



Sun City Center Audubon Club

November 2023

Prez Ponderings November 2023

Greetings SCC Audubon Club Members!
The next meeting of our club is scheduled for:

DATE: Saturday, November 4, 2023
PLACE: Florida Room
SOCIAL: 9:15 AM
MEETING: 10:00 AM
SPEAKER: James Stevenson, Supervisor
Pinellas County Parks Dept.
“Backyard Habitat for Birds”

Check-in volunteers will keep the line moving, and can confirm the status of your membership.

REMINDER: by joining or renewing now, your Audubon Club membership is fully paid until December 31, 2024. Thanks for joining and supporting our Audubon Club!

WE NEED AND WELCOME NEW VOLUNTEERS

Our Club’s *revised* volunteer opportunities are listed on the bottom of the Membership Registration form.

- ___ Membership Check-in Tables
- ___ Nature Trail Maintenance
- ___ Publicity / Photography
- ___ Refreshment Table
- ___ Technology / Video Set-up
- ___ Program Speakers
- ___ Field Trips / 3-day Trips
- ___ Decorating / Atmosphere
- ___ Greeting

Volunteers are the backbone of our Club. Let us know if you can assist.

We’d love to have you join our crew!

ATTENTION! BAKERS!

Tis the season for cookies and treats!

The Refreshment Table sign-up sheet will be circulating the meeting hall. Please sign up to bring a plate of holiday goodies to our December meeting – it’s our best-attended meeting of the year, so we need plenty.

HAVE YOU SEEN IT?

Everyone loves free stuff, so at our meeting visit the Share Table, located near the beverages. ALL items on the Share Table are free, so take whatever you can use, OR drop off nature-related items you no longer need. See Laura Butler, who is coordinating this project.

Our Audubon Club will once again have an informational table at

EVENT: *Hi! Neighbor*
PLACE: Community Hall
DATE: Thursday, November 2nd
TIME: 6:30 – 8:30 PM

Make sure to stop by and see us!

The Nominating Committee is continuing its task of finding Audubon Club Officer candidates for 2024. If you wish to be a candidate for *any* Audubon Club Office, please contact a member of the Nominating Committee for information:

Clara Clancy papabear261@juno.com
Pat Dean fredsfishn@aol.com
Linda Floyd LFloyd21@tampabay.rr.com
Melanie Higgins melaniephiggins@gmail.com
Mariclaire Jones mariclaire.c.jones@gmail.com

Looking forward to seeing *you* at our meeting!

Dennis Morris, President
570-814-2803

The **Florida Birding and Nature Festival** was once again a big success! Held at the Suncoast Youth Conservation Center in Apollo Beach October 12—15, it featured a large Nature Expo, numerous field trips and seminars, and keynote speakers in the evenings.

Organized by the Tampa Audubon Society, our SCC Audubon Club again was a Festival sponsor. Major support was received from TECO, the Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection, Audubon Florida, Tampa Bay Watch, Tampa Bay Conservancy, Sierra Club, Mosaic Corp., SW Florida Water Management District, and Hillsborough County. Many smaller organizations also were listed as supporting the Festival.

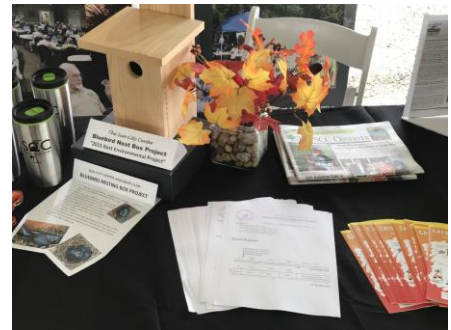
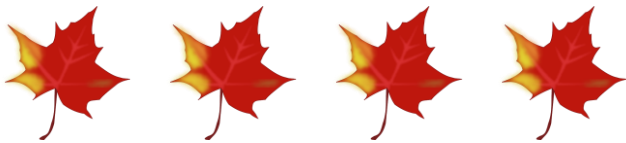
Our Audubon Club continued its tradition of participating in the 2-day Nature Expo by creating and exhibiting an informational table displaying the accomplishments of our Club. On display were our superb monthly newsletter, numerous awards, and the story of our Bluebird Box project. We gave away our Club bookmarks and copies of directions to build-your-own bluebird box. Our exhibit table was eye-catching and attracted a steady stream of visitors each day.

