



## GULF COAST WINTERING HUMMINGBIRDS

Fred Bassett

Twenty five years ago there were almost no reports of wintering hummingbirds along the Gulf coast, but now they are relatively common. What has occurred to cause that big change?

Conventional wisdom back in the 1980s was Ruby-throated hummingbirds were the only species east of the Great Plains, and they all migrated into the tropics for the winter. Everyone was told to take their feeders down in the late fall so the Ruby-throated hummingbirds would not stay and be killed by winter weather. If someone did report a hummingbird during the winter, they were usually told they had seen a hummingbird moth. That was a great example of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

About 1985, Bob and Martha Sargent began to hear about different hummingbirds reported during the winter in Louisiana. They thought hummingbirds must also winter east of Louisiana and came up with a plan to prove it. Bob got a banding permit in 1987, and Bob and Martha began to give talks and distribute literature all over the Southeast urging people to leave a feeder out all winter and report if they saw a hummingbird. They started to get reports of hummingbirds along the Gulf coast, and made their first banding trip there in 1989.

It started slowly, but over the next ten years the Sargents and banders working for them found eleven hummingbird species wintering in Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi. Those included Ruby-throated, Black-chinned, Rufous, Allen's, Buff-bellied, Calliope, Broad-tailed, Anna's, White-eared, Green-violet eared, and Magnificent. Bob and Martha were traveling all over the Southeast banding hummingbirds, and realized by the mid-1990s they could not respond to all the winter hummingbird reports along the Gulf coast

Bob trained me to band hummingbirds in 1997 and turned over winter banding responsibilities in south Alabama and the Florida panhandle to me in 1998.



I developed a network of hummingbird hosts through talks, newspaper and magazine articles, and personal contact. Reports of wintering hummingbirds increased rapidly as the word spread to leave out a feeder and contact me if a hummingbird started using the feeder. I try to respond to every report, and over the past 15 years have banded over 2,600 wintering hummingbirds. I also added Broad-billed and Costa's to the list of wintering hummingbirds. I have recently been joined by Fred Dietrich who bands in the Tallahassee area and Mary Wilson who bands in the Apalachicola area.

Pensacola has become a hot spot for winter hummingbirds with winter feeders now common all over the city. The most prolific yard in the area is Jim Dickerson's flower filled yard just across the bridge in Lillian. Jim has hosted eight species of wintering hummingbirds, and I have banded 113 there with 20 banded each of the past two winters. And some winter hummingbirds become family members as they return year after year. Jan Lloyd looked forward to a Black-chinned she hosted for eight years. Dawn John was always excited to see her beautiful male Rufous that returned for seven years. Bev and Don Kenney loved the Buff-bellied that graced their yard for seven years, and Kay Keigley hopes her Rufous returns soon for the seventh winter.

If you would like to try to attract a hummingbird this winter, leave at least one feeder up all winter. Most birds show up in December and January, so do not give up and take your feeder down. Best place for a feeder is where you can see it when eating breakfast. Keep the feeder clean and change the mixture of one part sugar to four parts water every week or so. Red food coloring is not needed.

If you are lucky enough to host a winter hummer and would like to have it identified and banded, contact me at [fhound@aol.com](mailto:fhound@aol.com) or (334) 868-9658.

## Field Trips

Field trips are open to the public and free of charge, but contributions are appreciated. All experience levels are welcome. Bring binoculars and/or a spotting scope on birding trips. A camera, sunscreen, insect protection, appropriate shoes, hat, water, and snacks or lunch are recommended on all trips. Carpooling is encouraged. Questions? Call Lucy Duncan at 932-4792 or email her at town\_point@bellsouth.net.

□ **Saturday, January 11. Baldwin County birding discovery.** Lucy and Bob will lead the group to several special places in Baldwin County. We expect to find wintering hummingbirds in one of the finest hummingbird gardens of the area, then bird along the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay visiting Daphne's Village Point Park where trails host winter birds and the shoreline offers a bayside vista with ducks and shorebirds. Be sure to mail/fax in your Blakeley Island Permit for the Mud Lakes impoundments (<http://www.aosbirds.org/BlakeleyPermitOnline.htm>) before this trip. We will enjoy lunch at a local restaurant and finish by mid-afternoon. Expect moderate walking. With luck, we could approach 100 species! Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot of Greer's Cash Saver (formerly Food World) at 4051 Barrancas, just east of Navy Blvd.

