Convoy Point in Biscayne National Park. Meet at 7 AM at the east gate (on SW 55th Ave.) of the Doc Thomas house. Bring lunch. Leader : Brian Rapoza.

Sat, Mar 30 – Florida Trail, Big Cypress National Preserve Nature Walk This section of the Florida Trail passes through open prairie, pineland, and a hardwood hammock. Spring wild flowers 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. Space limited; **reservations required**. Call 305-666-5111 for meeting time and location.

Sat, Apr 6 – Matheson Hammock Bird Walk Juan Vilamil will lead birders through Matheson Hammock on Old Cutler Rd. immediately north of Fairchild Gardens. Meet in the parking area on the left inside the park entrance at 7:30 AM. Return is at approximately 11 AM.

Sun, Apr 7 – A.D.Barnes Park Bird Walk Gigi Pardo 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 7:30 AM, returning at approximately 11 AM.

Wed-Sat, Apr 10-13 – Dry Tortugas Spring Migration Boat Trip

Sat, Apr 13 – 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 7:30 AM. Participants will carpool to the Bill Baggs/Cape Florida State Recreation Area. Shared entrance fee is required plus the causeway toll. Return will be before noon.

Sun, Apr 14 – Elaine Gordon/Enchanted Forest Park Bird Walk Joel Abramson, listed in the Guinness Book of World Records for having seen the most bird families in the world, will lead a group through the Elaine Gordon Enchanted Forest. Meet at 8 AM in the first covered picnic area just inside the park entrance at 1725 NE 135th St. west of Biscayne Blvd.

Sun, Apr 21 – Charles Deering Estate Plant Walk Rick Cohen will lead this walk emphasizing the botanical and geological features found in the 420 acre park. The rating is moderate to difficult off trail. Wear sturdy shoes only. Bring water, hat, bug spray. Admission fee to park required. Space limited; **reservations required**. Call 305-666-5111 for meeting time and place.

Sun, Apr 21 – Tour the Botanical Garden at the Tropical Audubon Society David Lysinger, native plant expert and Botanical Garden architect, will lead a tour from 9 AM to 12 PM. Learn about our botanical heritage and visit the historic garden. Call 305-666-8074 for information.

Sat, Apr 27 – Birdathon

Sun, Apr 28 – A.D.Barnes Park Bird Walk Trip leaders: Gigi Pardo and Jill Rosenfield. See April 7th for details. Meet at 7:30 AM, returning at approximately 11 AM.

Sat, May 4 – Virginia Key/Key Biscayne Bird Walk Trip leaders: David Wright and Mary Ellen Ahearn. See April 13th for details. Return will be before noon.

Sun, May 5 – Matheson Hammock Park Bird Walk Trip leaders: Juan Vilamil and John Boyd. See April 6th for details. Meet at 7:30 AM. Return approximately 11 AM.

Sat, May 11 – Spring Migration Bird Count for Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties Join the Bird Counts! Every year 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. The consistency of the count creates a viable set of statistics which 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 which should be heeded. In addition to the serious consequences of the bird counts, they are a fun way to spend a day with fellow birding enthusiasts. This is an all day event. Volunteers are needed for all areas. Call 305-666-5111 for more information and team assignments.

Sun, May 12 – A.D.Barnes Park Bird Walk. Mickey Wheeler and Jill Rosenfield will lead birders through A.D. Barnes Park. See April 7th for details. Meet at 7:30 AM, returning at approximately 11 AM.

T A S E V E N T S

Sat, Mar 16 – Doc Thomas Botanical Garden Work Day 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, 8 AM until around noon.

Tues, Mar 19 TAS General Meeting Tropical welcomes Dr. Peter Merritt who will show a presentation on the making of his Florida birds video. The video features 206 species from all regions of the state and is designed as a supplement to a field guide. The presentation includes scenes from spring migration in the Dry Tortugas, fall migration of hawks in the Florida Keys, and summer residents and winter visitors

from Jacksonville to Pensacola to Key West. The program includes some unique scenes, such as the nesting colony of Roseate Terns on Pelican Shoal. Many vocalizations and interesting behaviors are featured.

Dr. Merritt received a Ph.D. from the University of Miami in 1985 where he studied the singing behavior of the Northern Mockingbird. Since then, he has held the position of Regional Ecologist at Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council. Dr. Merritt has served as Editor of the Florida Field Naturalist, a scientific journal of ornithology and natural history published quarterly by the Florida Ornithological Society. Currently, he is President of the Florida Ornithological Society.

The meeting will take place at the Doc Thomas House, Light refreshments served at 7:30 PM, formal meeting at 8 PM. Free and open to the public.

Sat-Sun, Mar 23-24 – Native Plant Sale and Book Signing The Tropical Audubon Society Botanical Garden will be open for its quarterly Native Plant Sale. Lasting from 9 AM through 5 PM both days, there will be knowledgeable sales people to help select the best plants for your home and garden. You should plan to arrive early for the first pick. Becky Matkov, Executive Director of Dade Heritage Trust, will be on hand after 10 AM to sign the new *Miami's Historic Neighborhoods* book which she edited. TAS is located at 5530 Sunset near the intersection of Red Rd. Call 305-666-5111 for more information.

