Remembering

Over the years I’ve had the privilege of meeting, working with, and being guided by some amazing people, who have shared their memories of a Florida past. Here’s one.

A young man returning from service during the Korean War, my friend JD was stationed in Papua New Guinea, which opened his eyes to a very different place and ecosystem. Upon his return to Pensacola, he borrowed the family 10-foot john-boat and set off to see how this landscape differed from the one where he’d been stationed. He learned that while he’d been away the government had finished engineering and building the Intercoastal Waterway, which enabled him to get all the way to the town of Apalachicola via protected waters.

Back then, Florida was ‘free range’ which meant few fences between large tracts of land; live stock had open range, and homes were built hidden among the tree line, on ‘high’ ground. In the 1950s the area east of Gulf Breeze might have had 10-15 families spread out along the bay and the sound beyond Navarre. JD wasn’t in a hurry. He knew how to live off the land and he enjoyed looking at the many wetland systems and sloughs that drained the inland areas to the intercoastal.

Once he saw Sabine Island, which was a fisheries facility back then, he traveled under the narrow beach bridge which led to Casino Beach. He told me that he didn’t see another soul for the next ten days. He read the weather through the clouds, winds and waves, beached his little boat from time to time to climb over the sand dunes to see the Gulf. Back then, the dunes were 50’ high in some areas. He learned to read wildlife and knew where the fish schools were found, based on the presence of gulls.

At night he slept on the beach under the stars. If weather was coming, he’d flip his boat over and set up a little lean-to to stay dry. He knew something was up one evening near the little fishing town of Destin Harbor, as the waves in the Gulf had been building for the past few days, and he noted the wind had become more moist and blustery. That night, when he set up camp and flipped over his boat to make his shelter, a great blue heron took refuge with him as a terrible storm kept howling and dropping buckets of rain on the overturned boat. By late afternoon the hurricane had passed. He combed the beach and found the wrack line decorated in sea-life and shells. That night he slept between the dunes and woke up to the bluest sky he had ever seen. To this day, 97-year-old JD will tell me that the sky today is not as blue as it was, as he remembered it that time, in the 1950s.

The population of Florida was just over 550,000 in 1900 (US Census). Today, the annual population of Florida is over 21 million, and in addition we receive roughly 110 million tourist visitors annually. That’s a lot of pressure on our resources. I moved to Miami in 1970 from Chicago and was immediately sold on the area. In those early days, colorful land crabs would migrate in giant armies across low lying areas during the full moon. Other times, hundreds of tiny toads would hatch from small ponds in quantities too numerous to count. In 1972 we drove across the state, through the Everglades, to see what the other ocean looked like. These are my basic memories. Will any of the real Florida remain for future generations?

Today, in 2018, we as a community have a responsibility to remind our elected officials and regional representatives about the manner of growth we wish to realize. The shape and the accompanied growth of our future can and should be sustainable while recognizing that our resources are based on a landscape-scale, community-based conservation.
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. Sunscreen, insect protection, appropriate shoes, hat, water, and snacks or lunch are recommended on all trips. Please refrain from wearing scented cologne, perfumes or after-shave on field trips. It distracts from the experience in nature, and some participants are highly sensitive to it. Carpooling is encouraged, as is sharing gas expenses with the driver.

Questions? Call Lucy Duncan at 932-4792 or email her at town_point@bellsouth.net.

☐ Saturday, September 8. Ft. Pickens. Lucy and Bob Duncan will lead the group looking for Neotropical migrants and early winter birds at Ft. Pickens. Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the last parking lot before entering Ft. Pickens. This is on the north side of the road just past the pink condos. If you have a visitors pass be sure to bring it. We will finish around lunchtime. You may wish to bring snacks and water or lunch. Depending on the prevailing weather, we may have early Neotropical migrants like warblers, or shorebirds along the beaches. One thing is guaranteed, it will be beautiful regardless of the weather, and we’ll have time to study some of our feathered friends! See you there!

☐ Wednesday, October 3. Dauphin Island. Join the Duncans at this hotspot for Gulf Coast birding! The island typically hosts hundreds of Neotropical migrants on a good fall day in October. We’ll be visiting at the height of fall migration, so the hopeful prospect of finding warblers, vireos, flycatchers, tanagers, and others is enticing. Meet in the Walmart Neighborhood Market parking lot 9301 Pine Forest Rd (south of the corner of Pine Forest and Nine Mile Road) at 7:00 a.m. This is a new meeting location! Or, meet us around 8:00 behind the Shell Station overlooking D’Olive Bay on US 98 in Daphne, just south of Interstate 10. Next, we will drive to Dauphin Island and meet up at Cadillac Square on the island. Plan to bring or buy lunch on the island to enjoy under ancient oaks hopefully dripping with migrants!

