



# Sun City Center Audubon Club

March 2024

## *Prez Ponderings March 2024*

At the February 20th Community Association Club Leaders meetings, **the CA announced a new policy that all clubs must check CA Badges to make sure that attendees have paid their 2024 CA dues. This applies to Kings Point and Freedom Plaza members as well as regular Sun City Center residents.** So please try not to be annoyed with the nice people at the check-in stations, as they are only doing what the CA leaders have mandated that we do. For SCC residents, that means a badge showing the 2024 Black Dot on the front. If you do not have a current CA/KP/FP ID, we are told that we must turn you away at the door.

Our speaker for our March 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting is Eric Muecke, Urban Forestry Manager, City of Tampa since 2017. He will be talking about tree placement and species, the value of trees, and tree planting programs. He is a certified arborist with the International Society of Arborists (ISA). Your Audubon Club has invited members of the Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC), Beautification Committee, and Garden Club to attend as well. We hope our guests will enjoy this presentation and become members of the Audubon Club, so please give them a warm welcome when you meet them.

Admission for our first overnight trip in a few years on March 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> to the Wakulla Lodge is now closed. Great thanks to everyone that signed up! It will be a blast! Our next day trip is Thursday, March 28, to the Venice Rookery in Venice, where you can see nesting wading birds of all kinds and their fledglings. There is a covered viewing area there, as well as field glasses to get an up-close view if you don't have your own binoculars.

We have two positions open on our Board. We have a need for a Vice President to help with day-to-day duties, and for someone to handle Membership duties. Knowledge of Excel spreadsheets would be preferable. Contact us if you are interested. Either position can be shared with another person, as we have Co-Presidents & Co-Treasurers.

Make sure to drop by our table at FunFest on Saturday March 9<sup>th</sup> and say hello!

**And don't forget—if you have not already paid your 2024 Dues (only \$10 annually), you can remedy that when you check in at the front desk at the March 2nd meeting.**

Among the highlights of belonging to the Audubon Club is the social hour we host prior to our monthly meetings. Members get to hobnob with each other while drinking free coffee or tea and tasting delectable snacks. That is followed by an interesting presentation on varying topics of interest to our club. But like most good things, there is a cost. Coffee, creamer, sweeteners, and cups are not free to us. There are also printing costs for our brochures, bookmarks, and forms. We also give our speakers an honorarium for their time and travel to entertain us.

**Nancy & Alan Renfrow, Co-Presidents**  
**Email: [ac.coprez@gmail.com](mailto:ac.coprez@gmail.com)**  
**Phone: 847 989 9310**

**Don't forget to VOLUNTEER!**

## Happy St Patrick's Day



## ***2023 Bluebird Trail Report***

by

**Melanie Higgins and her Bluebird Project Team**

People have to deal with Bullies from time to time. And, so do birds. In the case of the beautifully blue, chestnut and white colored North American Bluebird, they suffer the harassment of snakes, Cuban tree frogs, and English Sparrows aka Weaver Finch. We Americans refer to them as "House Sparrows." They are definitely prolific. And, they raise havoc with Bluebirds.

A crew of volunteers with the Sun City Audubon Club started the Bluebird Project in 2014, to monitor a couple of dozen nest boxes on a regular basis each year (currently 25 newer Bluebird boxes line the trail). Their efforts have been rewarded with great success at increasing the Bluebird population here in our community.

We have attached to this email a tally of what the project volunteers have accomplished in 2023.

***Melanie Higgins***



***Meet Ebenezer, this Great Blue Heron is a local favorite of the residents at the Greenbriar Subdivision.***

***Photo by Alan Renfrow***

## ***The Importance of Urban Forests***

***Edward Muecke, COT Forester***

**March 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting**

The Urban Forestry Manager of the City of Tampa will be the guest speaker at the Saturday, March 2nd meeting of the Sun City Center Audubon Club. Eric Muecke will be discussing the various species of trees that do well in an urban setting, the value of these trees for our populated environment, and tree planting programs in Hillsborough County and vicinity.

Muecke has been the Urban Forestry Manager for the City of Tampa since 2017 and holds an advisory position on the Florida Urban Forestry Council. He is a Certified Arborist with the International Society of Arborists (ISA). An "Arborist" is a professional practitioner of the cultivation, management and study of trees, shrubs, vines and other perennial woody plants.