□ **Saturday, February 8. Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge** birding. The Duncans will co-lead this winter birding tour with refuge personnel. Expect moderate walking in wet conditions. We also hope to find the rare Henslow's Sparrow in the savannahs. Bring a picnic lunch and drinks for the day. Meet for carpooling at **6:30** a.m. in the Publix parking lot on the corner of Nine Mile and Pine Forest Roads, or at 8:00 a.m. at Refuge Headquarters. The headquarters is located one half mile north of Interstate I-10 at Exit 61, off the Gautier-Vancleave Road. We plan to return by late afternoon. Refuge vehicles will be used, so **please sign up before February 1<sup>st</sup>** by sending an email to Lucy Duncan at town\_point@bellsouth.net, or call her at 932-4792.

□ **Saturday, March 8. Ft. Walton and Navarre** birding. Dana Timmons will lead us to two productive pond areas and trails in Ft. Walton looking for wintering birds. There's a good chance for pipits, sparrows, a few ducks. Expect moderate walking. Lunch at a restaurant. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the shopping center parking lot across from Gulf Breeze Hospital. We will return by mid-afternoon.

□ **Saturday, March 29. Ed Ball Nature Trail** Native Plants. James Burkhalter will lead us on a walk to see unique plants along the Ed Ball Nature Trail at UWF and visit the Cousins Herbarium. 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.

□ **Friday, April 4-Sunday April 6. Tall Timbers Research Station (TTRS), Tallahassee.** With Lucy and Bob Duncan leading, we'll visit TTRS with some of the oldest and most magnificent longleaf pines in the southeast. While learning about fire ecology and pines, we'll tour the station finding White-breasted Nuthatches, late wintering sparrows, early spring migrants and abundant wildflowers. We'll visit MacClay gardens Saturday after TTRS if there's time, and then explore Florida Caverns State Park in Marianna for spring migrants and wildflowers on the way home. To sign up, send a \$40 donation per person to FMWAS and call Lucy Duncan at 932-4792. **Sign up before 3/21/14** when the unreserved rooms will be released. Space is limited to 20 people, but a 'waiting list' will be maintained. Call the Cabot Lodge-Tallahassee (850-386-2078) for reservations in rooms held in our chapter's name (\$85/night). Information and an itinerary will be sent to registered participants, so be sure that Lucy has your email.

□ **Saturday, April 12. Ft Morgan with Merilu Rose. The Hummer/Bird Study Group Spring Banding Session at Ft Morgan is scheduled for April 5-13.**

## Birdwalks

□ **Saturday January 18, 2014, 9:00-11:00am**  
**ECUA Bayou Marcus Wetlands Elevated Boardway**, 3050 Fagal Dr (Off Blue Angel Parkway, 1 and a 1/2 miles N. of Lillian Hwy).  
To see ducks and wading birds, bring binoculars and warm clothing. For information call Peggy Baker at 983-1482.

□ **Sunday, February 16, 2014, 1:00-3:00pm**  
**Great Backyard Bird Count** at Ann /Dan Forster's house, 447 Creary Street, Pensacola.  
To see yard and shorebirds, bring binoculars and warm clothing. Call Ann Forster for information at 456-4421.

□ **Saturday, March 15, 2014, 9:00-11:00am**  
**Tarkiln Bayou State Park Walk** on Tarkiln Bayou Boardwalk to see early migrants and remaining winter waterbirds. On Bauer Road (CR 293), 10 miles south of Hwy 98. For information, call Jim Brady 850-291-8908.

## ***Chapter Meetings***

Pensacola State College, 7:00pm, Main Campus, Baroco Science Center, Room 2142, unless otherwise noted. Guests welcome!

□ **January 23, 2014. Ms. Barbara Albrecht** will present the program entitled "**The History of our Rivers & the Role of our Forests.**" Barbara is the Watershed Coordinator at the University of West Florida and President of the Bream Fishermen Association.

