



KINGFISHER



Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis

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Representing the National Audubon Society
in Greater Minneapolis and Hennepin County

April 2001

President's Message

With March comes melting snow. Do you watch it? It melts at the angle of the sun, often making lovely patterns on snowbanks. The skiers and walkers have worn paths through the snow down to the ice on The Creek. It's a great time to go walking through the marsh, seeing those things out of sight in the summer.

Last month I was fortunate to have 3 days in Iceland. What a different world! It's too early for many birds so I was doubly delighted to see a group of Eiders. About 100 were lazing about in a corner of a small harbor. It was mating time so they were in full glory--what a treat. That was my special delight; however I saw many "penguins" which delighted me. Iceland hasn't had much snow this winter, leaving areas of smallish lava chunks with a patch of white on one side and the rest black. It was so like a group of penguins waddling along all in same direction--even had the slightly bent over look of the penguins. (Just keep our eyes open and creativity alive for the wonders of our planet.) Flying home in daylight was a joy, too--over Greenland with its mountains and glaciers, over the Ice Pack—and what memories of explorers that brought—and over Hudson Bay, which looked blotchy dull. I'm ready to return in the green, birding season for more.

Wasn't it nice to have a member do such a fine program? Thanks Don. I'm sure we have other members who could also do presentations. We'd welcome you. Don't be shy, tell us your talent, especial interest. It could even be a mini presentation before the regular meeting or 2-3 of you could do a program together. This is the time when programs get planned/arranged for next year. Call or talk to Fran Duritsa or me, Dorothy Kuether, about it.

Think spring, watch and listen for our returning friends. We'll see you at the April meeting.

—Dorothy Kuether

Upcoming Program

Tuesday, April 3

Redesigning the American Landscape:
Embrace Wildlife and Butterflies

It was such childhood fun. You discovered a creepy crawly caterpillar, confined it to a shoe box with twigs, grass and leaves. Eventually it spun its cocoon, and then if you were really lucky many days later, sometimes months later, you would

be there to see a beautiful creature emerge and spread its wings. It was an unforgettable thrill.

As the habitat has diminished, so have those beautiful butterflies. Dr. Vera Krischik believes this trend can be reversed, and little children can again take caterpillars to kindergarten and see that magical metamorphosis.

Dr. Krischik is an Associate Professor in the Entomology Department at the University of Minnesota in St. Paul. She is the Director of CUES and its website (www.entomology.umn.edu/cues) the Center for Urban Ecology and Sustainability. CUES strives to educate urban residents and landscape managers on ways to encourage the return of beneficial insects, and on ways to embrace environmental stewardship. With a little learning and planning, the return of butterflies and other beneficial insects to the urban ecosystem can be realized. CUES main goal is to convince people that environmental stewardship is not confined to the Serrengeti in Africa. Environmental stewardship starts in your backyard.

Butterflies could enjoy a tasty meal if your yard included azaleas, lilacs, a butterfly bush, privet or sumac, as well as many annuals, perennials and wildflowers. Food for the monarch caterpillar is milkweed and butterfly weed, the common sulphur chooses clover and alfalfa, the common hairstreak prefers the mallow family, rose and marsh mallow, and hollyhock. All of this and more is in Dr. Krischik's book, "Butterfly Gardening."

Vera Krischik's favorite activity is to be in the company of birds. She spent her childhood raising birds that fell from their nests. She was trained in bird etiquette by zebra finches, parakeets, and cockatiels that she raised herself. She can still give a parakeet warning that sends parakeets to the bottom of their cage. Vera thinks it is a hawk warning. So plan on a surprise.

Vera Krischik went to graduate school to become an ornithologist, but emerged an entomologist. She graduated cum laude from State University of New York with a B.A. in Biology. At the University of Maryland she earned her M.S. in the Department of Zoology and her Ph.D. in the Department of Entomology where she also did post-doctorial work.

Our meeting starts at 7:30 and is preceded by a Bird I.D. class beginning at 6:45. We meet at the Mayflower Church located immediately west of the Hwy 35W and Diamond Lake Road exit. Please join us.

