



Wing Beat

June & July 2009
Vol. 43 No. 4

Reach us by calling 727-442-9140 or visit us at www.clearwateraudubon.org

Habitat Fragmentation Part 3: resource-limited species

By Marianne Korosy



Federally Endangered Florida Grasshopper Sparrow
Photo Courtesy of Marianne Korosy

Animals differ in their life-history strategies and these differences can make them vulnerable to the pressures of habitat fragmentation. Resource-limited species are ecological specialists that require a specific plant community or a specific diet for survival and successful reproduction. Habitat loss, a form of fragmentation, diminishes acreage of critical habitat and isolates the remaining patches so that successive generations of young have more difficulty finding mates and suitable habitat in which to nest and raise young. Remnant patches may become separated by highways, parking lots and retail centers, and neighborhoods landscaped with non-native plants. Progressive isolation of small populations of a bird species result in loss of genetic diversity leading to inbreeding and genetic drift - a random loss of a possibly critically-adaptive gene that protects against disease, for example.

There are many examples of ecological specialists in Florida. Snail Kites depend on apple snails for food, Limpkin subsist on apple snails or freshwater mussels, Swallow-tailed Kites nest only in hardwood river swamps, and Least Terns require early-succession (i.e. little to no vegetation) sandy substrate for nesting. Florida Scrub-jays are resource-limited species that eat primarily scrub-oak acorns and require ample areas of bare sandy ground in which to cache hundreds of acorns for periods of each year when oak mast is unavailable.

Red-cockaded Woodpeckers are restricted to open-canopy clusters of mature pine trees, where they excavate nest cavities in live trees and then drill resin wells above and below the opening. Resin exuded from the resin wells covers the area around and below the cavity opening preventing entry by predatory, tree-climbing rat snakes. Cavity excavation in small-diameter trees can kill the tree outright or render it subject to breakage in wind storms. The Ivory-billed Woodpecker subsisted on larvae of three families of beetles abundant only in large acreages of dead and dying old-growth trees after storms, floods, or fires.

Florida Grasshopper Sparrows persist only in treeless palmetto prairie burned every 1-2 years and abandon habitat or have markedly poorer nesting success in habitat unburned for >3 years. Bachman's Sparrows are found only in treeless palmetto prairie, pine flat woods or longleaf pine savanna burned within the past 3 years and decline in abundance rapidly thereafter.

Ecological specialists, i.e. resource-limited species, are components of biodiversity that will only persist if their critical habitat remains intact in sufficient areas to provide for survival, reproductive success, and the genetic diversity needed to adapt to a changing climate, human encroachment and the spread of exotic, invasive plant and animal species. How can you help? Be active in supporting Florida Forever land-purchases, Everglades restoration, and revenue needed to maintain wildlife management areas and state parks. And be an active volunteer on behalf of environmental conservation!

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WING BEAT is published February, April, June, August, October, & December by the Clearwater Audubon Society.

Clearwater Audubon Society *servicing all of North Pinellas since 1959*
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WING BEAT Editor - Barb Walker
 Submissions deadline for the next issue is July 10th, 2009. **Submissions must be un-formatted.**

Please submit articles via email to: submissions@clearwateraudubon.org or mail to the address above, Attn: Wingbeat Editor.

WING BEAT advertising deadline for the next issue is July 10, 2009. Business size ads are \$25 per issue. Please address other rate inquiries to Treasurer, Jane Williams at 727-447-7394.

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BIRDS IN FOCUS
*In association with
NATURE'S BEST PHOTOGRAPHY*

Parlay your passion for birds into a dream trip to Peru, Australia, or Honduras, or win professional photo gear, in Audubon's first photography awards. Each participant can submit up to 10 bird images, so you have 10 chances to win. Your winning entry will appear in the January-February issue of Audubon and in Nature's Best Photography. Here's your chance to see your images soar to the top. **Enter now!**

Enter: May 15 to July 15, 2009
Categories: Professional, Amateur, Youth (ages 13-17)
Details: www.audubonmagazinephotoawards.org

