

THE SNAIL KITE

NEWSLETTER OF THE
FLORIDA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

www.fosbirds.org



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Celebrating 50 years of FOS in 2022!

Dear Florida Ornithological Society Member,

This year we are celebrating the 50th Anniversary of our Society. On October 14, 1972, the first members of FOS met in Lakeland, to advance ornithology in Florida, support research and education about birds, and unite amateurs and professionals in the study of wild birds. Bill Robertson, our first President, was followed by 22 leaders, three who served two terms. 1972 was a year of many significant environmental activities that have made a giant difference to our country, our world, and Florida. Cleaner air, cleaner water, rare species protection, open space conservation – and the beginning of our Society. I am so grateful for the work our leaders did then, and proud of the optimism of that era.



FOS President, Ann Paul.

This work continues, and we have so much to celebrate! FOS is active and we invite your participation!

The *Florida Field Naturalist* is published quarterly with peer-reviewed articles about the natural history, especially birds, of Florida. Thanks to our editors, Allison Cox and Scott Robinson, and the editorial associates. Andy Kratter and our Bird Records Committee review sightings and update *The Official Florida State Bird List*.

Heather Levy is the editor of the *Snail Kite* FOS Newsletter. Please contact her for suggestions or ideas for articles. Todd Engstrom regularly updates our fosbirds.org website. Please check it regularly to see what’s new!



Our three funds awarded each year include the Cruickshank Research Award to support projects dealing with wild birds in Florida, the Cruickshank Education Award to enhance teaching of primary or secondary classes on the scientific study of birds or to provide support for continuing education for teachers, and the Robertson Fellowship Award, to support the study and conservation of wildlife, habitat, and ecosystems in Florida and the Caribbean. The Board has increased the amounts for each fund, so applicants are encouraged to apply. See our website fosbirds.org to find application data.

Our Conservation Committee members, headed by Peter Monte and Michelle Wilcox, are preparing *Position Papers* about issues of importance to the survival of birds and wildlife in the state. These succinct papers articulate the scientific basis of our concerns, to provide guidance to decision-makers. A Committee including Jim Cox, Adam Kent, Todd Engstrom, David Stock, and Ann Hodgson are preparing the final work on the Breeding Bird Atlas 2. Special Publications can be ordered [here](#).

Financially we are in good shape with robust savings and funds for our projects.

Please make your plans to join us for the 50th Anniversary - Fall 2022 FOS Meeting, which will be a joint meeting with the Raptor Research Foundation, Tropical Audubon and South Florida Audubon societies at the Embassy Suites in Ft. Lauderdale, October 7-9. Field trips will be hosted by Audubon's Everglades Science Center, Avian Research and Conservation Institute, and Hawkwatch. And a Spring 2022 Meeting by Zoom on April 30 is being planned by Vice President Mary Mack Gray, so keep an "eye out" for that!

Please let me know if you have suggestions, ideas, or other thoughts to promote our efforts. Thank you for your membership. Our leaders were optimistic in 1972, and we remain optimistic today and committed to our mission for the future. I look forward to seeing you in South Florida in October!

Sincerely,
Ann Paul, President, 813/624-3149

USDA Confirms Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in a Wild Bird in South Carolina

This message comes from the United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. Please click [here](#) to be redirected to their webpage for more information.

Contact: APHISpress@usda.gov

WASHINGTON, January 14, 2022 – The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has confirmed highly pathogenic Eurasian H5 avian influenza (HPAI) in a wild American wigeon in Colleton County, South Carolina.

Eurasian H5 HPAI has not been detected in a wild bird in the United States since 2016. There was a case of HPAI (H7N3) in one commercial meat turkey flock in South Carolina in 2020 due to a North American lineage virus.



Photo courtesy of USDA APHIS website.

It Started in a Van—A Reminiscence of the Early FOS

By James A. Kushlan

Graduate school field trips are always memorable, memories that changeably mature as time passes. Fifty years ago our major professor, Oscar T. Owre, packed his pre-fledglings off to what became the first Florida Ornithological Society meeting. We crowded into his University of Miami VW van, prosaically named 613. It was to be my second bird meeting, as he had done the same thing the year before hauling us off to Dauphin Island, Alabama, for a Wilson Club meeting, where I gave my first - of far too many - research talks. But this was different; the Wilson Ornithological Society was scary, an unfathomably ancient organization at 52 years old. But, this was new. Florida was ready for its own ornithological society. After all, we were favored by having the cream of American ornithological science and politics in Florida. Oliver Austin was dean, or perhaps general. But there also were Pierce Brodkorb, Herb Kale, Robert Loftin, Bud Owre, Henry Stevenson, Glenn Woolfenden, and Bill Robertson, who was always a gray eminence even before turning gray and was the universal draftee as first president, a draft being essential to achieve his acceptance. He approached such recognitions, as he once said, "it is like being tarred and feathered, except for the honor I'd rather not be here." There were more of Florida's ornithological community during those decades, such as Robert Crawford, Bill Hardy, David Johnston, Walter Taylor, Lovett Williams, and for too short a time after the meeting ornithological publicist par excellence Allen Cruikshank. Helen Cruikshank continued their involvement. And there were fellow youngsters about in this era, such as Fred Lohrer, Steve Nesbitt, Rich Paul, and Ralph Schreiber. Many a mark was made on American ornithology by the early FOSers - future American Ornithologists' Union, Cooper Society, and of course FOS presidents among them.