He received his undergraduate degree in Urban Forestry from the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point, in 1992. Since then, Muecke has worked for the Forestry Departments of the Cities of Chicago and Green Bay, Wisconsin, dealing with Dutch Elm Disease, Oak Wilt and the Spongy Moth. In North Carolina, he helped communities develop urban forestry programs. He also provided assistance to those municipalities in developing tree planting programs and North Carolina's Wildland Urban Interface program.

SCC Audubon Club members will gather for coffee, tea, sweets and socializing prior to the meeting from 9:15 a.m. until 10 a.m.

Muecke's presentation will begin after a few brief club announcements from about 10:15 until 11:30 a.m. The meeting will be held in the Florida Room of the Atrium Building off North Pebble Beach Boulevard.

***John Perian, Publicity Chairman***

## Boyd Hill Nature Preserve Raptor Fest February 3<sup>rd</sup> *A Roaring Success*

St. Petersburg's annual Boyd Hill Nature Preserve "RAPTOR FEST" thrilled hundreds of spectators and bird lovers from the Tampa Bay area Saturday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>. Permanent avian residents at the preserve helped to educate the guests, as they quietly perched atop their handlers' gloved fists.

Children and their parents looked on in wonder. Normally, in the wild, birds of prey are frequently difficult to track, especially when they swoop down to catch their prey. At this month's festival, visitors got an up close look at their talons, their hooked beaks and the wonderful designs and colors that nature has bestowed on each bird.

Guests saw several different species of owls. A pair of very small Screech Owls, a Barred Owl, Barn Owl and the very large Great Horned Owl. There were also a Kestrel, a Swallow Tailed Kite, an even larger and regal looking Andean Condor, the South American cousin of our California Condor.

There was a presentation of two Harris Hawks circling the arena in an experienced tight formation, for the enthralled adults and kids. The two desert dwelling raptors were released by their handler, to demonstrate how they usually work together to "bring home the bacon."



*Beautiful pair of Florida Screech Owls.*

These beautiful birds of prey usually make their home in the desert Southwestern United States and Mexico. They normally hunt together as a team. One distracts the prey, while the other hawk glides down to pounce on their unsuspecting meal.

*Photos by Mariclaire Jones*



*Clara Clancy feeds a worm to a Swallow Tailed Kite*

Hundreds of people packed the area of the preserve that day. Vendors set up booths with items for sale. There were also Boyd Hill Raptor Volunteers scattered throughout the site, holding their birds of prey on gloved hands, to give visitors an up-close introduction to owls, hawks and kites.

One volunteer gave informative talks throughout the day, about a pair of Bald Eagles. Majestic looking animals. One of the eagles was blind in one eye. All of the raptors at this year's festival are birds that had been previously injured and cannot be released back into the wild.

*More Raptor Fest Photos*



*North American Bald Eagle*



*Florida Barn Owl*



*North American Kestrel Falcon*



*Harris Hawk Photo by Pixabay Images*

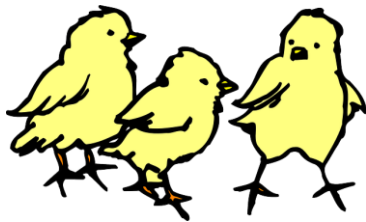
## News from our Master Birder

Ray Webb

The Holiday season has passed, and now we draw nearer to the conclusion of our 2023-24 season. Two more meetings. Two more field trips. And our first overnight field trip in several years (March 4 - 5, to Wakulla Lodge near Tallahassee).

However, our Audubon season is dynamic, continuing over the summer with monthly field trips. At this time of the year, we hold a field trip meeting, to poll all members as to where they would like us to visit in the coming months. This meeting is open to all, and will be held this year on **Friday, March 15, in the Atrium's Caper Room, at 10AM.** These meetings have proved to be very useful. This past year we had trips to two places recommended at these meetings (Paynes Creek State Park and Wild Florida Sanctuary.)

Our February field trip was held on the 23rd, to the Celery Fields in Sarasota. Our remaining trips will be to the Venice Rookery on March 28, and to Fort De Soto County Park on April 17. You can sign up to attend any of our trips at our monthly meetings, or online at [sccaudubonclub.Com](http://sccaudubonclub.Com).