☐ Saturday, October 13. Soundside Foundation Nature Preserve. This unique preserve in Gulf Breeze has it all – shoreline, coastal woodland, pines, fresh-water ponds…and the chance to see birds in varied habitats. Meet in the Office Depot parking lot across from Gulf Breeze Hospital at 7:30 a.m., or in the tiny parking area at the Preserve. To reach the Preserve, drive east from Office Depot on US 98 and measure 1.23 miles beyond the Walmart stoplight. Turn right on Soundside Drive and go .44 mi to the Preserve on your right. The morning trip will be led by Michael and Cathy Brower and will finish before lunchtime.

BIRDS AND BREW—SOMETHING NEW

Sunday afternoon bird outings in downtown Pensacola.

September 2—Meet at 5:30 p.m. October 7—Meet at 5:00 p.m.

Meet on the southwest corner of Seville Square catty-corner from the Pensacola Bay Brewery, 225 East Zaragoza Street, for a guided walk near historic Seville Square and the Pensacola waterfront looking for birds. All skill levels are welcome, from novice to experienced birders ready to enjoy a leisurely stroll to Admiral Mason Park, Bartram Park or through the Square. Our 45 minute to one hour walk will end at the Brewery for a cold craft beer and conversation. Bring your binoculars, or if you forget them, come anyway as we may have a pair to loan. Any questions, call Lucy Duncan at 932-4792 or email her at town_point@bellsouth.net.

Sea Turtle Baby Shower—Saturday, August 11, 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Landshark Landing (165 Fort Pickens Road), Pensacola Beach). A family-friendly afternoon of games, entertainment and activities to educate about and celebrate sea turtles and other beach wildlife. Audubon will have a table about birds. Bring the children/grandchildren. No entry fee.

Longleaf Chapter, Native Plant Society Activities—http://longleafpine.fnpschapters.org/

If you are a donor of over $180 to WUWF, public radio, then you may be a Day Sponsor. Day Sponsors receive a 20 second on air message announced live. Please consider donating your 20 second broadcast to Francis M. Weston Audubon to publicize our meetings on public radio. Contact Sue Timmons, 529-9576, if you’d like to contribute.
Board Meetings—Aug 2, Sep 6, and Oct 4 at 7:00 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church, 33 East Gregory St., Pensacola. Meetings are open to members. Date and location may change. Please contact a Board member for details and to confirm date, time and location if you wish to attend. The Officer/Committee contact information is on page 8.

Chapter Meetings
Our monthly chapter program meetings are held at 7:00 p.m., room 2142, the Baroco Science Center (Bldg. 21), Pensacola State College, 21 Airport Blvd., Pensacola, FL 32504 unless otherwise noted. The meeting room is located across the breezeway from the planetarium. Refreshments are provided. Guests are welcome!

Bird Walks
These short bird walks are designed to introduce “future birders” into the world of “Bird Watching.” If you have ever been curious about this activity or just enjoy the birds in your backyard, come join us to learn about our area birds. Families with children are welcome. If you have binoculars bring them. If not, we will have a few ‘loaners’ available. Bug spray, long pants and bottled water are recommended for our outdoor walks. For details, call Scott Rathkamp, 776-9736.

□ Thursday, August 23, 2018. Our speaker will be Mr. Les Kelly and the title of his presentation will be “Breeding Bird Atlas II Surprises.” The Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA) is a collection of data on the birds that breed in a particular state or region. Data are collected over a 5-year span and data for such atlases are collected at 25-year intervals. Les will discuss differences observed in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties’ bird distributions between the 1986-1991 BBA I results and those of the recently completed BBA II survey. Mr. Kelly is a retired chemist and a very active member of the Francis M. Weston Audubon Society. He is an enthusiastic birder and has participated in several bird surveys.

□ Thursday, September 27, 2018. Mr. Don McMahon, the owner of the Pensacola Bay Oyster Company, will present a program on his oyster culture operation in Pensacola Bay. Mr. McMahon grew up in Pensacola and studied business and marine biology at Florida State University. He is currently leasing 10 acres (5 in Escambia Bay and 5 in East Bay) from the State of Florida for his oyster farming operation. The Pensacola Bay Oyster Farm is the first oyster farm along the Gulf Coast.

□ Thursday, October 25, 2018. The program for our October meeting will be announced via our web site and Facebook page.

