

Skimmer



Winter 2012
January—March
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THE JONES SWAMP PRESERVE

Taylor Kirschenfeld, Manager
Escambia County Water Quality Division

The Jones Swamp Wetland Preserve consists of 1300 acres located in the southwest section of Escambia County, which provides open space within the urban core and is part of a 2700-acre watershed that flows into Jones Creek, Bayou Chico, and Pensacola Bay.

Passive recreation is the predominate use of the Jones Swamp Wetland Preserve. The County ensures that all natural and cultural resources are protected from consumptive uses. Special permission for consumptive activities is not normally permitted (i.e., plant or animal collection for the purposes of species documentation, selective timber thinning, etc.) but may be granted after review by the Escambia County Water Quality & Land Management Division and found to be compatible with the land management goals. Passive uses of the preserve include hiking, picnicking, and bird watching. Vehicle access, and damage to natural resources caused by vehicles, is prohibited.

The Jones Swamp Wetland Preserve acquisition also serves as a green space and park for the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Walking trails and picnic areas have been developed on the property, existing paths are being enhanced and expanded, and additional amenities are being added to provide a more extensive trail/greenway system. As funding becomes available, new trails and picnic areas will be designed and built to minimize erosion and impacts to the wetland areas and water bodies. As of the date of this report, a one-mile trail has been constructed with elevated walkways over wetland areas, and educational signage has been installed on the trail. A Jones Creek Natural Stream Restoration project is under construction to improve water quality, improve aquatic habitat, and to restore wetland hydrology.

The Preserve is utilized for passive recreation, green space and education. The prioritized list of management objectives is as follows:

- Wetland, groundwater, and surface water quality protection and restoration.
- Hydrological restoration, including floodplain restoration.
- Preservation and conservation of natural resources
- Environmental education.
- Outdoor recreation, including birding.



Public acquisition of Jones Swamp helps preserve natural ecological areas and riparian buffer zones, prevents further development and additional impervious surfaces that would increase stormwater runoff, enables water quality and wetland restoration projects on public lands, and protects the quality of the wetlands, surface waters, and ground water.

The Preserve represents a mosaic of wetland and upland natural communities. More than 60 percent is covered by forested wetlands (hardwood swamp, bay swamp, cypress swamp and mixed wetland forest communities), based on the Florida Vegetation and Land Cover Map published by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWCC) in 2004. The dominant upland natural community is pinelands.

Listed Plant Species—Several plant species present are listed on the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission's *Official Lists of Endangered and Potentially Endangered Fauna and Flora in Florida* and will require special protection. Within the Preserve, there are several populations of at least three species of pitcher plants: white topped pitcher plant (FNAI rank of G3/S3; federal category 2 candidate (C2) for listing under the Endangered Species Act, amended; State of Florida listed as Endangered), parrot pitcher plant (*Sarracenia psittacina*), and purple pitcher plant (*S. purpuree*). There is also a record in the FNAI database for southern redlily (*Lilium catesbaei*, G4/S3; no federal status; state listed as Threatened). It is also possible that two other very rare plant species also occur within the Wet Prairie areas of the site: bogbutton (*Lachnocaulon digynum*, G3/S2; C2; no listing by state) and Harper's yellow-eyed grass (*Xyris scabrifolia*, G2G3/S1; C2; state listed as Threatened).

Listed Bird Species—The following threatened or species of special concern have been reported: Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*), Snowy egret (*Egretta thula*), Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*), Florida Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis pratensis*), and Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*).

The County has conceptually proposed a Southwest Escambia County Greenway to connect the two large conservation areas—the Jones Swamp Wetland Preserve and the Perdido Pitcher Plant Prairie Preserve. When established, this proposed Greenway will be over 10 miles in length. Additionally, the county plans to work toward incorporating this Greenway into the Florida Trail system.

CALENDAR of EVENTS

Field Trips

All field trips are open to the public and free of charge, but contributions are appreciated. All experience levels are welcome. Bring binoculars and scope on birding trips and camera, sunscreen, insect protection, appropriate shoes, hat, water, and snacks or lunch on all trips. Carpooling is encouraged. Call Morris Clark at 968-5498 or email him at morrisclark@cox.net if you have any questions.