### Field Trips 2024

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| 03/28/24 | Venice Rookery<br>Venice FL                     |
| 04/17/24 | Fort De Soto County Park<br>Pinellas County, FL |

For information on Programs &  
To sign up for Field Trips please visit  
our website at

[www.sccaudubonclub.com](http://www.sccaudubonclub.com)



### BYOM

In an endeavor to support our conservation beliefs, please bring your own mug to our Saturday morning meetings. We appreciate your cooperation.

For those of you who use the recycle water bottles, the CA has installed water fountains in the atrium to conveniently refill your water bottles.

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING  
YOUR CA BADGE TO THE MEETING**



*Purple Martin Condo Celery Fields  
Photo by Alan Renfrow*

*Celery Fields Trip February 23, 2024*  
*Photos by John Lampkin*



*Purple Gallinule*



*Glossy Ibis*



*Glossy Ibis Flock*



## *We're on the road again!*

Thanks to our many energetic and dedicated members we have an overnight field trip planned for 2024. This two-day/one-night trip will be to Wakulla Springs on March 4th, we will be staying overnight at the Wakulla Lodge in Crawfordville, FL



**Don't forget to buy your raffle tickets  
for the framed Audubon prints.**



## *Programs 2024*

- 03/02/24    **The Importance of Urban Forests**  
Eric Muecke  
COT Forester
- 04/06/24    **Florida Wildlife Corridor**  
Marley Fuller  
Wildlife Corridor

*Kate and Dr. Bob Lochte* have gifted our Club with three high quality framed Audubon prints. These pieces were from the estate of their Aunt Jane Davis Doggett, 11/04/1929 – 4/10/23, in her memory. These three framed prints will be raffled off individually, with the first being “Painted Finches.” The overall size of the framed print is 30”x43”. Sales will be limited to 50 tickets total at \$10.00/per ticket.

*Melanie Higgins*

## *SCC Audubon Board Meetings*

*Board meetings are held in the heritage room at 7:00pm on the third Monday of every month.*

*All Members are invited.*



*Blue-Wing Teal Scratching  
Photo By John Lampkin*

# HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

**March 2024**

Roselyn Cruthis

Pat Dean

Carolyn Deming

Beverly Feindt

Marshia Hall

Erika Horvath

Mariclaire Jones

Valesca Lopez

Ron Matelski

Sandy McCaw

Pati Messick

Susan Mitchell

John Perian

Thomas Perusse

Catherine Petit

Bryant Pomrenke

Rod Rodrigues

Diane Van Der Woude

Ann Weber

Todd Wizelman



*Have you heard about the ....*

## ***SCC Audubon Club Fund***

This fund supports the continued mission of the Sun City Center Audubon Club to promote an understanding of and interest in all wildlife and the environment that supports it; to maintain and improve the Sun City Center Nature Trails, and to further the cause of conservation of natural resources for the benefit of posterity.

Questions, or need assistance with an asset donation to our SCC Audubon Club Fund please contact the Audubon Club Fund advisor at:

Denyve Boyle, CFRE

Senior Director, Philanthropy

Community Foundation Tampa Bay

813.609.4868

[dboyle@CFTampaBay.org](mailto:dboyle@CFTampaBay.org)

### ***Officers & Committee Chairs 2024***

<i>Co-Presidents</i>	<i>Nancy &amp; Alan Renfrow</i>
<i>Programs Chair</i>	<i>TBD</i>
<i>Secretary</i>	<i>Betty Giles</i>
<i>Co-Treasurers</i>	<i>Pam &amp; George Viner</i>
<i>Past President</i>	<i>Dennis Morris</i>
<i>Greeter</i>	<i>Linda Floyd</i>
<i>Refreshments</i>	<i>Pat Dean</i>
<i>Membership</i>	<i>TBD</i>
<i>Co-Name Tags</i>	<i>Jo Ann Wilkinson</i>
	<i>Laura Butler</i>
<i>Conservation</i>	<i>TBD</i>
<i>Historian</i>	<i>Clara Clancy</i>
<i>Newsletter</i>	<i>Denise Rosen</i>
<i>Publicity</i>	<i>John Perian</i>
<i>Master Birder &amp; Field Trips</i>	<i>Ray Webb</i>
<i>At Large</i>	<i>Patsie Ginley</i>