OUR MISSION

Connecting people with birds and other wildlife in their habitats and taking an active role in preserving and restoring diverse ecosystems. Flagler Audubon welcomes all nature lovers to come learn about birds and conservation together. We offer educational programs, bird walks and trips. Events are open to the public - visitors always welcome!

GREETINGS FROM YOUR FAS BOARD

May this newsletter find you all doing well and anticipating a better year in 2021. 2020 has been a tough one but we are grateful for your continued support of Flagler Audubon Society. We did not hold a board meeting in December due to the holidays, but will meet as scheduled on January 21 at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom. Members are welcome to join the meeting. Just send an email to flagleraudubon@gmail.com requesting a Zoom link. We need help so please consider joining us.

David and Dee Simpson of Birding with David Simpson gave a presentation for December about The History of the Christmas Bird Count. If you missed it, you can find it here on the FAS Facebook page. Audubon recently published an article about the results of the 2019 record-breaking season if you’re interested.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, January 7
Virtual Education Program
Lassoing the Sun: A Year in America's National Parks
Mark Woods, Metro columnist for the Florida Times-Union in Jacksonville, will be presenting our educational program. In 2011, Mark won the Eugene C. Pulliam Fellowship, an award given to one writer in the country each year. The fellowship allowed him to take a sabbatical and spend a year working on a project about the future of our national parks. During that year, Mark lost his mother, turning the project and a subsequent book into something much more personal. "Lassoing the Sun: A Year in America's National Parks" came out in June 2016, shortly before the National Park Service centennial. It was awarded the Gold Medal for general non-fiction in the 2016 Florida Book Awards. Please join us to learn more about Mark's year of exploration.

Jason Giraulo will be the host/facilitator of each program. The Bird Q&A is an opportunity for attendees to ask questions about birds, talk about a special sighting, or bring up any bird related topic on their mind.

You must register through Eventbrite to receive a link to the Zoom presentation. The program will be simulcast on the Flagler Audubon Society Facebook page and does not require a link, however, no live questions can be taken for the Bird Q&A.

Local Bird Walk Suggestion for January
County Beaches for Northern Gannets

Northern Gannets are winter visitors and can be seen off Florida's northeastern beaches plunging like brown pelicans into the water, especially when there's a good onshore breeze to bring them closer to shore. It is the largest indigenous seabird in the North Atlantic, and spends most of its life at sea. They are among the world's most renowned divers descending from heights of up to 130 feet into the ocean. During their first three years, the birds remain at sea year-round. So let's hit the beaches and watch the aerial display!

Road Trip Bird Walk Suggestion for January
Merritt Island National Wildlife Reserve
eBird: 267 species, 201 in January
The refuge traces its beginnings to the development of the nation's Space Program. In 1962, NASA acquired 140,000 acres of land, water, and marshes adjacent to Cape Canaveral to establish the John F. Kennedy Space Center. NASA built a launch complex and other space-related facilities, but development of most of the area was not necessary. In 1963, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service signed an agreement to establish the refuge and, in 1975, a second agreement established Canaveral National Seashore.

Merritt Island NWR has one of three strong hold populations of the threatened Florida scrub-jay, and is also a popular wintering location for migratory waterfowl.

The refuge closes for rocket launches, so be sure to check their hours before you go.

**BOAT TOURS**

The [Marine Discovery Center](#) in New Smyrna Beach is hosting monthly winter birding tours beginning January 14. To learn more, read this recent [article](#) from The Daytona Beach News-Journal.

**SAFE BIRDING GUIDELINES**

Team eBird has issued helpful guidelines for birding in these trying times:

- **Keep your optics to yourself.** Don’t share your scope, binoculars, or camera with others; disinfect the eye caps of your optics after each birding trip.
- **Maintain distance.** If you are birding near others (whether they are birders or not), maintain at least 6 feet of space between yourself and other people at all times. Take turns at blinds, shelters, and in other situations where proper distancing may not be possible.
- **Avoid touching communal surfaces.** This includes railings, doorknobs, handles, and other frequently used areas of public sites. If you touch these surfaces, wash your hands and/or use hand sanitizer immediately.
- **Respect restrictions and closures.** Check if your favorite park, trail, or wildlife refuge is still open before heading outside. Plan your birding trips in accordance with the latest recommendations of your local authorities.
- **Share checklists, not phones.** eBird Mobile users should avoid passing phones to review checklists for the time being. Confirm lists verbally before submission and if you need to make changes after you submit, it is easy to share and correct lists on the eBird Mobile app.

**WILDLIFE HAPPENINGS IN JANUARY**

*From the [UF Florida Wildlife Extension](#) website*

Not only does January bring in a new year, it also gives us a new batch of animal behavior to look out for. Here are some interesting things happening in January:

**Birds**

- Male cardinals begin territorial singing later in the month.
• Roseate spoonbill nesting activity is in full swing in Florida Bay.
• Other nesting activity can be seen by ospreys, sandhill cranes, hawks, and owls.
• Look for red-tailed hawks perched in trees along highways.
• Huge clouds of tree swallows should be visible around sunset roosting over large marsh areas.
• Don’t forget, now is a great time to watch our over-wintering populations of ducks and geese.