Distinctly and very purposely, FOS was not to be only for those drawing a salary or pension from birds. It was to be equally open for the rest of the bird-appreciating public. Likely 90% of the initial attendees were "amateurs," a categorization that distinguished them, not with unkindness, in the professionals' eyes. It was, after all, still a time when coat-and-ties were worn at the AOU, which limited its number of fellows to those countable on a few hands and having suitable academic breeding. In fact, the bulk of attendees would have called themselves bird-watchers then; but, really, they ran the board of birders, conservationists, Audubonites, and dedicated naturalists of all stripes. And they were, using one of Bud Owre's favorite words, a *gemütlich* group. Henry Stevenson made sure we knew how we all could be part of the science of birds by

participating in organized counts, fully documenting rarities, and publishing observations - an early exposition on what evolved into citizen science and Cornell's enabling apps. But back then, we needed it on paper. And Henry needed it for his life's work documenting Florida's birdlife, which became his incomparable magnum opus.



How many people can you identify in this photo?

So a journal was among FOS' initial imperatives, and its first volume emerged quickly the next year. Contributions from all - not just the "professionals" - were welcomed from the very beginning. The name Florida Field Naturalist was chosen with careful thought and historical connectivity. The name played off Florida Naturalist, the venerable organ of the Florida Audubon Society, which was nurturing its ornithological fledgling. And off its Field Notes section, which had enabled little bird notes to be published. I had some of my first mini papers published in that section, like a record of a Rusty Blackbird in south Florida - for which I received huge accolades for my field discernment. Truth be told, Bud Owre was from the old school of museum ornithology, which was in part conducted with a gun; and he sent his graduate students out armed to collect specimens. I had fired blindly into a blackbird flock producing the specimen that erroneously confirmed that I was a crack birder. Having been inculcated in the importance of publication, the first FFN volumes included two of my articles, extraneous notes from my thesis studies. FFN was indeed a welcome enterprise to young ornithologists.

I had the opportunity to pay back the leg-up provided youthful publication when I followed the incomparably knowledgeable Fred Lohrer as editor of the Florida Field Naturalist in the 1980s. It was old school editing; and, wishing to know how to do it right, I asked for an interview with long-time Auk editor Oliver Austin, which he granted. He was exceptionally kind in showing me how help out authors, how to organize a page, and how to edit - I recall well his rule that the final edit it was to be a “which” hunt so as to ferret out offending which’s that should be that’s. I still do. He gave me a metal ruler, a generational baton passed, that translated font type to page inches. And this was real; the journal was assembled by literally cutting a long banner of text and taping the bits together on the floor, a process continued with our same publisher when I later edited the *Colonial Waterbirds* journal. Formatting - it’s just too simple now.

As editor, I was an obligatory attendee at the semi-annual meetings, mostly to flog the journal and recruit submissions. Field trip attendance was expected, and I dutifully complied. As journal editor and rusty blackbird spotter, I also was expected - at 7 in the morning - to identify for fellow field-trippers a faint patch of color within a nearby bush. Turns out I’m a fair ornithologist but not so superior a birder. So I developed alternative skills, such as delaying with “where exactly?” noting “sorry it seems to have flown,” or asking “what do you think it is?” But we usually filled up the journal with interesting observations. I recall well how Lawrence Kilham, a microbiology professor in retirement in Florida, always had an article ready on crow behavior, each of which was wonderful. He knew his crows well. The journal pieced

together bits of our evolving Florida bird list, one article and observation at a time, and provided space for keen notes on bird behavior, as well as on herps and mammals, as the journal never was intended only to be about birds. Such bird notes saw their fruition in Bill Robertson and Glenn Woolfenden’s seminal *Florida Bird Species* as an FOS special publication, recently updated by Jon Greenlaw, Bill Pranty, and Reed Bowman.

It’s a bit odd, of course, to look back on how a van trip led to a memorable charter participant in a new society. It certainly proves how buying an early career life-membership is quite a deal. At some points sharing a “look back” is not without some value, perhaps mostly for those whose responsibility is now to look ahead. In the past few years I’ve had the opportunity to write about the history of Florida’s nature in several books on the history of Florida’s national parks and another on its early naturalists, in each of which birds played an outsized role. The science and conservation of Florida’s environment have always been about its birds.

Jim Kushlan is former professor, director of Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, and president of the AOU and Waterbird Society. His most recent books are *Everglades National Park* and *Seeking the American Tropics, South Florida’s Early Naturalists*. Find out more at JamesAKushlan.com.

Florida Keys Hawkwatch Primer

by Peter Monte

The Florida Keys Hawkwatch (FKH), the southernmost migration monitoring project in the continental United States, systematically tracks fall movements of all avian species with a focus on diurnal birds of prey. The all-volunteer operation is part of a history of raptor monitoring in the middle keys dating back to 1989. In the next Snail Kite Newsletter, due out May 2022, learn about the conservation and ecological significance of the ongoing work by FKH.



The Florida Keys Hawkwatch - 2021 official full-time count team pose comfortably (barefoot) at the site’s observation deck. Pictured left to right: Luis Eduardo Gles, Mariah Hryniewich, and Brian Cammarano. Photo taken September 15, 2021.

Atlantic to Gulf Passage

By Pat and Doris Leary

Resights of banded birds inform us that many migrants shift from the Atlantic to gulf coast in fall. Fifteen years of surveys and monitoring of American Oystercatchers (AMOY) on the Nature Coast have documented hundreds of Atlantic coast birds annually wintering there. In at least one case, satellite-tracking technology confirmed the route of a bird banded in NC that crossed from Nassau to Dixie County in a span of hours.



AMOY with YE[AAY] bands at Ft. Clinch. Photo by Carollee Adams.