The 2-day Nature Expo was open 7 hours (10 AM – 5 PM) each day! Thanks to the following Club volunteers, our exhibit table was once again fully staffed both days:

Laura Butler
Rick Robillard
Betty Giles
Nancy Shrom
Jesse Shrom
Linda Floyd
Ann Fenimore
Dennis Morris

Additionally, Patsie Ginley served as a seminar moderator, and John Lampkin led a Friday field trip to the Schultz Preserve.

WOW! That's a lot of involvement for one club! If you missed the Festival, put it on your to-do list for next year!



News from our Master Birder

Ray Webb

On October 18, twelve Audubon birders visited Paynes Creek Historic State Park in Bowling Green, about 50 miles from SCC, on a picture-perfect day. Here, we watched a short film about the Seminole Indian Wars and enjoyed the various drawings and artifacts at the Visitor Center. We followed this with a hike to a suspension bridge over Paynes Creek, to a monument to Captain Payne. A luncheon at Gloria's Restaurant on US 17 followed this.

Our next trip is on November 13 to Circle B Bar Preserve in Lakeland, a fabulous birding location complete with Visitor Center, displays and facilities. The wide range of habitats here presents a variety of species. Following this is our Christmas visit to Bok Tower Gardens on December 8!

You can sign up for these and other trips online at sccaudubonclub.com, or at a regular meeting.



Field Trips

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 11/13/23 | Circle B Bar Reserve
Lakeland, FL Park |
| 12/08/23 | Bok Towers Gardens
Lake Wales, FL |
| 1/16/24 | Wild Florida Sanctuary
Riverview, FL |
| 2/23/24 | The Celery Fields
Sarasota, FL |
| 3/28/24 | Venice Rookery
Venice FL |
| 4/17/24 | Fort Desoto County Park
Pinellas County, FL |

For more information on Programs & Field Trips please visit our website at

www.sccaudubonclub.com



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.

Background

Since December 2015, the SCC Audubon Club and the Sun City Center Community Association (SCCCA) have partnered to develop and maintain the 37-acre SCC North Campus Nature Trails.

Yearly care and improvement of this large tract of land is expensive. Grants and development monies have been expended. Our Club began seeking new revenue sources and ways to save for future expenses.

In February 2023, SCC Audubon Club members Nelson and Mollie Allen unexpectedly contacted our Audubon Club, looking for ways to benefit the parks and wildlife in our region. In April 2023, the Allens graciously provided the funds necessary to create the SCC Audubon Club Fund at the Community Foundation Tampa Bay.

At a critical time, the cooperation of Audubon Club members Nelson and Mollie Allen made possible the creation of the SCC Audubon Club Fund. The SCC Audubon Club is very grateful for their generous contribution.

SCC Audubon Club Fund *FAQs*

Q: Is the SCC Audubon Club Fund important?

A: *Absolutely!* Donations to this fund will create a legacy to ensure our Club's future projects, such as Nature Trail maintenance.

Q: What are some advantages of our Audubon Club Fund?

A: All funds begin earning interest immediately upon donation

You may donate any amount (\$25 online minimum) at any time, and receive a receipt for tax purposes.

Memorial and tribute donations may be made.

Funds will be safely held in perpetuity for Audubon Club use

Virtually any asset may be donated (see below)

Q: What other types of assets can be donated to our Audubon Club Fund?

A: Virtually any asset may be donated to our Audubon Club Fund, including:

- Real Estate
- Stocks and bonds
- Life insurance
- Retirement plan assets
- Large cash donations
- Personal property
- IRA distributions
- Cars, boats, RVs
- Annuities and trusts

Q: How can money be donated to our Audubon Club Fund?

