

Cedar Keys Audubon Summer 2023 Avocet Newsletter

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Florida 2017 Chapter of the Year

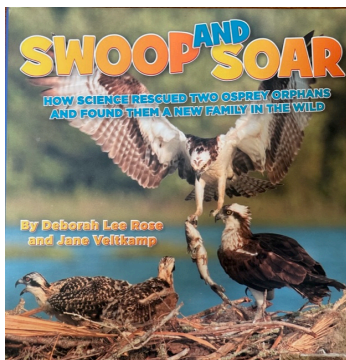
*Our mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds,
other wildlife, and habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.*

Veltkamp Talk Draws a Crowd

by Boyd Kimball

A Cedar Keys Audubon presentation has attracted one of its best-ever audiences on March 27th at the Cedar Key Community Center. More than seventy attendees heard raptor biologist and CK Audubon board president Janie Veltkamp speak about the 2019 rescue of two osprey chicks and how that story was transformed into a nationally distributed STEM children's book.

The book, **Swoop and Soar**, was inspired by



Janie's Easter Sunday weekend effort to find new parents after the osprey chicks' nest was taken down in a windstorm.

Working under severe time constraints, Janie had to care for the

10-day-old babies while searching for an active nest with accepting surrogate parents somewhere in the Cedar Key area. Amazingly, it all came together in less than 48 hours, a story worth retelling.

One indication of how compelling the audience found Janie's talk was the number of questions that came after. As Janie confided, her worst fear in giving presentations is that no hands will go up afterwards. This time she had nothing to worry about – folks peppered her with osprey questions for over twenty-five minutes. Another 5 star delivery.

Summary of the April Talk for Cedar Keys Audubon Focused on Shellfish Harvesting and Red Tide,

by Boyd Kimball

In its final offering for the 2022-23 season, CK Audubon presented "Harmful Algal Bloom Management in Florida's Shellfish Harvesting Areas" with Mark DeHaven of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Aquaculture on April 24, at the Cedar Key Community Center.

Mr. DeHaven is an Environmental Specialist 2 working out of the FWC Marine Lab in Cedar Key. Mark worked for the Department of Agriculture for 22 years but also worked as a field biologist in the area for 27 years. He is in the Shellfish Harvesting Area Classification Program doing the managing, water quality sampling and classification of shellfish harvesting waters in Dixie, Levy, and Citrus Counties.

Harmful algal blooms (HABs), such as the Florida Red Tide, present significant health concerns for both humans and wildlife. Fish and wildlife kills are often seen. Burning eyes and respiratory irritation often ruin beach days for humans throughout the state. These are some of the more well-known problems that HABs can create.

However, did you know that one of the most significant health concerns associated with HABs are illnesses called "shellfish poisoning"? Shellfish poisoning occurs when molluscan shellfish (oysters, clams, mussels) are harvested and eaten from waters in which a HAB is present. Since molluscan shellfish are filter feeders, it

causes them to become contaminated with the toxin produced from the HAB.

This presentation introduced the audience to the three species of harmful algae that occur in Florida and described how the state monitors and manages the shellfish harvesting areas for HABs in order to keep the consumer safe from shellfish poisoning.

Mark's presentation was comprehensive and interesting. An enthusiastic audience participated in a lively question and answer session after the talk.

Next season's CK Audubon presentation series will begin in November, 2023.

We have babies!!

by Scott Wright

The CKA is proud to announce the arrival of the 2023 cohort of Purple Martin babies. Ten of the 12 nest boxes contain baby birds. As you can see from the photos not everyone laid their eggs at the same time so some of the birds are in different stages of development. The adults are present at the nest boxes nearly all the time now bringing insects to feed the young birds. Everyone is very vocal and there is an air of activity and excitement. They are really fun to watch.

This season is even more productive than last season because there are more nest boxes this year than last. This is only the third breeding season the nest boxes have been at this location and the



productivity is striking. We are very lucky to have this level of success so soon after the structure was installed.

Moreover, we have permission, without going back to the Commissioners, to install more structures in the future on City property after consultation with the City Public Works manager. WooWho!! The Commission was all in! It looks like Cedar Key is well on its way to becoming a purple martin sanctuary.

A Snow Birds View of Cedar Key

by Donna Kreft

My husband John and I have wintered in Cedar Key for 15 years. Each March we eagerly await the migratory birds that stop on Cedar Key to fuel up on their way north. The Northern Parula warbler is one of the first to arrive, sometime early in March. This colorful little warbler is almost always heard before he is seen!

First one or two are heard, but before long it seems this warbler is everywhere! As they sing, they are busy foraging in the trees, and if you are patient, most of the time the Northern Parula can



be sighted. Maybe a week to 10 days later, a Great Crested Flycatcher will be heard high in a tree or sitting on a power line. Soon thereafter the Gray

Flycatcher arrives and is followed by Blue Grosbeak, Prairie Warblers, Cape May and many other warblers. Unlike the Parulas and Great Crested Flycatchers, these

birds are mostly silent and busy foraging for bugs. They are best seen by looking closely for movement in the trees, especially live oaks.



