

## Fertilizer Bill by Chuck Geanangel

Anyone who has lived in Polk County for any extended period of time has noticed a not so subtle change in the conditions of our lakes and waterways. A century ago, most Polk lakes were crystal clear with white sandy bottoms. There was very little aquatic and littoral vegetation.

Today we see a drastic decline in the condition of our greatest natural resource, our lakes. The causes are well known; they fall into two categories, point source and non-point source. Point sources are basically pipes that drain, street runoff, sewage, and factory wastes directly into the nearest water body. Over the years, anti-pollution regulations have virtually eliminated most point sources. The non-point sources are much more difficult to control because officials are not sure exactly what they all are. However, one comes to mind that we do know;

that being runoff of lawn fertilizers and pesticides. The Florida Legislature recently decreed that the counties develop ordinances to help correct the imbalance caused by fertilizer use. It is titled: "A MODEL ORDINANCE FOR FLORIDA-FRIENDLY FERTILIZER USE ON URBAN LANDSCAPES." Only urban areas were involved, agricultural interests were exempt.

Polk County will probably choose between a strong Manatee County type ordinance and a weaker ordinance favored by Orange County. Some of the differences are rather technical but many of the ideas are straight forward. Some of the topics are the use of time release fertilizer, limiting the amount of fertilizer phosphate, creating zones of no fertilizer zones around lakes and other water bodies, creating low maintenance zones, changing applications practices, and management of grass

clipping. One controversial idea is banning all lawn fertilizing during the rainy season when the runoff is the most prevalent. If our lakes are to improve in water quality, the County must act now.



Fertilizer runoffs are linked to algal blooms which reduce the amount of sunlight reaching bottom organisms and in turn, the amount of dissolved oxygen causing massive fish kills. Areas heavily affected are called "Dead Zones". We all have a mission to avoid these effects by reducing fertilizer runoffs.

## Updates & Events

### LRAS Annual Christmas Party (Dec 4<sup>th</sup>, 2:00 pm)

Come and join us for a great time among fellow members of the LRAS. The LRAS will provide the main course. Please bring something to share such dessert or finger foods.

### Join the Bird Club sponsored birdwatching hikes at Circle B.

Dec 3 & 17, 2011  
Jan 7 & 21, 2012  
Feb 4 & 18, 2012  
Mar 3, 17, 2012

### Florida Reptiles Sunday, Dec. 11<sup>th</sup> @ 2:00 pm Circle B Bar (Workshop)

Join us for a live-animal presentation on Florida's reptiles. The program, which includes several native species of snakes, lizards and turtles, will also cover some invasive species.

### Birds in Our Lives Thursday Dec. 15<sup>th</sup> @ 6:00 pm Circle B Bar

A study on how birds have shaped humankind, from the early humans to the most advanced technology today, birds have always been a source of inspiration and admiration. Learn about how birds served humans in many ways from the mere food source to the latest in surveillance.

### LRAS Christmas Bird Count Dec 17, 2011

Contact Paul Fellers at 863-293-0486 to help with the count and for more information.

### Bird-A-Thon Dec 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011

For the Bird-A-Thon fundraiser, please contact Janet Anderson at (863) 965-8241

Stay tuned with the latest information on programs and events by visiting our website at: [www.lakeregionaudubon.org](http://www.lakeregionaudubon.org).

If you have any suggestions on programs or events you would like to see, please send us an email to: [info@lakeregionaudubon.org](mailto:info@lakeregionaudubon.org)

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### AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

[make check payable to National Audubon Society]  
This membership automatically enrolls you in the National Audubon Society, Audubon of Florida, and Lake Region Audubon Society.

You will receive these publications from each organization:

- National Audubon Society - Audubon Magazine
- Audubon of Florida - Florida Naturalist
- Lake Region Audubon Society - The Scrub Jay Times

Cost: 1st year - \$20.00\* Yearly Renewal: \$35.00

\*Lake Region will receive all of the first year's dues. Thereafter it receives no direct portion of your annual dues.

### LOCAL MEMBERSHIP ONLY [make check payable to Lake Region Audubon Society]

• This membership enrolls you in the Scrub Jay Times, The Bird Club and offers you discounts on programs and events among other benefits.

- Cost: \$20.00 - Individual \$35.00 - Family \$15 - Student
- \* Your first year's dues and each renewal goes 100% to support all Lake Region Audubon's programs.

Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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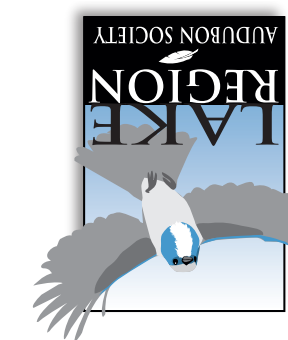
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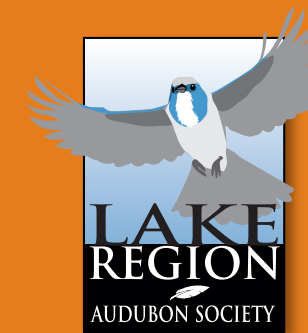
Please mail your check and this completed application to:  
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115 Lameraux Rd. Winter Haven, FL 33884

If this is a gift membership for the person named above, please write your name here: \_\_\_\_\_

Lake Region Audubon Society, Inc.  
115 Lameraux Road  
Winter Haven, FL 33884  
[www.lakeregionaudubon.org](http://www.lakeregionaudubon.org)



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## WELCOME TO THE LAKE REGION AUDUBON'S NEWSLETTER

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115 Lameraux Road  
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# THE SCRUB JAY TIMES

A Quarterly Look Inside Lake Region Audubon Society



## Fall Migration Highlights By Paul Fellers

For me, the migration begins in late July, so 3 visits to Saddle Creek Park (SCP) with our 2 big dogs in late July resulted in 6 Red-eyed Vireo and 5 N. Parula Warbler on 7/23; 10 Parula and Black-and-White Warbler on 7/29; and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, 2 Red-eyed Vireo, 8 Parula, Yellow-throated Warbler, 2 Black-and-White Warbler, Am. Redstart, and Louisiana Waterthrush on 7/31. Other visits to SCP produced the following: 8/9, 6 warbler species, the best being Worm-eating, plus 2 Yellow-billed Cuckoo; 8/10, light-phase Short-tailed Hawk (seen several times thereafter), 65 Mourning Dove (obviously migrants), first Belted Kingfisher of the migration; 8/18, 20 Parula, light and rare dark-phase Short-tailed Hawk, 2 Prothonotary Warbler; 8/25, 30 E. Kingbird migrating S.; 8/30, 2 Willow Flycatcher (both calling); 9/30, first Wild Turkey seen at SCP (a female); 10/7, first Yellow-bellied Sapsucker of fall; 10/13, Swainson's Thrush; 10/17, first of 2 red-letter days in a row, best birds being 4 Chestnut-sided Warbler (1 at home), Blackburnian, 4 Bay-breasted (1 at home), 6 Am. Redstart plus Indigo Bunting; 10/18, 2 Swainson's Thrush, 14 Warbler species, including Chestnut-sided, 2 Magnolia, 2 Black-throated Blue, Bay-breasted, 6 Black-and-White, 5 Am. Redstart, and male Hooded, plus Scarlet Tanager and Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

warbler species; 9/5, 3 E. Wood Pewee, 13 warbler species including 2 Blue-winged, Blackburnian, 7 Yellow-throated, Cerulean (young male), 7 Black-and-White, 8 Prothonotary, 4 Worm-eating, and 5 Hooded, plus 2 Summer Tanager; 9/10, 16 warbler species, best being 2 Chestnut-sided, a whopping 16 Blackburnian (personal high), young male Cerulean, 4 Prothonotary, and 2 Worm-eating; 10/2, Willow Flycatcher (really white front; Bob Snow also noted), first Ruby-crowned Kinglet of fall, 11 warbler species, Summer and Scarlet Tanagers plus at Dunedin Hammock 2 Summer and 2 Scarlet Tanagers; 10/15, a red-letter day with 69 species, best being Gray-cheeked, Swainson's, and Wood Thrushes, first Blue-headed Vireo of fall, a super 18-warbler-species day, best being male Golden-Winged (Yea!), 9 Tennessee, 3 Chestnut-sided, 4 Magnolia, 2 Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, 8 Yellow-throated, 2 Bay-breasted, 14 Am. Redstart, and Hooded, plus Summer Tanager and 3 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks.

On a great East Coast trip on 8/27 with Liz Lane we observed 60 species including Reddish Egret, 5 Roseate Spoonbill, Common Tern, E. Wood Pewee, Acadian and Willow Flycatchers (pics at Shell Mound), 12 warbler species, best being Blackburnian, 2 Cerulean (as close as 10 feet for 1/2 hour at Shell Mound), and 4 Worm-eating. It was a fine migration and included 26 warbler species.

