In the 19th century ornithologists relied on the gun to study birds. There were no field guides with descriptive drawings, and no lightweight, fine optics and cameras like those with which we pursue our passion. Instead, ornithologists lugged cumbersome shotguns around to collect birds to be studied. These specimens were prepared and preserved in both private and public collections. In fact, it was these specimens that enabled writers and artists to produce the first field guides. Birds had to be collected and studied in hand. So, in the 19th century, bird collectors roamed the world obtaining specimens for scientific study and museums.

One such man was George K. Cherrie, an Iowan who became an assistant curator of the Chicago Field Museum. Finding museum work rather boring, he set out to collect birds in the new world, collecting for the Chicago Field Museum, the Rothchilds, and the British and American Museums of Natural History. Cherrie made forty expeditions to South America and his wanderings there are reminiscent of the adventures of Indiana Jones. He killed two men, one a porter in a dispute over wages, and in the fracas he was himself shot in the arm. He was taken to a hospital in Lima, and was told by doctors he would not survive. He did, and so did his arm. He spent some time in a Peruvian jail. Once back in the field, he caught a thief one night stealing his equipment, and shot him dead. He was let off by the local police because they thought the victim deserved it. His reputation and volume of specimens earned him the title from noted ornithologist Frank Chapman as “Prince of the Tropical American Bird Collectors.”

In 1913, the Brazilian explorer Rondon invited Theodore Roosevelt to join him on an expedition to find the source of the River of Doubt. Having just lost the election, Teddy jumped at the opportunity and asked Cherrie to go along because of his extensive experience in the jungles of South America. The expedition ran in to considerable difficulties, took 48 days, ran out of food and other supplies. Teddy slipped in a stream, gashed his leg, ran high fevers and wanted to be left behind, but was not. The group was rescued, and Cherrie was given considerable credit for saving the expedition.

And now, a local connection to George K. Cherrie! In 1880, Gulf Breeze was known as Town Point. It was not given the present name until after the bridge was built in 1933. There were only two houses extant in Town Point in 1897, both Duncan homestead houses. One was located near where the foot of the bridge is, and the other near the end of Town Point Road, now known as Fairpoint Drive. At that time, the road was but a sandy trail forged by Andrew Jackson years earlier.

In Francis M. Weston’s “Birdlife of Northwestern Florida,” there is a reference to four now-extinct Bachman’s Warblers collected by George K. Cherrie in March 1897 on Town Point in Florida. The specimens are deposited in the Chicago Field Museum. The “Prince of Tropical American Bird Collectors” probably stayed with Duncan ancestors since they were the only folks living here then, and the extinct Bachman’s Warbler flew in our skies.
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.

The impoundments at Ft. Walton will hold shorebirds and ducks, and the fields will have sparrows. Befuddled by puddle ducks, skunked by skulking sparrows, and completely flummoxed by similar shorebirds? If so, you’re not alone. Leaders Bob and Lucy Duncan will help you sort them out. We will meet at 7:30 a.m. in the Office Depot parking lot across the highway from Gulf Breeze Hospital, and return by mid-afternoon. Plan to have lunch at a restaurant. Expect easy, moderate walking. Leaders will be Bob and Lucy Duncan.

☐ Saturday, February 14, 2015. Taminco/Eastman Bird Sanctuary Birding. Les Kelly and Bruce Furlow will lead us to this wonderful Bird Sanctuary (formerly Taminco/Air Products) in Pace. Some moderate walking in possibly wet conditions. Participation will be restricted and numbers limited. Contact Les no later than noon on February 10 at 850-341-8574 or email at les4plan@gmail.com for reservations as a list of participants must be submitted. Also, cameras are not allowed on the property without prior approval. Meet in the main parking lot at 8:00 a.m. To reach Taminco/Eastman from Pensacola, travel east on Hwy 90 through Pace and watch for the sign to the plant on the south side of the road. We plan to finish by noon.

