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This newsletter is published 5 times each year: Jan., Mar., May, Sept., and Nov. -SAVE THIS ISSUE UNTIL March, 2016
Our Motto is **"From Birding to the Total Environment"** Website Address: <http://www.baycountyaudubon.org>
Bay County Audubon Society's 53rd year of continuous successful operation

it out!!! baycountyaudubon.org or follow us on Facebook.

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

August – November 2015

Angela Covey, Debbie Frady, Wilma Gaudet, Kate Dailey, Carole Pope, Tammy Hess, Mary Frank Sheesley, Lois Mudge, Don Beers, Jerome Bechtle, Janet Rankin, Janice Shuffler, Ron Wilson, Luis Garcia, Marvin Friel, Judith Bradford, Dolores R. Brown, Jeffrey Whitton, Jo A. Rooks, Sally Whitley, Keith Bissell, Sue Whitfield, Phyllis Chaffin, George Ngo, Audra Resler, Joan Burnett, Cynthia Evans, Debra Shelton, Russilla Johnson, Elizabeth Zinsser, Patricia Higgins, Joni Gilbert, Maria McCarthy, Mary Vicki Taws, Linda Krepper, Julia Thompson, Wanda Giles, Carolyn Kent, Tracy Frigon, Dian Horvatic, Alicia Sullivan, Joyce Shepard, Alice Marquis, Ron Edwards, Kate Dailey, James Muller, Patricia Rueckert, Carole Pope, Newell Mock, Melissa Duke, David W. Jacobs, Caroline Shahala, Caroline Walker, Gwynne K. Ebanks, Robert Flora, Pamela Brewster, Janice Shiffler, Ron Wilson, Lois S. Frady, Travis & Karen MacClendon, Tonis Hagler, Gloria H. Gilmore, Glenn Riley, Judy Dusseault, Marie Moser, G.S. Manger, and Jeanne Carter.

WELCOME BACK TO BCAS

Gail Carmody, Ray Matson, and Patricia Kelly

NEW MEMBERS FORM (Not for renewals)

Yes, please enroll me as a new member of the National Audubon Society and of the local chapter, Bay County Audubon Society (C5ZE200Z) (Be sure to put this number on your check). Please send Audubon magazine, Conservation Chronicle, and my membership card to the address below.

\$20 One-year introductory membership \$15 Friend (*The Conservation Chronicle* only)

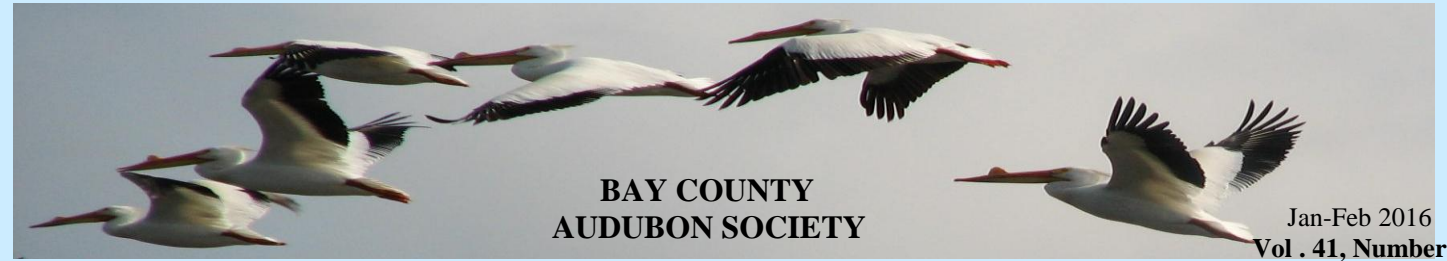
Name: _____ Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email Address: _____

Please make your check payable to the National Audubon Society and mail this application to the local chapter: Bay County Audubon Society, P.O. Box 1182, Panama City, Florida 32402