More recently, serendipitous resights of two, Atlantic coast, oystercatchers near Fernandina and later near Cedar Key offer increased insight into the frequency and timing of such crossings. On Oct. 7, of 2021, heavy fog interrupted our travel to Cumberland Island National Seashore and we lingered along Lt. Tiger Island's sound shore. There, we noted a dozen oystercatchers among a larger flock of, mixed-species, shorebirds. Collecting images of the AMOY as we drifted off the beach, we noted one with orange bands coded [YAN] and recognized the bird as a gulf winter resident. On our very next series of gulf surveys on Nov. 1, OR[YAN] was the second bird recorded at a roost west of Cedar Key! We cannot know for certain, but we suspect the heavy fog delayed the bird's passage and grounded it on Tiger Island. The bird was banded as an adult breeder, 5/6/2014 on Rockaway Peninsula, Queens NY and first resighted on the gulf near Cedar Key 11/5/2014 where it has returned each fall.

On the following day of gulf surveys, yellow [AAY] was recorded in a flock of 675 birds at a roost east of Cedar Key on Nov 2. Upon our return to Fernandina, we learned that the bird had been resighted and photographed on the shores of Ft. Clinch twenty-four hours prior!

On this occasion, heavy fog was not a factor in the stop-over prior to crossing the peninsula. Curiously, the bird was traveling alone. YE[AAY] was originally banded, 6/19/2015 as a chick on Nantucket Island, MA and first recorded on the gulf 10/13/2015 where it has returned every year since.



AMOY with OR[YAN] bands at Tiger Sound Shore. Photo by Pat Lesry.

Most curiously, these two migrants are the first and only, gulf-wintering, birds documented in NE Florida and on the gulf in the same season. Two out of *ca* two thousand migrants known to make the annual crossing. Small flocks of migrating AMOY have been observed in flight and briefly at rest in NE Florida, but no banded birds detected within such flocks have subsequently been resighted there. The paucity of such sightings could partially be attributed to a lack of observer effort on the Atlantic side, but it's more likely a consequence of the timing of AMOY flocks arriving in NE Florida prior to crossing over to the gulf. The lone, satellite-tracked, bird hinted at that circumstance as it arrived in the dark and made the dangerous cross-country passage to the gulf after midnight. NE Florida is most likely a "way point" vs. a "way station" for the migrating flocks and unusual circumstances are required to put a bird down here. For the majority of flocks, the final leg of their journey must begin well north along the SE coast placing their arrival at the crossing point well after dark to insure safe passage to the Nature Coast's wintering grounds.



AMOY with YE[AAY] bands at Corri-gan's Reef West Rake. Photo by Pat Leary.

AMOY with OR[YAN] bands at Pelican Reef. Photo by Pat Leary.

A Little More Privacy, Please

By Peter Kleinhenz

'Twas the day after Christmas, and I was filled with sadness. Nature seemed to be crying out on this day and I couldn't drown out the sound despite the holiday cheer lingering in the air. My fiancé and I were driving across the Florida peninsula on Highway 74, watching remnant patches of pine flatwoods and scrub transition to subdivisions. The holidays clearly weren't slowing down bulldozers or realtors. It was heartbreaking to witness the homes of so many animals vanishing so quickly.

Earlier that same day, we had observed red-cockaded woodpeckers and Florida scrub-jays in one of the most intact remnants of Florida scrub. The thought dawned on me that this habitat, while not threatened directly, was probably surrounded by the onslaught of development we were seeing further west. I pulled up a satellite view and was pleasantly surprised. Where I expected to see new subdivisions, dirt, and scooped-out golf course ponds, I instead saw cow pastures, open pine forest, and patches of white, sandy scrub. In fact, I could clearly see a corridor of undeveloped land between another large piece of conservation land and the home of those federally-listed birds we had explored earlier.

I did some more digging, as I'm prone to do, and discovered that the lands creating the aforementioned corridor were virtually all private. How, then, had development missed these high and dry lands only a stone's throw from Lake Placid? The answer is that many of them have been conserved with conservation easements.

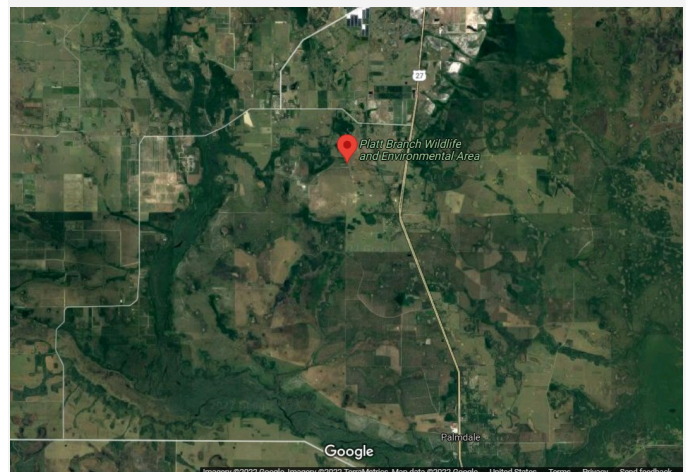
Conservation easements essentially function as a voluntary, yet legally-binding, agreement between private landowners and an entity that can ensure that the terms of the easement are met in perpetuity. These entities can vary, but include state agencies, federal agencies, municipalities, and land trusts most commonly. They allow landowners to continue to live on the land and, in most cases, continue to do what they were doing before on the land. This often includes activities related to agriculture, land and timber management, and recreational activities. The landowner simply gives up the right to intensively develop the property and agrees to maintain the important conservation values of the property, per the terms of the legal easement. In return, the landowner can either donate or sell the appraised value of the conservation easement or, in other words, their development rights.

While not always perfect, conservation easements work. And, for the sake of the species readers of this article care about, it's

important that they do. Approximately 78% of Florida is in private ownership. Most public lands are islands in a sea of private property, and the waves of development lap regularly against their shores.

Increased awareness about habitat connectivity resulted in a new focus on ecological corridors as part of the Florida Forever program. In 2020, \$300 million was allocated towards efforts that would help build new, and enhance existing, ecological corridors between conservation lands. The funding can be used to buy land, but it can also be used to purchase conservation easements from landowners. More and more landowners are recognizing that conservation easements can help from a financial and conservation perspective, and interest in pursuing this conservation strategy continues to rise.

