

WING BEAT

April & May, 2008

Volume XLI Number 5

Wingbeat Goes Electronic: Call Us If You Still Want A Paper Copy!

Starting with the August/September 2008 issue, we will start delivering Wingbeat primarily through email. This will save printing costs, paper, postage, and the fossil fuels required for paper delivery. It's time, we think, to be as responsible as possible in this matter. This step saves Clearwater Audubon dollars for more direct education and conservation uses, and also demonstrates our respect for consumption and a smaller carbon footprints.

To Receive Wingbeat Via Email

To receive Wingbeat via email, please email us at wingbeat@clearwateraudubon.org. Please use the subject line: **electronic wingbeat**.

To Receive A Paper Copy

We do realize that some members are not and do not intend to become email users. If you wish to continue to receive a paper copy of Wingbeat, you *must* let us know. Call Barb Walker at (727)442-9140, or write to us at P.O. Box 97, Clearwater, Florida 33757.

If I Do Nothing?

If we do not hear from you, we'll assume you plan to download Wingbeat from the Clearwater Audubon website at your own convenience. Wingbeat issues are already online. If you've never looked at one there, we encourage you to check out this very edition at clearwateraudubon.org/newsletter.html or by following the About Us menu item to Newsletters.

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New President's Thoughts

by Mike MacDonald

It's going to be tough job filling the shoes of those who have preceded me. I often reflect upon the rich history of Clearwater Audubon Society. I am humbled by the years of struggle and achievement. Clearwater Audubon Society has journeyed so very far!

Clearwater Audubon Society is fortunate in so many ways:

- financial resources that few organizations of our nature enjoy;
- great human resources that we have just begun to understand and connect with;
- gifted, talented, enthusiastic and dedicated Board of Directors;
- a rich and varied history of endeavors, achievements and adventures; and so much zzzzzmore.

Many of our Members have talents that would help Clearwater Audubon Society in its conservation endeavors. We want to connect with them, and discover how together we might support Clearwater Audubon Society in these endeavors.

I am honored to have been chosen to lead this great organization. I have a few goals and objectives I would like to achieve during my term. We are presented with opportunities to grow and become even more of an asset to our community. I will always be open to any and all who wish to join in these pursuits.

WING BEAT

Volume XLI Number 5

April & May, 2008

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by the Clearwater Audubon Society

Clearwater Audubon Society serves North Pinellas County.

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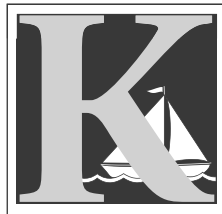
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April & May Calendar for Clearwater Audubon

Monday April 7, 2008, 7:30 pm

20 Years of Adventures with Terry Tomalin, St. Pete Times

Terry Tomalin, outdoors editor for Florida's largest daily newspaper, will speak about his 20 years of writing outdoor stories for the St. Pete Times. Tomalin joined The St. Petersburg Times in 1986, but two years later, left to backpack, fly fish and surf in New Zealand and Australia. He rejoined the Times in 1989 as a government reporter, but after climbing volcanoes and running white-water rivers, the newsroom had lost its allure. In 1990, he moved to the Sports Department and has since written about everything from cave diving to blue-water sailing. Tomalin was recently named a Fellow of the prestigious Explorers Club in New York City.

Friday, 4/4/08, 7AM

Long Day Trip: Cross Bar Ranch

Meet at Countryside Shopping Town in front of Sears by US19, bring lunch & water. We'll ride a safari bus to observe resident & migratory songbirds, raptors & burrowing owls; learn about Pinellas County water resources. Contact Ken Rowe, 727-781-0745.

Friday, 4/4/08 to Sunday, 4/6/08

Audubon Academy

Learn how to make our Audubon Chapter more effective. Contact Paul Trunk if you are interested in participating at 727-447-4785.

Saturday, 4/5/08, 8AM

Moccasin Lake Nature Park

Meet at Moccasin Lake Nature Park. We'll find resident songbirds & raptors in oak & xeric hammock, plus waterbirds. Easy ¾ mile trek on shell trail & boardwalks. Contact Madeleine Bohrer, 727-518-6241.

Saturday, 4/12/08, 8AM

Circle-B-Bar Ranch

Meet at Tri-City Mall in front of Party City, bring lunch & water. We'll see eagles & other raptors, songbirds, water birds & alligators at former cattle ranch in xeric oak habitat on the shores of Lake Hancock with 3.5 miles sand trail. Contact Mike MacDonald, 727-538-8688.

