



# TROPICAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

THE VOICE OF CONSERVATION IN SOUTH FLORIDA

5530 Sunset Drive, Miami, Florida 33143 (305) 667-7337

SPRING 2011

## PROTECT BISCAYNE BAY

BY ANA MARIA LIMA

**ON A WARM WINTER AFTERNOON** Royal Terns and Ruddy Turnstones perch on the rocks along the mangrove trail at Biscayne National Park's headquarters in Homestead, as canoes and tourist boats head out into the shimmering water. Somewhere in the distance off Miami, fishing boats and cruise ships are also plying the vast bay, where dolphins and manatee make their home.

At first glance it looks like paradise. But the truth is Biscayne Bay is in trouble.

From saltwater intrusion to a legacy of pollution and poorly planned agricultural drainage canals, to the threatened funding cuts for the bay's environmental stewards, there is an urgent need for action to protect South Florida's watery jewel. That is why Tropical Audubon has launched a Biscayne Bay Coalition, drawing together environmental advocates, citizens, government officials, and businesses in a joint effort to improve the health of the bay and to fight ongoing and new threats to its fragile ecosystem.

Stretching 35 miles along South Florida's Atlantic Coast, Biscayne Bay is not only a popular recreational and commercial boating destination but also an important shallow estuary full of lush sea grasses. Here, where freshwater and saltwater mix, the bay is protected from the ocean by islands and

keys to the west and the mainland to the east, creating a haven for infant and juvenile marine life.

One of the most urgent threats to Biscayne Bay this year are the proposed budget cuts to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Gov. Rick Scott announced he would keep all of our state parks open, but in turn is targeting the regulatory side of DEP. There is also a proposal to close the

office that manages the Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve, which oversees 70,000 acres of the bay beyond the borders of Biscayne National Park. Their job is to protect Biscayne Bay and all tidally connected tributaries that provide the bay with much needed freshwater.

The staff at the aquatic preserve office work hard to educate the public about the ecology of the Bay, monitor natural resources, and respond to disasters like algal

Photo © Rafael A. Gálvez

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## PORTER-RUSSELL PINELAND

by Ana Maria Lima

**A WALK THROUGH THE PORTER-RUSSELL PINELAND** at dusk is like a trip back in time. As sunshine splinters through the canopy of tall slash pines, Zebra Longwings float past lovely silver palms and Wild poinsettia. Underfoot, a lonely Blue-eyed Grass blossom pokes through the rocky soil. Above, an elusive Northern Cardinal chips.

Donated to Tropical Audubon 13 years ago, the eight-acre property in South Miami-Dade County is one of the few remaining tracts of globally imperiled pine rockland habitat remaining outside of Everglades National Park in Florida, a vestige of the 186,000 acres of pine rockland that historically occurred in the county. The unique habitat is home to three endemic species including Mosier's False Boneset with its tiny spindly white flowers.

Sadly the Porter-Russell Pineland is threatened by nature and humans.

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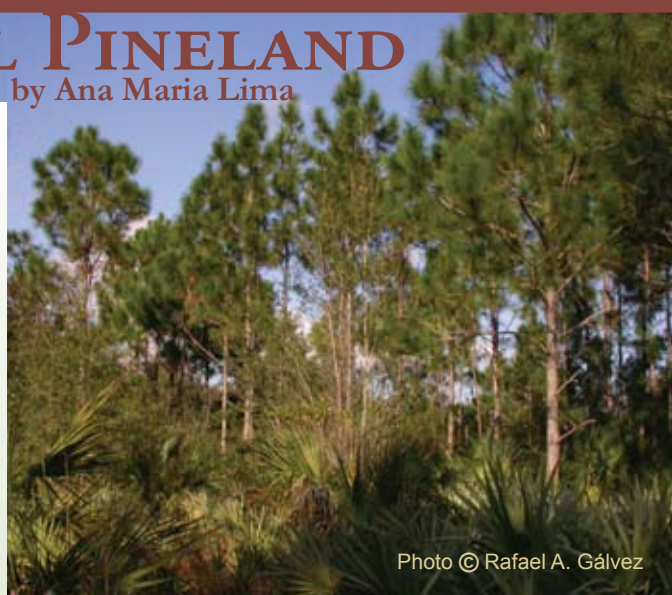


Photo © Rafael A. Gálvez

# PRESIDENT'S VOICE



Dear Friends,

In our Fall edition I focused on the positive happenings at Tropical Audubon Society and the successes that we had in conservation. I would like to continue being positive but we do have some greater challenges ahead of us if we consider ourselves keepers of our environment.

With the results of the last election we will not only have to keep working to protect and conserve but we will need to fight just to avoid losing ground. Under the new administration of Florida Governor Rick Scott, our conservation projects in the Everglades could slow to a crawl, funding for our environmental stewards is threatened, and the strides we have made in protecting Biscayne Bay could be in jeopardy.

There is much more than just the environment at stake and we all need to spread the word to support all of what makes south Florida the paradise that brought us here and what makes many come to enjoy.

A good first step is to spread the word with your friends, family, coworkers and neighbors about the importance of conservation. A mid-February poll conducted by the Tarrance Group and funded by the Everglades Foundation shows that there is value in a more aggressive approach to educating the electorate about Everglades restoration. According to the poll, Everglades restoration is nowhere near the top tier of voters' concerns. We need to convince people that it should be. One message that clearly resonates with voters, according to the poll, is "protecting the water supply." If we can convince people that conservation is directly tied to protecting the quality of our drinking water, we can start to change attitudes in a positive direction. Other issues that resonate with voters include reducing the levels of toxic pollutants like methyl mercury in fish, and protecting wildlife, with more than half of the participants surveyed saying those issues are either extremely important or very important, according to the poll.

Everglades conservation is also directly tied to the economy. The Everglades Foundation, one of Tropical Audubon's long-time supporters, reports projections that investing \$11.5 billion in Everglades restoration will result in \$46.5 billion in gains to Florida's economy and create more than 440,000 jobs over the next 50 years. For every dollar invested in Everglades restoration, \$4 are generated in economic benefits. Our city, county, state, and national parks all have value. Our seashores, lakes, and rivers are irreplaceable. Our hammocks, sloughs, and reefs are found nowhere else. The enjoyment that we and those that pay to experience it is priceless!

If our political representatives do not acknowledge this, then we need to contact them and make sure that they know that our local economy and our quality of life depends on restoring the Everglades, maintaining our parks and preventing the degradation of the natural ecosystems.

Please make sure to contact your representatives at all levels to let them know our environment matters.

Joe Barros  
President, Tropical Audubon Society



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**Tropical Audubon Society (TAS)** is a group of dedicated citizens who care about the quality of South Florida's environment. Established in 1947, we are a chapter of National Audubon Society and Florida Audubon Society. Tropical Audubon's Mission: 1) **Conservation:** To work toward protection of the natural world and to promote wise stewardship of natural resources, especially native plants, animals and their habitat. 2) **Education:** To promote, among members and the public of all ages, an understanding and appreciation of nature, the environment, and ecological relationships. 3) **Enjoyment:** To enjoy together the study and protection of nature. We believe in the wisdom of nature's design. We seek to foster and promote ecological conscientiousness in our community. This is the official publication of the Tropical Audubon Society (TAS), a non-profit, 501(c) (3) tax-exempt organization. Our headquarters, the Doc Thomas House, is a Dade County Historic site on three sub-tropical acres of native habitat in South Miami, located at 5530 Sunset Drive, Miami, Florida 33143. The phone number is (305) 667-7337. Membership rate, \$20 per year. Please make your checks payable to Tropical Audubon Society, and mail to our office (address above). Contact [TASpublisher@gmail.com](mailto:TASpublisher@gmail.com) for comments, letters and guidelines for anyone wishing to contribute to future issues.

# Conservation

AT A RECENT MEETING of the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board, acting Chair Jerry Montgomery publicly revealed that the Army Corps of Engineers was asked to reduce the pace of Everglades Restoration efforts. That feels like a catch-22 we just can't afford after years of hard-earned progress. We spent eight years waiting for the federal government to allocate funding for Everglades projects and now that we have a president who clearly makes Everglades a priority, Florida's citizens have elected a governor who does not seem to understand the importance of this project to our economy and water supply.

This is not unlike the high speed rail project that Florida Governor Rick Scott recently nixed in that without state planning on Everglades Restoration now, we will not be able to obtain the federal reimbursement owed to the state on investments in restoration that have already been made. Rick Scott is the first governor in Florida history to miss the annual Everglades Coalition Conference, and he has made no effort to reach out to assure his attendance in January of 2012 or to support Everglades Restoration in the way of funding.

A few years ago, under Governor Jeb Bush, the state was allocating \$230 million dollars to ensure the future of our drinking water. Now we are being asked to make due with just \$17 million dollars under Rick Scott. Is anyone in the new administration thinking of what it will cost us in the future for our water if we do not complete Everglades Restoration? Recently the House proposed a higher number of \$26 million and we should look to work with them in the coming month to try to raise that to \$50 million or more.