□ **February 27, 2014. Mr. Jerry Callaway**, an avid birder and employee of International Paper, and his wife **Brenda**, an amateur photographer, will present the program entitled, "**An Introduction to IP Wetlands: A Bird's-eye View.**" Included will be an overview of the wetlands focusing on the diverse wildlife that this project has attracted.

□ **March 27, 2014. Ms. Bonnie Samuelson**, Project Manager for Audubon Florida's Coastal Bird Stewardship Program in the Panhandle, will give a photo presentation entitled "**Beach-Nesting Shorebirds: Florida's Original Beach Babies.**" Come learn about courtship displays, amazing camouflage, aerial attacks, solitary and colonial nesting, and chick rearing by these rare and declining birds and the statewide efforts to protect them.

## ***Board of Directors***

**Jan 2, Feb 6, and Mar 6** —The Board will meet at 7:00pm at the First Presbyterian Church, 33 East Gregory St. Meetings are open to the public. Location may change. Please contact a Board member for location if you wish to attend.

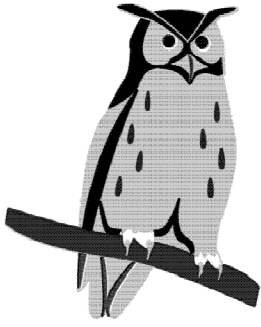
## ***President's Column***

NW Florida faces unprecedented threats and opportunities in the coming year. Let's talk about threats first. Recently, the USAF invited public comment on the Gulf Region Airspace Strategic Initiative (GRASI), which includes, among other elements, extensive use of two state forests for on-the-ground military operations. GRASI proposes to routinely use the forest for training operations involving insertion of forces by helicopter or tilt-rotor aircraft; ground operations involving ATV and amphibious vehicles that would cross the waterways at many entry points; and then recovery of the forces by those same aircraft. Multiple crossing of the streams and rivers by military vehicles will cause erosion and siltation that will have its effect all the way to Pensacola Bay, itself already ecologically compromised. Nap of the earth aircraft operations, using clearings and roads already in the forest landscape both day and night, cannot avoid disturbing wildlife, including nesting birds and their fledglings. Frequent and regular movement of troops on foot or in military vehicles from one landing zone to another will certainly be more disruptive to wildlife than an occasional hiker or hunter.

A recent PNJ Viewpoint assured readers that these terrestrial activities would be non-intrusive and "we won't even know they were there." We doubt this assertion. We are concerned that a recently completed 10-year management plan for Blackwater River State Forest (BRSF), which two members of our board reviewed as members of an advisory committee, was vague about the actual nature of the military ground operations. We wonder why. Four board members recently traveled to Tallahassee to testify to the Florida Acquisition and Restoration Council (ARC), which oversees the use of all state lands, and our voices, objecting to the lack of public input to these plans, were heard. The previous night, a large crowd attending a town hall meeting about GRASI stated their concerns to a panel of Florida Forest Service and USAF representatives. While it may be true that the average human visitor to BWRSF will "never know we were there," our Society, which seeks the conservation of wildlife and the habitat that supports it, feels sure that the non-human inhabitants of the forest certainly will. This is a bad idea, and state managers of the forest need to rethink their commitment to turning the BRSF over to the military. We are grateful that ARC has now required all proposed military uses of BRSF be fully reviewed by the public before returning for final consideration by that panel.

The opportunities in front of us are the possibilities that the massive RESTORE funding will present. Our two counties have established RESTORE committees to consider projects to restore and enhance our environment and our local economy, and they will be challenged to choose between short term gains and long term benefits. We are hopeful that these panels will have the prudence to see that what is good for our very special environment--our forests, rivers, bays and coastlines-- has a far-reaching positive impact on our economy. For too long we have suffered from the destruction and pollution of our lands and waters in decades long past. We need to restore in them ecological balance so that our forests and fisheries are sustainable, and our economy rests on solid ground, not shifting sands. That will require our leaders to look beyond glitzy "quick fix" projects to those which may seem more mundane, but which have a more positive long term effect, both ecologically and economically.

