

Cedar Keys Audubon Fall Avocet Newsletter

P.O. Box 96 Cedar Key, FL 32625 cedarkeysaudubon@gmail.com,
cedarkeysaudubon.org Facebook - Cedar Keys Audubon
CHAPTER CODE: E-53 501(c)3
Florida 2017 Chapter of the Year

*Our mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife,
and habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.*

HELLO, CEDAR KEYS AUDUBON

by Jay Bushnell

Everybody here is staying safe. Apparently, Cedar Key has become somewhat of an escape for outside folks who are not following safe covid-19 protocols. I do not live there, but I have been told that locals stay away from the busy areas on weekends.

In June, the board met without me to tackle the issue of Bird Rescue. It had been shut down because of the pandemic. Clearly, it was the right call. The problem was and still is that Doug Maple keeps getting calls. The board worked on developing a protocol in preparation for when the program may start again. You should have gotten a notice about this. Volunteers will be needed for receiving calls and locating volunteers to rescue and transport. Bird Rescue still is not officially open. The primary problem is that at least two people are needed for pelican and raptor rescue.



I have been participating in virtual meetings with other Audubon chapters organized by Jacqui Sulek. Some chapters simply closed shop, but most, like CKA, are trying to adjust. Field trips and in-person presentations are for the most part on hold. Back yard birding became the major event. As you read in the last Avocet, we are lucky to have folks who can still do some CKA projects.

Since March, we have done two board meetings in the park where safe social distancing was possible. This month we will try meeting in the Library for board meetings again at scheduled monthly times. Mask and social distancing will be mandatory. We are trying our best to have some sense of normalcy.

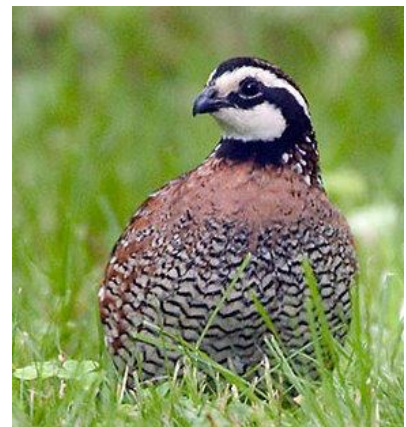
The position of secretary has not yet been filled. Of course, the pandemic put a stop to even needing one. So, there has been a board volunteer approach being used for the two meetings we have had since March. Everyone has done a great job but next year we need to double our efforts for filling all the board positions.

BIRDING MEMORIES

*This might be a fun feature for everyone to share for the Avocet
Reflect on your favorite bird memories to share in the Avocet.*

by Jay Bushnell

Perhaps one of fondest memories about birds is when I joined my dad quail hunting. As a kid, I would stomp around following him and learning to watch carefully where I walked. The rule was to scan five feet ahead as you walked to be careful not to step on a rattle snake. Watching our bird dog work was magical. He would trail and then come on rock hard point on a covey of quail then waited for us. As we eased forward, the quail flushed. Even though I knew what to expect, I was always startled. When I finally was old and experienced enough to actually hunt quail, the learning curve involved learning to pick a particular bird to shoot. The tendency was to just shoot, after all there were so many birds, how could you miss!



Now, very rarely do I see quail. I get really excited when I do. Loss of habitat has depleted the quail population in Florida. I used to call quail in from a produce stand

on the west end of Central Avenue St. Pete. where I worked. If I borrow the tune from a well-known song, “Where have all the quail gone, gone everyone, when will they ever return.

WHAT HAPPENED?

by Scott Wright

Oh No! The Purple Martin Bird Houses are gone! I bet it was those rascal raccoons! Not really. It is that time of year to take down the houses. The birds have finished their breeding season and flown south for the rest of the year until about mid-January when they return. This is a great time to check over the houses, clean them, and make any repairs if needed. Because this is the first season of the houses, they are in pretty good shape. They are very well made and will likely last many seasons.