One in every three Floridians depends on the Everglades for their drinking water. A mid-February poll conducted by the Tarrance

## Gridlock

BY LAURA REYNOLDS

Group a n d funded by the Everglades Foundation shows that this statement is its most powerful among registered voters. A phone call or a letter to our legislature can make a powerful impact now that they are in session. If anything will keep the Governor's budget from killing the progress on Everglades Restoration and environmental regulation that has kept our state green, it will be our representatives in Tallahassee. In order to get their attention, it is time for the citizens of this great state to speak out! A great number of our leaders across this state disagree with many of the proposals in the budget, and they need to hear from you now.

**One in every three Floridians depends on the Everglades for drinking water**

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BY RAFAEL A. GÁLVEZ

**THE CRITICALLY IMPORTANT HAWKWATCH** at Curry Hammock State Park is undergoing a revival through the efforts of several local and national organizations. This migration monitoring site in the Middle Keys is crucial in helping us understand the movement of raptors between the continental United States and the Caribbean, and it is the only standardized, ten-year raptor population dataset in the Southeast. Tropical Audubon Society is taking a leading role in ensuring that this project continues providing essential raptor population assessments to conservationists, and that opportunities for a greater appreciation of birds of prey are made available to a wide-ranging public.

After 10 continuous years of operation at Little Crawl Key, Marathon, this sole full-fledged hawkwatch in the deep southeast fell into a dormant state following the 2008 season, as the organizers redirected efforts and funding elsewhere. By that time, the Middle Keys had been established as a primary raptor migration hotspot, garnering important information about 16 species. In a relatively short period of time, the site cut out a niche all its own by becoming the southernmost hawkwatch in the US, and more impressively, by setting two records – the highest season count of Peregrine Falcons in the country with 2,858 tallied in 2003, and the world's highest daily Peregrine count with a spectacular 638 on October 11, 2008.

Mired in a management vacuum, the hawkwatch at Curry Hammock was not conducted in 2009. Under the danger of falling in too great a data gap that might have rendered the prior ten-year period ineffective, a dynamic effort was commenced by the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) to reestablish the hawkwatch as an all-volunteer site during 2010.

Recognizing the value of the hawkwatch as an irreplaceable conservation and education asset, TAS officials took charge of the local management of the site, joined by volunteers from the region, including the Tavernier Science Center, and by raptor enthusiasts from throughout the country, resulting in a successful season and a new beginning for the project.

In addition to the remarkable efforts of the all-volunteer staff during 2010, the project was strengthened by its daily participation on HawkCount.org, part of HMANA's Raptors Online effort, which makes count data immediately available to the public, and the conservation and scientific communities alike.

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# WING DING 2011 — ANNUAL MEETING AND SILENT AUCTION

## SUNDAY, MAY 15<sup>TH</sup>, 4 – 7 PM

TROPICAL AUDUBON SOCIETY INVITES YOU AND A GUEST  
TO OUR ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF CONSERVATION IN SOUTH FLORIDA

### Keynote Speaker: BOB GRAHAM

Bob Graham, former Senator and two-term governor of Florida who served in the United States Senate. Both as governor and senator, Graham has been a champion of Everglades Restoration and a foe of offshore oil drilling. The “Save Our Everglades” and “Save Our Shoreline” movements began under his aegis. Graham was appointed by President Barack Obama as Co-Chairman of the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon oil disaster.

### AWARDS

#### ERIC BUERMANN

The Dan Beard Government Conservation Award

Eric Buermann is the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board Chair, in addition to being an international banker and lawyer. He is a member of the Audubon Society who has been an ally in moving Everglades Restoration forward and is especially concerned about Biscayne Bay.

#### DAN KIPNIS

Polly Redford Citizen Conservation Award

Dan Kipnis is a passionate fisheries conservationist, lectures extensively on Global Warming and its effect on oceans and near coastal environments and is deeply involved in environmental issues using his position as past President of the Miami Beach Rod and Reel Club to further champion this important cause while also serving on the Board of the Florida Wildlife Federation. He currently serves on the Miami Dade County Climate Change Task Force and has also served on the Biscayne Bay Management Committee, Miami River Review Committee, and City of Miami Waterfront Board and was a Commissioner on the State of Florida Marine Fisheries Commission.

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

At the Historic Doc Thomas House 5530 Sunset Drive Miami, FL 33143 (305) 667-7337

## Winter 2010-11 Birding Recap by Brian Rapoza

It was an unusually productive winter for viewing waterfowl in south Florida, with a variety of ducks seen as far south as Coot Bay in Everglades National Park. West Lake hosted large numbers of ducks in November and December, including Redhead, Canvasback and Greater Scaup, species not often seen this far south. These three diving ducks were reported at scattered locations throughout the southern peninsula during the season, including ten Canvasback at the recently opened Wellington Environmental Preserve in Palm Beach County.

Completely unexpected was the Long-tailed Duck (pg. 5) discovered during late December in Miami Lakes. That bird lingered into late January, along with several Bufflehead. A Masked Duck was reported in early December at the Gate 15 marshes in Everglades National Park, but was never relocated. A White-faced Whistling-Duck of unknown provenance (this species is native to South America and Africa) was photographed at Stormwater Treatment Area 5 in Hendry County during late November. Also of unknown origin were two White-cheeked Pintails photographed on Fisher Island during the Miami Christmas Bird Count; another White-cheeked Pintail was found in January at Grassy Waters Preserve in Palm Beach County.

Key Biscayne is often a magnet for Caribbean vagrants, and this winter proved to be no exception. A La Sagra's Flycatcher was found in Bill Baggs Cape Florida State Park during December and remained through the winter; in fact, it may have been the same bird seen there earlier in 2010. A second bird was suspected to be present during February. Birders in search of the La Sagra's reported a Western Spindalis in mid-December and a Cuban Pewee in late February; unfortunately, neither of these birds was photographed.

At nearby Bear Cut Preserve at Crandon Beach, a Thick-billed Vireo was discovered in November but only remained for a couple of days. Shiny Cowbirds were reported from throughout south Florida, including from a number of backyard feeders in south Miami-Dade, but also from as far west as Tigertail Beach, on Marco Island in Collier County. A Smooth-billed Ani, a Caribbean species that may still breed in Florida, was seen sporadically in January at Anhinga Trail in Everglades National Park. Others were reported from Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge in Palm Beach County.

A number of western vagrants spent some or all of the winter in south Florida. Most unexpected was a Mountain Bluebird, only the second for Florida, reported from the Dry Tortugas in late December. Two western vagrants were at Cape Florida: a Western Tanager during December and a Bell's Vireo in February. Other Bell's Vireos were found at A.D. Barnes Park and in Woodmont Natural Area in Broward County. Franklin's Gulls were at Cutler Wetlands during December and on Sunny Isles Beach in January. Two Rufous Hummingbirds wintered at Castellow Hammock Park, while a Black-chinned Hummingbird was reported from Naples. Lesser Nighthawks wintered once again around Dump Marsh, Lucky Hammock and in Flamingo. A Brown-crested Flycatcher wintered at Lucky Hammock, while others were found in Everglades National Park and in Key Largo. An Ash-throated Flycatcher was discovered in Key Largo during February; another was reliably seen at Kendall Indian Hammock Park that month. Yellow-headed Blackbirds were seen at Dump Marsh during December and January and at Sem Chi rice plant in Palm Beach County during February.

# Conservation Gridlock

BY LAURA REYNOLDS

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Budget at a Glance, and how it will impact the environment: Governor Scott released his 2011-2013-budget proposal with reductions topping \$5 billion, despite facing only a \$3.6 billion state shortfall. While many budget categories are aggregated, making it difficult to determine specific programs that have been reduced or eliminated, a few items are apparent:

1) Everglades Restoration garnered only \$17 million in general revenue for each of the next two years (Scott's proposal was a two-year, rather than one-year, budget). Under Jeb Bush, by comparison, the Everglades received \$230 million. During Governor Charlie Crist's last year in office, it was \$50 million.

2) The state has proposed to slash the South Florida Water Management District's budget by 25 percent for the next two years (the equivalent of \$100 million per year) but some fear this could become a permanent change, and weaken water management boards across the state. This will require the Districts to dip into the reserve funding, which is there for emergency and safety situations that may arise due to hurricanes. Jeopardizing safety is not a good move as we see the disaster in Japan unfold and as we ready ourselves for retrofitting our water systems for sea-level rise and to better resist storm surge.

3) Disappointingly, the state's premier land-buying program, Florida Forever, was not allocated any funding. Without greenspace to recharge our aquifer and help secure parcels needed for restoration, the State will continue to face more challenges providing clean drinking water to its population.

4) The Department of Community Affairs, which oversees the state's growth management, appears to have been split, and farmed out to other agencies (like DEP), and ultimately reduced to a shadow of its former self. It remains to be seen how these functions will be retained. Environmental groups have opposed the recent house bill 7129, but will hope the companion senate bill will be a better model to work with and we may be able to more strongly support.