□ **Sat., Jan. 21, Baldwin County Winter Birding.** Jan Lloyd and Howard Horne will lead us to look for wintering birds at several locations in Baldwin County. Moderate walking and wet conditions. Lunch in a restaurant. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the Big Lots parking lot on the east side of Navy Blvd. south of Hwy 98 in Warrington. Finish by early afternoon.

□ **Wed., Jan. 25, ECUA Central Water Reclamation Facility Tour.** ECUA will give us a guided tour of their new facility. Low-heeled, closed-toe shoes required. We may see ducks on their shallow 70 acre wet weather storage pond, if it has water in it that day. Moderate walking. Contact Morris Clark by Friday, January 20th to sign up. Meet at 1:15 p.m. in Ascend Neighborhood Park on the north side of Old Chemstrand Road before reaching the main gate. Finish by mid-afternoon.

□ **Sat., Feb. 11, Big Lagoon SP & Tarkiln Bayou Preserve SP Birding.** Morris Clark will lead us through Big Lagoon SP and Tarkiln Bayou SP in search of wintering birds. Entrance fees from \$3 to \$6 per vehicle, correct change required at Tarkiln. Moderate amount of walking. Bring a picnic lunch. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the Big Lots parking lot (see above). Finish by mid-afternoon.

□ **Sat., Mar. 24, Ft. Walton Beach & Navarre Beach Birding.** Dana Timmons will lead us to the FWB landfill & ponds and Navarre Beach Park & pier. Moderate walking and wet conditions. Bring rubber boots. Lunch in a restaurant. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the shopping center parking lot across the hwy from the Gulf Breeze Hospital. Return by mid afternoon.

□ **Sat., Mar. 31, Ed Ball Nature Trail Native Plants.** James Burkhalter will lead us on a walk to observe the many native plants along the Ed Ball Nature Trail at UWF including the Michael I. Cousins Herbarium. Short side trip to see the rare plant *Lepuropetalon spathulatum*. Expect easy walking. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot in front of the Target Store near the intersection of University Parkway and Nine Mile Road. Finish by noon.

□ **Sat., Apr. 7, Ft. Morgan Birding.** Merilu Rose will lead us to look for migrants at one of the best places along the upper Gulf coast. We will visit the Sargent's bird banding station. Moderate walking. Bring a picnic lunch. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the Big Lots parking lot (see above). Return by mid-afternoon.

Chapter Meetings

Pensacola State College (formerly PJC), 7:00 p.m., Main Campus, Baroco Science Center, Room 2142, unless otherwise noted. Guests are welcome!

□ **Thurs., Jan. 26**--Bruce Furlow will present a program entitled: **The Avifauna of Taminco/Airproducts Wildlife Sanctuary in Pace, FL.** After graduation from Auburn University with degrees in the biological sciences and entomology, Bruce entered service in the US Army as a medical entomologist. He spent 23 years traveling from one side of the world to another— studying, collecting, teaching, and aiding in the prevention of vector-borne disease in military units. He has since moved up from counting gnats and mosquitoes to birding. Bruce also serves our community as wildlife tour guide and docent at the Taminco/Air Products chemical plant.

□ **Thurs., Feb. 23**--David Sparks will present a program entitled: **Report on a Photographers Wildlife Tour of Tanzania.** After a distinguished career as a professor and research scientist in neurobiology, David retired from the Baylor College of Medicine to pursue his hobbies in sailing and photography. He travels extensively and is an avid and very talented amateur wildlife photographer with a special interest in bird photography.

□ **Thurs., Mar. 22**--Heather Reed will present a program entitled: **Dead Man's Island, Its Past, Present, and Future.** Heather has a M.S. degree in Environmental Science and has been involved in various research projects throughout the United States as an independent consultant with Ecological Consulting Services, Inc. She is currently the project manager for the Deadman's Island restoration project in Gulf Breeze. She was also the Environmental consultant for the City of Gulf Breeze during the Deep Water Horizon Oil spill.