Wednesday, 4/16/08, 8AM

Honeymoon Island State Park

Meet behind McDonalds at corner of ALT US19 & Curlew Road. We'll observe wading, water & shore birds plus migratory songbirds & raptors along a 2-3 mile walk on sand trails. Contact Merle Hubbard, 727-939-1549.

Wednesday, 4/19/08, 8AM

John Chesnut County Park

Meet at Peggy Park Trail parking lot. We'll look for resident & migratory songbirds, raptors & more during this easy walk on packed trails, boardwalk & pavement. Contact Lynn Sumerson, 727-796-8822.

Monday, May 5, 2008, 7:30pm

Spiders with Francia Smith

It has been said that if you live in Florida you are never more than 8 feet away from a spider. At times that distance seems like an exaggeration. Francia Smith, long-time environmental educator from Sawgrass Lake Park, will tell us about the spiders that live in Florida & the crucial role they play in our environment.

Saturday, 5/3/08, 8AM

Moccasin Lake Nature Park

Meet at Moccasin Lake Nature Park. We'll find resident songbirds & raptors in oak & xeric hammock, plus waterbirds. Easy ¾ mile trek on shell trail & boardwalks. Enjoy Brunch With The Birds in conjunction with City of Clearwater's Fun-N-Sun celebration. For details, contact Madeleine Bohrer at 727-518-6241.

Saturday, 5/10/08, 8AM

Philippe County Park & Safety Harbor Museum

Meet at first parking lot in Philippe Park. We'll look for raptors, shorebirds & resident songbirds on Old Tampa Bay; learn about Pinellas history; then lunch at Whistle Stop. Contact Ken Rowe, 727-781-0745.

Saturday, 6/21/08, 9AM

Florida Aquarium & Liberty Ship

Meet at Tri-City Mall in front of Party City: explore the riches of Florida's marine world, discover the splendor of a WW II merchant ship. Lunch in Ybor City. Contact trip leader, Mike MacDonald, 727-538-8688.



To see additional Web Resources for each of these events, check out the calendar pages at clearwateraudubon.org

Eagle Watch

by Joan Brigham

If you enjoy mysteries help us solve these:

Territory #3 (the oldest in the county) Who is the sub-adult male that was injured in a territorial fight on February 28th at Grey Oaks? Why is the original pair still hanging around the nest but ignoring nesting duties? Who are the three juvenile delinquent young that are causing disturbances in the area? This territory has produced many young over the years. Are they part of past broods?

Territory #4 and 25 Why did the John Chestnut and Bayside Bridge pairs delay nesting until February? Nests this late are frequently unsuccessful.

Territory #20 Why did this Dunedin pair nest on schedule, abandon, re-nest and abandon again?

Territory # 22 Why did the Coopers Point pair abandon their nest just as eggs were due to hatch?

Territory #29 Where is our Walker Ford pair this year?

We observed 14 active territories last year which produced 27 young – a record for the 15 years they have been watched. This year we have 10 active nests from that group with only 9 young. Recent news of two Anclote River nests with one and two young respectively brings the total to 12 nests and 12 young. 3 nests have two each and six have 1 each. 3 nests are still incubating. This year there are three nests on man made structures. The rest are in pines.

It has been a puzzling nesting season in the county. The February flyover had a very bumpy ride making viewing of nests very difficult. Last year's nesting season was so incredible it is possible we just had too high expectation for this season. The birds may be exhausted from last year's efforts, but there has never been a year in which we have had so many failures. The questions remain. Stay tuned.

Meritt Island Overnight Trip

by Madeleine Bohrer

How can one possibly condense an overnight trip to Merritt Island National Wildlife refuge and the surrounding areas into a few lines of a newsletter? It's a tough order but let's try...

What comes to my mind are flocks of birds, feeding in watery expanses and flying freely, void of the human influences that so often impede their natural movement. Ironically, the preservation

of these 140,000 acres is guaranteed by Cape Canaveral's Kennedy Space Center, the pinnacle of human achievement.