By May, John and I are back in our Iowa home and busy taking care of grandchildren, seeing family and friends and taking care of the house and garden. I often think about going birding, but it happens infrequently. This May, John and I went camping for 4 days and on one of my walks I heard a bird I have never heard before. And there were a lot of them! But I was not able to spot one. Thanks to my new Merlin app, I discovered it was a Prairie Warbler!! Soon afterwards, I did see a male sitting high in a tree singing away. I was thrilled! I have been seeing that colorful little bird in Cedar Key every spring for at least a decade, but had never heard it sing. On the same camping trip I heard a most melodious bird, but again, was not able to see it. My Merlin app told me it was a Blue Grosbeak. It is like I discovered a whole new world of birding.

I have been called a “snowbird” before, but have mostly ignored it. Now I feel I am a snowbird because I am honored to be able to “follow” these beautiful creatures on some of their year-long journey. Next spring, soon after we arrive back in Iowa and before the trees are fully leafed out, I intend to go birding with my Merlin and binoculars. Maybe then I can see more of the birds newly arrived after their long journey south for the winter!

Forces of Nature: A History of Florida Land Conservation, Clay Henderson, 2022,
University Press of Florida, 2046 NE Waldo
Road, Suite 2100, Gainesville, FL 32609
Review by Jay Bushnell

Clay stresses that conservation in the United States began in Florida. His opus presentation provides a rich narrative about many who were involved with Florida conservation. This gives a texture to the story. These individuals recognized the importance of conserving Florida’s unique environmental heritage. Perhaps, they imagined the future and may have worried about Clay’s observation of “... how Florida’s growth

machine converted so much natural beauty into something more contrived...” (p.1). Many of these stories are serendipitous making even more interesting to read.

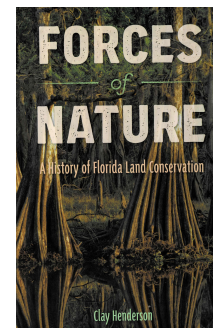
Clay goes on to map the impressive conservation successes that now make up some 30% of Florida’s land.

Clearly the public values conservation as reflected by recent ballot initiatives for conservation of land at local levels. Of course, Amendment 1 in 2014 with a 75% support reinforces public sentiments as well. Clay point out that it is ironic that those elected recently are less supportive of conservation. He suggests that there may be unexpected aspect to term limits. With term limits, there may be less concern for paying attention to what constituent's want; so much for being a public servant!

Clay begins his conservation history with the renowned naturalist Walter Boardman of The Nature Conservancy and Appalachian Trail fame. When he and his wife retired to Volusia County, Walter applied his land acquisition skills. In 1972, this skill was put to use with a proposed development called Halifax Plantation. Almost 5,000 acres was acquired from the original proposal. This land is now Bulow Creek State Park.

Members of the newly formed Volusia Anthropological Society of which I was president breathed a sigh of relief. For months, we had been working hard to protect the rich heritage resources located on this section of the proposed development. We managed to get some possible concession but it would require trust in the process. While we were working to protect these sites, the developer actually mined a complete prehistoric mound to build a causeway.

Clay moves to the familiar story of early naturalists stomping thru Florida recording the wonders of what they experienced was outline. One interesting story involved conservation



minded President John Quincy Adams. He identified the importance of conserving live oaks for the construction of our navy. The US Constitution or 'Old Ironsides' is the remaining example of that period.

Even before they could vote Audubon ladies provided political pressure for the protection of our shore birds and other natural wonders. They also knew how to use the depression era CCC for projects as did the developing State Park system. With Teddy Roosevelt guidance, Pelican Island became the first National Wildlife Refuge. Our state park system is recognized for their excellence. Seashores, wetlands, National parks, springs, development of the conservation easement system...the list goes on and on. This book gives new insights with each reading. Here are some of my favorite passages:

- Study the section dealing with 2014 Amendment 1 in terms of how the legislature did the 'Lottery Two Step' and how the conservation groups failed to find common ground.
- One of my favorite narratives is how George Willson in 1992 masterfully acquired Topsail Hill a 18,000 acre property in Walton County for \$20,000 due to a savings and loan foreclosure resulting. He was known for his ability to acquire conservation land.

Every recent governor no matter which party, was committed to conservation. Rick Scott's election as governor ushered in a new anti conservation agenda. His attempts to sell off conservation lands failed but he killed the Department of Community Affairs. The Department monitored comprehensive land use development. Perhaps the biggest paradox of the 'no climate change' governor was his ill advised evacuation order from hurricane Irma for the entire state of Florida! This made him appear as a caring governor. This press coverage to evacuation helped to get him elected to the US Senate!

**A must read for anyone interested in Florida
Conservation**