Four trips to John Chesnut County Park with Liz Lane resulted in some great birding: 8/12, Ruby-throated Hummer, 4 Carolina Chickadee, and 7

## LRAS: The Future Ahead *Photo & Text by: R. Munguia*

Many of you have noticed some changes in the Lake Region Audubon Chapter, changes that were needed in order to accomplish the goals of this organization. Some of these changes started back when Susan Schenk was our leading president. Her enthusiasm and willingness to work with the youth was the key to establishing some ties back to our community. Since I became the president and having worked with the younger audiences before, this has become one of our top priorities. The reason is simple. Over the years, many Audubon chapters around the country have ignored the importance of bringing kids into our organization and to get them interested in conservation. This mistake may cause many chapters to cease operation when they can't find anybody to perpetuate their existence. My goal was clear from the beginning that we needed young participants in our events, and perhaps one day they could be leaders for the organization. The plan was to bring them to the nature center and exposed them to things they haven't seen before. Additionally several school visits have been made and the results are really promising.

My wife and I have developed several educational modules to be used in education of different grade levels. Our visits to schools this year included grade levels from 3<sup>rd</sup> all the way to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Homeschooling groups and youth groups such as the Boy Scouts of America have also utilized our services. New connections with places such as Bok Tower and other private organizations are opening new opportunities for the Chapter to spread the word about the natural world and the need to protect it. If you have never participated in one of our outreach educational programs, I invite you to join us and see for yourself how rewarding this can be. Showing the structure of a bird feather under a microscope to the kids, or allowing them to feel the smooth scales of a snake are pictures that will get stuck in their young brains forever. Experiences that may change the way they see the natural world, and perhaps help them acquire a higher level of appreciation.

But kids are not the only ones who benefit with our programs. Several programs aimed for the adult community have been designed. Topics covering birds, butterflies, climate change, migration, hummingbirds, ecosystems,



Top: Kids from the Adventure Academy participating in a bird class activity at the Street Audubon Nature Center. Right: Webelos from Pack 515 came to the Center to earn their Naturalist Merit Badge. They learned about plants, animals and ecosystems.



birding and photography classes have made our calendar regularly. These presentations and programs are attracting many new members to our Chapter and will ensure that we continue to exist for many years. These are people that support our efforts in many ways, not only financially but by actively participating in our programs and helping out when needed.

Many other improvements have been made in and around the nature center including 5 new picnic tables, an automated irrigation system, maintenance to the lake shelter and outdoor display. We have also improved our membership program. Now you can apply for a new membership or renew online through our website. New levels of membership include student, family (up to 4 members) and corporate. The idea of a family type membership came as we're getting more families involved in the Chapter's activities. The student membership will attract younger people who are currently in college or high school and need to acquire field experience or community hours. Some of these younger members are being trained to do educational programs at various events.

The Chapter was represented this year at the Audubon of Florida Assembly and received the Second Place in The Best Educational Programs in the state. Our goals were presented

to various participants and they all supported our views and approach to bring the younger audiences back to the Society.

As we move forward in the Chapter's renovation, there will be many other changes to be made. Changes that may require your help. Part of our strategic plan includes a new exhibit area inside the Howe House that show the importance of habitats for bird life, as well as some of the threats that birds face in Florida. Several outdoor displays will be placed along the trails to educate our visitors about what they see.

These are some of the changes coming up, changes that may require some financial and labor support from our members. Please get involved, there is much to be done and it's one of the most rewarding things you can do.

If you feel like getting involved in educating our youth on birds, nature and conservation, feel free to send us an e-mail at:

[education@lakeregionaudubon.org](mailto:education@lakeregionaudubon.org)

If you're a teacher wanting to integrate a nature education program to your class, please send us an e-mail too!

## In The Good Old Summertime *Photos & Text by: Herman Moulden*

What happens in Central Florida in the summertime? It gets hot, humid and the birds become scarce. What does an outdoor photographer do? Being a Florida native, I do not go north. I break out the focusing rail and macro lens and go bug hunting. I usually start about sunrise to get the bugs heavy with dew and much more inactive than later in the day and most importantly, the wind is usually much calmer early in the morn. Wind is the bane of the close-up photographer. Bugs are plentiful year-round, but even more so during summertime. They can be found in your yard, a park, a bush in a parking lot or anywhere. So, just get out and look.



Gulf Fritillary taken with 90mm Tamron.

I load my camera with macro lens, and flash on a tripod and go hunting. I usually have a focusing rail on the camera as it helps in positioning the camera close. I like to walk the borders between high bush and grass as is found on many nature trails. When a subject is found, I try to shoot it from different angles. I have learned much about which insects will try to hide and which will pose for the camera. I have learned some tricks of the trade such as wiggling your fingers behind a bug to get it to move to the front of a twig. I like to photograph what I find, in place, this requires getting low and sometimes lying on the ground. When I am shooting a fast moving bug, the camera comes off the tripod and I chase the bug around. This requires



Top: Little Red Damselfly. This was taken handheld, note the black background behind the leaf. Below: Beetle, 90 mm Tamron, Nikon D7000. A handheld shot, (note the black background behind the leaf).



a different method of exposure using flash as the primary light.