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

Teen Birders Group
Do you know a teen who likes birding? We're proud to announce that FMWAS now has a Teen Birders group on Facebook. It is a closed group, meaning all posts by the teens are hidden from public view, and it is open to any teens who are interested. We will make every effort to see that it is a safe place for the kids to talk about the natural world with like-minded teens. A link can be found on our Facebook page under the group tab:
https://www.facebook.com/FMWAudubonPensacola
FIELD NOTES

The previous Skimmer report left off in the middle of April. In it, I was extolling the great birding that had been occurring for the past two weeks because of ideal fallout conditions which prevailed. Those conditions continued to the very end of the month, giving us the best birding in years. For almost the entire month, birds were faced with light and variable winds in the tropics and southern Gulf. Tailwinds which help the birds cross the Gulf were non-existent most of the time. Birds eager to move north and establish territories before they got left out were faced with the necessity of moving north before it was too late. So they left. And to make matters worse, once they entered the northern Gulf, most of the time, they encountered headwinds and sometimes precipitation. While most birds made it, some did not, with birds reported washing up on beaches from Ft. Pickens to Indian Pass. Yes, the birding was great for us but the birds paid a price. In spite of great birding, outstanding rarities were few but some noteworthy birds did appear. Read on.

Establishing a second April record and very late, a Golden-crowned Kinglet was observed by Michael Brower at Soundside Preserve 21 Apr. Brenda and Jerry Callaway counted 18 Purple Gallinules at International Paper Wetlands (IPW) 24 Apr. Lingering very late, 2 - 4 White-winged Scoters were present in Big Lagoon to 22 May (Carole Tebay). Carole Tebay’s discovery of an Inca Dove* there on 5 May established the state’s 7th record. Six of the 7 records are from our area. A very rare Black-legged Kittiwake* was found at Pensacola Beach on 2 May and brought to Wildlife Sanctuary of NW FL. A very late American Goldfinch was seen by Shelley Mangram in Pensacola 4 – 7 May. Also late was a Nashville Warbler* at Eastman/Taminco Sanctuary 7 May (Les Kelly, Bruce Furlow, Larry Goodman) as well as a Black-billed Cuckoo* in Gulf Breeze 9 May (Bob Duncan). Were these late arrivals a result of the bad migrating conditions described above? Two fledgling Bald Eagles discovered by Brenda Callaway in Shoreline Park in May were the first fledglings in Gulf Breeze in over 70 years! The Callaway’s count of 21 Least Bitterns at IPW 23 May was amazing as well as 10 King Rails.* A Chestnut-sided Warbler* in our yard in Gulf Breeze 29 May was very late (Bob & Lucy Duncan). May ended on a spectacular note with James Pfeiffer’s report of TWO Red-billed Tropicbirds* near the EPA Lab on Pensacola Beach on 31 May! One bird was reported as late as 2 Jul. Could this have been the same bird seen earlier in the season with a companion?

June began with the surprise sighting of a Roseate Spoonbill* on 3 Jun spotted by Jan Lloyd in e. Pensacola, only the 14th record for our area. The species is fairly common at catfish farms in Mississippi but very rare here. Constituting the first ever June record for our area, a Magnolia Warbler* was in the Duncan yard 4 Jun. Another delayed migrant! A nominate race Black-whiskered Vireo* (Vireo altiloquus altiloquus) was in the Duncans’ yard and neighborhood 6 – 25 Jun. The s. Florida race is V. a. barbatulus. The eighth state record of Inca Dove* was observed by Larry Goodman in his e. Pensacola yard 10 Jun. Forty Forster’s Terns were counted by Jan Lloyd and Ann Forster at Ann’s house on Davenport Bayou 10 – 20 Jun, a high number, as well as 14 Common Terns* there 20 Jun (Ann Forster, Scot Duncan). A first Jun record, I spotted a Lark Sparrow* in Gulf Breeze 12 Jun.

Either very late arriving or a very early fall migrant, a Louisiana Waterthrush* was in Gulf Breeze 26 Jun (Scot & Bob Duncan). Three American Robins* were in n. Pensacola 26 Jun (Dana Timmons). Robins breed sparingly in our area. Only the 4th area record, a Ruff* was identified and photographed by Bruce Purdy at the Okaloosa County Sewerage Treatment Facility in Ft. Walton Beach 30 Jun. It was also seen by Malcolm Swan, Alan Knothe, Bob, Lucy & Scot Duncan and by Daniel Stangeland and Chris Wiley on 1 Jul.