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Deadline: July 15, 2009

Audubon Magazine Announces Call for Entries for the Audubon Magazine Photography Awards: Birds in Focus
*In Association with Nature's Best Photography Magazine,
Awards Sponsored by Nikon*

New York, NY-April 20, 2009--- Audubon magazine is launching the 2009 Audubon Magazine Photography Awards: Birds in Focus, created to celebrate the beauty and diversity of birdlife through the art of photography, and to honor the exceptional work of talented professional, amateur and **youth photographers** from all over the U.S. Audubon will be accepting submissions online until July 15 in three categories: Professional, Amateur, and Youth. Photographers are encouraged to reveal a new angle or perspective in their work. "Think creatively," advises Audubon's design director Kevin Fisher, one of the judges. "Originality and drama rank high at Audubon. Include tight shots, such as close-ups of eyes, feathers. We welcome uncommon perspectives." Other judges include renowned wildlife photographer Joel Sartore, a regular contributor to Audubon and *National Geographic*; Kim Hubbard, longtime Audubon photography editor and an accomplished photographer in her own right whose work featuring the birds of Bonaire is currently on exhibit at the Greenwich (CT) Audubon Center; and Steve Freligh, publisher of *Nature's Best Photography*.

The Award winners will be announced in December and will see their work showcased within the pages of both Audubon and *Nature's Best Photography* magazines, as well as on their respective websites. An impressive array of prizes will be awarded, including top-of-the-line photo and optic equipment from award sponsor, Nikon. **Prizes include:**

- Journey to Peru's Tambopata National Reserve
- An ultimate birding safari to Australia's "Top End," the Northern Territory
- 14-day Tropical Rivers and Rainforest cruise through South America
- Opportunity to travel to Honduras with Audubon wildlife photographer Roy Toft
- A Nikon D80 digital SLR camera, 18-55mm NIKKOR VR lens, and a set of Nikon EDG 8x32 binoculars

Submissions: Accepted May 15 - July 15, 2009. Up to 10 images per entrant. For details, visit www.AudubonMagazinePhotoAwards.com

Audubon magazine, the flagship publication of the National Audubon Society, has been connecting people with nature for over 100 years, and has been recognized with an impressive number of photography, design and editorial awards, including:

- ASME National Magazine Award Finalist: General Excellence
- ASME National Magazine Award Finalist: Design
- Communications Arts Photography Award of Excellence
- American Photography Award
- Photo District news (PDN) Award
- Ozzie Platinum Awards for Photography

Clearwater Audubon Society Field Trips

June 2009

Saturday, 6/6/09, 8AM
Moccasin Lake Nature Park
Madeleine Bohrer, 518-6241
Meet in the Park: songbirds & raptors in oak & xeric hammock, waterbirds in lake. ¾ mile trail.
More info online: Moccasin Lake Nature Park

Saturday, 6/13/09, 8AM

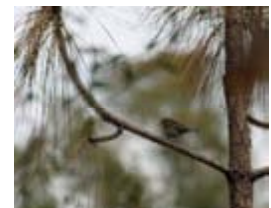
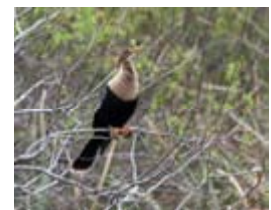
Clearwater Marine Aquarium
Mike MacDonald, 409-0459
Meet at Clearwater Marine Aquarium: explore the marine environment of St. Joseph Sound with CMA biologists; lunch on mainland. More info online: <http://www.cmaqarium.org/>

July 2009

MULTI - DAY TRIP: Wednesday, 7/29/09, 6AM - Thursday, 8/6/09, 6PM+
Southeastern Arizona Birding
Paul Trunk, 447-4785
Hummingbirds, songbirds, raptors galore in the Chiracahua & Huachuca mountains.



Photos Courtesy of Barb Walker



Blown Away at Morris Bridge and Lettuce Lake

By Madeleine Bohrer

On a very gusty day in late March, six of us gathered in the whirlwinds for a walk in these familiar, beautiful woods full of the shimmering, bright green leaves unique to springtime. Everything was in motion—like the tail end of a hurricane—and finding birds was a tall order.