When shooting close-ups, I usually travel heavy (much equipment). This includes; camera, macro lens, telephoto lens, flash, focusing rail, clamps on stakes (to steady wind blown bush) and sometimes windbreaks. I use a modified pull-behind golf cart to carry the items. If you see an odd looking character walking along pulling a golf cart with a tripod over his shoulder, it might be me. Stop and say hello.

Taking all into consideration, shooting close is a bit more difficult than shooting telephoto, but it is very rewarding and fun. I encourage all to, at least, try it once.

For more images visit my Flickr page at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/herman1944/>

## The Christmas Bird Count (CBC)

From the dark practice of killing birds by the masses during the Christmas holiday in a competitive fashion comes one of the most famous bird counts in the U.S. It was in the year 1900 when the concerned ornithologist Frank Chapman proposed a new holiday tradition of counting birds instead of shooting them. Chapman, a member of the newly formed Audubon Society, together with 27 other birders in 25 separate locations made the first count in which 89 species were recorded. By then, the holiday practice of killing birds had taken a toll in the country's bird population.

Today more than 2,113 counts are made between December 14th and January 5th. Nearly 60,000 people participate in these counts that cover most of the U.S., Canada and selected countries in Central and South America.

The Lake Region Audubon Society hosts the CBC for Polk County. For more information on how to participate, please visit our website at [www.lakeregionadubon.org](http://www.lakeregionadubon.org)

## Overview of Events at the LRAS *by: Nyleen Rodriguez*



Top: Some of our young volunteers teaching about reptiles during Water Wings & Wild Things. Bottom: People of all ages enjoyed our program on Parrots of the World. Left: Emily and Sunshine, the Blue & Gold macaw. Right: Joanne Hillock found a friend in Sammy, the Scarlet Macaw.



As many of you know, the Center has been very busy in the past year, offering multiple opportunities for our members to get educated, have fun and give more of their time for our well-being as Audubon chapter. It is because of this, and with a desire to make you want to wish you'd been here, that we are starting this section about what has happened, so that you see what you have been missing.

Work days are always fun at the Center. The first Saturday of the month is dedicated to make our property be what it should be. Our teen group is always working hard, from cleaning the ponds, pulling out weeds, and even doing some construction. Our teens at heart are also hard at work, even removing fallen

trees from the trails. We have lots of work to be done and never enough time, so join us. We will sure find something that fits your abilities. In October, we started another series of birding classes, this time offered at the Center in benefit of those living in eastern Polk County. These birding classes, FREE, are a must for anyone that either likes birding or is considering taking the challenge of knowing more than just "Oh, there is a bird". These classes teach you about the anatomy of the bird, flight patterns, sounds, and even birding by habitats. By the end, not only will you know a bit more but also you will get a certificate that says so. Pay attention for when the next series will be offered.

October also marked the beginning of our food and workshop presentations for this season, and we definitely started with something totally unique: Breakfast with the Parrots. For a small fee, participants enjoyed a breakfast buffet cooked by our

very own President, family and the Anderson family, which has become an exceptional addition to our volunteer group. After breakfast, our attendees had a chance to take pictures with the birds and listen to a very informative presentation about the parrots of the world. Everyone was extremely happy, and because of so many requests, we will be doing this again sometime in winter.

Water, Wings and Wild Things, annual event sponsored by the Environmental Lands Program, was another chance the chapter had of making itself known. We set up two tents, and even though the weather was not great, we managed to attract lots of people to learn about Audubon, make crafts or find out about our programs. Some of our volunteers joined us, including our teen group who helped from set up to clean up, and to talk to the public. It was a great day.

Our Eagle Watch volunteers had their training on October 27<sup>th</sup> at the Howe House in Winter Haven. Linda and Jim White traveled from Maitland, with Paige, their beautiful bald eagle ambassador, to train a group of old and new very enthusiastic volunteers. We had an opportunity to socialize and meet new people and exchange experiences and ideas with those that had not yet started watching eagles. One of the high points of the evening was to see a whole family come to be trained and the enthusiasm that the kids have into being part of this amazing program. This is why we need to go out to the community. We need more families, more young people.

Back in August, the Saddle Creek hikes restarted. This year, three of our volunteers switched Saturdays to make sure that anyone in the community that wanted to explore this great site would be able to. At first the viewing experience was slow, and then mosquitoes became a problem. By the last few weeks, and with the help of a couple of cold fronts, the sightings improved. Also, in October, we started hikes at Circle B Bar in Lakeland. These hikes were sponsored by our Bird Club. We are all excited to be able to reach more members of our community and hopefully bring new people to our chapter.