☐ Monday, February 16, 2015. Ascend Wildlife Refuge Birding. Sharhonda Owens will lead us through the Ascend Wildlife Refuge in search of wintering birds. Long pants and closed toe shoes are required. Please sign up by contacting Lucy Duncan at 932-4792 by Thursday, Feb. 12th and leave your name, phone and number of participants in your party. We will ride in their vehicles, so attendance is limited. Expect easy walking. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot of Ascend Neighborhood Park located on the north side of Old Chemstrand Road before reaching the main gate. Ascend is providing a picnic lunch for attendees.

☐ Saturday, March 14, 2015. Grassy Point and (possibly) Escribano Point. Larry Goodman and Peggy Baker will lead us to these beautiful areas on the east side of Escambia Bay. Plan on moderate hiking in possibly wet conditions. Bring lunch, drinks, and insect repellant for no-see-ums. Meet behind McDonald’s on Hwy 90 in Milton at 8 a.m. This is on the south side of the highway. We will return by early afternoon.

☐ Saturday, March 28, 2015. Ed Ball Nature Trail. Native Plants. James Burkhalter will lead us on a walk to see unique, interesting plants along the Ed Ball Nature Trail at UWF, and to 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. We will finish by noon.

Birdwalks for Beginners
Come and join us on these short excursions into Birdwatching. Everyone is welcome but we hope to attract people of all ages who have wondered what this birding thing is all about. Experienced birders will be present to share their knowledge of the birds that we find. A great morning of learning will be shared by all.

☐ Saturday, January 17, 2015, 9:00-11:00 a.m. ECUA Bayou Marcus Wetlands Elevated Boardwalk; 3050 Fayal Dr. - Off of Blue Angel Parkway, 1 1/2 miles N. of Lillian Hwy. To see ducks and wading birds; bring binoculars and warm clothing. For information call Peggy Baker, 983-1482.

☐ Sunday, February 15, 2015, 9:00-11:00 a.m. Great Backyard Bird Count - at Ann and Dan Forster’s home, 447 Creary Street, Pensacola, 32507. To see yard and shorebirds; bring binoculars and warm clothing. Call Ann Forster for information, 456-4421. See page 6 to learn about the Great Backyard Bird Count.

Board of Directors
Jan 8, Feb 5, Mar 5—The Board meets at 7:00 pm at the First Presbyterian Church, 33 East Gregory St. Meetings are open to the public. Date and location may change. Please contact a Board member to confirm date, time and location if you wish to attend.
**Chapter Meetings**

Pensacola State College,  
7:00pm, Main Campus,  
Baroco Science Center,  
Room 2142,  
unless otherwise noted.  
Refreshments are provided and guests are welcome!

- Jan. 22, 2015. **FWC Wildlife Biologist Mark Winland** will present a program entitled “Escribano Point, Florida’s newest Wildlife Management Area.” The WMA is a large undeveloped area along East Bay 6 miles SE of Milton. The area is bordered by Blackwater Bay to the north and west and Eglin AFB to the east. The WMA is open year-round and provides numerous opportunities for outdoor recreation such as hunting, fishing, camping, boating, and bird watching, etc. Mark will present FWC’s plans for expanding and enhancing recreation at the WMA.

- Feb. 26, 2015. **David Sparks**, a very accomplished nature photographer and member of our society, will present a program entitled “Glimpses of our Natural World.” Photos from two photo tours will be included in the slide show. Images of the White-tailed Ptarmigan and the courtship displays of Greater Sage Grouse, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Greater and Lesser Prairie-Chicken were captured on The Chicken Run. The second tour was to St Paul Island, the largest of four volcanic islands which make up the Pribilof Islands in the middle of the Bering Sea. Thousands of Horned and Tufted Puffins, Least, Crested and Parakeet Auklets, Red-faced Cormorants, Red-legged and Black-legged Kittiwakes, Northern Fulmars, Thick-billed and Common Murres and Glaucous-winged Gulls nest on the vertical cliffs of the island. These will be supplemented with some of his favorite nature photos taken locally, regionally, and on other photography outings.