We urge our members to remain vigilant to both the threats and opportunities; to join us at public hearings, county commission and city council meetings; and to speak out for our special NW Florida environment and its inhabitants to friends and neighbors.



# FIELD NOTES

Bob Duncan

Few fall migrations can be described as dull, but this was one of them. Usually we look forward to lots of migrant warblers and other Neotropical species in Sept and early Oct, arrival of lots of sparrows and ducks in late Oct and

Nov, and a few vagrants to really liven things up. Although these species did arrive, numbers appeared to be low and vagrants were the rare but regular kind. It appears to this observer that there are fewer birds migrating through our area each year. But is this just my perception? A lot depends on how weather affects migrants en route. Although this season had its share of fronts and storms, migration was lackluster except for one spectacular day at Ft. Pickens. December, however, started off with great birds.

On 22 Sep a front went stationary about 50 mi south of the coast and brought rain and moderate NE winds. Savvy birders hustled out to Ft. Pickens expecting great things. And they happened! In a small area in the main campground there were an estimated 40 to 60 **Blackburnian Warblers**, 30 to 40 **Chestnut-sided Warblers** and other assorted warblers and Neotropical migrants. A **Cape May Warbler**, very rare in fall migration, was spotted by Jerry and Brenda Callaway. Never had so many Blackburnians and Chestnut-sided been reported at one time in our area.

An **Olive-sided Flycatcher\*** appeared on schedule 2 Sep in the Duncan's Gulf Breeze neighborhood. This is the only reliable spot in Florida that it can be seen in late Aug – early Sep. Rare in Sep, a **Dickcissel\*** was observed by Lucy Duncan in our yard on 19 Sep. **Gray Kingbirds\*** are very rare summer residents in our area. Two adults were seen feeding two young on 21 Sep as the Duncans dined at the Thai restaurant at the south end of the Pensacola Bay Bridge. Jerry & Brenda Callaway's **Clay-colored Sparrow\*** at Ft. Pickens on 22 Sep was a rare find for that month.

Normally Oct is chock full of noteworthy birds but the first did not occur until the 18<sup>th</sup> when the Duncans observed an **Ash-throated Flycatcher\*** at Ft. Pickens. This western species is now rare but regular. Lucy also saw another western species there, a very rare **Black-headed Grosbeak.\*** Ft. Pickens



Pearson Scott Foresman

came through again when Bridget DeArman and Daniel Stangland found a **Burrowing Owl** on 28 Oct, also seen by Jerry & Brenda Callaway. The next day Daniel Stangland, Jerry Callaway and Anita Meagher found another western stray there, a **Groove-billed Ani**. It lingered until 2 Dec and was seen by many observers. A female **Western Tanager\*** was found by Bernice Gilley and Larry Tilley at Ft. Pickens on 26 Oct and observed 27 – 29 Oct there by Jerry & Brenda Callaway (photo). The species is very rare in fall. The **Baird's Sandpiper\*** photographed by Brenda Callaway and seen also by Bridget DeArman at Ft. Pickens on 24 Oct was only the 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct record locally. Rare but fairly regular in fall, a **Lark Sparrow** was seen at the Okaloosa County Water and Sewerage Treatment Facility (OCWSTF) on 28 Oct by Jerry Callaway and another by the Duncans at Ft. Pickens on 4 Nov.

November began with a very late (by 24 days) **Prothonotary Warbler** in the Duncan's yard on 3 Nov. Casual vagrant in fall, a **Vermilion Flycatcher** was discovered by Jerry & Brenda Callaway at the International Paper Wetlands on 3 Nov. Another vagrant from the west, an **Ash-throated Flycatcher\*** was seen and photographed by the Callaways there on 10 Nov.