We could hear Red-eyed and Blue-headed Vireos calling but seeing them was next to impossible. The old adage applies though: “A bad day birding is better than a good day at work.” Of course, there is no such thing as a “bad day” when we bird—there are just too many wonderful things to see.

After scoring Northern Parulas and Carolina Chickadees in the parking lot, the boardwalk at Morris Bridge brought us some exciting sights: over a dozen yellow-striped baby ‘gators were slowly worming their way through the duck weed with mother a few feet away, submerged to her eyeballs; she was certainly keeping her eyes on us. Nearby, one lucky soul saw a Louisiana Waterthrush but it quickly disappeared into the brush. As a consolation, moments later a Swallow-tailed Kite circled just above us in an opening in the trees like a lost star from the heavens. I would love to transform myself into one of these phenomenal birds.

We watched more ‘gators, turtles and a lovely green anole then continued to Lettuce Lake. What a remarkable park—it never ceases to amaze me: it is a world unto itself. Perhaps it seems like this because of the 4 story tower set beside the oblong lake: you have a true bird’s eye view of water, trees, clouds, and sky. Side by side with ancient cypress trees you can watch Spoonbills, Cormorants, Great Blue Herons, and Osprey glide by at eye level. On the boardwalk, we set up a scope and studied three stunning species: Glossy Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, and Wood Duck. Just as the leaves glow with spring energy, the plumage on these birds radiated color. The Glossy’s iridescent green wings contrasted beautifully against its sleek red-brown body. A Spoonbill cannot be rivaled when in breeding plumage: this individual had a remarkable black strap behind its head as if it were holding his bill in place and its flanks were streaked with not only deep pink but yellow feathers. And the Wood Ducks...such a splendid creature: the male wears his multicolored helmet with such pride while the female is subtly elegant and poised with her pussy willow-gray feathers and white spectacles.

So again, in spite of the strong wind, the day was fine. It is spring in Florida, the edge of April, the earth shifts and the breezes blow. If we keep our eyes open and soul calm, we can appreciate the wonder of it all.



Photo Courtesy of Barb Walker

Trip to Bird Country

by Madeleine Bohrer

With the New Year at our heels it is easy to be swept into the rush of life in Pinellas County. The best antidote is to go birding with the cool Florida air to sharpen one’s focus.

A dozen Clearwater Audubon members took flight mid-January to the southwest corner of Lake Okeechobee to spend a weekend visiting Stormwater Treatment Area 5 and the vicinity. We began our tour of STA-5 as the sun rose over a mosaic of lakes fringed with green and gold reeds bending in the constant crisp breeze. Our first sighting was phenomenal: five Purple Gallinules foraging at the water’s edge, their gangly, yellow toes so shocking against the black, boggy mud. A Purple Swamp Hen strutted behind them. Lining a nearby canal were hundreds of Snowy Egrets, White Pelicans, Glossy and White Ibis. Interspersed were Lesser Yellowlegs doing a face-to-face dance and Black-necked Stilts hopping up and down on those glorious red legs. A lone Caspian Tern streaked by while a Sora with its yellow bill and upturned “bunny” tail darted into the reeds. A Peregrine Falcon perched on a utility pole observing everything from a safe distance. Huddled together in a white, pink, and black collage were more Snowy Egrets, Roseate Spoonbills, and Wood Storks. Even seeing the contrast of Black and Turkey Vultures sitting side by side was thrilling. There were giant flocks of Long-billed Dowitchers, Least Sandpipers, and Red-winged Blackbirds and when they took flight it was like a bird rain storm.

Over one pond we found a bird many of us yearn for—the Snail Kite. One flew right by our van: no binoculars were necessary to see its somehow sorrowful face, red hook-bill, and huge brown wings delicately poised on the breeze, nearly motionless, just a small dip and flap, up and down, searching for snails. We saw a total of five of these Kites—suddenly they were commonplace! Northern Harriers were seen feeding here as well. Quietly bobbing beyond were Ring-necked Ducks, Gadwalls, and Northern Shovelers.