- March 26, 2015. To be announced later on our website and facebook page.

www.FMWAudubon.org  
www.facebook.com/FMWAudubonPensacola

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**President’s Message**

Reflecting on the past summer and fall months, I am struck by both positives and negatives for the birds in NW Florida. The first positive is the incredible victory we enjoyed when the Amendment 1 initiative was passed by an overwhelming majority of voters. Thanks to all of you who supported the campaign and voted for this important step forward for conservation of the natural resources of Florida. We must nevertheless remain vigilant, lest our legislators seek means to divert some of the allocated funding to unintended uses.

The second positive is the great team that Audubon Florida has assembled to protect the nesting and wintering shorebirds that grace our beaches, aided by local volunteers. The first negative is the abysmal fledging success of shorebirds across the panhandle this past breeding season, despite the efforts of that team to raise public awareness of the birds’ presence. The main culprit was widespread predation by coyotes, raccoons, opossums, feral cats, and ghost crabs. We hope that the newly energized predator trapping program at all our parks will be successful next year. The second negative was the approval by Escambia County commissioners of a feral cat ordinance that provides little control or regulation on feral cat colonies. However well-meaning the intent of the ordinance, we fear that many forms of native wildlife will suffer from predation by these non-native felines.

The third positive is that the negative responses to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the proposed GRASI land initiative drove it back to the USAF authors for further consideration. When the final EIS is released in a few weeks, we may need to mount further defense of our local state forests. Keep your eyes on this threat to the natural resources that are the reason the forests are a state asset.

Jim Brady

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**Florida Audubon Assembly 2014 Winner**  
**Francis M Weston Audubon Society Chapter of the Year**

http://fl.audubon.org/audubon-florida-naturalist-magazine
FIELD NOTES

Where are all the birds? We’ve been trying to answer that question since September! Fall migrants that should have followed cold fronts were absent or present in small numbers compared to the strength of the fronts that passed through. Feeder watchers even complained about absence of resident birds, which was certainly true of the Duncan’s yard feeders. So what’s going on?

Internet chatter reports from northern Alabama and Mississippi indicated birds were in good numbers up that way, but coastal birders from Louisiana to NW Florida were crying the blues. Let’s face it, each year there are fewer and fewer birds migrating through our area as cats, loss of habitat, windows, etc. take their toll. But this fall season was exceptional.

I can speculate on what might be the causes: 1. The northern states, especially the mid-West, had an unusually cool summer, which could have delayed breeding or diminished the numbers of birds, (fewer hatchlings) that migrate south. 2. Birds may have migrated south well to the east or west of the northern Gulf Coast but I find this unlikely since I closely analyze weather patterns and keep tabs on migration both east and west of us. 3. Feeder birds have abundance of other natural food sources. It seems like everywhere I looked - at migrant traps, woodlots or suburban yards, there were plenty of berries and fruits available as well as a large acorn crop. Insects were abundant as well. 4. Raptors, especially Cooper’s Hawks, have adapted to suburban living quite well and find a feathered smorgasbord at feeders. That is certainly true of the Duncan’s yard where a “Coop” can be seen swooping through the yard daily. This has kept our “locals” away from feeders and extremely wary. This has been complicated lately by the presence of a Merlin, another raptor that dines on birds.

On the positive side, the F. M. Weston Audubon field trip to St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge 2–4 December was rewarded with lots of birds. Songbirds were in low numbers, especially sparrows, but ducks were in good supply, more than I’ve seen in recent trips. We logged 17 species of ducks and 17 species of shorebirds, a total of 123 species for the trip. Good fun and birding was had by all.