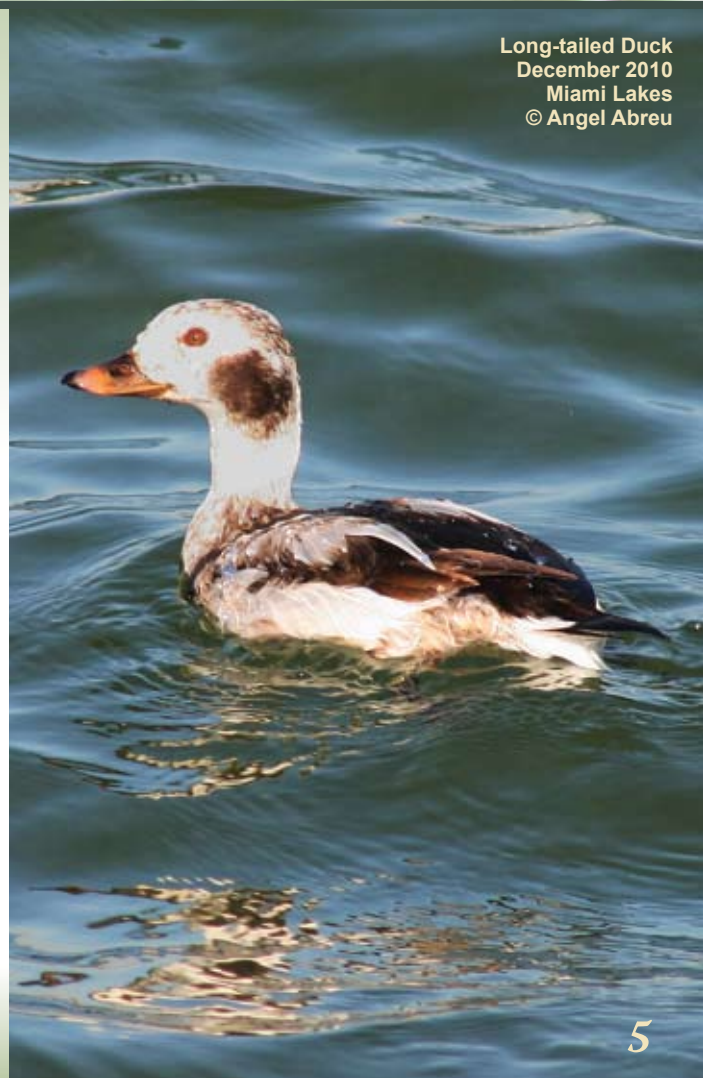
5) Hundreds of positions are proposed to be cut from the regulatory side of the Department of Environmental Protection. It is not clear exactly where these cuts will be made from or what specific programs they will affect. But earlier this year after much scrutiny from the public, Rick Scott vowed to keep parks open.

Locally, some fear the DEP program that manages our Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve (BBAP) will be closed. The BBAP serves as a very large state park, and staff and funding should not be eliminated, but rather increased, due to the many pressures the bay is facing due to our large adjacent population. Five other aquatic preserves across the state are in the same position. A total savings of a whopping one million dollars; that protects and manages 763,082 acres of submerged lands across the state.

As many criticize the governor for cuts to education and service to the needy, we must also start criticizing him for his severe threats to environmental programs that make this state a top tourist destination and provide Floridians with drinking water. TAS encourages you to speak out in the media as well as to your elected officials.

A Hooded Warbler spent much of the winter at a business park in Broward County. Wilson's Warblers were reported from Broward during December, Bill Sadowski Park in January and Matheson Hammock Park in February, while a Nashville Warbler was at Sadowski for several days in February. A small flock of Pine Siskins was visiting a backyard feeder in Immokolee, Collier County during February. Also that month, several Dickcissels were at Rocky Glades Public Small Game Area (also known as the C-357 sparrow fields), while another was visiting a feeder at Okechee Nature Center in Palm Beach County. Short-eared Owls were seen around Lucky Hammock for much of the winter; another was spotted on the Christian Point Trail during the Coot Bay Christmas Bird Count. A Field Sparrow was at Eco Pond during that count. Earlier in the winter, Black Rails were heard on the Coastal Prairie Trail in Flamingo, but none were found during the CBC.

Among the mega-rarities found upstate this winter was Florida's first Kelp Gull, discovered in Pasco County in January. Other rare gulls seen in the state included Thayer's, Glaucous, Iceland Black-headed and possibly, Yellow-legged. A Sage Thrasher was found at Ft. Pickens in Pensacola during January and remained through February. A Green tailed Towhee wintered at Ft. Pickens, while a Groove-billed Ani was present there during November. Another Groove-billed Ani was at Paynes Prairie in Gainesville; a Tundra Swan also wintered there. Snow Buntings were in Flagler County during December and January and in St. Johns County during January and February. A Say's Phoebe wintered for the fourth consecutive winter near Lake Apopka in Lake County. Finally, a loon that was thought to be a Yellow-billed was found in Brevard County in December, but the identity of that bird was never confirmed.



Long-tailed Duck  
December 2010  
Miami Lakes  
© Angel Abreu

**Brian Rapoza**, is the field trip coordinator for Tropical Audubon Society and author of *Birding Florida*. He has organized and led birding trips for Tropical Audubon Society throughout Florida as well as in several other states.

# PROTECT BISCAYNE BAY

by Ana Maria Lima

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blooms and oil spills. They are responsible for promoting awareness and appreciation of the bay and study issues that impact its health, such as the expansion of Florida Power & Light's nuclear power plant and the impacts associated with the expansion of the Port of Miami. The office also conducts training for marine law enforcement on environmental laws for everything from seagrasses to marine mammal protection.

Biscayne Park Superintendent Mark Lewis expressed his support for the Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve and reminded TAS members of the environmental benefits of the strong partnership between the Department of Environmental Protection's aquatic preserve and the National Park Service.

"There are 3.5 million people living adjacent to the park and the Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve. One of the park's mandates from Congress, as well as a charge of the Aquatic Preserve, is to help people understand the importance of the natural environment," Lewis said. "There just isn't enough of us to do the job."

Among the man-made threats to the 173,000-acre underwater park established in 1968 is the practice of boat anchoring, which can damage fragile reefs, grass beds and shipwreck sites. Lewis said officials are working on a revised Mooring Buoy and Marker Plan in an effort to reduce anchor damage by installing additional anchor balls (mooring buoys) across the park, as well as more signs and markers. Lewis said that boaters would have to use the mooring buoys in areas where they are provided, instead of dropping anchor there. The park's initial plan was criticized by boaters concerned about access at the Sands Cut Sand Bar and the University Dock anchorage area. Lewis said the park is reaching out to a wider variety of groups and the public as the park drafts a revised plan.

Another problem impacting the Bay is saltwater intrusion and the ever-increasing salinity of the bay. Scientists and environmentalists are worried about the rise in salinity caused by Florida Power & Light's nine square miles of cooling canals for its nuclear facility. The hot and heavy hypersaline water in the cooling canals sinks and flows under a thin layer of groundwater, and threatens not only the bay, but also the public's drinking water and the health of Biscayne National Park.

The threat is even more urgent now as TAS and its partners battle FPL's plans for two more nuclear reactors for the existing Turkey

Point facility. The organizations have challenged FPL's plans to use radial collector wells under the bay because they would siphon fresh water from the ecosystem that could otherwise be used for Everglades restoration. The plan to use up to 124 million gallons a day, according to TAS Director Laura Reynolds, would alter the salinity of Biscayne Bay and accelerate saltwater intrusion that has already contaminated well fields that Miami Dade and Monroe depend upon.

There is some good news. The Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project phase 1 to rehydrate wetlands, and improve almost 10,000 acres of coastal and estuarine habitats and re-establish a productive nursery for shrimp and shellfish is underway in southern Miami-Dade County. We support the project and hope funding for phase 2 will not take as long as water managers predict. Currently the South Florida Water Management District is investigating plans to try to deliver a minimum amount of water in the dry season to avoid salinity above 30 PSU and keep Biscayne National Park from critical harm. If salinity were to go any higher many of the invertebrates and small fish that call Biscayne home would have no estuarine refuge and would disappear from the park all together.

Biscayne National Park is doing its part to build awareness, with efforts to educate the public. According to Lewis, park officials are hoping to open a new visitor center closer to downtown Miami, in addition to the facility at Convoy Point in Homestead, as a way to attract more visitors. Two potential sites for the new center are Dinner Key in Coconut Grove and Virginia Key.

It is clear Biscayne Bay needs more advocates that understand the issues and what is at stake. TAS aims to recruit the many groups who use this precious resource including the commercial and recreational fishing industry, the tourist industry and businesses that thrive on the use of the bay. We must all work together to ensure our lawmakers, and the public, are aware of the economic benefits of the bay as well as the urgency in protecting this ecological treasure.