The ponds were full of ducks: Pintail, Blue- and Green-winged Teal, American Widgeon, Shoveler, and Scaup. One lone female European Widgeon floated serenely, the morning sun turning her into a lovely golden prize. A flock of White Pelicans were intermixed with hundreds of feeding Avocets rushing en masse with their heads underwater—such a purely remarkable and cherished sight the fourteen of us on this trip shared. Tricolor Herons picked their way along the banks draped in long, lush breeding plumage as Killdeer rushed by and Red Wing Blackbirds busied themselves in the reeds. Dark flocks of Glossy Ibis glided above us as a Harrier dipped down into the brush in the distance.

Remarkably, Paul Trunk, the leader of our trip, led us to all our target species. We saw two Clapper Rails darting through mangrove roots; I never realized how skinny they were until Liz Drayer and I saw one from behind. "As thin as a rail" someone remarked. How true! Nearby was a Queen Butterfly—no field guide could ever do justice to the crisp colors of this insect.

After a delicious picnic put together by Paul and Debbie Trunk and graced by the cries of Osprey and Red-shouldered Hawk, we drove to Playalinda Beach, 24 miles along the Canaveral National Seashore. Surf sounds lured us up a stairway over a huge palmetto-covered dune to look down on the endless blue expanse of the Atlantic Ocean. Unbelievably, far over the ocean right in front of us were three Northern Gannets, one of which was an adult as white as the sand flying with such ease it seemed to move in slow motion. A Black-backed Gull flew over our heads breaking the spell and we were off to look for Scrub Jays who we found easily with peanut lures. One in particular eyed each of us with astounding intelligence before swooping down for its treat. Their tails were long and beautifully blue.

Before leaving the refuge, we stopped at Haulover Canal to look for manatees. Sure enough, there they were: huge, algae-covered torpedoes with nostrils, the upsweep of their paddle-tails making flat circles on the water's surface. Amazing!

From here, we went to a water treatment plant south of the refuge. As we drove our two vans around the lovely spring-green plants and bubbling ponds ringed with wild flowers, Debbie radioed Paul in the van ahead: "Could you please find us a Bittern?" Not 30 seconds later, he responded, "I've got a Bittern here in the ditch." Yeah, right, very funny. But, yes! The camouflage on this American Bittern was so perfect we nearly missed it: just a couple of feet away, its brown and pale gold stripes matched the reeds to perfection. Even with its bill pointed straight up it looked at us so intently that its eyes seemed comically pasted to the underside of its bill.

We were on a roll so we asked for a Purple Gallinule next.

(continued on page 6...)

Rowdy Raptors

by Barbara Walker

On February 28th a resident of Grey Oaks, Mr. Richard Weeks, noticed that his dog was behaving strangely. Upon investigation he found and reported a Bald Eagle on the ground near his property. The injured 4-5 year old male eagle hid below the deeply shaded tree line which surrounds the vacant lot next door to Mr. Week's house. Unable to fly due to a broken wing he could only watch and wait until rescuer Rick Gechter from the Suncoast Seabird Sanctuary arrived.

Equipped with long leather gloves and a net with a long handle Rick Gechter and Clearwater Audubon Society member Mathew Poling teamed up and quickly captured the Bald Eagle. Rick transported the young male in a cage to the Suncoast Seabird Sanctuary where Clinic Manager Barb Suto and staff tended to his wounds. His right side had clearly taken the brunt of an aerial dispute. Miraculously his right eye was intact but every feather on the right side of his head had been plucked off. He really was a bald Bald Eagle. A single stitch was placed near his right ear. Extensive bruising under his right wing and puncture wounds required antibiotics. He cleaned up well and we found out he had just a little bit of brown on his tail to help us identify him and determine his age.

Two days later I drove the eagle to the Audubon Bird of Prey Center in Maitland, Orlando where it was examined immediately by Veterinary Technician, Sam Stock. First the eyes were checked for any scratches but none were found. "He must have closed his eyes at the right time," said Sam. She x-rayed an unusual lump which could have been a bb or a bullet. The x-ray revealed only a broken radius on the right wing.

Currently the eagle remains in the clinic as #79. "Once he recovers he'll go down to rehab in a fairly small mew which is just a big slated wooden cage," explained Lynda White who runs the center. After that he will be moved to a 100 foot enclosure. He will be released as soon as he is ready. "That will be the tricky part" said Lynda. Using her own territorial maps she will locate a safe place for release. It's nesting season and the center does not want to release him in a place where he may get beat up again.