The Skimmer welcomes reports of noteworthy birds. If you have something to report, please contact Bob or Lucy Duncan at town_point@bellsouth.net or 932-4792. * Species with asterisks require documentation so that they may become part of the ornithological record.
On a hot August evening 25 years ago, we sat down to watch the ABC World News. Peter Jennings said, “Two important biologists have been killed in a plane crash in Ecuador.” I turned to Dan and said, “Ted Parker.” We couldn’t think who the second person might be but in a few moments learned that it was Al Gentry. So in one tragic event we lost the most brilliant ornithologist and the most knowledgeable botanist ever to study Neotropical biology. The crash occurred in the coastal mountains in southwest Ecuador. They were flying all over South America identifying critical natural areas in a project sponsored by Conservation International and the McArthur Foundation. It was called the Rapid Assessment Program and many scientists in other disciplines were also involved. The program resulted in many South American countries putting thousands of hectares of critical habitat into national parks or reserves. The area where they crashed was made into Machalilla National Park and dedicated to Ted Parker and Al Gentry. Some of the more stable countries, such as Ecuador and Peru, have maintained and even expanded these areas especially when they learned that ecotourism is a renewable resource. Sadly Venezuela, Bolivia, and others have reneged and opened their “protected” areas to exploitation.

The Rapid Assessment Program was a small part of the contributions of these two men. Ted Parker was sponsored by the LSU Museum of Natural Science and Al Gentry worked out of the Missouri Botanical Gardens. Al Gentry was older and had written several books on the forests and plant communities of the American tropics. Ted Parker was younger and spent more of his time in field work. He wrote many of the species accounts for *The Birds of Peru* and for *The Birds of the High Andes*. His special genius was bird vocalizations. He had deposited more than 15,000 recordings at Cornell’s Library of Natural Sounds.

Several of us were lucky enough to have met and communicated with Ted. In 1982, we planned a trip to Peru. The first stop was Iquitos on the Amazon and the jumping off place to the new river camps – Explorama and Explornapo. After that we were going on to Machu Picchu. Birding with inadequate field guides was pretty much the rule in those early years. Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee’s *Birds of Venezuela* served on the Amazon but there was nothing for the rest of Peru. We wrote Ted hoping he would be at LSU for a bit and he was. I asked if there were any lists of birds for those areas and I got a large manila envelope full of lists. He had spent several months at the camps and had promised the owner that he would send the lists if he ever found someone coming down. The owner was delighted, and the lists made our trip. Most exciting was seeing a new to-science wren at Machu Picchu that Ted had described and named. We were among the first birders to add the Inca Wren to our life lists.

**Fall 2018—Our Avian Neighbors Birding Class**

**Learn about the area birds.**

**Sign up for our birding class.**

Experienced birders from the chapter will instruct the classroom sessions from 6:00-7:30 p.m. at the Pensacola Public Library, downtown at 239 N. Spring Street. A 2-4 hour field trip on a Saturday will follow three classes.

The first class, Tues., Oct 9., 2018 will be about **birding basics** (binoculars, field guides, birding ethics, etc.). The remaining classes will cover different groups of birds:

- **Shorebirds** — Tues, Oct 16 with field trip on Oct 27
- **Woodland Birds** — Tues, Oct 30 with field trip on Nov 3
- **Raptors** — Thurs, Nov 15 (class 5:30-7:30 p.m.) with field trip Nov 17

To register or for more information, contact Mary Jones, 850-288-0488 or brumarcylyde@cox.net.

To confirm your registration, send a participant contribution of $100.00 for Audubon members and $120.00 for non-members of which $20.00 can be applied to Audubon membership. Make a note on the checks “For Our Avian Neighbors Class” and make payable to the F.M. Weston Audubon Society. Mail to FMW Audubon Society, P.O. Box 17484, Pensacola, FL 32522 before the classes start. Classes will be limited in size.

These classes with the field trips are a wonderful opportunity for individuals in the community to learn about birds from expert birders in the Pensacola area.
President’s Message

Once again a new year is upon us! Our 2018-2019 FMWAS year begins with our meeting on Thursday, August 23rd. We will continue with our meetings at 7:00 p.m. at Pensacola State College (see page 2).

Your Board of Directors met for the annual planning meeting earlier this summer to discuss plans and projects for the upcoming year. You can anticipate another year of interesting programs, field trips, Skimmer articles, website articles and Facebook posts (just to name a few).

The Board has chosen the Brown Pelican as our Bird of the Year. To many, the Brown Pelican is a common, goofy looking sea bird. They are fun to watch diving for fish and flying overhead in formation. Those of us living here in the 1960s–1980s have an additional appreciation for this bird. Back then, there were none here. They now represent a success story of rescuing a species on the brink of collapse. You will hear “the rest of the story” and more about the Brown Pelican throughout the upcoming year.