Birding the country roads in the area was just as breathtaking: Sandhill Cranes, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Crested Caracaras, Savannah Sparrows, Kestrels. Can you imagine such color and beauty in one day? We watched a Short-tailed Hawk ball itself up before a dive and you could see its talons etched against the bright sky, sharp and ready for the hunt.

Corkscrew Swamp was our last stop—how can words do it justice? It is a primeval cypress stand which cradles dozens of species of warblers, hawks, storks, herons, egrets, and owls in trees that have seen centuries of life. Walking into the forest is like entering a crystal where trees magically split the light. There is no sound but the calls of the birds. Can you think of anything better?

Two days, one hundred bird species, good company, and visions to last a lifetime. This trip into bird country has stayed in my mind’s eye to this day.

[Note: Hendry-Glades Audubon offers public tours to STA-5. Contact Margaret England at sta5birding@embarqmail.com or 863-902-0856. Lodging was at the wonderful Clewiston Inn. Thank you to Paul and Debbi Trunk for arranging this trip.]

HONARIUM: John W. Rippon, PhD:

By Mike MacDonald

‘Dr. John’ is a Past President of Clearwater Audubon Society. He has been active in environmental causes for more than 20 years in Florida, and as a resident of Illinois, Michigan & planet Earth.

Dr. John’s renown comes from his forty plus years as a leader in the mycological [fungi] discipline. As a tenured professor at the University of Chicago, Dr John was a pioneer in basic [medical] mycological research all over the world. He has lectured in medical mycology throughout the world, on every continent.

Dr John has authored 3 medical mycological dictionaries, 7 textbooks, and well over 100 “publications, articles, reviews, abstracts, and lab manuals.” Along the way he has been recognized and honored too many times to enumerate here.

Dr John’s greatest contribution to the science of mycology, perhaps, was his help in the creation of the Medical Mycological Association of the Americas.

The Association will honor ‘Dr. John’ at their 2009 annual convention in Philadelphia. He will be presented with their Rhoda Benham award, the equivalent of the Nobel Prize in the Medical Mycology discipline.

I will represent Clearwater Audubon Society at the ceremonies in Philadelphia.

It is my honor to be counted among ‘Dr John’s’ friends.

In Remembrance of Valore Marcinak

By Paul Trunk

Valore Marcinak passed away on April 21, 2009. She was born in Clinton, IN, but spent most of her adult life in Detroit, MI. where she was hired by Ford Motor Company as their first woman metallurgist and then went on to own her own Industrial PR and Advertising firm. She was a lifetime member of the Society of Women Engineers although she retired from the work force,

Valore did not retire from her personal commitment to helping others. Upon her move to Florida in 1971 she became involved with non-profit environmental concerns and other charities. In 1987 she helped found the Mustard Seed Foundation, which housed & cared for the chemically addicted & homeless. She was a member of the Nature Conservancy, Past President of The Clearwater Audubon Society, the Clearwater and National Sierra Club, The Greens Defenders of Wildlife, The Florida State Parks Environmental Protection & was a Hospice volunteer, along with her dog "Fritter". She was awarded "The Service to Mankind" by the Sunshine Sertoma Club, & also received J.C. Penney's "Golden Rule Award".

Valore was one the most engaging, dynamic and positive people I have ever gotten to know. She filled the room with energy and she truly loved life.

2008/2008 Bald Eagle Season Finale

By Barbara Walker

Bald Eagle nesting season ended on Friday, May 15th and it has been a monumental year. At the start of the season, which is October 1st, I wrote a story called “The Banded One”. I was hopeful to find a banded female eagle which was taken to the Audubon Bird of Prey Center in Maitland last February. Mike Kell, VP of West Pasco Audubon, captured a photograph of that eagle. She is successfully nesting and raised her first young eaglet. She was identified by a scar on her right eye and the band.

Early in the season Betty Mayo of Tarpon Springs spotted a banded eagle and reported it to us. We located that eagle but were unable to identify it this year. Then half way through the season Doug Davidson helped us track an eagle in his neighborhood near Gandy. We found that eagle was banded too! Two more eagles in St. Petersburg had been previously noted with bands bringing the total of banded eagles to 5 in Pinellas County. Wow!