An account of noteworthy birds from mid-September to mid-December follows. The rare Olive-sided Flycatcher* made appearances 7 Sep, 15 Sep & 5 Oct in Gulf Breeze (Bob & Lucy Duncan) and 13 Sep at Ft. Pickens (Ron Sinclair, et al.). An E. Phoebe in Milton 23 Sep (Les Kelly) was very early. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers appeared at Ft. Pickens 1 and 4 Oct (Larry Goodman, Robert Ludlow), and another Dec 10 (R. Ludlow) at Tiger Point. Other western species, Groove-billed Ani, 1 Oct (Larry Goodman) and 22 Oct (Alan Gurney) and Ash-throated Flycatcher* were at Ft. Pickens 15 Oct (Jerry & Brenda Callaway, Larry Tilley, Bernice Gilley) and 21 Oct (Callaways). Another was in Gulf Breeze 10 Nov (Lucy Duncan). A very rare Bell’s Vireo* was at Ft. Pickens 10 Oct (Lucy Duncan).

Another Groove-billed Ani was observed at Taminco Sanctuary 27 Oct (Peggy Baker, Les Kelly, Bruce Furlow, Larry Goodman). I flushed a Whip-poor-will* at Ft. Pickens 28 Oct. A Barn Owl was flushed by the Duncans at Veteran’s Memorial Park in Ft. Walton Beach on 19 Oct. On 2 Nov, the Duncans counted 55 Greater White-fronted Geese* as they passed over Gulf Breeze. Seventy-five Soras were tallied by the Callaways at the very productive International Paper Wetlands on 2 Nov. A Cliff Swallow at Taminco 17 Nov (Les Kelly, Peggy Baker, Bruce Furlow, Larry Goodman) was very late leaving the continent.

Vaughn Hedrick’s yard in east Pensacola continues to produce great birds. On 8 Nov, Vaughan observed a beautiful tropical Buff-bellied Hummingbird* feeding amongst her flowers and on 16 -27 Nov, a late Baltimore Oriole.

The rarest bird of the season was an adult female Anna’s Hummingbird* spotted by Patriciann Retherford at her feeder on 22 Nov. It lingered to 28 Nov and was banded by Fred Bassett, a third state record! Birders came from far and wide to enjoy this gem. Its normal range is the coast west of the Rockies! Almost as rare is a Long-tailed Duck found by Sue and Bill Yates Dec 10 and present through this writing (14th) at their home.

The Skimmer welcomes reports of noteworthy birds. If you have something to report, please call Lucy or Bob Duncan at 932-4792. Species with asterisks require documentation so that they may become part of the ornithological record.
The southwestern parishes of Louisiana are some of our favorite places to bird in the spring, fall, and winter. It is all about migration.

In the spring, the trans-Gulf migrants pour through. These flocks are composed of songbirds, shorebirds, even owls. They are dressed up in their best plumages and are easy to identify. There are times when a late cold front brings rain and adverse winds and they are forced down in the thousands to rest and feed. This phenomenon is called a fall-out and is a mixed blessing. Many birds never make it to the Gulf coast and are lost at sea. Fortunately for the birds, these conditions may only occur a few times over the migration period so more birds survive than perish.

In the fall, the migration pattern is reversed. Then many of the migrants are more drably plumaged and offer an ID challenge. The most exciting time is when the geese, ducks, and blackbirds pour in by the millions in late November to winter over on rice fields and refuges. There is no exaggeration there. One of the Christmas Bird Counts routinely reports 20 million blackbirds and Snow and Greater White-fronted Geese in the thousands. The birder has the good fortune to be able to visit enormous National Wildlife Refuges (Lacassine, Cameron Prairie, and Sabine) and Rockefeller State Wildlife Refuge. All have driving trails and visitor centers.

When we first started birding in this area in the early 1970s, birders were not that welcome. The hunters fretted about birders trying to stop hunting in the refuges. To make matters worse, some genius in the State Game Commission got the bright idea of dressing wardens up as bird watchers and making arrests for exceeding game limits and other infractions the good ol’ boys were perpetrating. This actually brought about legal action from the Louisiana Ornithological Society before someone got shot. We were stopped once by an irate hunter who thought we were undercover game wardens. Dan pointed out that an 80-year old man accompanied by three women in a vehicle with a Florida tag were really just looking at birds.