A: Simply go to the website **CFTampaBay.org** select *Get Started*, then page down to the SCC Audubon Club Fund and *Donate Now!* using a credit card or account debit.

Q: Who professionally manages our Audubon Club's fund?

A: The Community Foundation Tampa Bay (CFTB) began on the Southshore in 1990, and now manages assets of over \$500 million. They partner with many local SCC groups.

Q: Do you have questions, or need assistance with an asset donation to our SCC Audubon Club fund?

A: Contact our Audubon Club Fund advisor at the CFTB for a private, confidential consultation by phone, email, or in person:

Denyve Boyle, CFRE
Senior Director, Philanthropy
Community Foundation Tampa Bay
813.609.4868
dboyle@CFTampaBay.org



- 11/04/23 **Backyard Habitat for Birds**
James Stevenson
Pinellas County

- 12/02/23 **Birds of Prey**
Mike Stott
Boyd Hill Nature Preserve
(*Community Hall)

- 01/06/24 **Suwanee Cooters**
George Heinrich
Field Biologist
(*Community Hall)

- 02/03/24 **Bugs in your Bloomers**
John Lampkin

- 3/2/24 **The Importance of Urban Forests**
Edward Meucke
COT Forester

- 4/06/24 **Florida Wildlife Corridor**
Marley Fuller
Wildlife Corridor

- 4/19/24 **EARTH DAY CELEBRATION**
AT THE NATURE TRAILS
(Friday before Earth Day)



Photos from Florida Birding and Nature Festival by Dennis Morris

Officers & Committee Chairs 2023

<i>President</i>	<i>Dennis Morris</i>
<i>Vice-President & Programs</i>	<i>Patsie Ginley</i>
<i>Secretary</i>	<i>Betty Giles</i>
<i>Co-Treasurers</i>	<i>Pam & George Viner</i>
<i>Immediate Past Pres.</i>	<i>Mary Duncan</i>
<i>Greeter</i>	<i>Linda Floyd</i>
<i>Refreshments</i>	<i>Pat Dean</i>
<i>Membership</i>	<i>Merial Graff</i>
<i>Name Tags</i>	<i>Jo Ann Wilkinson</i>
<i>Co-Chair</i>	<i>Laura Butler</i>
<i>Conservation</i>	<i>Melanie Higgins</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 & Field Trips</i>	<i>Ray Webb</i>



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. The print will be available for viewing at the October 7th meeting.

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.



www.sccaudubonclub.com

First Place Award of Excellence Sun City Center Audubon Club

The Florida native Plant Society has awarded its 2023 Landscape First Place Award of Excellence to the Sun City Center Audubon Club, for its efforts to help restore the Community Association's West Campus Nature Trails to a more wild-like Florida preserve.

In selecting the local club for its prestigious annual prize, FNPS Executive Director Lynda Davis applauded the efforts of the organization to help raise funds, along with the SCC Community Association, the Men's Club and other community residents, to gradually restore the 16 acre site to a more natural setting.

"They are promoting the use of native plants and educating the residents at the same time," Davis explained. "The creativity to raise funds by members of the SCC Audubon Club and the community, to restore this site is amazing to see."

SCC Audubon Club Conservation Committee Chairperson Melanie Higgins said the Club assumed stewardship of the Nature Trails in 2015. At the time, she said, the site was loaded with non native plants, trash and other debris. Since then, exotic and invasive species of foliage along the West Campus Trails have been removed and replaced with native species.

Funding for the restoration work was contributed by the Hillsborough County Pollution Recovery Fund, the SCC Men's Club, the SCC Community Association and the SCC Audubon Club.

The donations paid for trail grooming, exotic plant and tree removal, easier trail access and signage.

SCC Audubon Club members Ray Webb and John Lampkin helped identify and catalogue more than 100 different species of birds, and in excess of 350 species of plants, butterflies and dragonflies within the preserve.

"They counted every climbing, crawling, swimming, walking, flying and slithering bird, mammal, reptile and insect within the nature trails," Higgins said. "Then they sent the catalogued list along with the contest application to the Florida Native Plant Society."