—Fran Duritsa



Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis 2000-2001 Contacts

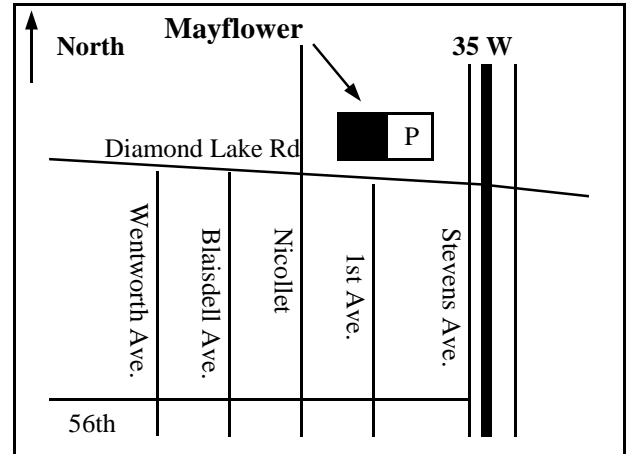
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www.geocities.com/audubon.geo/
Minnesota Audubon
www.audubon.org/chapter/mn/mn/
National Audubon Society
www.audubon.org

Come to Our Next Program!

DATE: Tuesday, April 3, 2001
TIME: 7:30 p.m. **"Redesigning the American Landscape:
Embrace Wildlife and Butterflies"**
AT: Mayflower Church (Lower Level)
109 E. Diamond Lake Road, Minneapolis
(35W & East Diamond Lake Road)



Chapter to Participate in Environmental events

We have been invited to two events and will staff an exhibit booth with information about Audubon and our Chapter's activities and membership opportunities.

Friday, March 30, 2001
6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Pilgrim Lane Elementary School, 3725 Pilgrim Lane, Plymouth
Theme: HABITAT HOTEL

Thursday, April 19, 2001
9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Olson Junior High School, 1607 51st Ave. N., Minneapolis
Olson Jr. High is designated Minnesota's Official Earth Day Celebration Event

We encourage our members to visit these events and check out what today's students are learning and doing to conserve and protect our natural resources.

—Mary Ellen Vetter

Electronic Kingfisher

SAVE A TREE! SAVE US SOME MONEY!
SUBSCRIBE TO THE KINGFISHER
ELECTRONICALLY.
Contact Jerry Bahls at bahls001@tc.umn.edu today!



Spring Is On the Way

It has been a long, hard winter. Thank goodness signs of spring are everywhere. I noticed last time I was on the road that there are Horned Larks on all the bare spots in the fields and along the road edges. The Great Horned Owls in our area are sitting tightly on their nests. I expect that they may be brooding very young fledglings. I have watched Bald Eagles in their mating rituals. They soar high and then lock talons with their mates to go cartwheeling through the air. They seem to unlock at the very last minute. I wonder if an eagle has ever misjudged? Some local eagles have refurbished their nests and are already sitting on them.

Some of the rituals of spring for birds are mindful of human experience. I saw two Red-tailed Hawks sitting close to one another on a branch. They weren't looking at each other, but were very much aware of one another. The smaller moved closer and received a baleful glare. He took off, circled around in the sky and landed next to his prospective mate once more. Still staring straight ahead he took a step closer to her. She let him this time. They just sat there for a while in what seemed to this human's eyes a self-conscious manner. Then, after a long while, they both took off, making great, circling arcs in the air as they soared higher. I chuckled at their antics because it reminded me so much of junior high school dances. Boys and girls would stand along opposite walls. Then some brave souls would move to a common wall. Without really interacting, they would sidle closer together. Eventually a pair would get out on the dance floor. Ultimately the dancers would have a good time, but it took so long for them to get together.

The cardinals in my neighborhood started really singing in early March. Their dating game includes the male feeding the female. She crouches and begs like a youngster sometimes. The House finches seem to be already paired. They appear side by side on the branches of our Ash tree and at the feeder. I can't see Chickadees, but you never see them two by two even if they are singing their fee-bee songs.