Audubon Eagle Watchers and Grey Oaks residents' first question was who is the injured male? Was it the male from the Grey Oaks nesting pair? Probably not. Field notes and photographs consulted since February 28 suggest that despite altered nesting patterns, and the presence of unfamiliar sub-adult males within the territory, the Grey Oaks pair seem to be in residence. On March 11th Marijke Verborgt of Grey Oaks said, "I'm glad I took my walk this morning" after spotting some wing flapping in the Grey Oaks nest. Shortly afterwards the female flew in and appeared to be tending to young in the nest. First she tended one side of the nest and then the other. Maybe there are two eaglets just waiting to be seen.

So who is #79? Does the Progress Energy Corridor hold hidden clues? Since early this season Roger Hardwick has been watching

a pair of Bald Eagles attempt to build a nest on a tower in the Progress Energy Corridor near the intersection of East Lake and Tampa Roads. On an outing this season some eagle watchers noticed what could have been a little bit of brown on the tail of the smaller eagle at this unusual site. Roger Hardwick has only seen one eagle flying near that site since the February 27th. On February 29th an Osprey moved into the nest on the tower.

Could the nest have been available because one eagle in that pair is in Maitland at the Bird of Prey Center? If so, this year was his first attempt at nesting and he started in the Progress Energy Corridor. At least one other eagle's nest is on a tower in the Progress Energy Corridor near Trinity. Could our injured male possibly have been born in the Progress Energy Corridor years ago? Did he venture into the Grey Oaks territory while the resident male was nesting and keeping an eye on the other rowdy raptors in his territory? Well, maybe.

Support HR 4093

Unfortunately besides territorial fights, power lines, and car collisions many raptors are killed deliberately. One example is a Bald Eagle who was shot while on the nest in Manatee this year. Another is the Red Shouldered Hawk which golfer Tripp Isenhour allegedly killed with a golf ball recently. Representative Peter DeFazio of Oregon has introduced legislation that would amend the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 so that the intentional killing of protected bird species would be considered a felony, rather than the current Class B Misdemeanor. HR 4093 would send a strong message to prosecutors and courts that Congress takes these crimes seriously. It would pave the way for significant fines (up to \$50,000) and jail sentences (up to 1 year) for the most serious bird-related crimes. Please call your representative and voice your support for HR 4093.

Trinidad - November 2008

by Tom Pickard

The Clearwater Audubon trip to Trinidad & Tobago from the 8th to the 17th of November, 2008 will cost \$2,825 per person double occupancy, including all travel and lodging expenses, everything except drinks and personal purchases.

A deposit of \$325 is required by July 1 and should be sent to

Jane Williams, Treasurer
Clearwater Audubon Society,
P.O. Box 97,
Clearwater FL 33757

Checks should be made out to Clearwater Audubon Society. The deposit will be refundable until August 5. The balance will be due September 15.

A full description of the 10-day program will be posted on the Clearwater Audubon website: www.clearwateraudubon.org by mid-April. For reservations or further information, please e-mail Tom Pickard at tompickard@hotmail.com.

Advocacy Corner

by Liz Drayer

New threat to Brooker Creek Preserve. Progress Energy is planning to build new transmission lines to serve its proposed nuclear power plant. One possible corridor for these power lines is through the Brooker Creek Preserve. Please watch the media for news about these plans, and express your views to the Pinellas County Commission, or in a letter to the editor!

Support county environmental lands. More cuts to the county budget are coming. Please tell your commissioners that our preserves like Brooker Creek, Weedon Island and Shell Key are important and need continued funding. In addition, please urge them to purchase more land for conservation whenever it becomes available. You can call your county commissioners at 464-3377.

Support environmental protection for Clearwater. Clearwater Audubon is urging the city to 1) enact fertilizer restrictions to protect the water quality of Tampa Bay; 2) use more native plants and less turf throughout the city, to conserve water and decrease pesticide and fertilizer use; and 3) continue full funding for Moccasin Lake Nature Park, the city's only environmental education center. City residents, please call your city council members at 562-4042 to support these measures.

Vote "yes" on ballot measure ending property taxes on undeveloped land. This important proposal has the potential to save thousands of acres around the state from development and preserve them for conservation, hunting and fishing. Landowners would be required to sign a conservation easement to restrict use of the land forever. A number of environmental groups including Audubon of Florida support this measure. Please vote "yes" in November and urge your friends and neighbors to do so too.

Volunteers from Clearwater Audubon and the Clearwater police department post "no dogs" signs on north Clearwater Beach. This was the next step in our joint effort to encourage nesting on this beach. Volunteers will be maintaining the signs throughout the year and watching to see if the birds return.