Three **Western Kingbirds** and 3 **Scissor-tailed Flycatchers** were seen at the OCWSTF on 5 Dec by the Duncans and the "Gourmet Birders." That same day there, the Duncans discovered a very rare visitor from the far north, a **Lapland Longspur,\*** an 8<sup>th</sup> area record, and Sam Tagatz spotted another not far away for the 9<sup>th</sup> area record. A **Hairy Woodpecker\*** was seen earlier in the day by Bob Strader and other Gourmet Birders, and the Duncans observed a rare western vagrant **Swainson's Hawk\*** there topping off a very exciting day. December's goodies continued with Bill Bremser's discovery of a female **Common Merganser\*** at Tiger Point on 8 Dec, a 12<sup>th</sup> area record (photos R. Sinclair, B. Callaway). On 9 Dec the Duncans and Cecil Brown saw and heard calling a **Western Meadowlark\*** at the catfish farm area of n.

Escambia Co., a third state record in the last 30 years. What else has Dec to offer?

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

# TRIPPING through the weeds

Ann Forster

With all the rain we had this summer, we had a bumper crop of seedy weedy plants. We have read and written about some of our obnoxious, even dangerous plants which can be medical threats. The familiar poison ivy, oak, and sumac can cause aggressive contact dermatitis. I have it all over my right arm even as I write this. Ugh.

What are some of the common plants which are pesky, even irritating, but only mildly dangerous?

Spanish Needles, Shepherd's Needle, or Beggar Ticks (*Bidens pilosa*). The seeds (or needles) are produced by the hundreds by each plant. They go through socks and clothes and drive their sharp little points into the skin. On the bright side, the white yellow centered flower is a very important nectar plant for butterflies. Bite the bullet folks and let them multiply and bloom in those ditches and waste areas.

Beggar Lice (*Desmodium canadense*). This member of the pea family has jointed flat seeds which firmly attach to clothing surviving a trip through the washer and drier and ending up attached to just about everything in the house.

Sandbur or Sandspur (*Conchus pauciflorus*). This spreading grass has the meanest prickly burs for seeds. The ones at Fort Morgan are the most vicious. Because picking

them off can cause stuck and sore fingers, most of us carry an old comb to rake them off our clothes and boots.

Prickly Pear (*Opuntia drummondii*). This nasty little cactus lurks low on sandy soil. Its segments break off easily and stick in your boot until you jab it into the opposite ankle or stab a finger in an attempt at removal.

Because birders are always looking up, we are Prickly Pear magnets.

Ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*). This is a coarse herb as tall as ten feet. It has numerous flower spikes. Its profuse pollen is a leading cause of hay fever. Because it blooms at the same time as Goldenrod and the Goldenrod is more showy, it is often blamed for the allergies caused by Ragweed.

Catbrier or Greenbrier (*Smilax sp.*). This genus of thorny vines is in the lily family. It creates impenetrable tangles. Very few birders have left the field without bleeding scratches if they have plunged into the undergrowth after that skulking bird.

Despite the negative aspects of these plants, they do provide food for bees, butterflies, and birds. It is still hard to like a Sandspur.



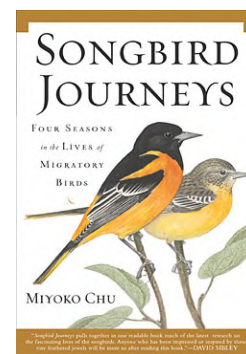
## Songbird Journeys by Miyoko Chu

*Songbird Journeys* by Miyoko Chu reveals (by season) the remarkable lives of migratory birds and explores where songbirds go, how they get there, and what they do in the far-flung places they inhabit throughout the year. Until recently, little was known about the lives of songbirds during their travels from autumn until spring. Aided by modern technology, scientists have documented mass migrations over the Gulf of Mexico, identified the voices of migrants in the night sky, and showed how songbirds navigate using stars, polarized light, and magnetic fields.

Each spring, millions of orioles, tanagers, thrushes, warblers, and other songbirds travel thousands of miles from the tropics to their summer breeding grounds as far north as the boreal forests of Canada, and in the fall return to their southern wintering grounds. Navigating by the stars, magnetic fields and polarized light patterns invisible to humans, the birds make their amazing journeys at night, flying in huge flocks that most of us never see. In this captivating debut, Chu, an ornithologist at Cornell, conveys the wonder of these migrations. She follows the birds through all four seasons, chronicling the efforts of scientists to track them with technology and their own ingenuity. Trekking to distant locales, some scientists in cars and airplanes even follow individual birds outfitted with transmitters. Their heroic efforts are important, Chu points out, for only by understanding where the birds go can we learn how to preserve their habitats. To engage the general public in these efforts, she includes information on the best places to observe migrating birds and provides lists of citizen-science projects and resources for amateur birders who want to contribute to the growing base of knowledge about bird migration.