The Martin Houses were installed by the Cedar Keys Audubon in order to increase the presence of Martins in Cedar Key. They will be cleaned and stored until they go back up for another breeding season. While we did not have any Martin nesting this year, we did have some interest in the nest boxes. Toward the end of the season, Martins fly around “prospecting,” as it is called, looking for other nest boxes. We had a few pairs check out our nest boxes. It was really cool to watch. The female would sit on the perch while the male landed on the vestibule. He would look inside and tell her about the nest box. They would chitter back and forth. “Is there AC? Yes, dear. How roomy is it? There is plenty of space for us and the kids. I sure like the view. That’s good, dear.” We hope to have active nesting next year.

AUDUBON BIRD FEEDERS IN CEDAR KEY

by Tom White

This past summer two bird feeders (with a mixture of seeds) were established by the Cedar Keys Chapter of the Florida Audubon Society. Their locations are the entrance to the cemetery (on the left) and the State History Museum (in the tree adjacent to the bench alongside the parking lot). Both bird feeders may be closely observed from a car or golf cart. In the next few weeks, fall migrants should be moving through our area. Two more bird feeders will be maintained for these fall migrants (locations still need to be selected).

During the summer the bird feeders were visited regularly by locally nesting species such as Northern Cardinals, House Finches, and occasionally by Carolina Chickadees looking for a sunflower seed. The larger birds could not perch on the bird feeders but did scavenge seeds on the ground that were spilled by squirrels. These included Eastern Towhees, Common Ground Doves, and Eurasian Collared Doves. Interestingly, the native Mourning Doves were never observed near the bird feeders.

During the Fall migrations, several new species might be observed at the bird feeders. These include Grosbeaks, Goldfinches, and a number of sparrow species. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, American Goldfinches, and Dark-eyed Juncos are the most likely migrants to be observed but a few other species could easily be included. The Cedar Keys Chapter will soon establish a program for individuals to report on a seasonal basis the avian species, locations, and numbers of individual birds observed. These reports will be compiled and reported in order to document seasonal changes in avian diversity, monitor the health of the Cedar Key ecosystem, and long-term detection of variation in bird diversity due to climate change. The bird feeders are provided as convenient locations for bird observation but reports from anywhere in Cedar Key will be welcomed.

HEAVEN HUMMINGBIRD

by Ann Kamzelski

We have been feeding the hummingbirds at our home in Pennsylvania since we moved there. Every year when we return after our winter in Cedar Key, the hummers are sitting on the Shepard's hook where we hang the feeders, waiting for us to put out their dinner.

We have also put in many plants around the house that are favorites of these tiny birds. They really enjoy coral bells, morning glories, Hosta, jewel weed, trumpet creeper and, my favorite, Crocosmia. They buzz around taking turns eating at the feeders and flowers.

Because they move so fast, I have had a hard time getting nice photographs of them in the past. This year, however, we have had a bumper crop of birds and I discovered a great way to relax and also get wonderful photos at the same time. I noticed that the birds routinely went between the feeder in the back yard and the trumpet creeper that grows on an arbor near it. I took my camera and telephoto lens and stood on the back porch waiting for the birds to feed on the trumpet creeper. They didn't seem to be bothered by my presence and I got a few good images. One day I was tired of standing there and moved a comfy chair to a spot where I had a good view of the flowers that were blooming at that time. In short order, I had even more wonderful pictures of the birds.

I have lazed in that chair many times since then enjoying the nature that abounds in our back yard, but mostly the hummingbirds. There may be up to four there at once. They are feisty and chase each other all the time. There is one individual that perches on a bush next to the feeder waiting for others to arrive, and then runs them off before returning to the same spot to wait for another foe. I enjoy watching them feed on the trumpet creeper. Some of them dart in and out of the flowers, some climb right into the flower and others stick their bill through the back of the flower. Different techniques for different birds.

This must have been a good year for babies since a lot of my photographs are of young birds with muted colors. Here is a selection of my favorite images.



Protecting my territory



Immature hummingbird