**Please join our coalition. Contact Laura Reynolds at [tropicalaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:tropicalaudubon@gmail.com) or 305-667-7337 for more information or to schedule a presentation for your group.**

## **Tropical Audubon Wish List**

### **Needed Items**

Desktop & laptop computers  
New copy machine  
Dual-line office phones  
Digital SLR camera  
Binoculars  
Telescope  
Kayaking equipment

### **In Kind**

Grounds maintenance  
Computer service  
Construction  
Plumbing  
Fence repair  
Organizational skills  
Docents for tours  
Secretarial services

### **Open Directors Seats**

Membership Chair  
Education Chair  
Secretary  
Treasurer

### **Open TAS Positions**

Conservation committee  
Library committee  
Education committee



**Join us on Wednesday May 11 at 7:30pm  
for a presentation by Michael Aronsohn:**

## **BIRDS OF BOTSWANA**

**Two weeks in  
the Kalahari Desert,  
Okavanga Delta and  
Chobe National Park  
in Botswana observing and  
photographing birds.**

**Doc Thomas House,  
5530 Sunset Drive, Miami FL, 33143  
305-667-7337**

# PELAGICS OFF MIAMI:

## WE'RE GONNA NEED A BIGGER BOAT

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ROBERTO TORRES

**WHILE OUR PELAGIC SPECIES** variety and individual numbers come nowhere near those encountered off California and North Carolina, or even off Ponce Inlet, there are enough of these birds off the coast of Miami to keep things very interesting. We also have the luxury of having the deep waters of the Gulfstream approximately five miles offshore, so a pelagic trip aboard a small boat is not only doable, but also very affordable. I typically run my boat only 10 to 12 miles offshore, and rarely make it out to the middle between Florida and the Bahamas. There is plenty to see.

Despite my many commercial fishing trips off Miami beginning in the mid 1970s, it wasn't until 2005 that I ventured in search of pelagic birds. That was my first big birding year, and I knew I would need some pelagics if I wanted to make it a true big year. I didn't know what to expect before heading out for the first time on June 25th. Birds with names like Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, Greater Shearwater, and White-tailed Tropicbird seemed so exotic that I wondered if we'd see any of these off Florida's most populated metropolitan area.

One thing I did know all too well from my fishing days is that the Gulfstream is relatively close to shore in this area, with the western edge usually between 8-10 miles offshore. That first trip was a very pleasant surprise in many respects. For one, the birds were there, and in good numbers! On that day, the crew (which included Rock Jetty) and I saw three species of shearwater including more than 150 Greater and 50 Cory's, plus two Storm-Petrel species and a bunch of other stuff. Not only did we see a lot of birds, we had fantastic looks at most of them, with shearwaters literally coming right to the boat trying to take our baits as we attempted to catch some dolphin (mahi-mahi). We even caught a couple of Greater Shearwaters that grabbed our baited hooks before we could yank the line away. It was a very good start.

For me, after so many years of fishing and "seeing it all" so to speak, the trip offered a renewed interest in the ocean because I could now see it in a different way. Instead of chasing fish, I was now chasing birds. I can't stay away from the ocean for very long. Remember, old fishermen never die, they just smell that way.

In the five years since that first trip, I've done 38 pelagic trips aboard my boat off Miami, and although there is still much to learn and hopefully much more to see, there are a few things I think we've learned about this type of birding in this area. First, it appears that we have Brown Booby year-round. We always seem to find it perched on Fowey Rocks Lighthouse six miles off Key Biscayne, or foraging in the gulfstream offshore. Another is the relationship between the winds and the birding. Just as winds will affect the birding during migration, they seem to influence the movement of birds offshore. The best appears to be winds from the eastern quadrant, while west winds appear to be dismal for pelagic birding off Miami. Since the fishing is also related to the winds, and both birds and game fish are after the same thing – food – it appears that we should heed the local charter captain's ode: "winds out of the West, stay home and rest."



**Species seen off Miami during 38 pelagic trips by the author, with their status and the best times to see them:**



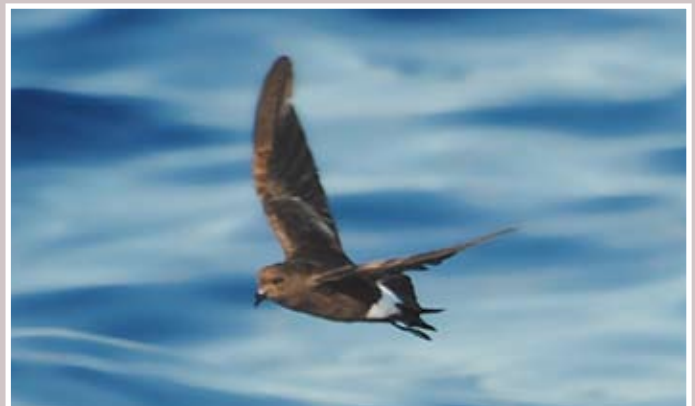
**Cory's Shearwater:** It seems our most common shearwater (above). Seen mostly from late June to September.

**Greater Shearwater:** Late June and July is best, but pretty rare off Miami.

**Sooty Shearwater:** Very rare, with only one seen on a July trip.

**Manx Shearwater:** Very rare. Only two seen in all my trips, and although generally considered a winter species, my last one was in July; the other was in November.

**Audubon's Shearwater:** Fairly common and sometimes numerous. Best from April to July.



**Wilson's Storm-Petrel:** Fairly regular May to July. Generally seen (above) in single digits, but sometimes in bigger numbers: 35 were seen on one trip in July.

# PELAGICS OFF MIAMI



TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ROBERTO TORRES

Pomarine Jaegers

 Continued from page 7

Some species I've yet to see on our trips off Miami, but that I hope we will add at some point are: Black-capped Petrel, South Polar Skua, White-tailed Tropicbird, Black-legged Kittiwake, and Sabine's Gull.

White-tailed Tropicbird is considered the "easy" of the two tropicbirds found here, and is regularly seen by some of the charter captains I talk to. Yet, we've seen three Red-billed Tropicbirds – a review species by the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee – on trips aboard my boat, but no White-tailed.

Black-legged Kittiwake is a circumpolar breeder, and is pretty rare this far south, but it is not unheard of in Florida and is on the Miami-Dade list. However, South Polar Skua and Black-capped Petrel are not. South Polar Skua breeds in Antarctica, and has the distinction of being the only predator seen at the South Pole. It is a review species in Florida and is very rarely seen here, but more effort on the water may add this one to the Dade County list! Black-capped Petrels breed on Hispaniola in winter, and have been seen in Monroe to the south and Palm Beach to the north, so there's no reason why a few wouldn't pass by here. I think it's just a matter of catching them at the right time of year. It's possible that

most of the Black-caps seen from north Florida to the Carolinas pass east of the Bahamas while heading north, but a small number may come by here. If this is true, May might be the best month to try, and like other Pterodromas, they like stiff winds. Hence, I'm going to need a bigger boat than my 25-footer to make it out to the Gulfstream with 20-25+ knot winds!

Then there's the really rare stuff. As in all birding, the potential for finding the unexpected is always there, and with the ocean connecting these species' ranges, there's a good chance of finding something seen only a couple of times before in Florida, or even for the first time! Some species to be on the lookout for include Yellow-nosed Albatross (one was seen on the median in US-1 in Key Largo!), Northern Fulmar, several Alcids, Trindade Petrel, Bulwer's Petrel, or even Great Skua.

With any luck, the next five years will allow me to continue searching for pelagic birds off Miami. Who knows what the species list will look like then? More trips on rough days, especially in winter when cold fronts could push many unlikely visitors south of their range, would definitely increase the chances of finding the unexpected. But for that, we're gonna need a bigger boat!

## VIRGINIA KEY SUFFERS ANOTHER BLOW

BY LAURA REYNOLDS

**VIRGINIA KEY**, the ecologically significant and fragile barrier island off Miami's coastline, suffered another blow recently when the Port of Miami tunnel contractor authorized by the City of Miami dumped construction fill on the island's North Point, mistakenly depositing debris on top of protected wetlands and destroying 40 mangroves adjacent to the state-protected waters of the Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve, according to the Miami Herald.

The City of Miami was ultimately responsible for the work of its contractors in depositing fill near Virginia Key's fragile habitats. The agencies responsible for permitting the City's plans, the Department of Environmental Resource Management, and the state Department of Environmental Protection, are looking into what happened and what action they will require the contractor (and ultimately the City of Miami) to take to mitigate the loss of wetlands and to prevent any runoff from entering the CWA.

The management of Virginia Key involves a number of local, municipal and state partners that had otherwise recently made strides in protecting the island and its adjacent critical wildlife area by helping to create and later approve the people's remaster plan to keep Virginia Key as natural as possible while increasing its range of recreational

uses. At the island's center is the 700-acre state-designated Bill Sadowski Critical Wildlife Area (CWA), established by the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission in coordination with the City of Miami to protect a range of shorebirds and wading birds including herons and egrets that forage within the site, as well as other species including the American Kestrel, Osprey, Bald Eagle, and Peregrine Falcon.

The agencies responsible for the management of Virginia Key must to do a better job to ensure the protection of the key's ecological, historic, and recreational amenities for generations to come. TAS, in coordination with its partners, are seeking help to ensure the city sticks to its master plan and that this resource is properly managed. Blanca Mesa, lead organizer of Friends of Virginia Key, said that what is in place now is not sufficient and that greater protection is needed. She has been taking steps to have Virginia Key considered for inclusion in the National Park system.