Board of Directors Meetings

Thursdays, 7 p.m., Jan. 5, Feb. 2, and Mar. 1, at Baskerville-Donovan Building, 449 West Main Street, Pensacola. Open to all members.

Bird Walks

□ **Sat., Jan. 14,** 9:00-11:00 a.m.—Lucy and Mo Michel (433-3151) have invited birders for a “birdsit” to watch the wintering and local birds that come to their feeders. Call for directions.

□ **Sun., Feb. 19,** 9:00 a.m.—Ann Forster and Jan Lloyd (453-1660, 572-2669) will help ID the birds in Ann's yard at 447 Cleary St. and on the shoreline behind her house for The Great Backyard Bird Count. Call for directions.

**The 15th annual Great Backyard Bird Count
will be held Feb. 17-20, 2012. See page 6 .**

From the President

Dana Timmons

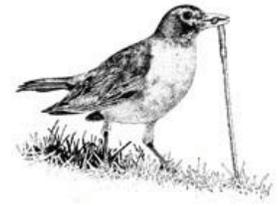
The cold, north wind has only teased us thus far but the winter birding season is off to a great start. Wintering sparrows and ducks are in! This year Fred Basset is having trouble getting around to all the winter hummingbirds that have come to visit the Deep South (see Bob Duncan's report for details). Surely, when the hard freezes come more birds will show up. Our trees, lawns and feeders will be filled with American Robins, Cedar Waxwings and American Goldfinches; welcome birds of the season.

We can only admire these winter birds for a short time before they head north again to their breeding grounds. We study and learn their alternate plumages and then one spring day they leave us. Our little winter hummer will leave to live somewhere else and start a family, and the cycle begins again.

What is our role in this cycle? We can put out feeders and provide fresh water, but what can we do to really protect them? Our chapter's mission statement is *to promote the understanding and preservation of wildlife and the environment that supports it*. You and I are a vital part of the cycle. We can, for example, write letters to politicians who want to drop a park right in the middle of a Least Tern nesting colony, or we can question the National Park Service as to why so many Terns and Skimmers are being killed on the roadways. And we can participate in The Great Backyard Bird Count this February 17-20. See details on page 6.

This coming summer we will be looking for volunteers to participate in a Stewardship Program to protect our Least Tern and Skimmer colonies from damage by unsuspecting passersby, especially during holiday weekends and the Blue Angel air show, when colonies are often disturbed by people trying to find a spot on the beach. It's our part of the cycle.

Today, in parts of Central and South America, our breeding birds are spending the winter and hopefully being studied and observed in their alternate plumages. Let's all do our part in protecting the cycle of life, to keep it moving along.



Biodiversity: a little food for thought

Barbara Albrecht

As naturalists, diversity in ecosystems is often sought after, unless it happens to be in the form of uninvited species. Uninvited species may be applied to non-indigenous species, flora or fauna, which adversely affect habitats and bioregions. Some choose to call these newcomers 'alien invaders'. There can be a fine line in identifying a species as 'invasive' or simply 'non-native'; consider the Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia*) for example, a favorite of local gardeners. Native to the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, and Northern Australia, this species contributes little to the resident biota (i.e., birds rarely nest in this species; insects are not interested in feeding on the leaves or wood, etc.).

Categorizing invasive species (i.e., Popcorn trees, *Sapium sebifera*, Kudzu vine, *Pueraria lobata*, or Lantana shrub, *Lantana camera*) can be tricky. Invasive species are just that, prolific and successful – that is they reproduce rapidly. Non-native species on the other hand (i.e., Norfolk Pine, *Araucaria heterophylla*) may survive the conditions of our area's climate and soils but are unlikely to reproduce. Because of the variability of its definition, and because definitions are often from a socio-economic perspective, the phrase *invasive species* is often criticized as imprecise.

Northwest Florida and South Alabama have been identified as a 'biological hotspot' - bioregions which contain a higher than average diversity of native species. Often these biological hotspots occur in undisturbed areas (e.g., steep head ravines) in which conditions exist to support pockets of isolated organisms. Federal regulations that are supposed to protect and limit the destruction or impact of these ecosystems are seldom enforced. Worse, individuals empowered to make the decisions within these agencies are frightfully unaware of the subtle but insidious impacts of their decisions.