Another setback for Tarpon Springs Wal-mart. In a victory for environmentalists, the city's board of adjustment ruled that Wal-mart will have to get its proposed store reapproved by the city commission after a public hearing. Wal-mart won approval for the proposed construction 3 years ago but has faced a series of setbacks because of opposition by residents and environmentalists.

Developer of Magnolia Bay goes back to the drawing board, again. According to reports in the St. Petersburg Times, the developer of this condominium and hotel project in the Big Bend region plans to change it again to try to win state approval. The Big Bend region is one of the state's last undevel-

oped coastal areas, and this project has been opposed by environmentalists, including our group, since it was proposed more than two years ago.

Hometown Democracy Amendment dead for now. The proposed amendment to the state constitution will not appear on the 2008 ballot. Organizers dispute the state's count of signatures needed to put the measure on the ballot, which the state says fell short of the required number. The signatures gathered so far will count when supporters try again to place it on the ballot in 2010. (This amendment would give voters much greater control over development decisions in their communities).

Questions about our conservation activities? Call Liz Drayer at 771-8044 or email edrayer@tampabay.rr.com

Meritt Island Overnight

(continued from page 4)

Why not? Sure enough, Sid Crawford spotted one walking on the pond plants—its rainbow colors glinting in the sunshine. Could this trip be more perfect? Well, actually yes and it was the second day. The first bird of the day was a Crested Caracara feeding on the roadside. We pulled over and watched this proud and regal member of the falcon family glaring back at us. Fantastic!

We toured another sewage plant with ponds filled with Blue-winged Teal, Hooded Merganser, Mottled Duck, a Kingfisher, and "rafts" of Coots. A lovely female Harrier flew past us as well.

On the way to Lake Kissimmee there were Kestrels, Bald Eagles, Turkeys, and fields of grazing Sandhill Cranes as Robins dotted the sky with their scattered flight. A Peregrine Falcon dove from its post perch straight toward us and seeing its black-marked face straight on was nothing less than awesome. Our goal at Kissimmee was to see Snail Kites. I tried not to get my hopes up as we had all our wishes granted so far, but true to the miraculous nature of this trip, we saw not one but two Kites feeding in the distance. Through a scope I watched one dip down to the water, grasp an apple snail, transfer it from talon to curved beak, and glide down to a shrub to eat it. I decided there and then that my full time job definitely needs to be replaced by full time nature watching.

The only target species we missed was the Red Cockaded Woodpecker in the Three Lakes Wildlife Management area but only due to the time of day we visited its pine realm. Honestly, just standing in its forest and learning that it takes five years for each bird to develop a nest cavity, was quite enough to honor and respect such a creature and end our trip on a humble note.

Two days, over eighty bird species, good birding friends, sunny days and cool nights. "Do we have to go home?" I wondered. At least the deep satisfaction of experiencing these two glorious days will stay with me for many days to come, but I cannot help wondering: where can we go next?

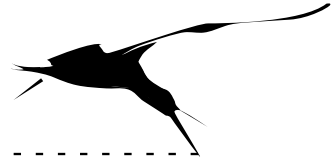
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Karin L. Sampson
Martha Furentes
S. Cashin
J Bixler
Stacey Leigh Chung
Janie Bridges
Anthony Hatzkeris
Eloise Walker
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Mr. Zachary Maciolek
Mr. Leo Olson
Mr. John Thompson



Audubon Membership Form

- National Audubon Membership includes an automatic membership in your local chapter as well as annual subscriptions to Audubon Magazine, Florida Naturalist, & Wing Beat. Introductory membership to National Audubon is \$20.00 (National renewal will be handled by National Audubon.) Make your check payable to National Audubon Society.
- Chapter Only Membership enrolls you as a member of the Clearwater Audubon Society and includes a 6-issue annual subscription to Wing Beat. Annual dues are \$15.00. Your renewal date will appear after your name on your mailing label. Make your check payable to Clearwater Audubon Society.

Member Name(s) _____

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- Please save resources and send my Wing Beat through email.
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WHAT IS THE CLEARWATER AUDUBON SOCIETY?

by Liz Drayer, Board Member & Conservation Chair

Our purpose is embodied in our motto: "Conservation through 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 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 Paul or Debbie Trunk at 727.447.4785 and we'll tell you how you can help.