Florida is blessed with several accredited land trusts who can help landowners through the process of completing a conservation easement, whether that's with them or with another entity. If you, or someone you know, wants to conserve their land, meeting with staff from an accredited land trust is the best first step. Development will keep marching forward in our state indefinitely, but Floridians have tools to prevent the loss of areas with high conservation value. All of us that love birds can help inform and promote conservation efforts on private lands to ensure that some of the places that matter most to our feathered friends stay intact. Besides, I'm sure that they would appreciate the privacy.



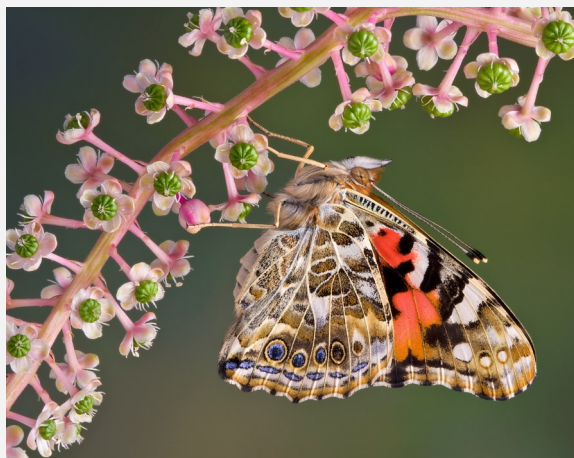
A wildlife corridor is evident on this aerial image nearby Platt Branch Wildlife and Environmental Area.

Featured Native Plant for Birds: Pokeweed

By Donna Legare

For this issue, I have chosen a native plant that is often considered a weed. It is not available for purchase but can easily be found growing in most yards springing forth from mulched beds or in areas that are not mowed regularly. The trick is to learn what a seedling pokeweed looks like when it is young. You can easily pull up ones you do not want and keep the ones that grow in desirable spots.

Why would you want this weed in your yard? For one thing pokeweed is beautiful especially in late summer and early fall when it sports drooping clusters of deep purple, nearly black fruit along reddish stems. However, there are also ecological reasons for including pokeweed in your garden.



A painted lady on pokeweed flowers.

Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) is a native herbaceous perennial that is found throughout Florida and may grow 4 to 10 feet high. It grows naturally in open or edge habitats, especially in places where birds can roost. It is found at forest edges, in fence rows, under power lines, pastures, old fields, forest openings, and suburban and urban yards. The entire plant including the berries is poisonous to humans, though young leaves and stems when properly cooked are edible and known as poke sallet, an Old English term for cooked greens. As children playing in New York, we commonly made mudpies of pokeberries and used the ink from the juicy stems to write messages. My children did the same here in Florida and no one was ever poisoned. We were taught not to eat these plants.

The creamy white flowers in spring nurture bees and other pollinators including the Ruby-throated Hummingbird. The leaves provide larval food for the giant leopard moth, a species of army worm, and other moth caterpillars.



Gray Catbird on pokeweed. Photo by The Nature Geek

The fruits are highly preferred by birds and usually consumed long before birds get around to other berries like American beautyberry and yaupon holly. Some of the birds observed eating pokeweed are Cedar Waxwing, Eastern Bluebird, Gray Catbird, American Robin, Brown Thrasher, Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Mockingbird, Northern Flicker, Mourning Dove and Northern Cardinal. There have been sightings of fox, squirrel, opossum and raccoon as well.

In late fall, when the pokeweeds in our yard begin to die back, we allow them to stand in place all winter and into the following seasons often falling to the ground. To neaten up the yard near the road, we move the dried hollow stems and place them underneath shrubbery where they are seldom noticed. Bees and other insects may use these old stems for nesting and overwintering habitat. These stems along with other hollow perennial stems will break down over time, thus limiting disease and parasite problems, as opposed to utilizing human made bee houses that need to be cleaned and maintained.

Give pokeweed a chance in your yard; spend time watching it and you will be surprised at its wildlife value.

Donna Legare graduated from the University of Florida's School of Forest Resources and Conservation. In 1980 she co-founded Native Nurseries in Tallahassee, retiring after 40 years. She is co-author of *Planting a Refuge for Wildlife*, a publication by FWC.

Florida Ornithological Society

Position Statement on Wildlife Corridor Connectivity

Abstract: In July 2021 the 'Florida Wildlife Corridor Act' was signed into law. We support increased wildlife corridor connectivity to support the birds of Florida during their nesting, foraging, dispersal, and migration stages. We support continued funding of Florida Forever which is informed by the Florida Ecological Greenways Network and the rich scientific history that has gone into prioritizing connected conservation lands. We encourage municipalities and governments of Florida to include land conservation and corridor connectivity in their comprehensive land use plans and land development regulations. We also support funding for the proper long-term stewardship of public conservation lands which includes funding for prescribed fire and invasive plant reduction.

Background: In the mid-1980s, Larry Harris and Reed Noss outlined the importance of ecological connectivity, wildlife corridors, and the protection of functionally connected networks of conservation lands. They detailed the strategic value of protecting specific tracts of land in Florida that would result in large, connected conservation networks. In 1985 Noss proposed the first statewide ecological network. In 1994, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) scientists (Cox et al. 1994) assessed the security of rare and imperiled species on existing conservation lands in Florida and identified 'Strategic Habitat Conservation Areas', since updated in FWC's 2009 'Wildlife Habitat Conservation Needs in Florida' (Endries et al. 2009). This information with contributions of researchers from the public, private, and non-profit sectors has directed work by the Florida Ecological Greenways Network, Florida Forever, the Rural and Family Lands Protection Act, the Forest Legacy Program, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Cooperative Conservation Blueprint, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Critical Lands and Waters Identification Project (CLIP), and Peninsular Florida Landscape Conservation Cooperative and many other conservation and land use planning efforts across the state (Hector et al. 2015).