Other signs of spring include yellow bills on starlings and, would you believe, apple green beaks on Evening Grosbeaks?

Spring is a time to get outdoors, clear the cobwebs, exercise the body and thrill the soul. Might I suggest that you start watching for the return of the Great Blue Herons. You can watch them refurbishing their nests if you go down to Islands of Peace Park and look at the island in the river. If you couldn't make it to Nebraska to see the Sandhill Cranes, may I recommend Crex Meadows outside of Grantsburg, Wisconsin. You won't see hundreds of cranes, but you should see some and there will be returning waterfowl. If you can't travel very far, take up a seat at a local nature center and watch the feeders. Fox Sparrows and thrushes will be coming through soon. Most of all—just get out and celebrate. Life is a wonderful gift.

— Vija Kelly



April is John James Audubon's Birthday Month

On April 26, we celebrate the namesake of the National Audubon Society, which is among the oldest and largest national conservation organizations in North America. J. J. Audubon, born in Haiti in 1785, was formally educated in France, but was primarily a self taught artist. Arriving in the United States in 1803, Audubon moved from state to state, trying many merchant ventures but never succeeding. However, his sketches of wildlife, especially birds, afforded some income and he devoted himself to his life's ambition—painting every bird in America. He took his portfolio of hundreds of paintings to England in 1838 to be exhibited, printed and sold by subscription. With his 4 volume work "Birds of America", the world acclaimed him an incomparable artistic genius.

Many credit Audubon's "Birds of America" as providing the spark that ignited America's passion for bird watching and for protecting wildlife in general. In her New York classrooms, Lucy Audubon used her husband's pictures as teaching aids and one student was so impressed that years later he named the country's new bird conservation organization after the artist.. By forming the first Audubon Society in 1886, George Bird Grinnell guaranteed that John James' name would continue on long after his death in 1851. More importantly, he assured that the Audubon vision would live and grow in all society members to devote time and money to create a "Culture of Conservation" in all of our citizens.

—Mary Ellen Vetter



Conserving the Raptors, Waters and Wildlife of the Upper Mississippi Watershed

April 6-8, 2001

Wabasha, Minnesota

It's not too late to join in the fun! All Audubon members and persons interested in the birds and wildlife of the Upper Mississippi are invited to Wabasha, April 6-8th, for Minnesota Audubon's annual Spring Membership Meeting. Through presentations, discussions, and field trips, we will explore the diverse issues relating to conservation of the Upper Mississippi watershed. We'll also examine Audubon's local, state, and regional efforts to ensure the health of the river and the well-being of the human and natural communities that depend upon this unique region. (See our March *Kingfisher* for more details.)

Cost for Saturday, including three meals, is \$38.00. Check the Minnesota Audubon website at www.audubon.org/chapter/mn/mn/ for lodging information, times and locations of meeting activities, and a registration form; or contact Suzanne Plass at 651-225-1830 or splass@audubon.org.

—Suzanne Plass

Field Notes

1/30/01, 10:00 am: **The Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary**, Pacific Grove, California.... I had heard of this Monarch wintering site several years ago and quite frankly never took the time to seek it out. Don't make the same mistake. Much has been written about the migration and wintering habits of the Monarch and the research continues. But a few things struck me about Pacific Grove that I think are worth mentioning. Most people are aware of the site in Mexico, famous perhaps, because it is more vulnerable as the result of the loss of surrounding forest habitat, and is, as a result, under twenty four hour armed guard. The Pacific Grove site, on the other hand, is 'hidden' in a residential neighborhood and so understated that I drove around the block twice before spotting the tiny arrow directing me down a shaded path. Once I entered the grove, there appeared to be a few stray Monarchs on the wing but where were the large numbers that I expected? And then, there they were! In the deeply shaded under story of the towering Eucalyptus and Pine were masses of Monarchs. The muted underside of their folded wings provided perfect camouflage, mimicking the shape and subtle coloration of the abundant Spanish moss against the Robin's egg blue sky. The word I choose to describe it is 'amazing.' The residents of Pacific Grove have made a commitment to the butterflies that they consider important to the quality of their lives.

