



# Tropical Audubon Bulletin

Newsletter of the Tropical Audubon Society



5530 Sunset Drive; Miami, Florida 33143

(305) 666-5111

May/June 2002

## TROPICAL WELCOMES A NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CYNTHIA GUERRA

**Cynthia Guerra** has formally become our new Executive Director as of April 8, 2002. We are happy to welcome her. Cynthia comes to Tropical from DERM where she has been a biologist since 1996 in the Coastal Resources Section. Also at DERM, she worked in the Wetlands Planning Section in 1993-94. Cynthia earned her Master of Public Administration Summa Cum Laude specializing in Environmental Policy in 1999 and a Bachelor of Science in Biology with a minor in Chemistry in 1993. She won several scholarships at FIU and was a member of the

Golden Key and Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Societies. Cynthia was born in Texas, but her family moved to the south Miami area when she was four years old. She considers herself a Miami native. Her current hobbies (sailing, canoeing, scuba diving and, of course, birding) are an extension of the activities she loved as a child visiting local natural areas and boating in Biscayne Bay. Cynthia is looking forward to meeting members of the Tropical Audubon family.

See Cynthia's comments on Page 3 —>

## GEORGIA TASKER RECEIVES AWARD

**Well known garden columnist** and environmental writer for the Miami Herald, pioneer in the promotion of native plant preservation and landscaping, and author of celebrated books on horticulture, Georgia Tasker added to her significant list of honors on April 7. Tasker was granted the Tropical Audubon Society's Lifetime Achievement Award at a celebration at the historic "Doc" Thomas Audubon House & Botanical Garden. Tasker received the award, a Clyde Butcher photograph of the Shiny Leaf Orchid, from Tropical Audubon President, Joe Barros.

Mayors Evelyn Greer of Pinecrest, Julio Robaina of South Miami, Don Slesnick of Coral Gables, and Paul Bithorn of Virginia Gardens, each proclaimed April 7, 2002 as Georgia Tasker Day. Other well-wishers at the podium included Bruce Greer, Chairman of the Board of Fairchild Tropical Garden, Julia Kornegay, Director of Fairchild Tropical Garden, Carrie Cleland, President of Dade Native Plant Society, Robert Kelley, Past President of Tropical Audubon Society, and Dennis Olle, Vice

President of Tropical Audubon Society, who served as Master of Ceremonies.

The ceremony was capped by a dedication to Tasker of an extremely rare tree, *Cupania Glabra* by David Lysinger, long time member of Tropical Audubon and the designer and curator of the Botanical Garden. Lysinger, who conducts tours of the Botanical Garden at Tropical Audubon Society, explained that the *Cupania Glabra* is known only in isolated areas of the lower Florida Keys (Johnston Key, Summerland Key and Big Pine Key).

Tropical Audubon's recognition of Georgia is centered on her environmental writing and her leadership in conserving native plants and native plant horticulture and gardening. Her writings and lectures make botany and horticulture, especially as it has to do with native plants, accessible and exciting to countless numbers of readers. We cannot tally how many readers have become planters, inspired by Georgia Tasker.

## To Our Donors... THANK YOU!

**Tropical Audubon** would like to thank the following individuals who generously donated to our cause in 2001. We are a not-for-profit membership organization which is financially separate from the National and Florida organizations. We focus entirely on South Florida issues. We maintain the historic Doc Thomas House and Botanical Gardens, a full time Executive Director, regular nature walks, educational meetings and this bi-monthly Bulletin all of which are you are helping to support. We could not survive without you. If anyone has not been appropriately recognized, please email [tas002@tropicalaudubon.org](mailto:tas002@tropicalaudubon.org) to correct the error.

Tropical Audubon Society  
5530 Sunset Drive  
Miami, FL 33143

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We also thank each and every member, plant sale customer and event participant for helping us be a stronger grass-roots organization. We appreciate YOU ALL!

(on page 4, TAS thanks you individually!)

# Dry Tortugas: *the* place to be in Spring

**O**ur 2002 Tortugas adventure began on the morning of April 10 at the Doc Thomas House. This year's trip had participants from as far away as New York, Wisconsin, and California, and they all wanted to see south Florida specialty birds. We obliged by caravanning through south Miami to pick up Red-whiskered Bulbul, various parrots, and Cave Swallow before heading down the Keys highway.