The importance of corridors in general to reduce isolation and extinction: Habitat fragmentation poses a widespread threat to biodiversity by disrupting the dispersal of organisms (Levey et al. 2005). Corridors, that are strips of habitat that join patches of similar habitat, provide avenues of dispersal between patches, thereby increasing gene flow and reducing the probability of local extinctions (Beier and Noss 1998). Small, isolated populations have higher extinction rates (e.g. Pimm et al. 1988) and habitat fragmentation often leads to the isolation of small populations (Rosenberg, Noon and Meslow 1997). Ultimately, the processes of population isolation and local extinction reduce biological diversity. Corridors should be included in conservation plans to increase the connectivity of otherwise isolated patches (Meffe and Carroll 1994). To be most beneficial to wildlife, the corridors should be intact native habitat, not simply strips of land of low-quality habitat.

Public lands and private and agricultural lands (cattle ranches, timberlands, groves and farms) in Florida contribute a great deal towards greenspace that wildlife can use as wildlife corridors.

Avian needs for corridors in all parts of life history: Many iconic bird species are **year-round residents** of Florida. This includes, among others, Crested Caracara, Florida Sandhill Crane, Wood Stork, Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow, Burrowing Owl, Florida Scrub-Jay, Florida Grasshopper Sparrow, Southeast American Kestrel, Limpkin, and Everglades Snail Kite. Some non-migratory species like the Florida Scrub-Jay and the Red-cockaded Woodpecker require large, contiguous tracts of well-maintained habitat for the dispersal of young birds, genetic mixing, and to support their life history. For Florida Scrub-Jays, high quality oak-dominated scrub corridors support Jay dispersal between fragmented habitat patches (Root 1998). If Scrub-Jay habitat patches are separated by more than 12 km with no connecting scrub patches or corridors, populations are isolated and susceptible to extirpation (Woolfenden and Fitzpatrick 1996). Scrub-Jays that must disperse across longer distances are less successful at breeding or passing their genes on to further generations and subject to higher mortality (Coulon et al. 2010).

Continued on page 8

Wetlands in Florida, particularly the Everglades, are among the most important in North America for vast numbers of wading birds, especially colonially nesting species as herons, egrets, ibis, and Wood Storks. In the post-breeding season once nestlings fledge, many wading birds move from rookery areas to richer foraging areas using habitat corridors.

Many birds are **part-year residents** in Florida, including species that breed in Florida and winter elsewhere, including the Swallow-tailed Kite and Smooth-Billed Ani, or birds that winter in Florida like the American White Pelican and many shorebirds. Birds that spend part of their year in Florida use different habitat types at different times of year, as Swallow-tailed Kites that gather in large numbers at important Staging Areas (Millsap 1987) after dispersed breeding throughout Florida (Breeding Bird Atlas https://myfwc.com/media/19627/bba_astk.pdf). The kites prefer wetlands during their breeding season and are associated with forest habitats in all seasons. Kites need connected forested corridors as they move between breeding and pre-migration staging areas in Florida. Even in their stopover sites in the Yucatan Peninsula, these birds have been shown to avoid disturbed areas and areas without vegetation (Zimmerman 2004).

Important waterfowl habitat is on major rivers such as the St. Johns and Kissimmee, natural lakes such as Lake Okeechobee and many smaller lakes, interior prairie wetlands, and in isolated coastal areas and estuaries. The Indian and Banana rivers provide important winter habitat for 200,000 to 300,000 lesser scaup (Ducks Unlimited, Florida website <https://www.ducks.org/Florida>). The St. Johns River Valley marshes and lakes provide winter and migration habitat for an additional 15,000 ducks on average. Substantial numbers of shorebirds use this region, particularly the Atlantic coast of Florida and the mudflats and beaches of the eastern Gulf Coast of Mexico. It is important to increase Wetland Reserve Program projects, conservation easements and private lands programs to protect these corridors.

Many birds are **migrants** through the state of Florida, either on the northbound and/or southbound passage. Birds need stopover sites that provide habitat for feeding and resting during migration between breeding and wintering grounds. Passerines need fruits and insects during migration. There are large flights of migrating hawks and other raptors that funnel through Florida each fall to their southern wintering grounds (floridakeyshawkwatch.com). Peregrine Falcons are counted in particularly high numbers as they traverse the Florida Keys (Lott 2006). These birds need areas to rest and forage on their passage.

Migrating birds often use river corridors and coastlines to aid in navigation. For instance, the St. John's River is an important corridor for migrating Spotted Sandpipers and the coastlines are important for many migrating shorebird species.

Habitat changes and sea-level rise are potential threats to bird species: On both coasts, cold-sensitive mangroves now occur northward of their former range, displacing salt marshes over the past few decades due, in part, to changes in climate exhibited by winters with few hard frosts (Cavanaugh et al. 2019). Coastal marsh habitats are home to tidal marsh birds like Saltmarsh Sparrow, Black Rail and American Black Duck. These species face a crisis of sea-level rise, urbanization, and other human impacts that degrade the narrow band of coastal habitat that they require, pushing many bird populations into steep decline (The Atlantic Coast Joint Venture <https://acjv.org/>). In Florida Bay, wading birds as spoonbills, egrets, and ibis are moving northward into the Everglades because islands are submerging and saltwater creeks are moving inland.

Funding and planning for stewardship of wildlife corridors: There is a critical need for considering management needs in the planning process. Practically every habitat type in Florida is fire-dependent at some level, but fire management becomes unfeasible if corridors are thin, forcing land managers to resort to more expensive mechanical methods that inflate management costs 8-to-10 fold.