So, when you come across a pocket of unusual species, take time to note the flora associated with the area. Chances are these plants are native species supporting a delicate ecosystem. Whether you have an eye for things that fly or crawl, take note of the area in which these species of interest are found. Photograph the area, and try to identify the plant communities that support these species. Determining the true value of ecological systems that harbor biological hotspots is in its infancy. As the science of 'Ecosystem Services' evolves, the data collected by interested individuals may assist in identifying the native ranges or pockets of isolated species.



As if on cue, a cold front entered our area on 1 October, bringing the oppressive summer heat to an end and with it birds, lots of birds. Ft. Pickens and the migrant traps of Alabama were hopping! Lots of warblers were reported along with orioles, tanagers and other

Neotropical migrants. But that was just the beginning of the excitement, because before early October was over, several outstanding vagrants were found by alert birders.

October never disappoints. Young birds making their first migration south sometimes get it wrong and go off course, sometimes WAY off course. And, of course, that's what we birders look for, that exceptional rarity that makes the listservs buzz with discussion. And boy, did they go off course! And the invasion of great birds continued into November! Read on!

SUPER RARITIES

First mega tick was a **Say's Phoebe***, a western stray named after Thomas Say (b. 1787), curator of the American Philosophical Society, and found by Peggy Baker and James Pfeiffer at Ft. Pickens on 1 Oct, photos by Brenda Callaway. It was seen by many observers and was the 3rd area record with fewer than 15 records for the state. This was followed by a first area record spotted and photographed at Ft. Pickens by David Sparks on 5 Oct, a **Fork-tailed Flycatcher***, (fewer than 15 state records). It didn't linger long. This is a Central and South American bird, the southern populations of which (austral migrants) move north in the austral winter and return to southern South America in the austral summer. Some birds move in the opposite direction and wind up in North America, with records as far north as Maine. Next came another western stray, rare but regular and not as fancy as the last two species. This was an **Ash-throated Flycatcher*** found by Lucy Duncan and Brenda & Jerry Callaway and me at the Ft. Walton Beach Spray Fields on 6 Oct. Before the season was over, 4 other Ash-throateds were found! An **Inca Dove*** observed by me on 9 Oct in a gated community near my home in Gulf Breeze was only the second state record, the first having been documented at St. George Is. only about a month before! This is a species of the southwest U. S. and Central America. It was photographed for documentation by Larry Goodman and Alex Harper and seen by Lucy Duncan and Alicia Gerrety. It has been expanding its range and is now entrenched in southwest LA. Topping off the list of super rarities was a

Varied Thrush* I found with Cecil Brown at Ft. Pickens on 20 Oct and later seen by Laura Catterton. This was a second area record and about 5th state record of a bird of the Redwood forests of the Pacific Northwest.

OTHER LESS DISTINGUISHED NOTABLES

No less than 6 difficult-to-identify **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers*** were reported in the area. A male **Yellow-headed Blackbird*** from the west was found and photographed by Brenda & Jerry Callaway at Ft. Pickens on 4 Oct. Numerous rare **Clay-colored Sparrows*** were observed in the area between 1-23 Oct with an all time high of 12 at Ft. Pickens tallied by Patrick James on 17 Oct. A **Dark-eyed Junco** photographed by Bala Chennupati and seen by members of the Florida Ornithological Society's Ft. Pickens field trip on 14 Oct was very rare in Oct. A **Yellow Rail*** was brought to Wildlife Rescue of Northwest Florida by David Pinning of Gulf Breeze on 19 Oct. This secretive species is almost never seen in the field, but chose a swimming pool for a stopover in Gulf Breeze!! No wonder they're hard to find...we're looking in the wrong places!