For information about this and other initiatives join Blanca's facebook group: Friends of Virginia Key, or call or write TAS: 305-677-7337, email to [director@tropicalaudubon.org](mailto:director@tropicalaudubon.org) to join our efforts.

**Leach's Storm-Petrel:** Very rare. First county record came when I saw five on June 14, 2008.

**Band-rumped Storm-Petrel:** Though generally considered rare, this one seems to be regular from May to July.

**Red-billed Tropicbird:** The "rare" one of the two tropicbird species found in the Atlantic, but I've had three of these, with no White-tailed yet. Two were seen on the same date one year apart (May 23) in 2008 and 2009 respectively.

**Masked Booby:** Pretty rare off Miami, with only a couple seen in April and May.

**Brown Booby:** Fairly common on Fowey Rocks Lighthouse or in the Gulfstream year-round. I've also seen it on navigation structures throughout the Florida Keys.

**Northern Gannet:** In terms of sheer numbers, our most abundant pelagic. Starting in November, large numbers can be seen heading south over the reef or just a littler farther offshore. Sometimes seen easily from shore. In April and May, seen heading north, with some stragglers in June.

**Magnificent Frigatebird:** Year-round, but much more abundant in summer.

**Surf Scoter:** Very rare, but two were seen while still in Biscayne Bay on a December pelagic trip.

**Red-necked Phalarope:** Fairly regular in Fall, smaller numbers in Spring. September appears to be the best month here.

**Brown Noddy:** Despite nesting in huge numbers on the Dry Tortugas, this species is pretty uncommon off Miami. Late summer appears to be the best time, perhaps as part of post-breeding dispersal.

**Sooty Tern:** Usually the most abundant species seen on pelagic trips off Miami. We know we're in the pelagic zone when we see the first Sooties. Seen March to September.

**Bridled Tern:** Same as Sooty Tern, but only slightly less abundant.

**Black Tern:** Pretty rare offshore, with all my pelagic sightings during September.

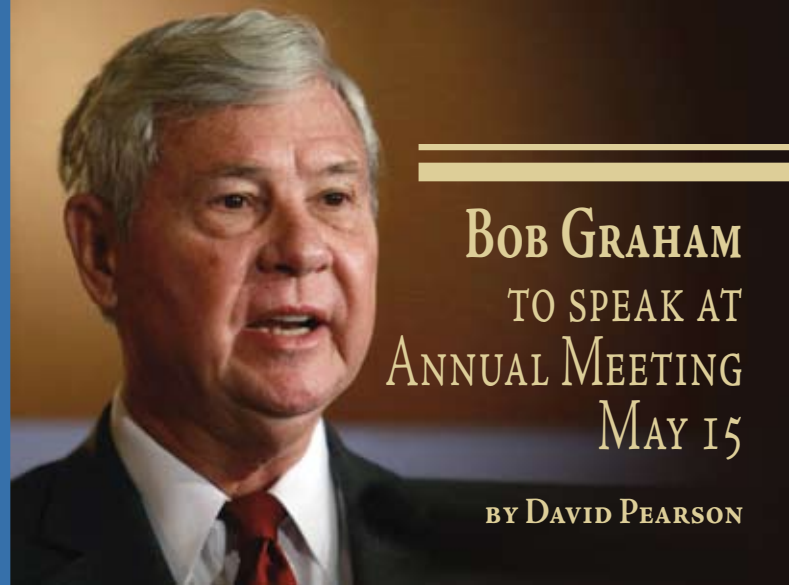
**Common Tern:** Pretty rare, with most sightings in September, but also in July and a single bird in April.

**Arctic Tern:** Very rare, with only two seen on my pelagic trips, both in May.

**Pomarine Jaeger:** Most abundant in late October / early November, when large numbers migrate south. I've seen this species every month except Jan, Feb and Aug.

**Parasitic Jaeger:** Much less abundant than Pomarine, but pretty regular in fall and winter. During winter, it's the more likely jaeger to be encountered here.

**Long-tailed Jaeger:** Rare; only one seen in 38 trips.



## BOB GRAHAM TO SPEAK AT ANNUAL MEETING MAY 15

BY DAVID PEARSON

**FORMER SENATOR BOB GRAHAM**, two-term governor of Florida who served 18 years in the United States Senate, will be the keynote speaker at Tropical Audubon's annual meeting and picnic Sunday, May 15.

Appointed by President Obama Co-Chairman of the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon oil disaster, Graham is expected to speak on the Commission's recent report which stated that the blowout was preventable and the result of missteps and oversights by BP, Halliburton and Transocean. Far from being a freak accident, the Commission found that the risk of a deadly blowout "was both unreasonably large and avoidable" and that government regulators lacked the authority and resources to prevent it.

Graham's keen interest in the environment had its public beginnings in his support of the 1972 ELMS act while a state senator from Miami; hallmark legislation which set up controls to assure regional sustainability as well as funding to buy endangered lands. (Graham's fellow advocate was longtime Audubon officer Richard A. Pettigrew, who served alongside him in the Florida Senate).

Both as governor and senator, Graham has been a champion of Everglades Restoration and a foe of offshore oil drilling. The "Save Our Everglades," "Save the Manatee" and "Save Our Shoreline" movements began under his aegis.

Graham also currently serves as a Commissioner on the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, established by Congress to examine the global and domestic causes of the recent financial crisis.

Author of a new book about civic participation entitled "America: The Owner's Manual," Graham also chairs the Board of Overseers of the Graham Center for Public Service at the University of Florida.

In 1974, Graham received the Tropical Audubon Society Conservation Award for his work on the Land and Water Management Act of 1972.

His recent awards include:

- The National Park Trust Public Service award
- The Everglades Coalition Hall of Fame
- LeRoy Collins Lifetime Leadership Award

# Help A Wild Animal In Distress

## *Armed with Facts and Common Sense*

by Kenneth Setzer

**ONE OCTOBER EVENING**, I was gearing up for Halloween at my daughter's school. As I searched for the restroom I wandered into a small outdoor alcove where I spotted a dark little fluttering thing at my feet. I thought it might be an injured bird. Eager to help a living creature in distress, I scooped it up without hesitation, and absolutely could not believe what I saw in my hand: It was a little bat!

I'm dangerously unafraid of most animals, so I was comfortable holding my little patient. When I relaxed my grip however, in order to show my incredulous wife and daughter, little "Jack" bat popped out and bit me repeatedly between my thumb and forefinger. Fortunately, the bite did not draw blood, or even leave a mark. We took Jack home, wrapped him in a towel and placed him outside in an old birdcage.

My little friend was a Brazilian Free-Tailed bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*), common in Texas and Florida. This species especially likes to reside in narrow spaces, such as under roofing, where at nightfall they drop out in groups. They are very small bats, appearing like winged mice. They are exclusively insectivorous, and swoop down on swarms of insects over water to feed. These bats are extremely beneficial to us. Think of the millions of mosquitoes they consume, sparing us discomfort, West Nile Virus, Malaria, etc.

Our "Jack" bat lived for about three days. We got him to drink, though he wouldn't eat, and he wouldn't fly. I told this tale to quite a few folks, who all had one warning: "Rabies!" The amateur scientist in me decided to investigate. After some research, I learned that rabies is a virus. Viruses are very small. Bat teeth are also very small, and can penetrate skin without leaving a visible mark.



Once introduced to human skin from an animal bite, rabies migrates to the brain, where it is always fatal.

Luckily, because the virus moves slowly, post-exposure vaccination is a viable remedy.

I yielded to reason (and fear) and sought professional help. I discovered doctors don't stock rabies vaccine; you must go to the Emergency Room (ER) to get it. After retelling this story to about a dozen amused hospital workers, I got my first of five rabies shots. Thankfully the injections are no longer applied to the abdomen, but rather to the upper arm, which is painless. After five ER visits, I suffered side effects including a mild flu-like feeling a couple times and a sore arm. And then there was the \$27,000 hospital bill (really). But I won't die — at least from rabies.

I hope to clear up some myths about rabies, primarily that certain animals "carry" rabies, and should be exterminated. Any mammal can be infected by rabies, usually through exposure to saliva from an already-infected mammal. An animal can't be a carrier of rabies — if infected, they die sooner than later. Unfortunately they can pass it along via a bite, but they won't go on long to carry it.

There are two sets of symptoms to look for in a potentially rabid animal. One is the stereotypical "mad dog" behavior of extreme aggression and agitation, with the classic foaming at the mouth, which is caused by an inability to swallow. The other set of symptoms is the appearance of extreme lethargy and partial paralysis. So if a wild animal lets you get much closer than normal, this could be the reason. In hindsight, my bat seemed to exhibit the latter symptoms. It was very calm, and barely lifted its head. There is still only one method to prove that an animal is rabid: its brain tissue must be examined in a lab. Since my bat died, but was subsequently abducted from its cage (I suspect by a hungry possum), I'll never know for sure if I was exposed to rabies.