In conjunction with our selection of the Brown Pelican, our theme is about Pensacola Bay. Our environment and community is very much tied to the Bay in one form or another. One big nasty oil spill in 2010 should forever remind us not to take it for granted. Now every theme needs a bumper sticker worthy slogan. Well, we failed to come up with one. So please, help out. Give some thought about what the Bay means to us. Go to our website and send us a catchy catch phrase. Some that failed the consensus test were “Make the Bay Great Again!” and “Bay Life.” Close, but no.

Hopefully by our August meeting we’ll have something most of us can relate to.

Susanne Timmons

The 2018-19 chapter officers were elected unanimously at the Annual Meeting, May 17, 2018:

President—Susanne Timmons
Vice President—Michael Brower
Treasurer—Steve Coster
Recording Secretary—Carole Tebay
Corresponding Secretary—Ann Forster
Director—Scott Rathkamp (first year)

2018 Curtis Kingsbery Education Award—

The 2018 Curtis Kingsbery Education Award was presented to the Baker School, K-12, Okaloosa County, Florida, in recognition of their outstanding conservation education program for fifth graders, and to the longtime coordinator of the program, Mrs. Annette Loyd.

Every year for the past decade, Baker School has presented a unique and creative program in conservation education to prepare their fifth grade students who will take the Florida Assessment Test. For the complete story go to www.FMWAudubon.org, look on the home page (if not there go to Article Archive tab in lower left corner).

Audubon Adventures—Nature Study Designed for 3rd-6th Graders

One of our ongoing projects is to introduce children to the world of nature and wildlife through colorful magazines and resources for educators from the National Audubon Society Audubon Adventures program. In the 2017-18 school year, through generous member donations we funded 5024 magazine booklets for students at the Roy Hyatt Environmental Center, Escambia County Schools; 192 magazine booklets for students at the Navarre Beach Marine Science Center, Santa Rosa County Schools; teacher kits for a classroom in Santa Rosa County and in Escambia County and 96 magazine booklets for the chapter's Outreach Committee.

A donation of any amount is welcome and will provide magazine booklets for the Roy Hyatt Environmental Center or the Navarre Beach Marine Science Center. A donation of $50 will sponsor a classroom. If you would like it to go to a specific teacher, please include teacher’s name, school and contact information. Please make checks payable to FMW Audubon Society and mail to FMW Audubon Society, P.O. Box 17484, Pensacola, FL 32522. For information, contact Mary Jones, 850-288-0488.

To learn about the program, visit the website www.audubonadventures.org
What you don’t see you don’t miss. But I remember and I miss them. In the lingering light of a long June night ahead, we hurried through the dinner dishes, anxious to be outside when they arrived, on schedule, at dusk. Fireflies (Photinus pyralis), the species most common to Southeastern United States.

They filled the night sky, a million blinking lights gliding slowly through the air around us. We could reach out to touch them. Sometimes we would catch them and put them in jars, take them inside to a darkened room, briefly before returning them to the night. They had a purpose, we were told, blinking in code to attract a mate, just that really special mate out there among those million gliding lights. How awesome nature seemed to a nine year old.

We called them lightning bugs. We knew little then of their value, their needs, only their magic of a summer night in Missouri. But we were free to ponder, free from the distractions of a world to come, of television, computers, and cell phones, we were free to indulge in the wonders and ways of the natural world, of nature at night, and the mystery of the Earth, the sun and the moon, all the things to consider on a summer evening in Missouri in 1938.

And now they’re mostly gone, the fireflies, lightning bugs, glow worms, those candles of the night sky. Insect spraying may also be a factor, but light pollution, the scientists postulate—the end of the dark sky—is thought to have doomed them. Yes, just look into the sky any August evening in Pensacola and try to find the stars above the dome of light—much less a firefly. Rarely now, in certain southern wilderness areas, they are reported, but the very last firefly I ever saw was on a June night in Natchez, Mississippi, in 2014. A single lonely searcher.

I’m glad I have the memory that few youngsters today can share, of fireflies from those long ago starlit nights of summer, when as a nine year old I could catch them in a jar, and release them to go on blinking in code, for that mate out there somewhere in the dark sky. History may be the storeroom of time. The past, however, belongs only to those who have lived it.
Introductory Membership

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

Individual/Family: One year — $20

(Join through our chapter and your 1st year dues will come to us for local use.)

Student Membership — One year — $7

(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 ____________________________

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 __.

Francis M. Weston Audubon Society —— Chapter 46

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