Exotic plants also pose a management problem for thin corridors. Making sure future corridors are five to ten times wider than the Cross Florida Greenway would help prevent problems with non-native invasive plants that exclude native vegetation, so important for healthy habitats that can support birds and wildlife.

Florida Ornithological Society

Position Statement on Fishing Gear and Bird Protection

The Florida Ornithological Society is concerned about the impacts of fishing gear on birds in the state, especially Brown Pelicans. It is well-known that Florida offers spectacular fishing opportunities. Fish-eating birds also flourish, taking advantage of the abundant baitfish populations in Gulf, Atlantic, estuary, and freshwater habitats. The overlap of waterbirds and fishermen, using the same regions and habitats, often leads to conflict, resulting in significant detriment to birds, especially Brown Pelicans.

Wildlife-sensitive fishing practices, if adopted by fishermen state-wide, can significantly reduce injury and mortality for birds.

It has long been known that fishing gear entanglement causes significant problems for individual Brown Pelicans, to the point of affecting regional populations (Schreiber and Mock 1988). In 1980, Schreiber reported that over 700 adult and immature Brown Pelicans were being killed due to entanglement each year, in Florida alone. In addition, inspection of individual birds revealed that 80% of live birds showed signs of past physical impacts of fishing gear entanglement (Schreiber 1975). Rehabilitators found that hundreds of pelicans were being treated for injuries from hooks and fishing line (Mackey 1982). Hooks were seen to tear pelican's pouches, impairing ability to forage, and causing starvation. Entanglement in line sometimes causes inability to fly or swim due to wrapping of the wings and legs, which will result in death. Line becoming tightly wrapped around extremities can result in infection and necrosis that can also lead to death (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2009). "Entanglement in sport-fishing gear is a major cause of mortality in the southeast U.S." (Schreiber and Mock 1988).

Today, the destruction that fishing gear and fishing practices on pelicans individually and regionally on their populations continues. "Abandoned fishing line . . . threatens this species along with many other marine animals. It has been estimated that more than 700 adult and immature pelicans die each year in Florida alone from entanglement in sport-fishing gear." (Shields 2021). Studies conducted by the State Park staff, volunteers from Tampa and St. Petersburg Audubon Societies, and Friends of the Pelicans, Inc. on the Sunshine Skyway Fishing Pier State Park and at the Ft. DeSoto Fishing Pier revealed that this figure significantly underestimates the actual numbers of birds being injured and killed by fishing gear (unpublished data). Cosgrove (2017) reported that with education to fishermen on the Naples Pier, impacts to pelicans was significantly reduced.

Another unfortunate fishing practice which results in significant injuries and deaths for Brown Pelicans and other birds is the feeding of the filleted carcass bones and offal of larger fish by fishermen. While this traditional post-fishing trip practice appears to benefit the pelicans and birds, the result can be deadly to the birds. Pelicans naturally eat small fish, captured by plunge-diving, and swallowed whole. The bodies of the small-fish prey are dissolved slowly by powerful gastric acids; first the scales, then muscle, and finally softened bones are passed into the intestinal tract, under the natural digestive process, without causing injury.

But the large bones of filleted carcasses, fed to begging birds, often puncture pouches, throats, stomachs, and intestines, causing infection, peritonitis, and a painful death. Bird rehabilitators warn that this is a significant cause of pelican mortality.



A deceased pelican caught in fishing line.

Photo by Bonnie Samuelson.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has a rule prohibiting feeding pelicans, but the rule's wording interpretation interferes with enforcement. Florida Administrative Code 68A-4.001 states, "The intentional feeding or the placement of food that attracts pelicans and modifies the natural behavior of pelicans so as to be detrimental to the survival or health of a local population is prohibited." Since it is not possible to prove that feeding an individual pelican affects a regional population, the rule is unenforceable.

FOS recommends the following actions to reduce the impacts of fishing practices on pelicans and other birds in Florida:

- Educational outreach to fishermen that includes information about how to avoid accidentally catching a pelican or other birds and techniques to safely release a bird if caught, without further injuring it, should be actively provided by the FWC, State Parks, and counties and towns across the state, especially at piers, boat launch sites, and other fishing locations.
- Fishermen and others should never feed pelicans or other waterbirds, as this trains them to come near fishing piers, fishermen in boats, on bridges, and other locations, where they may become entangled in line or hooked by gear.
- Filleted fish carcasses should be discarded where pelicans cannot get them, either in appropriate garbage cans or using carcass chutes which will drop the exposed bones and offal below the top 6 feet of water, in areas with strong tidal flow.
- The FAC 68A-4.001 rule should be amended to make it illegal to feed pelicans and other large waterbirds in Florida.

Some websites and information for fishermen and others who are often outdoors and may encounter a pelican or other bird tangled in line are:

- <https://myfwc.com/wildlife/unhook/?redirect=unhook> or myfwc.com/unhook
- <https://ocean.floridamarine.org/SeabirdRehabilitators/>
- <https://myfwc.com/media/6320/pelican-rescue-brochure.pdf>

Tampa Audubon, St. Petersburg Audubon, and Manatee County Audubon, and videographer Dee Fairbanks Simpson have produced video documentaries about the impacts of fishing gear on pelicans and how to release a bird accidentally entangled. The longer documentary (21 minutes) describes the issue and ways to prevent it: <https://youtu.be/dkcMdpBaZ3s>. The short video (5 minutes) shows how to rescue a pelican: <https://youtu.be/PQU9V1IS8fg>. There is also a playlist which includes both videos and any future added pelican videos https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLw7UG4BcJDK0frdHFfDBxCo_9QH07XLM2.