Mammals

• Gray foxes, bobcats, and raccoons begin breeding this month.
• Deer reach the peak of the rutting season in north Florida.
• Black bears in North Florida are inactive or in dens

Fish

• Black crappie start feeding heavily in central Florida
• Striped bass and sunshine bass move into open water to feed on shad

Have a GREEN Holiday

If you have a live Christmas tree, put it to good use - use it to start a brush pile near your bird feeder. Not only will it provide good year-round cover for birds, but it will also take up a lot less space in your county landfill.

NATURE CONNECTION

Three photographers went out into the wild hoping to capture that perfect, once-in-a-lifetime moment. The trio spent 2 hours hiking in the woods with no luck when they met up with a gentleman out owlspotting. After a chat, they parted ways, but the owlspotter gave them a thumbs up he had found an owl so they returned to join him to see the great gray owl perched about 10 feet away in a pine tree. They watched for a few minutes when the owl suddenly flew from its perch for a close encounter. To learn more about this close encounter and see the fabulous photos, check out this [article](#) from boredpanda.com.

NATIVE PLANTS FOR WILDLIFE

Per the [Florida Native Plant Society](#) website: A "Florida Native Plant" refers to a species occurring within the state boundaries prior to European contact, according to the best available scientific and historical documentation. Florida native plants include those species understood as indigenous, occurring in natural associations in habitats that existed prior to significant human impact and alterations of the landscape.
An evergreen mint, Florida Pennyroyal (Piloblephis rigida) is found only in peninsular Florida, a few western Bahamas islands, and maybe a foot or two across the state line into Georgia. Indians in Florida, including the Mickosukee and Seminole, enjoyed brewing tea from it and flavored soups with it. They also put a small bag of it in a pet's bed to repel fleas. Its oil has been used as an insect repellant.

Wild pennyroyal typically flowers late winter through spring, but can bloom year-round. Its flowers are attractive to a variety of bees and butterflies. Because of its early bloom period, it supplies pollen and nectar when little else is available, making it an important part of natural landscaping and restoration areas. To learn more about this delightfully aromatic plant, checkout this article from the Florida Wildflower Foundation.

Additional Resources for Native Plant Landscaping:
- Audubon's Plants for Birds
- Florida-Friendly Landscaping (IFAS)
- UF/IFAS Extension Flagler County
- Florida Wildflower Foundation
- The Virtual UCF Arboretum (very cool)

CUTE BUT STINKY:-)

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has launched a new community science project to learn more about Florida's two species of skunks pictured here. Both are thought to be found throughout the state and biologists want to learn more about their distribution and habitats. You can make a big difference by reporting any skunk sightings. To learn more about this effort and how to report sightings, click this link.
You may remember Wellington from earlier this year when he went viral in a video of him hanging out with a Beluga whale at Shedd Aquarium in Chicago. He's also a beloved local figure known as one of the aquarium's penguin ambassadors who guests can play and interact with. The Rockhopper Penguin turned 33 on Friday, December 18, and is the oldest penguin in the aquarium having lived twice as long as Rockhopper penguins typically do in the wild. The facility even held and livestreamed a birthday party for the distinguished fellow. To learn more about Wellington, click on this link for the article from USA Today. Cheers to Wellington:-)

CONSERVATION CORNER

In addition to native plants and landscaping, birdhouses and nesting platforms are an important conservation effort to support our feathered friends. The Cornell Lab or Ornithology has created NestWatch, a resource covering all aspects of making a safe, successful home for the birds in your yard. It is also a nationwide nest-monitoring program designed to track status and trends in the reproductive biology of birds. Participating is easy and open to anyone.

"For many species of birds, there is a shortage of great places to nest. There may be birds that would love to call your habitat home, but they have a specific nesting requirement which needs to be met. Birdhouses can be placed in backyards, schoolyards, parks, orchards, farms, pastures, cemeteries, woodlots, deserts, cities...you name it. Support more nesting birds, and give a bird a home. Use these resources to become the ultimate nest box landlord; find out what features make a birdhouse ideal, which specifics you can attract to your area, and how to troubleshoot any problems that arise."

MATANZAS RIVERKEEPER & THE LITTER GITTER

The Litter Gitter is a program of the Matanzas Riverkeeper that takes members of our community out on the river to remove trash from our waterways and learn about the issues surrounding marine debris and litter. FAS was privileged to have the Matanzas Riverkeeper, Jen Lomberk, as the presenter for our educational program in October 2019. Captain Adam Morley can take groups of 4 or more people, and trips depart from different locations including Bings Landing.

Public cleanup trips are currently on hold, however, they are offering private, family trips by appointment. To sign up for a trip, send a message on their Facebook page.