In Key West that evening we boarded the Yankee Freedom and took to our bunks to ride out unusually high winds and seas in port. At first light Thursday morning winds were still at 20 knots and higher and seas approached 8 feet: the trip out was bracing. Birders on the top deck were rewarded by a White-tailed Tropicbird barreling right over the boat west of Rebecca Shoal. This bird has become very rare in our waters in recent years, and its appearance made the trip for many. By late morning Fort Jefferson and Loggerhead Key came into view, and soon we docked at the Fort on Garden Key.

After scouting Garden Key for migrants, we boarded the boat again and headed for Loggerhead Key, the largest of the Tortugas. We anchored off the lee side of Loggerhead and

crossed the reef via skiff to land on the island in small groups. Most of us fanned out to search for birds but a few snorkeled the reef, viewing many of its colorful denizens, including the outlandish Stoplight Parrotfish. Birders found three species of falcon and other landbirds, but the highlight here was a Short-eared Owl of the Caribbean or "Arawak" race.

Back on Garden Key we had close views of nesting Sooty Terns and Brown Noddies on adjoining Bush Key. Campers were lulled to sleep by the soothing sound of the wind, while the boat contingent slept blissfully in their bunks on the Yankee Freedom. Night owls on the boat were witness to the spectacle of hundreds of warblers circling the lights of the craft.

Friday morning had us again scouring the island for migrants. The relentless wind had them hunkered down and it took some work to find them. An Arawak Short-eared Owl made another appearance. Skiff runs along Bush and Long Keys provided panoramic views of roosting noddies, terns, boobies, and frigatebirds, males of latter magnificent indeed with inflated red throat pouches. After lunch we took the Yankee Freedom on a tour of buoys, checking the Brown Boobies

that roost on them for a stray Red-footed (not this year). We found at least 40 Masked Boobies on Hospital Key.

That night we had a small party and barbecue on the island. The moat walk afterward produced good looks at many odd sea creatures, but we'd have to say it was most memorable for the exuberance of the participants. Mother nature treated Friday night's campers to rain along with the wind.

Saturday morning had us once again scouring Garden Key for migrants. The wind had lessened considerably, and birds were more active. We ended our visit with 12 warbler species - not a record by any means, but not too shabby, considering the unusual conditions. Seas on the return to Key West were still high enough to keep us in protected waters but we did see Roseate and Bridled Terns. When the boat docked at the marina, most of us were ready to turn around and do it all over again.

Last, but not least, the trip raised funds for TAS. It's great to be able to have so much fun and raise money for your favorite cause at the same time. Don't miss out next year!

- David Wright & Mary Ellen Ahearn

Tropical Audubon would like to thank the Sheraton Biscayne Bay for their generous donation of lodging for Ron Windingstad of Eagle Optics during his Miami stay. Located in downtown Miami's Brickell area, the Sheraton is convenient to the entire town. Our Optics Event at Books and Books and at the Doc Thomas House was a great success with the help of Sheraton.

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  
Layout: 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>

# AND FROM CYNTHIA WE HEAR:

**I am very excited** to have been offered this position with Tropical Audubon. I have always had a passion for nature, and I consider myself extremely lucky to be able to work towards such a noble goal as the conservation of Florida's natural resources. I have worked as an environmental regulator here in Miami-Dade County, so I have a good understanding of the challenges we face in trying to preserve the quality of South Florida's environment. However, it was a previous experience that provided me with much of my motivation to fight for environmental protection.

In 1994, I had an opportunity to set sail in a 34' sloop to the Caribbean. My sailing partner and I had no idea where we were going or how long we'd be gone. We spent 28 months traveling the 'Thorny Path' which included visits to the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and most of the Windward and Leeward Islands. The summer months were spent sailing from port to port (and dodging hurricanes), and the winter months were spent in St. Thomas where I worked as a Co-Pilot on a tourist submarine. I will never be able to describe how enlightening and amazing the whole journey was: I came eyeball to eyeball with a baby Humpback whale calf, her mom and her nanny; I saw more stars and satellites than I ever thought possible; I saw Sperm whales resting at the surface of the water like giant logs, and pilot whales riding

in our bow wave; I spent hundreds of hours exploring reefs and rainforests.