T A S N E W S

Dade Heritage Days Feel something special in the air? It's Dade Heritage Days, a two-month celebration of Miami's historic, architectural and environmental heritage brought to you every spring by Dade Heritage Trust. It's going on now until April 28 with tours, exhibits and special events all over town. Call DHT for a brochure (305 358 9572) or check out www.dadeheritagetrust.org.

Nominating Committee A Nominating Committee has been chosen to find new recruits for the Tropical Audubon Board of Directors. Cathy Coates is Chairperson, serving with Rick Cohen, Jorge Khuly and Maggie Khuly. Any member of Tropical Audubon may submit suggestions. The new board will be elected and sworn in at the Annual Meeting and Picnic on Sunday, April 28.

Thanks, Steve! We'll Miss You!! Tropical Audubon bids a fond farewell to our tireless Bulletin Editor and Web Master, Steve Mumford. All who have read the Bulletin or visited the site are seeing the result of the hard work Steve put in to make them both beautiful. Alas, he has moved to North Carolina for better weather and different birds. We all thank Steve sincerely for his years of service to Tropical Audubon and wish him luck in his new home

Mailing List Corrections TAS has recently experienced problems with our mailing list. If your name or address appears incorrectly on anything that you receive from us, please contact tas002@tropicalaudubon.org to have it changed. We apologize for the errors.

Calling All Advertisers! The Bulletin is a big expense for Tropical Audubon. Advertising or underwriting can be a good avenue for organizations which support the TAS cause to notify readers about their products and services and at the same time help us defray publication costs. Because we use special not-for-profit postage rates, there are advertising guidelines. The TAS Bulletin is mailed every other month to approximately 3000 households in South Florida, mostly Dade County, all of which have an interest in nature and conservation. Our rates are reasonable! For information, please contact Cathy at advertising@tropicalaudubon.org

EAGLE OPTICS OPTIC OUTFITTERS

"Eagle Optics provides quality products and service and is an ardent supporter of a variety of conservation causes, including the Florida Birding Festival and the Directory of Nature Festivals. Their leadership in this arena is good news for birders, and for birds and their habitats. By supporting Eagle Optics, customers are also supporting important conservation programs."

Peter Stangel, PhD
The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

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Eagle Optics Comes to Miami

On April 20 and 21, come meet Ron Windingstad of Eagle Optics who will be visiting Miami, to discuss and demonstrate optics equipment. Ron will talk about binoculars and spotting scopes and their applications in bird watching, butterfly watching and nature viewing. There will be products on hand from a variety of manufacturers for the beginner as well as the advanced enthusiast. All who are interested will be able to compare various types of equipment, ask questions, and purchase or order items of their choice.

Based in Middleton, Wisconsin, Eagle Optics has one of the nation's largest selections of binoculars, spotting scopes and accessories. Products are sold from their extensive catalogue and web page. The company is an authorized dealer of each manufacturer represented. Almost all models listed are stock items available for immediate shipment and include factory new equipment with all accessories supplied by the manufacturer, including U.S. warranty. Eagle Optics has built a solid reputation on offering birders the best in selection, service and prices on quality optic products.

The event will be held on Saturday, April 20 from 10 AM to 5 PM at Books & Books on Aragon in Coral Gables. He will offer a presentation starting at 1 PM. The products will again be available for demonstrations on Sunday, April 21 from noon to 3 PM at the Doc Thomas House at 5530 Sunset. Think how nice it would be to have new binoculars for the First Annual TAS Birdathon on April 27!

TAS is proud to participate in an affiliate program with Eagle Optics wherein any purchases made from their website when accessed by a link from our website will earn Tropical a commission. If you don't buy directly from Ron in April, please consider making your next optics purchase from Eagle Optics via the TAS website at tropicalaudubon.org.

Fakahatchee Strand Walk

The Feb. 17 Swamp Tromp through the Fakahatchee Strand with Rick Cohen was a tremendous success. We started back through the swamp on an old tram bed before wading into the knee deep water in search of orchids. As he did last year, Ranger Mike Owens accompanied the group which included several knowledgeable native plant enthusiasts. There were many, many telephone calls and emails about the trip which sold out about 15 days in advance. We apologize to all of you who were interested but could not be accommodated. Please stay tuned to our web page and Bulletin for more nature walks and don't forget to call early for reservations.

WALK AMONG THE PELICANS at Pelican Harbor Seabird Station, inside Pelican Harbor Marina at 1275 NE 79th Street Causeway, Miami, FL 33138. Pelicans, egrets, cormorants and other birds walk the sidewalks with the visitors. Visitors are welcome from dawn until dusk, 7 days. We personally greet visitors and conduct short mini-tours anytime between 8-12 AM and 2-5 PM, 7 days. We'll supply a few fish to feed the friendly birds. Please call ahead for groups of more than 4. (305) 751-9840. There is no charge.