Sun City Audubon Club Conservation Committee Chairperson Melanie Higgins admires a cake that was enjoyed by club members at its October 4th meeting, to celebrate the club's 2023 Landscape Award by the Florida Native Plant Society.

Last year's FNPS Landscape Award went to the City of Sanibel, on Florida's east coast.

Higgins explained that the contest and awards encourage individuals, businesses, government agencies, HOA's and community groups, like the SCC Audubon Club, to restore some of Florida's native plant species to the state's populated areas.

"It also helps motivate citizens to get outside to enjoy nature and learn about the native plants that are local to our area," she said. "By doing this, it will also help promote species diversity in our community."

The West Campus Nature Trails are identified by a large sign at the trailhead, that can be seen from West Del Webb Boulevard. The preserve is located across the street from North Lake, between Vincennes and Seton Hall Drive.

Birding - Sun City Center

Ray Webb Presentation 10/4 meeting

SCC Audubon Club members and guests were treated to a presentation by Club Master Birder, Ray Webb, at its October 4th meeting in the Florida Room of the Atrium Building. Ray's lecture and slide show were called "Birding - Sun City Center." He gave a basic description and explanation of many of the iconic bird species that live here year round, as well as the migratory avifauna.

"It's important to be observant," Ray said. "Birding is a skill. There are birds everywhere and practice leads to improvement."

People who enjoy "bird watching" can start learning about our feathered friends in their own backyards and neighborhoods. As he explained, birds are not only identified by what we observe, but also by what we hear. Because of the density of the surrounding foliage, it might not be possible to immediately identify a bird, if it flies off. But, if you also learn its songs and calls, that knowledge can be effectively used to distinguish which bird you are attempting to recognize.

As Ray explained to the audience, "You WILL miss identifying many birds. Don't let that get you down. Listen to their songs, look for field marks on their feathers, look at their size and shape. Watch their behavior."

While birding at home or in the hammocks, swamps, pinewoods and coastal areas, it's important to observe if a bird hops, walks, runs, jumps, or flies a few feet and then lands on a branch or in open areas. Does your bird pump its tail? Does it congregate in large groups (flocks), by itself or with two or more similar species? On a tree trunk or branch, does it walk up or down and use its tail as a "crutch?" Does it feed on the ground? Does it perform acrobatics, while attempting to catch a bug on the fly?

Ray said there are at least 30 species of warblers, and each one has its own differences. Sometimes a bird will have a specially colored eye patch or crown, belly, chest or rump. Maybe it will have white chevrons on its primary wings, like a Mockingbird



Mexican Crested Caracaras

Today, there are numerous, small, illustrated bird identification books and cell phone apps, that include bird songs and other specific identifiers. Binoculars and spotting scopes come in all shapes, sizes and price tags. Even a small inexpensive \$35 pair of binoculars with a neck strap will help make identifying birds much easier than relying on the naked eye.

Ray discussed Raptors that frequent our area. They include three classes of hawks or birds of prey, he added. Accipiters are hawks that have to navigate through thick forested areas, like a Cooper's Hawk. The tail is long and narrow. The wings are short and rounded. They generally prey on other birds. They use rapid, bursting flaps of their wings, punctuated by glides through the trees and brush. Their bodies move and turn like a fighter plane.

Buteos, on the other hand, have robust bodies, long and broad wings but relatively short, fan shaped tails. They like to soar and band together sometimes in groups called "Kettles," especially during migration. Some buteos include Red Tailed and Red Shouldered Hawks, Bald Eagles, Broad Winged and Rough Legged Hawks. They are opportunistic feeders and prey on small mammals, particularly rodents.

Falcons, on the other hand, are the avian equivalent of a fighter plane. They have broad short heads and very long, pointed and slender wings. Examples of a Falcon are the Kestrel, which used to be called a "Sparrow Hawk." It's the smallest Falcon in North America. About the size of a male Robin. And, as its traditional name implies, it will often snatch a sparrow in mid flight.