— Tom Rice

Conservation Chair



Volunteers Needed for Common Nighthawk Survey

The Wildlife Section of Hennepin Parks is looking for volunteers to participate in a statewide Common Nighthawk survey. Hennepin Parks conducted similar surveys in 1989, 1990, and 1991. The goals of this year's project are to assess the abundance of Nighthawks in Metro and outstate locations, and to compare their current abundance and distribution with the results of the previous surveys.

Volunteers will drive a survey route and make 3 to 10 five-minute stops at pre-selected sites to count calling Nighthawks. The surveys will be completed between June 10 and July 1, 2001. The counts will be conducted from 10 minutes before sunset until one hour after sunset. Volunteers need to be able to identify Common Nighthawks by both sight and calls. Training may be offered if enough volunteers are interested.

Survey routes will be established in the Twin Cities Metro area and suburbs, and volunteers will be assigned a route as close to their homes as possible. Those who have outstate lake homes can choose to survey a route in that area. Please do not base your decision to participate on whether or not you know there are Nighthawks in your area. Negative data is just as important to the effort as positive data. *(continued)*

(Continued from previous column) Call Carol Pearson at 763-476-4663 or email <cpearson@hennepinparks.org> no later than April 30, 2001 to register and to receive a letter including project details and instructions. When registering, please provide your name, address, phone number, and email address, and indicate the towns or cities you would be willing to survey.

—Carol Pearson



Beginning Birding Class

Everything is set up for your Beginning Birding Class. All we need now is YOU (and of course your friends, neighbors and even the relatives)! As announced last month, the date is April 28th at 9:00 AM. We have arranged to have the class at Westwood Hills Nature Center at 8300 W. Franklin Ave. in St. Louis Park. So we'll have an excellent area to apply what has been learned.

This is an excellent opportunity for all you birders who aren't comfortable identifying all those flying creatures out there. We plan on having a class on the basic points you should have in identifying species (or at least deciding what type) of birds. It will become evident that you can't mistake a hummingbird for an eagle. Bluejays are easy to identify. Warblers are nearly impossible for the beginner, but with time and practice you will become proficient. After the classroom time, we will do the fun part: Go out and look for birds! Remember, birding is a rain or shine activity, so wear appropriate clothing. Also, bring along what you have for observing birds. Tips will probably be available on what is good to have. A few items may also be available for you to purchase before and after the class.

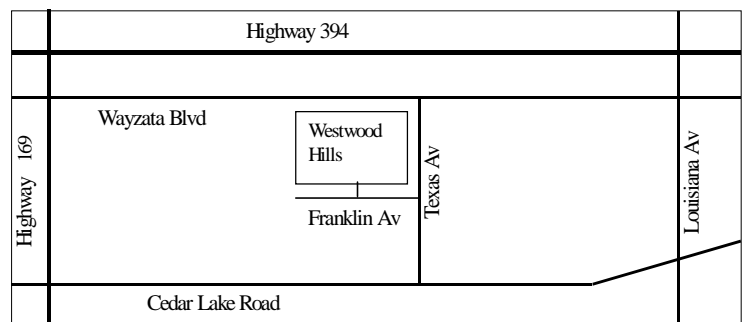
Also, before and after the class, someone will be available to answer your questions about Audubon. Who we are and what we do. Also, how can you get involved or even join.

NOW! GO OUT AND CIRCLE THE FOLLOWING DATE ON YOUR CALENDAR!

April 28, 2001

9:00 AM

Follow the map below to get to Westwood Hills Nature Center, or call them at 952-924-2544 for directions. —Jerry Bahls



March Program Review

This month's meeting was filled with information and fun. It was also popular: 81 people were in attendance!