Over the years the people in that area have come to appreciate the economic boon that birding is. The negative attitudes of the past have been replaced by enthusiasm we never thought was possible. Look up the Yellow Rail and Rice Festival in Jennings, LA. A whole group of Weston Auduboners went over there this year. There are field trips and seminars and really, really good food. And if you can, go over there this winter and stand on the road in Lacassine and watch and listen as 100,000 geese pour in.

Darwin’s Ghost, The Origin of Species Updated

Steve Jones' grand scale updating of Darwin is as breathtaking as it is detailed. He begins with a litany of historic retribution of Darwin's thesis on evolution, then goes on to update Darwin's principal findings with much more evidence to put any doubt to rest--except for those minds completely closed to ever considering evolution as an explanation for how we got here. Jones writes with both fervor and style, and although the book is long, and rather heavily detailed, it reads easily enough for the average 'citizen scientist' and should be on the bookshelf of every serious environmentalist. JF
**Make a New Year’s Resolution—Become a Citizen Scientist**

One of the compelling attractions of participating in a Christmas Bird Count is the repeated surveying of the assigned area at the same time each year. After eight years in the same area, my team can now predict where the birds will be and what we will see or what birds are new to our area. There is something comforting and reassuring about observing this predictable flow of the river of birds and the seasonal rhythm of the earth.

When our FMWAS team surveyed Blackwater River State Forest, we visited the forest once a week and reported our findings to eBird.org, a data base of Cornell University School of Ornithology. After the first year we began to anticipate what we would find on our weekly visit. “This is the week that the robins should be here.” Or, “The wintering sparrows should begin to arrive this week.”

All of the birders along the gulf coast, eagerly look forward to the return of the neotropical migrants in the spring because it is exciting to see these beautiful birds. But the eBird Database will benefit by receiving data about where the birds are throughout the year. FMWAS should have numerous surveys in progress collecting data on the birds in our area.

**So here is—A New Year’s Challenge**

Start a bird survey. It can be in your yard, or in your block or a nearby park or wooded area. Or at the state or national parks. Wherever you want and whatever size you feel comfortable with. You can bird by foot, bike, car or even boat.

Then what?

1. Name your survey area, define its boundaries. (You might want to establish a private birding spot so no one else can add data to your project. Send me your plans. This will become part of our chapter report as a citizen science project. pbakerbirds@gmail.com, 850-983-1482. Call me, I would love to bird your selected area with you.

2. Decide how often you will visit- once a week is best but once a month for a large area will do.

3. Set up an account in eBird - I will help you do this if need be. In fact I will enter the data for you.

4. Go birding - keep a list of what you see - and numbers of birds seen - report it to eBird. If you are birding from a car, stop every half mile to listen for bird song.

5. At the end of the year print out a report. Look for predictable patterns and share it with me, then start all over again. And this time you will become aware of the repetitive patterns of nature and realize how much you have learned about your little corner of the earth from just observing your closest neighbors, the birds. You have become a Citizen Scientist by adding your valuable knowledge to eBird.

_Peggy Baker_

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**The Great Backyard Bird Count**

**February 13-16, 2015**

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 is used by scientists to get an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds. 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. Count both the species as well as the number of each species, such as “3 Northern Cardinals,” “2 Blue Jays,” etc. Then go to [www.birdsource.org](http://www.birdsource.org) and 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 of where the birds are, and how their populations may be changing from year to year.

Please visit the official website for more information regarding participation, as well as a summary of results from prior years. [www.birdsource.org](http://www.birdsource.org)
Squirrels Among Us

On a warm winter day I sit on the deck and watch whatever wildlife is available to me, jays, wrens and such—and of course the squirrels, loud and visible. It’s been a bumper year for acorns and they feast on them in my oaks, pulling them off, taking a single bite, throwing the acorn down on the deck and pulling off another—for a single bite, before discarding it as well. Wasteful? It would certainly seem so, as I have daily a deck full of partially nibbled acorns to prove it.