CONSERVATION CHRONICLE



BAY COUNTY
AUDUBON SOCIETY

Jan-Feb 2016
Vol. 41, Number 1

CO-PRESIDENT'S CHAT

By Ron Houser

YOGI WAS RIGHT; YOU CAN OBSERVE A LOT BY WATCHING

When we give birding advice to new birders we tend to talk about binoculars and other bits of information that they need to know. But from my experience, I have found there seems to be something else that people need to know but is hard to teach, and that is how to shift into another gear to be aware of one's surroundings. This is an essential part of being a good birder. If someone always depends on other people to show him or her birds, then that person will not develop that skill. The first thing you need is a genuine desire to learn and improve your skills in birding. If you have that, you are more receptive to learning how to spot birds in what seems to be just a bunch of bushes or trees. Shut everything else out and concentrate on seeing and hearing. You will learn to watch for subtle movements, listen for faint calls and songs and to scan the sky for things flying over. Pay attention. If you are chatting or fumbling around with equipment, phones or snacks, you will miss things. You don't necessarily have to know what bird you are seeing or hearing; that will come later. But if you just say "What is that bird in the bush over there by the tree stump?" then someone with more experience can probably identify it for you. But at least you were the one to spot it first, and that earns respect from other birders and will encourage you to improve your skills every time you go out. Soon you will be one of those experienced birders. If you think about it, Yogi Berra made a lot of sense.

Christmas Bird Count

Ron Merritt

This was the 116th year of Audubon's Christmas Bird Count. As of 1 Jan 2016, there have been 415 counts reported with 13,344,572 birds counted during this year's event. So when did this whole thing get started? Prior to the turn of the 20th century, hunters engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt." They would choose sides and go afield with their guns—whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered (and furred) quarry won. Conservation was in its beginning stages in that era, and many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, an early officer in the then-nascent Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition—a "Christmas Bird Census" that would count birds during the holidays rather than hunt them. So began the Christmas Bird Count. Thanks to the inspiration of Chapman and the enthusiasm of 27 dedicated birders, 25 Christmas Bird Counts were held that day. The locations ranged from Toronto, Ontario to Pacific Grove, California with most counts in or near the population centers of northeastern North America. Those original 27 Christmas Bird Counters tallied around 90 species on all the counts combined. CBC data have been used for over a century for a wide range of conservation and restoration initiatives. With global climate change in the forefront of environmental concerns, it is clear that this effort, which began over a hundred years ago, will provide valuable baseline data which we can hold up to the public. We will present our results from the 2015-16 Christmas Bird Count in our next edition!



CALENDER OF EVENTS

PROGRAMS

All membership meetings will be held at the Science & Discovery Center of Northwest Florida, 308 Airport Road, Panama City

A few dates to mark in your calendars for this coming winter and coming spring. Some great programs and a few important meetings that you may want to attend.

January 11 – Our regularly scheduled meeting at Science and Discovery Center. 7:00 PM. Special guest speaker Jim Stevenson who will speak about saving Wakulla Springs.

January 19 – **The Big Year.** A wonderful movie on birding to be shown at the Bay County Library, 898 W 11th Street, Panama City, FL, as part of the Under the Lens Book and Film Festival. 5:30 PM, Free Admission.

February 8 – Regularly scheduled meeting at Science and Discovery Center. 7:00 PM Guest speaker Bonnie Samuelsen, Audubon Florida, who will present the shorebird monitoring program.

BIRD IDENTIFICATION QUIZ

(Answer at the end)



Photo by Charla Boggs

Field Trips By Ron Houser

Tentative Schedule for Field Trips through May 2016

Jan. 16 Okaloosa spray fields area in Ft. Walton with Lenny Fenimore (Choctawhatchee Audubon). Meet behind the Taco Bell on Thomas Drive near the bridge at 7:00 AM to leave at 7:15 sharp. Moderate walking required. Bring binoculars, snakes, and drinks. We may eat lunch locally.

Feb. 10 PCB Bird Walk – Lead by Ron Houser. Easy walking.

Feb. 13 Nature Conservancy's Apalachicola Bluffs Preserve near Bristol. Moderate walking along the scenic river bluff trails. Bring binoculars, camera, snacks and drinks. We may have lunch in Bristol or Blountstown. Meet at the PC Mall by Starbucks at 7:00 AM to leave at 7:15 sharp. Led by Gail and Fred Casteel.