We started off with a short presentation by Carmen Converse, Supervisor for the DNR's Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS). The MCBS has been surveying biodiversity in Minnesota counties since 1987. So far, the surveys have been completed in 49 of the State's 87 counties, and surveys are currently under way in 13 more counties. The surveys are exhaustive, and the information from them will be of great help in the future planning of development within each county. The information will also provide benchmark data to compare to future research. Information on the surveys can be found at the following website: http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/ecological_services/mcbs/mcbsmaps.html. *Free maps* of 23 completed counties are available by leaving your request, name, and address, on voice-mail at this number: (651) 296-2835.

State funding for the MCBS is under consideration by the State Legislature at this time, and our next speaker was Lee Lewis, a Minnesota Audubon lobbyist to the Legislature. He spoke of four issues of special concern to Audubon at the State level: MCBS, the Songbird Diversity Project, the Freshwater Mussel Survey, and matching funds for the Nongame Wildlife Tax Check-off Fund. We were asked to contact our legislators about these issues, and were informed that the most effective form of communication is still a personal letter, or even a visit to your Legislator's office. For more information on the issues, call Minnesota Audubon at (651) 225-1830. To find out how to contact your Legislators, you can call the House Information Office at 800-657-3550, or the Senate Information Office at 800-234-1112.

The evening's highlight was a slide presentation by long-time birder (40 years!) Don Bolduc. Don's dry wit is always a treat on field trips, and we had plenty of it while he showed us some beautiful slides of Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado. A Professional Photographer he met told him to "photograph everything that is interesting"; and Don did. We not only saw wonderful pictures of hummingbirds in flight (something I wish I was better skilled at), but we were also shown the "aspen snake" and the "bark moth". We were shown many beautiful pictures of the sky, as well as photos of other birds, and various shots of mountain wildflowers. Don asked us to tell him which was the best photo of several subjects, and it often wasn't easy to do. It was great fun to listen to a member of our own group share his knowledge and experiences with us. Thanks, Don!

—Paul Kinzer

"Is *this* the best one?"



Scholarships for Summer Camps

Our Audubon chapter, as well as the Mpls. Audubon society, donates funds toward camperships to Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary in Sarona, Wisconsin, and the Audubon Center of the North Woods in Sandstone, Minnesota. This scholarship money is awarded to local area students to help defray the cost of a week of summer camp. In past years, the *Kingfisher* has provided descriptions of North Woods & Hunt Hill, mentioned funds available, detailed the camp offerings, and listed a name and phone number to contact. We get little or no response and often end up just sending the money to North Woods and Hunt Hill, losing our intention to *connect* to local young people and to report to members just who we sponsored.

The following are two letters written by scholarship recipients last year, sent in thanks to Marion Borell. They may grow up to be Audubon members and leaders. (Marion says, "I was one of them 100 years ago!")

I would like to thank you for sending me to camp. It was great fun and it was the best camp I've been to! Now I have 3 pen pals! And I'm thinking of going next year!

Thank you for the fun!

Taisia Rieck

P.S. I thought the campout was fun. I also liked the people there.

Many Thanks,

Taisia Rieck (6th grade)



Dear Mrs. Borell,

Thank you for helping me go to camp this summer. I had a good time there. I especially liked to swim. I also enjoyed petting and talking with the dogs at the camp.

The counselors were nice too. I especially like Dan and Tina. I enjoyed the stories they read and the games we played.

I also enjoyed campfires and remember the big bon-fire and the time we roasted hot dogs. I would very much like to go again some time.



Thanks again,

Teddy Shaw (3rd grade)

Our May/June issue will include more details about the camp programs and dates. In the meantime, we hope you will consider a child or children who would benefit from a week at an Audubon summer camp. Teachers, you could pass this information on to your students! To get all the details now about the camps, the dates, and the themes for each week, you can contact them for the information.