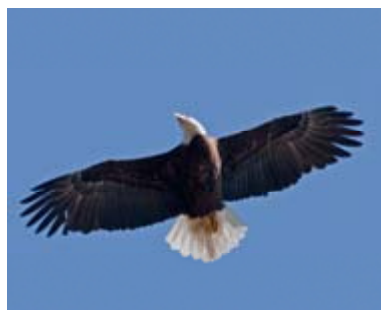
The season ended with 27 nests and 31 young eaglets fledged bringing the young-to-nest ratio to 1.14. The state goal is 1.5. 1/3 of the nests are ‘adapted’ in cell towers or power transmission towers and 50% of those failed. One cell tower nest produced 3 young however. 8 new nests were identified and reported.

Join us for a Bald Eagle Presentation!

June 6th, Brooker Creek Preserve, 1—2pm, Meet Lynda White of Audubon of Florida’s Bird of Prey Center and Paige the Bald Eagle. This is a full day of celebration beginning at 10am and ending at 5pm. Jeff Klinkenberg from the St. Petersburg Times will also present. Please visit www.clearwateraudubon.org or call Barb Walker at 789-0183 for more details.

September 15th, Bald Eagles and Osprey, St. Pete Audubon <http://stpeteaudubon.org/joomla/index.php>

October 3, Bald Eagles, West Pasco Audubon <http://www.westpascoaudubon.com/>



*“The Banded One”
Photo Courtesy of Mike Kell,
Vice President
West Pasco Audubon*

Creating Healthy Backyard Habitats

By Judith Gammonley

Habitat loss is the most significant threat to our endangered animals and plants. Healthy habitats provide food, water, shelter and a place to raise young wildlife. Other benefits include: using less water, less fertilizers and pesticides. Planting native plants can also reduce the work of lawn care and enhance the natural environment. We can then experience the enjoyment of seeing and interacting with plants, birds, and other animals. Audubon and other ecological organizations have identified some general guidelines for creating a healthy yard (including small spaces such as patios, balconies, and rooftops).

1. First survey your space with the goal of improving the environment and attracting wildlife.
2. Identify what types of wildlife will benefit? Birds, insects, butterflies, mammals, toads, lizards.
3. Plant native plants and wildflowers specific to your region.
4. Plant the right plant in the right place according to soil, water, and light conditions. May use containers or raised beds
5. Increase food supplies for birds and other species with feeders and native plants.
6. Provide a water source and keep it clean and filled. Fountains, birdbaths, dishes, and misters.
7. Provide shelter with trees, shrubs, logs, and snags.
8. Provide nesting sites of birdhouses, clay pots, toad houses and/or brush piles.
9. Remove invasive exotic plants.
10. Reduce the size of turf lawns.
11. Keep cats indoors.
12. Avoid impervious surfaces, “hard-scaping”
13. Recycle pine needles, grass clippings and leaves to use as mulch.
14. Use compost kitchen waste as a natural fertilizer.
15. Collect and use rain barrel water.

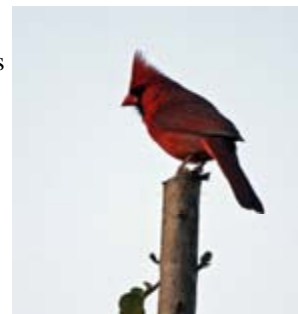


Photo Courtesy of Barb Walker

Remember creating a healthy backyard, patio, or balcony habitat can be fun! Start with small changes that are important for wildlife survival and environmental improvement. Need help in getting started? Contact these online sources:

1. Audubon At Home, Healthy Yards
2. Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, Project Feeder Watch
3. Florida Native Plant Society
4. National Wildlife Federation, Garden for Wildlife.
5. National Gardening Association.

Happy 50th Birthday Clearwater Audubon Society!

The trials have been few. The struggles many! The accomplishments unbelievable in spite of it all – mute testimony to dedication of “*Conservation Through Education.*”

One of the original founders is still with us ! We have honored many of our members who have enabled our successes.