Fishermen should know the steps for safely releasing an accidentally hooked bird:

- Enlist another person to help you hold the bird while you unhook or disentangle it.
- The rescuer should wear sunglasses or goggles to protect their eyes.
- Secure the head firmly, gently fold the wings against the bird's body, and hold the feet.
- Gently covering the bird's eye with a towel or cloth will help calm the bird, making it easier to remove the hook or line.
- Use a wire clipper to cut the barb, and back the hook out of the bird's flesh. Cut and remove any line.
- Check the wings, legs, and body for additional hooks or line, as many birds have been entangled or hooked before.
- Point the bird's head towards the water and step back as you release the bird.



A deceased pelican caught in fishing line.
Photo by Bonnie Samuelson.

Become a member of FOS!

Benefits

- Learn more about birds and improve your birding skills
- Support research and conservation of Florida birds
- Interact with Florida's leading birders and researchers
- Participate on great field trips and visit unique areas in Florida
- Contribute to our knowledge of Florida avifauna
- All members receive the FFN

Memberships available

- \$25 Regular
- \$15 Student
- \$30 Family
- \$45 Contributing
- \$40 Library/Institution
- \$400 Individual Lifetime
- \$500 Family Lifetime

You can join by check or paypal. Click [here](#) for more information on how to become a member!



Grant Opportunities

Helen G. and Allan D. Cruikshank Education Award

The Helen G. and Allan D. Cruickshank Education Award is awarded to projects that expand and enhance knowledge of Florida's native birds during primary and secondary education. This award is generally given to a Florida primary or secondary teacher to create or enhance teaching of classes on the scientific study of birds or to provide support for continuing education for teachers. The applicant should provide a two-page written description of the proposed use of the award, a time schedule, and a budget. Applications should be sent to Cruikshank.Education.Award@gmail.com



Helen G. Cruikshank was an award winning nature writer and photographer of birds in their natural areas.

Application Due Date: September 1 of each year

Mary J. and William B. Robertson Fellowship Award



Known as the "Dean of Florida Ornithology", William Beckwith Robertson, Jr.'s vast knowledge of the habits, habitats, and history of Florida's avifauna qualified Bill for the title. He was a founding member of the Florida Ornithological Society, which came into being in the early 70's.

The William B. and Mary J. Robertson Fellowship Award is offered to support the study and conservation of wildlife, habitat, and ecosystems in Florida and the Caribbean, as defined by the area covered in "A Guide to the Birds of the West Indies" by Raffaele et al. (2003).

Preference is given to projects with an ornithological emphasis, and those that further the research of Bill and Betty Robertson, such as their 40-year study of Sooty Terns in the Dry Tortugas, Florida. The maximum amount awarded each year is typically about \$2000. Please check fosbirds.org for details on how to apply and send your application to Robertson.Fellow.Award@gmail.com

Application Due Date: February 15 of each year.

FOS Publications

Call for submissions for the Florida Field Naturalist



The *Florida Field Naturalist*, quarterly publication of the Florida Ornithological Society, welcomes submission of articles and notes containing the results of biological field studies, distributional records, and natural history observations of vertebrates, especially birds. Its geographic area includes Florida, adjacent states, the Bahamas, and nearby West Indies. Manuscripts of original articles and notes should follow the Guidelines for Manuscript Preparation and sent to the Editor. Suitable manuscripts are sent by the editor to referees for evaluation of scientific merit.

Notes on behavior should consider previously published information, and interpret the biological, ecological, or evolutionary significance of the behavior reported. Field studies must conform to standard scientific criteria for study design, analysis, and interpretation. Hypotheses should be clearly stated and data should be subjected to statistical testing where appropriate.

The *Florida Field Naturalist* presents reviews of books, monographs, and other material of interest to its readers. Materials to be considered for review should be sent to the Associate Editor (for reviews). Ideas for commentaries should be submitted to the Editor. Please check our website for more details on submitting an article for review.

To read an article or obtain a PDF copy of a Florida Field Naturalist article, first visit the SORA website <https://sora.unm.edu/>. Click on the Florida Field Naturalist in the “Browse Publications” list on the left-hand side of the page.

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Florida Field Naturalist

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FOS Publications

Official Checklist of Florida State Birds



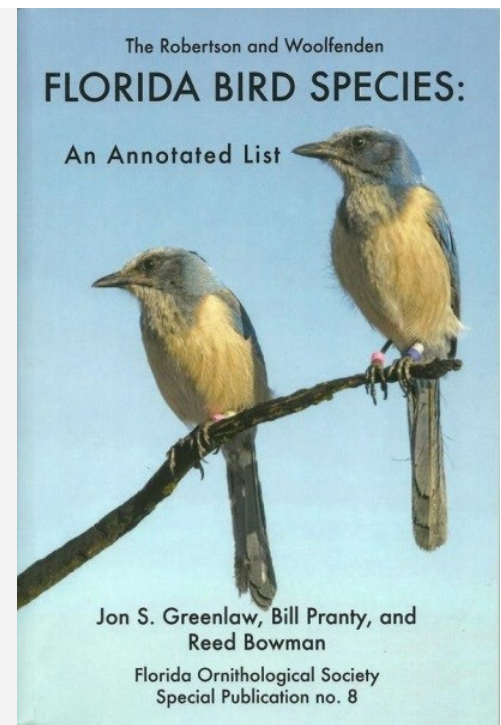
This is a formal list of modern bird species that have occurred in Florida by natural appearance or by establishment of an exotic. The base list shall be the Supplement: Checklist of Florida Birds, pp. 255-260 in Robertson & Woolfenden (1992), as updated by final decisions of the Florida Ornithological Society's Records Committee. Status = Review species (Review), established exotics (Exotic); extinct or extirpated native species (Extinct) and disestablished exotics (Disestablished Exotic). Extinct species do not reduce the size of the Florida list, but a disestablished exotic species does. A distinctive member of a subspecies group may be added to the list for review purposes (see below), but it shall not be counted on the list beyond the species' presence there. Review species should be documented when detected in Florida and submitted to the FOSRC for review. In addition, documentation should be submitted to the FOSRC for any species detected in Florida believed to have occurred naturally or to have escaped, but not appearing in the main list below or in its formatted download versions. Currently, there are 545 total taxa of which nine are subspecies, four are extinct, and one is a disestablished exotic leaving 531 extant species. Of these 531 species 17 are established exotics.