Four **Groove-billed Anis*** were spotted at Ft. Pickens on 21 Oct (Alex Harper, Patrick James et al.). A **Barn Owl** was found there by Patrick James, Alex Harper and Alicia Gerrety on 23 Oct. **Nutmeg Mannikins** continue to expand their range in the area, now being seen at the Tamincos Sanctuary in Pace (Les Kelly, Larry Goodman, Bruce Furlow). A male **Bronzed Cowbird*** was at Ann & Dan Forster's feeder in west Pensacola on 25 Oct.

NOVEMBER'S DELIGHTS

Very rare locally, a **Sprague's Pipit*** was flushed by Alex Harper at the Ft. Walton Beach Sewerage Treatment Facility on 19 Nov. and refound there by the Duncans on 2 Dec. along with a real arctic wanderer, a **Lapland Longspur***, only the 6th area record.

Rarest of the scoters, a **White-winged Scoter*** was spotted by Sue Yates from her home on Perdido Bay on 18 Nov. Rare western hummingbirds made an appearance with a **Calliope*** at the home of Larue Holtzclaw in Pensacola and a **Broad-tailed*** at the home of Ann & Peanut Johnson in Pensacola. Both were banded by the indefatigable Fred Bassett on 29 Nov.

**Species with asterisks require documentation for processing to become part of the ornithological record. The Skimmer welcomes reports of noteworthy birds. If you have something to report, please call Bob or Lucy Duncan at 932-4792.*



Steven D'Amato

Having lost part of our house and yard and most of our neighborhood in Hurricane Ivan, going to observe hurricane damage has not been high on our tourism agenda. We finally succumbed to curiosity and concern and visited the Louisiana and upper Texas Gulf coasts the week before Thanksgiving. We wanted to see how some of our favorite birding spots and eating places had fared in Ike. We dropped south from Jennings, LA and found little damage to the Lacassine, Cameron Prairie, and Sabine National Wildlife Refuges (NWR). All three are low, marshy, and inland quite a distance from the Gulf. The storm surge came and went, damaging and destroying structures, but sparing the habitat. The east jetty area at Cameron, Louisiana was heavily damaged, with much beach erosion. The birds have adjusted by moving east to a wider beach and west to the surviving jetty. A telescope is a necessity.

We then visited one of the designated IBAs (Important Bird Areas), Peveto Woods, a hackberry chenier that has been a fabulous migratory songbird stopover. Our hearts were broken. Almost all the mature hackberry trees are dead and many of the grand old live oaks. This refuge is only a few yards away from the Gulf. Even though the staff of the LSU Museum of Natural History and their supporters have had some

workdays, the devastation was so complete that there is no evidence of revival or restoration. This suggested to us that Sabine Woods, a counterpart migrant trap just over in Texas, is similarly ruined.

We spent the next morning at Anahuac NWR in Texas. The structures were all destroyed and the roads damaged, but it is a beehive of activity. New elevated structures, a visitor center, trails, raised observation platforms, restored butterfly gardens and songbird retreats are all either done or under construction. Our hats are off to refuge management.

The Houston Audubon sanctuaries on High Island and Bolivar Flats were sorely damaged but are still usable for birds and birders alike. The only place on the whole trip that was nearly unchanged was Rollover Pass. It was ugly to start with—just mud flats, oyster reefs, fishermen, trash, and thousands of birds—what a relief. We spent an hour taking turns at the telescope checking out every little island and reef.

The biggest shock is that in the few years since Ike, thousands of homes and condominiums have been built on the whole length of Galveston Island. The habitat loss is indescribable and one of these years Mother Nature will decide to clean house again.

BOOK REVIEW

Illumination in the Flatwoods: A Season with the Wild Turkey by Joe Hutto

I hope you saw the PBS special based on this book. If not, they will have it again and it is a must see program. The book is even better than the program. Joe Hutto, a naturalist and artist, is also a skilled chronicler of the processes of nature. He spent the better part of two years mothering and observing a flock of wild turkeys from egg to independence. His farm is just north of Sopchoppy, Florida on the southern boundary of the Bradwell Bay National Wilderness Area in the Apalachicola National Forest.