So please learn from my mistake. Help injured animals, but do so intelligently! Call wildlife centers first, and if you must handle a bat, or any strange animal, wear heavy gloves. If you get bitten, seek medical attention ASAP. The shots are costly, but don't hurt, and are definitely better than the alternative.

For more information on Brazilian Free-Tailed bats:  
<http://www.nsrl.ttu.edu/tmot1/tadabras.htm>

For more information on Florida's bats:  
<http://www.floridabats.org/>

# FLORIDA KEYS HAWKWATCH

Continued from page 3

BY RAFAEL A. GALVEZ

To ensure that no future fall migration season through the Middle Keys goes unmonitored, the hawkwatch has been reorganized and redefined as a "locally-owned" project committed to the long-term establishment and sustainability of a raptor migration site, rebranded as the *Florida Keys Hawkwatch*.

A coalition of regional and national organizations is working hard in preparation of the upcoming 2011 fall migration, and invites the public, educators and conservationists to get involved in making this important project a success.

Bird enthusiasts or not, most of us have at some point been captivated by the power and grace of raptors in flight. Human culture is seeped with symbols of raptors, and Tropical Audubon uses a Swallow-tailed Kite to represent its commitment to conservation, education, and the wider appreciation and study of birds. It should not come as a surprise that several birds of prey were once housed at the organization's headquarters as part of TAS's educational programs during the 80s. What could have a greater effect on instilling in the public a sense of wonderment about the environment than a close encounter with such captivating birds?

My first experience with Tropical Audubon – and a breakthrough moment for me in my appreciation of nature – was in the Spring of 1986, when at the age of thirteen I rode my bike to the Doc Thomas House to meet a welcoming Bob Kelley, then TAS President, who eagerly agreed to be interviewed for my research paper on bird migration.

To my delight, the conversations with Bob Kelley soon focused on raptors. I eagerly listened to him tell me about the great migratory journeys of hawks and falcons, how despite their important role at the top of the food chain and the well-known benefits they provide to humanity and the environment, they had been met with intolerance and persecution, to the point that several species were in peril and pushed to the brink of extinction.

The interview took greater meaning when Bob invited me to participate in TAS's Environmental Education Program involving rehabilitated birds of prey. To this day, I remember that first encounter with a Bald Eagle, a Merlin and a Great Horned Owl housed at Doc Thomas. From that point on, raptors were in my blood!

Many folks have forgotten about the tremendous impact those programs made in our community.

From the summer of 1985 to the summer of 1986, the birds of TAS's Environmental Education Program – under the leadership of David Hitzig, TAS's Environmental Educator and now director of the Busch Wildlife Sanctuary (Jupiter) – educated more than 22,000 people, from school children to adults and family groups at TAS's property and throughout the region; an amazing feat!

Tropical Audubon aims once again to engage the public with the wonder of raptors during the upcoming 12<sup>th</sup> season of the Florida Keys Hawkwatch (FKH). Local support to revive FKH has been greatly positive, and it is exciting to see a coalition of Florida-based partners giving forth their support. However, the project is still short of its 2011 budget and in need of monetary and logistic assistance.

Take pride in the Florida Keys Hawkwatch: *No other site in the world experiences a higher concentration of migrating Peregrine Falcons.* More than 10,000 raptors\* were tallied this past fall at the site, and while other hawkwatches throughout the continent might monitor significantly larger volumes of birds, FKH never disappoints in terms of variety. Take the weekend of October 15-17 as example, when 2,685 raptors of 13 species\* were counted, including 92 Northern Harriers, 238 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 1600 Broad-wings, and 275 Peregrines, along with Mississippi Kites, Short-tailed and Swainson's Hawks, Bald Eagles and others.

\* Excluding vultures due to a lack of migratory behavior in the Keys.

## Get Involved!

- Volunteers will be needed for the coming 2011 fall season; no experience is required, training will be available on site.
- Join the coalition of Florida partners committed to the success of the hawkwatch – if your organization wants to contribute to our long-term commitment to raptor research and education, and the benefits these bring to our communities and to Florida ornithology, don't hesitate to contact us.
- FKH is searching for temporary housing for the fall season: an RV, camper or apartment in nearby Marathon FL to house volunteers.
- Visit FKH from September 15 to November 13, 9am to 4pm at Curry Hammock State Park (entrance fee) at mile marker 56.5 on the Overseas Highway.

Several components will make the upcoming 2011 season significant, including the resurgence of a raptor banding station and new research and educational opportunities, a strengthened local presence and social media component, citizen science opportunities, and the establishment of a world-class site for birding and nature recreation opportunities for enthusiasts of all ages.

**Please contact Rafael Gálvez at [TASpublisher@gmail.com](mailto:TASpublisher@gmail.com) if you are interested in participating in the upcoming 2011 Florida Keys Hawkwatch, or if your organization is interested in sponsoring or partnering with the project.**



HELEN G. & ALLAN D.  
CRUICKSHANK  
RESEARCH  
AWARD



Sport  
Optics





Two gems found at Porter Russell Pineland; left: Pineland Jacquemontia (*Jacquemontia curtisii*), endemic to pinelands of central and southern Florida; right: Everglades Squarestem (*Meleanthera parviflora*), endemic to pinelands of southern Florida. Photos by Alan Cressler.

Like many pine rockland habitats that have been fragmented, the Porter-Russell property is susceptible to invasive exotic plant species, from Brazilian Pepper to Shoebuttan Ardisia. It has also become an illegal dumping ground for some who carelessly sully this rare natural treasure with their trash.

In an effort to clean up the property and educate the public about the importance of threatened pine rocklands, Tropical Audubon Grounds Chair Lewis “Brother” Milledge has launched a one-year action plan that seeks to build partnerships with the local community and civic groups eager to help. Work has already begun.

“This property has the potential to be a community asset for many to enjoy nature, as well as an environmental educational venue,” Milledge said. His plan calls for a thorough cleanup of the tract, posting signs to identify the property and its purpose, and clearing a loop trail posted with interpretative signs.

Brother is also in the process of establishing a Friends of Porter-Russell Pineland Group; involving neighborhood organizations in the maintenance of the property; planning a neighborhood picnic with nature walks; and inviting partner conservation groups to use the property as an educational venue.

Located in Goulds on the east side of SW 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 222<sup>nd</sup> and 223<sup>rd</sup> streets, about a block west of Cauley Square Historic Village, the Porter-Russell Pineland was donated to TAS in 1998 by William M. Porter of Annapolis, MD. The donation was part of a complex deal between the Department of Environmental Resources Management, the developer and TAS. The eight-acre property was too small to become part of Dade County’s park system but worthy of preservation because of its high-quality pineland plant community. It is surrounded by a housing development.

TAS president Joe Barros said one of his predecessors, TAS President Karsten Rist, was instrumental in negotiating the land deal. “Karsten was always a visionary and recognized the importance of land preservation,” Barros said.

Barros leads an annual Spring nature walk at the Porter-Russell Pineland, where the public can see wildflowers, butterflies and birds, and witness the struggles involved in the preservation of this rare habitat.

The property is a welcome urban oasis for a variety of song birds, raptors, water birds and other wildlife. TAS Board member Rafael Gálvez has observed more than 100 bird species on the property between 2007 to this year including: Great Blue Heron; Swallow-tailed Kite; Short-tailed Hawk; Peregrine Falcon; White-crowned Pigeon; Yellow-billed Cuckoo; Downy Woodpecker; Black-whiskered Vireo; Cave Swallow; Cedar Waxwing; Orange-crowned, Blackburnian and Bay Breasted Warbler; Northern and Louisiana Waterthrush; Indigo and Painted Bunting; Scarlet and Summer Tanager; and Bobolink.

According to TAS Honorary Board member Roger Hammer, pine rockland is one of two types of pinelands that occur in the Everglades, and is characterized by outcroppings of limestone on the Miami Rock Ridge. In his Everglades National Park and the Surrounding Area guide book, Hammer writes that fewer than 4,000 acres of pine rockland remain outside of Everglades National Park, and that due to the mixture of temperate and tropical plants, pine rockland is the most floristically diverse plant community in Florida.

In 2003, the Institute for Regional Conservation (IRC) conducted an inventory of the flora at the Porter-Russell Pineland, recording 99 different native plant species, including three species endemic to South Florida: Mosier’s False Boneset, Pineland Jacquemontia (Pineland Clustervine) and Everglades Squarestem (Pineland Black Anthers), according to IRC Senior Biologist Keith Bradley.

The Porter-Russell Pineland tract is special, Bradley said, because it is one of the larger pieces of pine rockland left outside the Everglades, and unlike many of the other smaller fragments out there, it is in relatively good condition.

“Anything that is still in good shape is extremely important,” Bradley said. “Every little piece is important in maintaining this ecosystem in the county.”