We traveled to many exotic destinations before “eco-tourism” became a buzz-word. We have explored nearly every environmental nook & cranny in Florida.

We have sponsored legions of educators and young people to environmental camps and other environmental learning opportunities.

We have supported worthy conservation causes and environmental facilities in our Chapter’s assigned area, again too numerous to mention here.

We have advocated an encyclopedia’s worth of conservation/ environmental issues. Celebrations are being planned. Keep an eye out for more information!

Lifetime Conservation Awards

On Monday, 2 March 2009, **Joan Brigham & Ken Rowe** were recognized for their dedication to “*Conservation Through Education*”.

It was difficult to know where to begin to find the proper words, and compress them into this space, in order to convey a sense of the achievements of these honorees:

educator – statistician – researcher - fund raiser - generous supporter – recruiter –mentor - tenacious conservation advocate - avid birder – organizer - field trip leader - and just generally all around beautiful people to know and count as friends.

Clearwater Audubon Society is indebted to **Joan Brigham & Ken Rowe** for more than a combined total of forty-five years of steadfast, thoughtful and tireless support.

Joan Brigham & Ken Rowe are a treasure trove of knowledge, facts, history and have showered honor on the Society’s “*Conservation Through Education*” efforts.

It was a pleasant duty to recognize and reward **Joan Brigham & Ken Rowe** with the Society’s Lifetime Conservation Award.

Clearwater Audubon Society Membership Application

Name _____
Home _____ Cell _____
Phone _____ Phone _____
Home _____
Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email Address _____

To ensure you receive our electronic newsletter please fill in your email address, if you do not have email please call 727-442-9140 to request a paper copy.

Which membership category? Chapter @ \$15/year _____ National @ \$20/year _____

Please enclose check to Clearwater Audubon Society for Chapter membership, or National Audubon Society for National membership

<p>Clearwater Audubon Society P.O. Box 97 Clearwater, FL 33757 Attention: Barbara MacDonald, Membership Chair</p>
--

How can you help Clearwater Audubon Society achieve its Purpose? [check all that apply]

advocacy ___ conservation ___ education ___ field trips ___ finance ___ hospitality ___
media/PR ___ membership ___ newsletter ___ investment security ___ other ___ [list below]

When can you help Clearwater Audubon Society achieve its purpose? [check all that apply]

SUN am _____ pm _____ nite _____
MON am _____ pm _____ nite _____
TUE am _____ pm _____ nite _____
WED am _____ pm _____ nite _____

THU am _____ pm _____ nite _____
FRI am _____ pm _____ nite _____
SAT am _____ pm _____ nite _____
HOD am _____ pm _____ nite _____

If not a Florida resident, which months of the year are you available?
From _____ To _____

Any other information about you that will help Clearwater Audubon Society achieve its purpose:

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WHAT IS THE CLEARWATER AUDUBON SOCIETY?

Reach us by calling 727-442-9140 or visit us at www.clearwateraudubon.org

Our purpose is embodied in our motto: **Conservation though education** & our activities include:

- protection of nesting, wintering and migrating birds through Project Colony Watch, rescue of chicks fallen from rooftop nests, Project Eagle Watch, and participation in the county-wide beach nesting bird survey;
- education, including Audubon Adventures for elementary school students, environmental education scholarships for teachers and students, free birding classes for the public, and a speakers bureau;
- sponsorship of projects at local nature parks;
- field trips to prime birding locations in Florida, throughout the United States and internationally;
- monthly meetings held October through May featuring speakers on a wide array of environment-related topics;

- participation in bird surveys, which provide data for vital ornithological research;
- participation in local nature festivals;
- publication of our bimonthly newsletter, Wingbeat, and our website, at www.ClearwaterAudubon.org;
- advocacy at the local, state and national levels.

YOU CAN HELP!

Whatever your interests or skills, we can use your help protecting birds and the environment. If you like working outdoors, writing, speaking, organizing, baking, or just meeting new people, we have opportunities for you. Call the Clearwater Audubon Society at 727-442-9140 or an officer listed on page 2 and we'll tell you how you can help.

Our Motto: *Conservation Through Education*

Supporting our community since 1959