*Songbird Journeys* is wonderful reading, and though much science is covered, it is not beyond the average reader. When you're done, keep it on your bookshelf; it is the kind of book you'll undoubtedly want to read again.

Kathryn Palmore



## Osprey Monitoring

Many of you may have noticed the increase in Ospreys in the Fort Pickens area on Pensacola Beach. Biologists with the Gulf Islands National Seashore have been monitoring the nesting of these birds in the past, but have recently relied on volunteer assistance. This year, Dana Timmons volunteered to monitor the ospreys in Gulf Islands National Seashore at Naval Live Oaks and Fort Pickens units. Monitoring was done on a weekly basis from nest building on March 29<sup>th</sup> to post fledging on August 11<sup>th</sup>.

A total of 28 visits were made with 70 hours of observation in both areas. A total of 38 nests were observed from the beginning to the end of the observation period. Of the initial 38 nest sites, 23 were productive, resulting in 43 fledged Ospreys. The remaining 15 nests were either abandoned, destroyed by storms, winds, etc., or invaded.

Other interesting observations include:

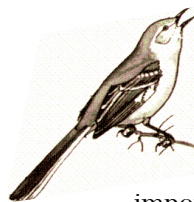
- Suspect predation of some type on unproductive nest in Naval Live Oaks
- Platform nests produced an earlier hatch than tree nests
- Nests near camping and other human activity areas produced normal fledge dates
- One platform nest in a wooded area was invaded by a Great Horned Owl. This was perhaps due to the wooded location vs more open location of other successful nest sites.
- There is an abundance of snags and dead trees at GINS, Ft. Pickens which helps support nesting.
- There appears to be an abundant food supply, based upon observed Menhaden and Mullet carcasses below nest sites.



## February 14-17 is the 2014 Great Backyard Bird Count!!

The Great Backyard Bird Count is almost here. This annual WORLDWIDE 4-day event encourages bird watchers of all ages and experience to get out there to count birds! The data from this event, as well as other surveys, is used by scientists to monitor bird populations. Participating is easy and fun.

Watch and count birds for at least 15 minutes on any day of the count. Although it may be called the Great BACKYARD Bird Count--you can count birds anywhere—at a nearby park, your schoolyard, a nature center, even the local landfill—anywhere there are birds! And you don't have to be a bird expert. Just report the birds you can identify. Then go to [www.birdsource.org](http://www.birdsource.org). In 2013, the GBBC integrated with ebird, a worldwide bird



data collection program. Now all counts are uploaded onto ebird. If you don't already have an ebird account, this website will guide you through the easy process. Then enter your data. Your observations are important because no single scientist or team of scientists could hope to capture so much information about birds around the world in only four days. The more people who participate, the better the snapshot we will have of where the birds are and how their populations may be changing from year to year.

In 2013, participants set several records. Birds were reported from all 7 continents including 111 countries. Over 4,000 species were reported which is 39% of the worlds' known species! Please visit the official website for more information regarding participation as well as summary results from prior years. [www.birdsource.org](http://www.birdsource.org)



**2013 Christmas Bird Count Results**—This year's Pensacola Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held on Saturday Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>, a day which was forecast to be 80% rain and high winds. However, the CBC bird god took pity on the 50 participants and changed the weather to be a bright mostly sunny day and warmish temps but with some southerly winds. As a result the 12 groups found a total of 138 species. There were many interesting rarities found. The best was a first ever for our CBC, a female Common Merganser in the Tiger Point area which was first found a week ago and played hide-and-seek but was found on the CBC and was observed by many birders. Other good rarities were White-winged and Black Scoters, Western Kingbird, Tri-colored Heron, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Barred Owl, Lincoln's Sparrow (very rare here), Lark Sparrow, Rufous Hummingbird, and a Jaeger. Following the day's birding efforts, Greta Bremser prepared a hot sumptuous meal with refreshments for all prior to the compilation.

