

To: Members of Cedar Keys Audubon

From: Boyd Kimball

Date: February 24, 2023

Re: FWC Nature Coast Shorebird Partnership meeting

Janell Brush, associate research scientist with the FWC, invited CK Audubon members to attend the Partnership's biannual meeting held February 22 at the FWC Marine Laboratory in Cedar Key. This is the first time we have been invited as a group.

CK Audubon board members Michael Hamilton, Maureen Magee and Boyd Kimball attended.

These meetings are held twice a year, just prior to shorebird mating and nesting seasons. Nesting season begins in March and runs through August. The purpose is to coordinate monitoring and conservation efforts for shorebirds. The group's particular focus is on American oystercatchers, Black skimmers, Least terns and Snowy plovers.

The focus of the first half of the meeting was to sort out database survey responsibilities for individual routes on the Nature Coast. Representatives from various state and federal agencies, most of them attending digitally, discussed monitoring needs.

The results of these surveys are entered into a larger database that tracks how shorebird populations are doing in the whole state of Florida. (Check out the Florida Shorebird Alliance on line)

The second half of the Pre-season Meeting was devoted, in part, to new monitoring certification requirements and opportunities for education and outreach. During that session Maureen Magee suggested that FWC offer an opportunity for CK Audubon members interested to accompany monitors on survey routes.

Maureen, explaining her role as a bird rescuer, also suggested that survey monitors might be prepared with proper gear in the chance that they come across a bird caught in fishing line.

There were a number of ideas mentioned on how to educate boaters about roosting shorebirds. (Some of these actions might be local chapter initiatives). They included:

- \*Signs or kiosks near boat ramps relating to nesting shorebirds

- \*Leaflets or educational outreaches/meetings at campgrounds and marinas

- \*QR codes with shorebird info

- \*Having kayak or boat renters suggest their customers take cell photos of shorebird advisory signs (Maureen's idea) as they already do for bird rescue.

\*Local presentations/speakers on shorebird conservation (like CK Audubon already does)

\*Boat ramp stewards (possibly the most interesting) – interns to engage people at launch sites as they wait for boats to be launched. John Stark, Deputy Manager at Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys NWR, said that he had operated such a program at St. Vincent NWR. In that case, interns were paid by Friends of St. Vincent. Information there was based on Audubon guidelines.

Our CK Audubon members were thankful for being invited to the meeting and gaining some insight into how data on shorebirds is collected. It was also an opportunity to consider how Cedar Keys Audubon might help these threatened species.