The general format is a chronological account of the maturation process of his flock, with many passages about what they taught him about his own property. Their relentless curiosity revealed that his snake population was alarmingly higher than his wildest estimate. Reading about the interactions, foraging behaviors, and warning systems is the kind of writing that anyone fascinated with behavior just loves. Because he lives in the pine flatwoods so familiar to us, there is a constant recognition in his descriptions of places we all love. His pen and ink illustrations appear throughout, and there are some color photographs of his beloved “children.”



Ann Forster

**WHAZAT?
YOU'RE A BIRD WATCHER IF...**

Most people can usually recall a single bird event that turned them into bird-watchers. I feel my own bird awareness was more of an eventual evolution into bird watching, and I remember one such event in my youth that made me aware of interesting bird behavior. In my mother's backyard there were two large chinaberry trees, and anyone raised in the South knows that the large berries hang on the tree until they ferment in late winter. One winter day a large flock of Cedar Waxwings landed in the trees and began to devour the berries. As I watched, the birds began to drop from the tree, falling to the ground in an unconscious state. I thought they were dead but as I rushed out to view the "dead" birds they fluttered and flopped on the ground and then, to my astonishment, flew away. My mother explained that the birds were intoxicated from the fermented berries. This entertaining event certainly made me aware of 'interesting' bird behavior!



Peggy Baker

Christmas Bird Count Summary

On December 17 some fifty stalwart members on eleven teams trudged through snow and sleet (kidding!) to identify and list 135 bird species in this year's Christmas bird count. Not a record for us, but an acceptable total. Some ups and downs: Bald Eagles are totally on the rise as reported by several teams. Bobwhites haven't been seen by anyone now for several counts. Collared Doves are down (but not Mourners), and Eastern Bluebirds are way up. Hurray for that too!

Great Backyard Birdcount—February 17-20, 2012

As movie-goers watch the stars of *The Big Year* in their quest to count birds, some may be motivated to try the hobby for the first time. The annual Great Backyard Bird Count is the perfect opportunity. The event is hosted by Audubon, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Canadian partner Bird Studies of Canada. The results provide a snapshot of the whereabouts of more than 600 bird species.

Each of us can participate in this free event and no registration is needed. Watch and count birds for at least 15 minutes on any day of the count, February 17-20, 2012. Enter your results at www.birdcount.org, where you can watch as the tallies grow across the continent. The four-day count typically records more than 10 million observations.

Please visit the official website at www.birdcount.org for more information.

National Audubon Society

Gulf Islands National Seashore (GINS) Management Plan

Use, not protection, clearly won the day when boaters had their say at a public forum in November at GINS headquarters. Protecting the seagrass habitat and wildlife in general got a wake-up call—again. A National Parks spokesperson said, "The boaters love the park." Trash left by boaters and disregard for habitat does not reflect 'love'. The Gulf Islands National Seashore is arguably our greatest local natural asset. Protection of it falls, alas, on those who can see beyond a day in the sun.

Roy Hyatt Environmental Center

The work that naturalist Jennifer Butera, has been doing at the Roy Hyatt Environmental Center (RHEC) is well known to our members and to thousands of elementary age children over the past four years, thanks to a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation/Gulf Power and the general fund of Weston Audubon. That grant has now expired, and we have only the contributions of our members and friends to continue to support Jennifer's work. While many of you have generously contributed to our annual letter request to support the general fund, I want to make you aware of a special fundraising campaign that specifically funds the work of our naturalist. A memorial terrace has been constructed at RHEC, using paver bricks that can be inscribed to honor someone. A chapter member or friend can purchase a paver for the terrace for a \$100.00 contribution. This is not only a meaningful way to honor a special person, but an equally important way to make sure that 100% of your contribution will be used to support the work of our naturalist. At our next volunteer day, you can visit RHEC, sit on a bench and view the memorial terrace. Please help keep our Audubon naturalist in front of our children! You can contact me at 850-456-5083, or use our website to place your order for a memorial paver.