Since 2005 the IRC has conducted exotic plant control at Porter-Russell Pineland with grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, using mostly herbicides to control exotic hardwoods and grasses like Burma Reed. They are considering conducting a controlled fire to further control the exotics. Bradley said he is hoping their efforts will improve the habitat, and that they could possibly see the



[A] An Atala (*Eumaeus atala florida*) at Porter-Russell Pineland. Feared extinct by the 1930s, the endangered butterfly might have been lost to urban development within its restricted South Florida range if not for preserved habitat with Coontie – host plant of the caterpillar. [B] *Galactia floridana*, an endemic milkpea found at the pineland. Photos A and B by Rafael Gálvez. [C] Mosier's False Boneset (*Brickellia mosieri*), endemic to pine rocklands of the Miami Rock Ridge, also found at Porter-Russell; photo by Roger Hammer.

return of the federally endangered Goulds Wedge Sandmat, a species they observed there years ago but haven't seen since.

Recently Barros and Milledge took a walk at the Porter-Russell Pineland to mark a path to clear for future nature hikes. They trekked past Cabbage Palms, Coontie, Gumbo-limbo trees, Wild Grape, Rosary Pea, and a lot of tender Poisonwood, which all tried to avoid. There remains much garbage to clear from the property, but thanks to the efforts of several civic groups, the property is already much improved.

The cleanup of the property was kicked off on February 12<sup>th</sup> with a project by the Miami Country Day School, which donated the money for a dumpster.

The project was organized by Gary Pappas, an alumnus of the Miami Country Day School, and two of his partners at the law firm Carlton Fields. He said the school's Eco Club of about 15 teenagers cleared bikes, car parts, baby cribs and beer bottles. A neighbor pitched in with his own chainsaw.

"I think when you do something good that's visible in someone's neighborhood, people take notice," Pappas said. But he warned that without the neighbors' help, the project could be in vain. "If we do nothing more, within a month the property will be right back to how we found it that morning. No one will care."

"It's tempting for people to illegally toss their garbage here instead of going to the dump," Brother said. "We hope that the community will come to realize the importance of preserving this important property and help put a halt to dumping."

Garrett Siljee, 17, a chapter chief of the Order of the Arrow, a Boy Scout Honor Society that also did a cleanup at the Porter-Russell Pineland, said his group is dedicated to conservation in the community. "Brother said there's a lot to be done here so we came to help out," he said, as he lugged garbage to a dumpster one afternoon. TAS appreciates the efforts of these groups and hopes to involve more advocates in protecting this rare gem.

If you are interested in protecting the Porter-Russell Pineland, please contact Lewis "Brother" Milledge at [brothermilledge@mac.com](mailto:brothermilledge@mac.com).



# FLORIDA BIRD BOOK REVIEW - 60 YEARS OUT OF SYNC

BIRDS IN FLORIDA – THE COMPLETE BOOK OF FLORIDA BIRDS

BY JEFF WEBER

FLORIDA STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FLORIDA GROWER PRESS, TAMPA, 1951



IT'S FUNNY HOW WILDLIFE STATUS, nomenclature – and even reputation – can change so radically in a span of 60 years, but this was very apparent as I scanned an old book a friend gave me recently. *Birds In Florida – The Complete Book of Florida Birds* was issued as a new edition in 1951 in response to what the publisher called “steady, almost impassionate demands by Florida bird lovers.” Such love had its conditions, however, as virtually all of the birds covered were rated according to their ability to aid human interests, such as agriculture and pest eradication. Aesthetics

played only a minor role in the book's bird descriptions, usually relating to the song, as here: *It . . . has a lovely liquid song of o-kal-re-e-e that echoes through the areas it inhabits.* (Can you guess the identity of this common songster, also identified as the “Rice Bird”?)

Here are some more interesting observations in this volume of quaint, and sometimes charming, Florida bird lore:

On the “American Flamingo”: *Many persons who have seen the sunset-hued plumage of these creatures have expressed the hope that when the proposed Everglades National Park is opened as a bird sanctuary the flamingos will choose to breed in Florida.* This must be a holdover from the earlier editions, as the Park was opened in 1947. We're still waiting on the breeding part.

On the Roseate Spoonbill, or “Pink Curlew”: *Between 300 and 350 were reported to be (left) in the state in 1951. . . . When there are many together, one usually acts as a sentinel unless a heron should be near; and in any case you may despair of approaching them.*

On the “Everglade Kite”: *National Audubon Society states there were barely 50 of these graceful birds left in the Everglades-*

*Okeechobee area in December 1950, and appealed to hunters to spare the species.*

On the “Carolina Paroquet”: *Unlike our pioneer ancestors, American citizens now strive to protect beautiful birds and helpful birds, and, if any Carolina paroquets should be found in Florida, they would enjoy the fullest possible protection. . . . If any remain in Florida, they probably stay in the most isolated of cypress swamps and in the timbered bottomlands bordering unchartered streams.*

On the Great Horned Owl, or “Cat Owl”: *Although the great horned owls kill cotton rats that destroy the eggs of ground-nesting birds – and possibly the esthetic value of these huge birds is considerable – they are undeniably, destructive and are not protected by law.*

On the Ivory-billed Woodpecker: *Every known spot in Florida inhabited by the ivory-billed woodpecker has been marked and as it is a constant resident, that area is carefully protected by law.*

To me, the text of this curious book out-of-time is both disturbing and hopeful. Disturbing, because the evaluative characterizations of Florida birds are so closely tied to the needs of man – the very source of nearly all our environmental problems. Hopeful, because it shows a dawning awareness of the importance of conservation, the notion that perhaps all life is inextricably linked and that no single species should have dominion over the others.

But, there is a long way to go, and it is doubtful that we have yet learned the most important lessons. In an appendix of essays, the book carries a sentiment about native animals that I often hear today. A piece by entomologist J. R. Watson, ironically titled “Stop Shooting Your Friends” warns: *The only snakes in Florida that should be killed are the different species of rattlers, moccasins, coral snakes, and in the extremely northern part of Florida an occasional copperhead.*

It's clear we still have a distance to travel in environmental thinking, and not a whole lot of time left to get there.

## HONORING EMILIE YOUNG

**FRIENDS AND FAMILY GATHERED TO CELEBRATE** the life of Tropical Audubon Society Board member and champion of the environment Emilie Young at a heartwarming ceremony at the the Deering Estate Feb. 26.

Emilie, who passed away on Dec. 11, 2010, was remembered fondly for her dedication to land preservation, her unwavering professionalism, her humor, and her love of family.

“Emilie trod lightly on the Earth but she left distinctive virtual footprints,” said Doug Yoder, Deputy Director of the Water and Sewer Department for Miami Dade County.

Under the shade of towering Royal Palms overlooking the sparkling Biscayne Bay, about a dozen people spoke about Emilie, often reminding the crowd of about 50 attendees that Emilie helped acquire more than 80 acres for the Deering Estate.

“This land will be enjoyed by many for years to come,” said Joe Barros, TAS president.

Barros said he considered it a “coup” to sign Emilie onto the TAS board in April 2010, only two years after the board gave her the Dan Beard Award. He praised Emilie's dedication to the board despite her illness. “With courage and conviction she moved forward,” Barros said. “I knew then that Emilie's life would continue to make a difference and it has. We at TAS feel the difference and we miss her.”

Among the speakers at the ceremony were Joyce Sealey, Emilie's sister; Carlos Espinosa, Director of the Miami Dade County Department of Environmental Resources Management; Cynthia Guerra, Director of the Environmentally Endangered Lands Program and former TAS director; former TAS Board member Sam Poole; Roberto Torres of the Nature Conservancy; Barbara Falsey of the Urban Environment League; and W. Howard Gregg, Deputy Director, Miami Dade County Park and Recreation Department.

Following the ceremony, visitors gathered to dedicate a memorial bench donated by the Deering Estate Foundation in recognition of Emilie's work on behalf of the acquisition of natural areas for the Estate.

Emilie was a long-time County employee who retired in 2008. An environmental planner, she was the first Director of the County's Environmentally Endangered Lands Program where she oversaw the acquisition and maintenance of nearly 18,000 acres of land that celebrate the natural heritage of south Florida.

She began her career with Miami Dade County in the Planning Department, working on the Comprehensive Development Master Plan to develop policies to protect and preserve open space and natural areas in the face of urban growth. She played a major role in promoting a voter referendum that approved a special tax to pay for the acquisition and management of endangered land.

# TAS THANKS

The following generous individuals and foundations have contributed to TAS since our last publication. We GREATLY appreciate their support!