By the end of the winter season in 1996, I had begun to internalize much of what I had been experiencing. Throughout the Caribbean, in some of the most beautiful natural areas that I have ever seen, there are signs of degradation to the environment. There are dead reefs from Miami to Trinidad; there are windward beaches on uninhabited islands covered with tar and debris; there are many threatened and endangered plants and animals that can't compete with the needs of the people living in the region. And often, these problems are the result of poor environmental decisions that are made for the sake of political or economic reasons. I believe that there are links between social and environmental well-being, that we don't need to sacrifice environmental quality for economic benefit, and that is why I endeavor to bring about positive changes in South Florida.

I hope that you will all join me in working to fulfill our environmental goals. I will be writing short articles in later editions of this newsletter about the little things we can all do to make a large difference. If you have questions, comments or suggestions about anything at all, please call me at (305) 666-5111 or send me an e-mail: tropicalaudubon@hotmail.com .

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Capt. Ed Davidson, Chairman Emeritus of Florida Audubon, long time Board member of Tropical Audubon, and former eco-tour concessionaire for Biscayne National Park, lives on site and is available for tours, discussions, and environmental field trips for student and adult groups.

Located in the heart of the Keys at Mile Marker 52 in Marathon - 2 hrs from Coral Gables, 1 hr north of Key West. Call Capt. Ed at 305-743-6054 -- 24 hrs, 7 days for info, or email: [CaptEcoEd@aol.com](mailto:CaptEcoEd@aol.com)

## A FEW ACTIVITIES AT FAIRCHILD

*Research Lecture*  
**"Tree Islands of Everglades National Park"**  
Tues., May 14, 4pm, FTG Research Center,  
11935 Old Cutler Rd.  
Presented by Dr. Mike Ros,  
Southeast Environmental Research Center, FIU

Dr. Ross will discuss the tree islands in Shark Slough. He will share what his research group has learned about these forests over the last few years, and speculate on the interactions of history and hydrology in maintaining their function and structure. For more information, call Jack Fisher, 305/667-1651x3412.

**Mamey & More**  
Sun., Jun. 16, 2-4pm, FTG

*Mamey sapote, canistel and sapodilla* constitute a truly "All American" line-up, uniting the people, cultures and histories of North, Central and South America with their commercial and home garden production and uses. Come learn about the latest in cultivars, horticultural breakthroughs and uses of the fruit and take home a tree to put your education to the test. Call FTG 305/667-1651 for more information.

## 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. 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. Call 305 666 5111 for more information.

## Sat., May 18 - 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. Call 305-666-5111 for more information.

## Tues., May 21- Tropical Audubon General Meeting

Chuck McCartney of the Native Plant Society will discuss Florida wildflowers. Refreshments will be served at 7:30p. The meeting starts at 8. Doc Thomas House - 5530 Sunset Dr. near Red Rd.

## Sat., June 1 - 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, 8am until around noon.

## Sat.-Sun., Jun. 8-9 - Native Plant Sale

The Tropical Audubon Society will be open for its quarterly Native Plant Sale. Lasting from 9:00am through 5:00pm both days, 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. Call 305 666 5111 for more information.

### TROPICAL WISHES TO THANK

TAS appreciates the whole-hearted support of the Georgia Tasker event by our South Miami businesses: Gardner's Market, Deli Lane, Winn-Dixie, and the Morning Call Bakery, along with Lorenzo's Italian Market in North Miami. We are also grateful to neighboring businesses who invited us to use their parking spaces on April 7: Palmetto-Ace Hardware, Robinson & Reeves Framers, Up on Sunset Salon, Tysunn Dry Cleaners, and Natural Feed Pet & Garden Center.



## TAS APPRECIATES *YOUR* SUPPORT!

Almonte, Maria R.  
Arnold, M.  
August, Blanche  
Austin, Alison  
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Ball, David  
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Barros, Jose-Francisco  
Blackstone, Darryl  
Booker, Maxine  
Bowker, John H.  
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Bures, Maria  
Butler, William P.  
Butterfield, Mary L.  
Cameron, Lynne  
Camp, Barr A.  
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Marshall, Harold  
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Matos, Maria  
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McKenna, Alice M.  
McKenna, Joan H.

McQuale, E.L.  
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Metraux, Ginger  
Milledge, Allan  
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Oile, Dennis J.  
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