A Merlin or Peregrine are also Falcons. The Peregrine Falcon folds its wings in close to its body, when it dives after a pigeon or other bird. It often reaches speeds of 200 mph, before it makes a fist with its talons and punches its prey.

There are about 196 species of breeding birds in Florida, or about 524 different bird species or naturally occurring strays that have been recorded in the state.

One "Outlander" that is now seen more frequently here is the Northern Crested Caracara, the national bird of Mexico. Contrary to popular belief, though, it is not the bird found on that country's flag. That happens to be a Golden Eagle.



Yellow Throated Warbler

If you're at the beach in this area, you will readily see and hear Gulls soaring or diving nearby. There are two species of Gull that congregate along our Gulf Coast. Our year-round resident, Ray said, is the Laughing Gull. During winter, it is joined by the Ring Billed Gull. Either bird is an opportunistic feeder. Although they prefer fish, crabs and other seafood, they WILL sneak up on you and snatch your sandwich, if you aren't paying attention. It happened to me once, while i was sitting under our beach umbrella at Holmes Beach. There was only a quarter of my hoagie left. But that cheeky Laughing Gull swooped down and grabbed it, before I even heard it.



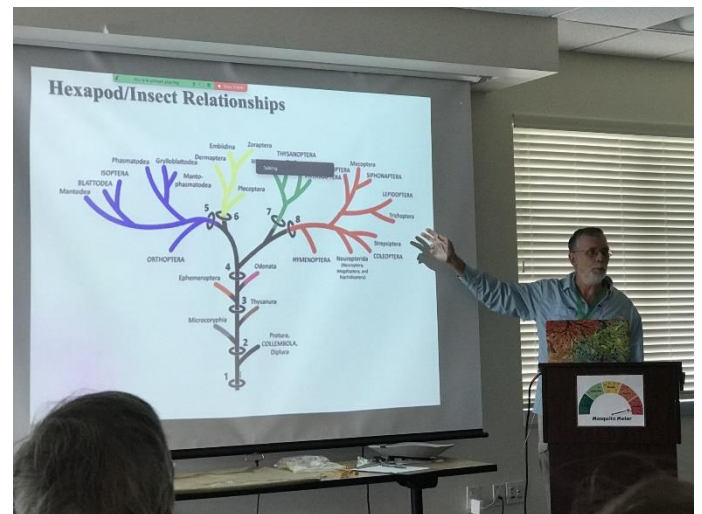
As Ray will caution you, while birding out in the field, it is extremely important to be aware of your surroundings. Watch your step. Florida not only has alligators of all sizes in just about every body of water. There are also small mammals and venomous snakes that normally leave people alone, unless you get too close to them. Or, if you step on them. And, if they don't get you, poison ivy will.

Wear sunblock and protective clothing, including a hat that covers your ears and neck. Long sleeved shirts and pants. Proper footwear that is comfortable, already broken in and supports the foot and ankle is important. It's even more crucial in Florida's tropical climate to stay hydrated. Don't forget to bring plenty of water.

Ray offered another piece of great advice. When you spot a bird in a tree or bush, don't take your eyes off of it. You should already have your binoculars close to your chest and hanging with a strap around your neck.

Without moving your eyes off of your target, take your binoculars and bring them up to your eyes. Your bird should be almost in the center of your field of vision, if you keep your eyes on it. If you look down to grab your binoculars and try to look up and find your bird again, you won't stand a chance. Your quarry will be gone, by the time you try to sight it again. Most of all, enjoy yourself and happy birding!

John Perian



Presentation at the Florida Birding and Nature Festival

Meetings

1st Saturday of the Month
Florida Room in Atrium

9:15am Coffee Social

10:00am Business Meeting followed by
Scheduled Program and
Adjournment



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.

So, you say, you forgot your coffee mug, no worries, you can purchase one of our brand-new SCC Audubon Travel Mugs at our next meeting. Available for \$5 each.

★HAPPY★
BIRTHDAY!

November 2023

Ann Fenimore

Dave Greise

Paul Kopf

Russell Moody

Sabine Prather

Cathey Sandquist

Linda Torchia