*Bill Bremser*

Fall comes to Northwest Florida. Indian summer lingers on, in the soft Gulf breezes, and we spend our weekends gardening and counting the last of the fall migrants winging south. Then of a sudden in December or January the winds change direction, slamming us unexpectedly; furnaces wind up, windows wind down, sweaters come out of mothballs, chimney smoke bites the air. And autumn leaves fall.

We don't get much show from our native trees. Pignut Hickory (*Carya glabra*), Turkey Oak (*Quercus laevis*), and Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) are probably our mainstays, although we do get color from some acceptable introduced species, like Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*), and even unwanted species like the Popcorn Tree (*Sapium sebiferum*). Some folks take a trip to New England to see the brilliant red and gold produced primarily from the Sugar Maples, but you can find lots of color closer to home in the forests of Southern Appalachia, and avoid those leaf crowds, if our coastal color production is a bit too timid for your taste.

I recommend planting native trees for their ease of maintenance and their affinity to local wildlife. For trees and shrubs that attract wintering birds to your garden, here are a few suggestions:

Beautyberry (*Callicarpa Americana*) produces showy clusters of purple fruit that birds love. Also called French Mulberry.

Firebush (*Hamelia patens*) flowers mostly year round and attractive to our winter hummingbirds. (see page 1)

Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) really a juniper, with large clusters of blue berries that birds, squirrels and even bears enjoy.

And don't forget our dependable old favorites: Lantana, Yaupon, Pyracantha, Virginia creeper, and Wax Myrtle, all of which produce fruit and seed that wintering birds consume wherever they're found in Northwest Florida.

There are good reference books available to help guide you in planning for winter birds, and I like Gil Nelson's *The Trees of Florida* (Pineapple Press, Sarasota, 1994. For books with wintering birds specifically in mind, see also: *Birdscaping Your Garden*, George Adams; The National Wildlife Federation's *Gardening With Wildlife*; *The Bird Garden*, by Stephen Kress (our January speaker in 2005); and a new book, *Turn Your Yard Into A Refueling Spot For Birds*, Susan Tweit (love that name).

And remember, it's always a good idea to plant in the winter, while trees and shrubs are usually dormant.

Leaves, colorful or not, are the source of rejuvenation for hardwood trees, so don't forget their value as they swirl about your boots. On the ground they decompose from leaf litter into leaf mold, duff, then humus, supplying the nutrients that continue to vitalize the layer of topsoil that feed the roots, and from which all seedlings get their start. If you insist on raking leaves, compost them for heaven's sake, don't throw them away!

Most of all, on any warm, sunny January or February morning, put on a cardigan and grab a thermos of coffee and your binoculars, and watch the titmice and chickadees at work in your winter garden.



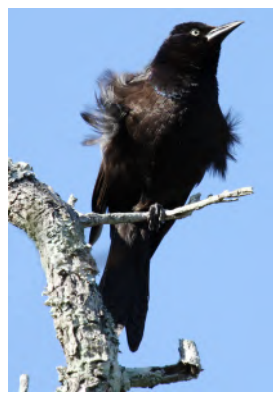
### Let's go Kayaking!!!!

A kayak has been donated to our chapter as a fundraiser. Proceeds for the sale will be dedicated to support our on-going work at the Roy Hyatt Environmental Center. The kayak is a 19' fiberglass, Necky "Amaruk" Tandem Kayak and includes paddles, spray skirts and roof racks. For more information contact: Dana Timmons 850-934-4521 home or 256-505-1143 mobile.

Francis M. Weston Audubon Society  
 P. O. Box 17484  
 Pensacola, Florida 32522

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Brenda Callaway

**Chapter Meetings**  
 Jan 23, Feb 27, Mar 27

**Field Trips**  
 Jan 11, Feb 8, Mar 8  
 Mar 29, Apr 4-6

**Birdwalks**  
 Jan 18, Feb 16, Mar 15

*Details on pages 2-3*

**Backyard Bird Count**  
 Feb 14-17  
*Details on page 6*

[www.FMWAudubon.org](http://www.FMWAudubon.org)

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