Everglades Foundation  
Elizabeth Ordway Dunn  
Foundation

**Swallow-tailed Kite (\$10,000)**  
The Villagers

**Roseate Spoonbill (\$5,000)**  
In memory of Jane Heuson,  
Porter Anderson

**Painted Bunting (\$250)**  
In memory of Jane E. Heuson,  
Andrea Heuson-Sharp  
In Honor of Robert L. Kelley,  
Helen & Joe Barros  
Mark & Beth Abbott  
Dr. & Mrs. Richard F. Newman  
Sue Nulman  
Patricia Phares  
Mr. & Mrs. Stephen M. Rowland  
George Van Wyck

**White-crowned Pigeon (\$100)**  
In Memory of Emilie Young,  
Anonymous  
Thomas P. Abbott  
Ellen & John Barrett  
William & Nancy Baxter  
Rick & Nancy Blanchett  
William Boeringer  
Bruce & Joyce Chesney  
Tribute to Helen and Joe Barros,  
Deborah Covert  
In memory of Mel Davidson,  
Mrs. Toby Davidson  
Shirley Gibson

Frances Guerra  
Martha Kent  
William H. Kleh  
Tribute to Dennis Olle & Margee  
Ryder, Ellen Oppenheimer  
Nancy Pastroff  
Gwladys Eliot Scott  
Catherin Seele  
Dewey Steele  
Philip Stoddard

**In-Kind**  
Christina Jacobs

**Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow and below**  
Harvey & Kathy Abrams  
Suzy Amerkan  
Mary Alice Ayers  
G.M. Fernandez Baden  
David Ball  
Aileen Bartholomew  
Arlene Bernie  
RC Bertrand  
Paul & Pamela Bithorn  
Stephen E. Blanchard  
Liesbeth Boots  
Paul Borden  
Silvia Maria Bota  
Roger Bradley  
Don Bristow  
Kathleen Burkhardt  
Thomas Caldwell  
Michele Barica Callahan  
Nuria Carret  
Lawrence T. Carroll  
Christina Casado  
Pat Cervi  
Camille Ciriano

Stephen Davis  
Christina Delphus  
Lisa DeTournay  
The Diggers Garden Club  
Rosalind Dobkin  
JoAnne Domke & Wilfried D.  
Domke  
Jeannette Gato  
Ms. Janet Gardiner  
Jine Gierbolini  
Edward Gilhuly  
Ergo Gonzalez  
Anthony Alfieri & Ellen Grant  
Elizabeth Grass  
Dr. & Mrs. Edward N. Green  
Ellen M. Green  
Leonard & Dana Greenberg  
Ms. G. Greene  
Harold A. Greene  
Paul Groff & Barbara Whitlock  
Marlene Grover  
David Hardy  
W.G. Harward  
Martha Heath  
Michael Himics  
Linda Humphries  
Gary Hunt & Linda Van Leer  
John Hutchison  
Carol Jacque  
Kimberly Kaeser  
Jennifer Kilpatrick  
Michael Kridel  
Claudia Kotchka  
Mark Kraus  
Martha Larmier  
Jacqueline M. & Paul F. Leader  
Arturo Leon  
Amy Leonard  
Virginia Lepper

Cindy Lerner  
Diane Loffredo  
Natalia Lopez de la Cruz  
Manuel Lorenzo  
Mel Mackler  
Libby Mahaffey  
Michael Maidenber  
Celia Mangels  
Robin Marks  
Sandra Marris  
Charles Martijn  
Scott Massie  
LeeAnn Masterson  
Kassia & Austin Matheson  
Dr. Alvis May  
Laura McDermott  
Martha Morrill McDonough  
Elizabeth L. McQuale  
Joel Merz  
"Jenny" Elisabeth Michalover  
Glenn Miller  
Susan Montesino  
Chery & Benjamin Morgan  
George B. Moser  
Melinda Munger  
Lili Neale  
David Ornstein  
Angela Palmisono  
Gale & Glenn Patron  
David & Anne Pearson  
Catherine Pendlebury  
Andres Perea  
Richard A. Pettigrew  
Dr. Robert S. Pittell  
Nancy Ponn  
Redland Tropical Gardens &  
Botanical Foundation  
Larry Reynolds  
Joel Rosenthal

Faith Ford Sandstrom  
Monica Santangelo  
Steve Sarnoff  
David Schaffter  
Frank Schena & Juan Gaston  
Gina Schild  
Donna Schiller  
Thomas Shreve  
Steven Siegel MD PA  
Maggie & Bernie Silverstein  
Mary Snipes  
Billy W. Shores  
Ms. Erik Speyer  
Dennis Sotolongo & Maria E.  
Nodal-Sotolongo  
Michael Stern  
Jennifer Stine  
Lynne Strieter  
Suzanne & Henry Stolar  
Pamela Sweeney  
Georgia Tasker  
Julia J. Thomas  
Freda Tschummy  
Susanna L. Travis  
Juan Valadez  
Maximiliano Valdes  
Randy & Kerry Waldrep  
Duchess Weiner  
Beth Werner  
Audrey Whitlock  
Elizabeth & Victor Wiggert  
Joel Wilcox  
Jean Yzer  
Jim Zauertnik  
Larry Zemanek

Born on August 16, 1943 in Jersey City, New Jersey to Neil S. and Marie A. Young, Emilie attended elementary school (P. S. 25) and graduated summa cum laude from Dickinson High School in Jersey City. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from Dickinson College, Carlisle Pa. She then moved to Washington D.C where she taught English to junior high school students. After a time in Washington she moved to Tallahassee Florida and obtained a Master of Science Degree in Urban and Regional Planning with a specialty in Environmental planning. In Tallahassee, Emilie was a founding member of the local chapter of the National Organization of Women (NOW).

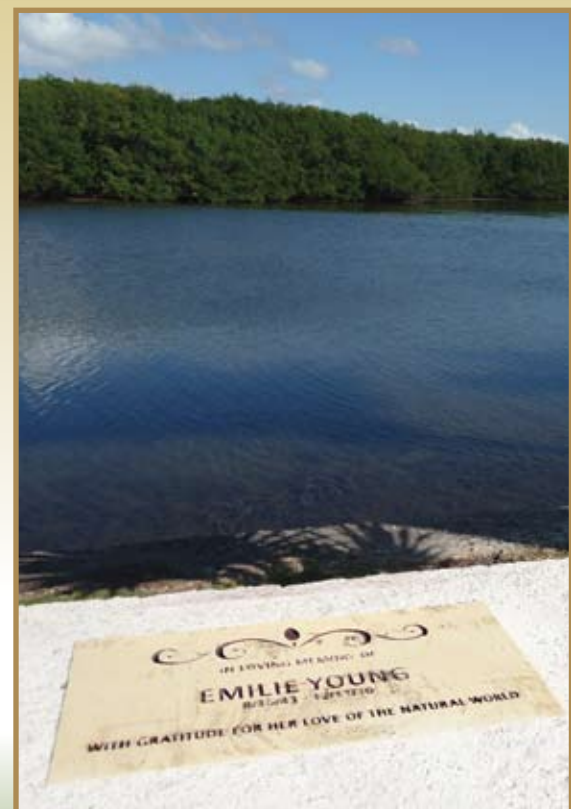
Emilie was a member of St. Matthew the Apostle Episcopal Church. She served on the board of the Urban Environment League. She received the Chairmans Award from the Nature Conservancy, and was named an Outstanding Woman of Miami Dade County. She was a dedicated member of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.

Emilie was predeceased by her father, Neil, and her step-father Howard I. Schmidt. She leaves behind her mother and loving sister Joyce Sealey of Monticello Florida; her stepsisters Barbara Monteith and Ann Brown, both of North Carolina; her "adopted" family Ricky and Murry Sill and her beloved godchildren Savannah and Marlin Sill; her nieces and nephews; and numerous close friends and colleagues.

For obituary go to:

<http://www.legacy.com/EnhancedObit/EnhancedObit.aspx?PersonID=147153571&Cobrand=LEGACY>

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/herald/obituary.aspx?n=emilie-young&pid=147150223>





# TROPICAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

THE VOICE OF CONSERVATION IN SOUTH FLORIDA

5530 Sunset Drive, Miami, FL 33143

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## TROPICAL AUDUBON SOCIETY INVITES YOU TO CELEBRATE EARTH DAY

### EARTH DAY TIME CAPSULE & DIRT - THE MOVIE

Friday April 22, 6-9:30pm

We are encapsulating the environmental challenges of today so future generations can remember them.

Help us fill our time capsule by bringing a captioned photograph or a small item related to Earth Day or the environment. Items and photos must be no bigger than 8.5 x11 and include your name, age and address. The capsule will be registered with the International Time Capsule Society and will be opened in 50 years.

Following the Time Capsule reception will be a screening of the movie DIRT.

Free to public. Popcorn will be served, donation bar.

Donations accepted to support our conservation efforts. Co-hosted by Gifford Arboretum.



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### SOLAR DOGS EARTH DAY CONSERVATION CONCERT

Saturday April 23, 7pm

Solar Dogs, a four-piece, acoustic string band of Americana, Bluegrass, Blues and Country & Western, performs at TAS for the first time. The critically praised Coconut Grove-based band has made previous appearances at The Barnacle, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, Gifford Lane Art Stroll, Luna Star, Scotty's Landing and the annual Shell Lumber Howl in the Wood. Michael Stock, host of WLRN's Folk and Acoustic Music, considers Solar Dogs "the definitive South Florida sound."

ADMISSION: \$10 donation, children free. Concert proceeds will support South Florida conservation efforts and benefit capital improvements to the TAS grounds and historic buildings.

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Both events will take place at TAS's Doc Thomas House, 5530 Sunset Drive, South Miami 33143. 305-667-7337. [www.tropicalaudubon.org](http://www.tropicalaudubon.org)  
Limited free parking on TAS grounds and along 56th Avenue. Metered parking available on Sunset Drive.