Jim Brady



GARDENS FOR ETERNITY

Michael Pollan is in a quandary so encompassing—over weeds—that he’s written a book about it—to wit, what’s a weed and what isn’t. The problem for him seems to be an inherited disagreement in principle—between his grandfather, a sternly focused gardener of the Old School who considered a weed to be anything he had not personally planted with his own hands, and his clearly rebellious dad who took a live-and-let-live attitude to the point of being threatened with tar-and-feathers, or at the very least a hefty fine from his zealously watchful, green turf forever homeowners’ organization—respective of the shabby, weedy, overgrown nature of his front lawn.

Even writing a book about his dilemma (*Second Nature*) hasn’t helped Pollan, and really, why should it? We’ve been struggling with the question of what to plant and what to rip out by its roots ever since Eve puzzled over the efficacy of the First Lily. During the Italian Renaissance, to state the grandfather’s case, man’s need to show his prerogative became so engrossing that the wealthy and powerful of that era sought to define themselves through their ascendancy over nature—by making gardens of such strictly geometric shape and dimension that no one, particularly the plants themselves, would have any doubt as to who was celestial and omnipotent, and who was merely carnal. And thus the line was drawn.

Pollan repeatedly cites the example of a nearby village, abandoned a century ago to the relentless plundering of nature, which has alone brought down the walls, caved in the roofs, and swallowed up the village. Nature, to him,



seems a *Little Shop of Horrors* on a grander scale. And he’s not alone, as history records John Adams once stating, regarding the western frontier, “Our two greatest challenges are Indians and trees.” Subdivision developers have doubtless agreed, clearing the land of all trees, should an Indian be skulking behind one, before pouring the first yard of concrete. And finally, after all the *celestial* components are in place, we allow the planting here and there, by design or whim, of a few exotic trees and shrubs. I would urge we find a middle ground, a *rapprochement* with the natural world, and that includes our wonderful wildlife as well. Leave everything that’s not immediately in the way, and give the wrens, the box turtles and the anoles a place to make a living too. Make a bond with nature.

In general I’m satisfied with our bond. I trim the oaks and magnolias, pull out the vines (mostly Smilax), and eliminate anything growing in paths or invading my view of the bay. And often I’m pleasantly surprised in the discovery of a new magnolia or yaupon, growing in a place for which I have no particular objection.

Poor Michael Pollan, he never does reach accord with nature in his garden, but frets over a green villainy overtaking the perfect order of his doing. He’d be unlikely to step foot in my wild garden, taking my birds and beasts as obnoxious vagrants, fearing toxicity in every irksome wild vine. And yes, it can be a bit disconcerting this paradise, with creatures rushing and slithering hither and yon, leaves and limbs crashing willy-nilly, but in the early evening of a late afternoon, when the low slanting sun underlights the leaves of the magnolias and my resident mockingbird starts his evening song—for me it’s Eden.

In Memory—Our chapter has recently lost two loyal members: Joyce Geiger Johnson and Mable Turman Smith. We were honored that they designated our chapter as a favored charity. Our sympathy is extended to both their families.

Francis M. Weston Audubon Society
 P. O. Box 17484
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Larry Goodman

**The Great
 Backyard Bird
 Count**

**February
 17-20, 2012
 (see page 6)**



about 25% postconsumer waste

Chapter Contacts

President	Dana Timmons.....	934-4521
Vice President	Jan Lloyd	453-1660
Recording Secretary	Lucy Michel	433-3151
Corresponding Secretary	Ann Forster.....	456-4421
Treasurer	Becky Grass	455-9666
Directors at Large	Lucy Duncan	932-4792
	Larry Goodman	433-5135
Membership	Jan Lloyd	453-1660
Field Trips	Morris Clark	968-5498
Programs	Larry Goodman	433-5135
Publicity	Sue Timmons	934-4521
Fundraising	Dana Timmons	934-4521
Conservation		Position open
Hyatt Center Committee	Jim Brady	456-5083
Education	Peggy Baker	564-1482
Outreach		Position open
Skimmer Editor	Jere French	932-8796
Web Master	Debra Jones	

Web Address: <http://www.fmwaudubon.org/>

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 color on the web site.

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The National Audubon Society occasionally makes its membership list available to carefully selected organizations whose mailings you might find of interest. To have your name omitted from this list, please check here. ____