For more information please call Ron Houser at 763-7485 or 381-5651

Local Bird Observations



This year many people in Bay County reported seeing American White Pelicans in the skies over Panama City as well as loafing and feeding on St. Andrews Bays and estuaries. Majestic flocks that almost mystically come in and out of view as they turn against the sun.

Photo by: Richard Ingram

The 47th Year Travel Adventure Film Series Bay County Audubon Society

Thanks to the hard work of the film series committee and the continued support and involvement of our Benefactor: The St. Joe Community Foundation; Underwriters: Bay County Tourist Development Council, the Jelks Family Foundation; and our many sponsors, we are proud to present the line-up for the 2016 Travel Adventure Film Series. These films are full-length motion pictures narrated live by the cinematographer. Presentations will be at the Arnold High School Auditorium, 550 Alf Coleman Road, Panama City Beach, and start promptly at 7:00 PM. Tickets are \$7.00 at the door, \$20.00 for the entire season (students are free!)

January 5, 2016 – *Gulf Coast Adventure* by John Holod

This presentation takes you on a 1,700-mile adventure along the Gulf Coast from Sanibel Island, Florida, to Padre Island, Texas. Following the impact of recent hurricanes and tropical storms the residents are working hard to rebuild the coastal environments. Come and join John for his ride along the Gulf Coast.

January 21, 2016 – *St. Vincent and the Grenadines* by Steve Gonser.

Relax in the warm images of a visit to the 32 unspoiled islands of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. A break for the cold winter weather, enjoy the rainforests, waterfalls and natural pools and vicariously experience Caribbean foods, festivals, and music.

January 28, 2016 – *Autumn in Denali and the World of the Bear* by Tom Sterling

Denali National Park and Preserve include over six million acres of mountains, valleys, rivers, lakes, tundra and forests. It is home to a wide range of birds and wildlife including grizzly bear, moose, caribou, Dall sheep, wolves, red fox, beaver and pika. This adventure begins with Ontario's Black Bears (not all are black!) and concludes with at the world's most popular bear and salmon location.



The American White Pelican Ron Merritt

The American White Pelican, *Pelicanus erythrorhynchos*, is one of North America's largest birds. These birds breed in fresh water lakes in the northern US states and Canada, and winter along the Gulf Coast from Mexico to south Florida. These birds are commonly observed over Bay County in fall months as they head south for the colder winter months. White pelicans are dynamic soaring migrants, using thermal lift and then coasting along the migration route until they find additional lift. Subsequently they are not known to be night migrants. A flocking species, these birds are known to cooperate when feeding, coordinating their swimming to drive schooling fish towards shallow water. In 1987, a US Air Force B1-B bomber flying a low-level route near La Junta, Colorado, struck a single American White Pelican. The aircraft crashed killing three crewmembers. This event prompted the Air Force to develop more sophisticated bird avoidance technologies, which are in place today.

ANSWER TO BIRD ID QUIZ

I'm a Roseate Spoonbill, (*Ajaia ajaja*). The spoonbill is a large wading bird with pink plumage and a distinctive spatulate bill, is one of the most striking birds found in North America. They stand 85 cm tall and have a 1.3 m wingspan. The eyes and legs are red. Breeding in the United States is restricted to coastal Texas, southwestern Louisiana, and southern Florida. Their breeding range extends south from Florida through the Greater Antilles to Argentina and Chile. Spoonbills took a serious "hit" during the fashion plume-hunting era of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Populations in north Florida along the Gulf Coast and elsewhere are stable, even growing in some places, but spoonbill numbers are sinking in south in the broad estuary sandwiched between the Everglades, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Keys. A likely culprit is poor water management in the Everglades, which has dramatically altered water depths and salinity levels in Florida Bay, creating a difficult situation for a wading bird on a special diet. Spoonbills will bear considerable watching over the next 5 years as climate change and other environmental impacts will certainly be reflected in this highly specialized species.