Check our website to download the checklist as a PDF, excel, or word document!

FOS Special Publications

Occasionally, students of the wildlife of Florida need a longer format for publication of research results, reviews, species accounts, or basic reference materials than cannot be accommodated by the article format of the *Florida Field Naturalist*. The Society created a "Special Publications" series to provide such an outlet. The length of the Florida Ornithological Society Special Publications has ranged from 43 to 435 pages, and the rate of publication has been a steady one per decade since the 1970's except for a burst of activity in the 1990's with three publications. Most Special Publications are solely soft cover, but two have been published in soft- and hard-cover.

If you have a manuscript that you would like to have considered as a Special Publication of the Florida Ornithological Society, please visit our website to fill out a form. All potentially suitable manuscripts will undergo a peer review process.



You can find a list and purchasing information for our Special Publications on our website!

Florida Breeding Bird Atlas II

By Ann Paul

A small committee of folks is working on the Florida Breeding Birds Atlas II (BBA II) project including Ann Paul, Jim Cox, Adam Kent, David Stock, Ann Hodgson, Mary Mack Gray, and Todd Engstrom.

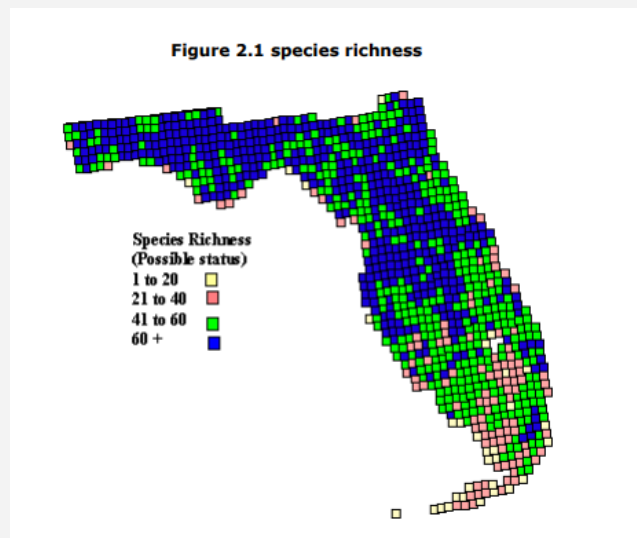
The FOS Board is hoping that we will be able to publish the BBA II during this year, as 2022 is FOS' 50th Anniversary year with the goal of suing the FOS Fall meeting, scheduled for the beginning of October, as a good “destination” time for presenting a finished product. Todd Engstrom has donated a fund of \$5,000 to assist in accomplishing this goal.

The plan to accomplish this goal is as follows:

- We will use the maps that Jim Cox has developed from the data collected during the BBAIL field work and the BBA I maps, to provide the basis of analysis of each species' breeding distribution changes.
- Authors of BBA I species accounts will be asked if they want to work on “their” species accounts for BBA II. Other biologists will be specifically asked to write some species accounts. *The Snail Kite* newsletter will be used to request volunteers to write some species accounts. “Orphan” species accounts will be addressed by Mary Mack Gray, Bill Pranty, and possibly other writers. If more than one biologist volunteers to write an account, they will be asked to work on it cooperatively. We will make be as inclusive in this work as we can, while maintaining a high degree of professional work.
- FOS Special Publications Editor Dr. Ann Hodgson will review and edit the accounts, to ensure consistency.
- Diane Pierce's artwork will be used again for BBA II; we have received permission to use the artwork from her heirs.
- We will use as a “template” the American Crow species account that Adam Kent has developed.
- Each species account author will be acknowledged on the species account write-up. Any references/sources will be included as part of the species account write-up.
- “Publication” will be an on-line document. We may consider a limited print run of books, with requests for a copy required in advance by subscription.
- The time frame for the work will be:
 - The work plan was approval by the FOS Board January 14, 2022.
 - Species accounts authors will be identified by March 2022.
 - Species accounts will be due by May 31, 2022.
 - Editing for consistency by Special Publications Editor will be completed by August 15, 2022.
 - On-line publication mechanics will be accomplished by September 15, 2022; printed copies may be available by subscription.
- The “grand release” of the FL BBA II will be at the Fall FOS Meeting, October 7, 2022.

Needless to say, this is a very aggressive plan, but it is “doable”, if all will assist.

Anyone who wants to participate as a species account writer is encouraged to please call Ann Paul, 813/624-3149.



A figure of Florida's species richness from the FL BBA I.

Florida Ornithological Society Executive Committee Members

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Florida Field Naturalist

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FOS Special Publications

Save the date for our 2022 meetings!

Spring Meeting:

Details: TBD

When: April 29—May 1, 2022

Where: Virtual

Fall Meeting:

Details: This will be a joint with the Raptor Research Foundation. Conference co-hosts include Tropical Audubon Society, South Florida Audubon Society, and the South Florida Conservation Network. This meeting will include field trips and educational talks.

When: October 6—9, 2022

Where: Embassy Suites 11— SE 17th St, Fort Lauderdale, FL , 33316



Letter from the Editor:

I was so excited to grateful for all the contributions provided for the first issue back of the Snail Kite last fall and I've thoroughly enjoyed putting together this issue. We are looking forward to celebrating the 50th year of FOS with you all! Please continue to send us your articles, photos, art, naturalist notes, and event announcements. Follow us on social media to stay up to date by clicking the links below!



Sincerely,
Heather