When I was a child my Depression era mantra was ‘waste nothing, a starving child in China would love those (beans, okra, spinach, cauliflower)’. And I would sigh, knowing that neither dessert nor leaving the table were options until the plate was clean. My bedroom window looked out onto a large old pear tree which was heavy with fruit each spring. I would watch the squirrels in their daily feasting on the ripening fruit, invariably taking a single bite then, as in that comic strip, casting it disdainfully to the ground, repeating this wasteful ritual until the area below was littered with barely nibbled fruit. I wondered, were there no parent squirrels in the nest to scold their offspring on the evils of their profligacy, and of starving squirrels in China?

Through Nature and such erudite sources we are fed a constant litany of the ways by which wildlife conserve their food sources, birthing their young at just the time when certain insects are hatching and such, to the point where we are shamed from all sides by the mere suggestion of wastefulness. Even the military, well known for spendthrift ways, had a large warning sign at the entrance of the mess hall, stating TAKE ALL YOU WANT, EAT ALL YOU TAKE. It was just un-American to waste food, in the Navy and in civilian life as well. And yes I know, packaging and serving fast food meals is a disgraceful waste of paper and plastic, but when it comes to food itself, we still remember, most of us anyway, to follow our mothers’ advice and ‘clean the plate if you want dessert!’

So what to do about those prodigal squirrels? Well, yes, at the risk of being thought a bit dotty, I scold them, as their mothers should have done, about the squandering of resources and also the mess created on my deck, making barefootedness untenable at best. But what of the dreadful waste, all those acorns that childhood lore told us was cached for winter’s weary months—a lesson with a clear objective to little ears: save for the future, put your money in the bank, bad times are surely ahead? Are our squirrels just too stupid to understand what lies ahead? Or do they simply replicate the life of so many of us today, living from day to day, enjoying the seemingly endless summer, unaware, unafraid, and uncaring of the future?

Are we all becoming squirrels?

2014 Christmas Bird Count Results—Saturday 20 December was the Pensacola Christmas Bird Count. The weather was absolutely miserable with continuous rain and light to moderate cold winds. The birds didn’t like it either as shown by the lower numbers. Fortunately, with the help of our expert leaders and their parties, they managed to find a total of 127 species compared to 138 last year. Some of the good finds were an American Black Duck (extremely rare on the Gulf Coast), a White Ibis, and a Tri-colored Heron. A Wilson’s Warbler was also spotted at the Duncan’s bird haven. After the grueling day we all met at Niki’s Restaurant and had a nice meal along with the compilation.

Bill Bremser

Wings Over Florida Workshops—
Throughout 2015 the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will be offering several Wings Over Florida workshops around the state. The workshops, lasting for a day, will typically consist of a morning and afternoon field trip, and a classroom presentation. The field trips will give participants the opportunity to see a variety of birds thus earning them a Wings Over Florida certificate. Please visit:

Wings Over Florida webpage
http://floridabirdingtrail.com/index.php/resources/wings/
Chapter Meetings
Jan 22, Feb 26, Mar 26

Field Trips
Jan 10, Feb 14 & 16, Mar 14 & 28

Bird Walks
Jan 17, Feb 15
Details on pages 2 & 3

Great Backyard Bird Count
Feb 13-16. Details on page 6

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http://www.fmwaudubon.org/
Web Master Debra Jones

Introductory Membership
National Audubon Society
(includes Audubon Florida and our local chapter)

Individual/Family: One-year —$20
(Make checks payable to the National Audubon Society.)

Student Membership—local chapter only
One year—$7.00
(Include a copy of your student ID with a check payable to FMW Audubon Society.)

Mail to the Francis M. Weston Audubon Society,
PO Box 17484, Pensacola, FL 32522.

Name ________________________________
Address ______________________________
City __________________ State ___ Zip ______
Phone ________________________________
E-Mail Address _________________________

Francis M. Weston Audubon Society Chapter C5ZE460Z

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. ___