Audubon Center of the North Woods: 1-888-404-7743
www.audubon-center.com email: audubon1@ecenet.com

Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary: 1-877-777-8383
www.audubon.org/local/sanctuary/hunthill
email: hunthill@spacestar.net

Contact Marion Borell for scholarship info! 612-866-1266



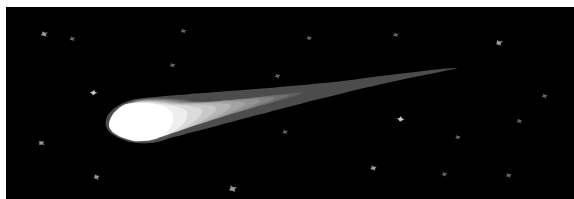
The Conservation Scene

The Conservation Committee met at my home on Saturday, February 24. The attendees included John Arthur, Kim Shearer, Sherry Koger, Tim Dunnigan, Susan Troha, Pamela Deerwood and Jack Hauser. Our agenda covered discussion of our committees near-, mid-, and long- term goals; a review of recently completed projects; upcoming projects; and ideas for future conservation projects. If you have a project, let one of us know...or, better yet, join us on the Conservation Committee.

Just a reminder, that even though we have had good response so far, we are still looking for volunteers for this year's projects. They include: Planting of native species at Wood Lake Nature Center, probably beginning around April 15 and continuing through mid June...Wetland monitoring with Hennepin Conservation District, with field training on May 9 or 10, and invertebrate identification training on June 2...And, habitat assessment at Cedar Lake Park. Call me if you are interested in any of these exciting projects.... It's your chance to make a difference!

Anyone interested in receiving the Hennepin Conservation District quarterly newsletter can do so by contacting Tim Reese at tim@hcd.hennepin.mn.us.

—Tom Rice
Conservation Chair



Cranes, and Hale-Bopp, Too (part 2)

(Continued from last month)

After the cranes settled in and near the Platte, Hale-Bopp became clearly visible as evening became night. We wanted to view it under darker conditions (we were only a mile off Interstate 80), so we took some back roads away from Kearney (where we were spending the night) to find black skies. Unfortunately, we were still in farming country, and every farmyard had an amazingly bright light that seemed to be aimed straight up. We did the best we could, and took some photos, just in case the next night was cloudy.

The next morning *was* cloudy, and wet, which is not good weather for comets, but was great for viewing cranes and waterfowl. We drove a wonderful loop that was mapped in a local crane guide (the area around Kearney is amazingly welcoming and friendly to birders), and then headed northwest toward Valentine, Nebraska. Without leaving the road, we saw 31 species of birds! Here's a selection: American white pelicans; Common snipe; Snow geese and Greater white-fronted geese (our first sight of these species, and we saw hundreds); eight species of duck; over 100 American goldfinches; and our first Harlan's form of the Red-tailed hawk.

Valentine is the only town of significant size for fifty miles in any direction, and it has a population of less than 3,000. Better still (for stargazers and others seeking solitude), there is an area of more than 10,000 square miles to the south and west of Valentine that is nearly empty of humanity. These are the Sand Hills, and as their very name implies, they are not suitable for crop farming, so they have been used as rangeland and have had little or no development. In the 125 miles between the cities of North Platte and Valentine, there are only two towns, both with less than 300 people. Less than half a dozen paved roads intersected U.S. Highway 83 on our drive. Brad especially loved the emptiness of the hills; covered in grass, but nearly devoid of trees. As we rose over the crest of each rise, we would often be surprised with "potholes", ponds, or even small lakes. Each seemed like a small, isolated world of its own, cut off from, and needing nothing from, the rest of the planet. Different species of birds seemed to have chosen specific sites that were just to their liking, and we never knew which ones we would see in a given spot.

That night, Brad and I drove first south, then west, until Valentine was just a very dim glow above the horizon. (Wina wanted to stay warm in the motel, and got to watch *The Three Lives of Thomasina*.) I have not often seen skies so black! They probably seemed darker still because of the surrounding desolation: one tree in sight; everywhere else, low rolling hills invisible in the darkness; not a light to be seen anywhere on the horizon. Hale-Bopp seemed as bright as a full moon (there was no moon in the sky). And it was so quiet! There was the lightest of breezes, but it had little to stir. I felt as though the comet, as it seemed to be roaring across the sky, should be making some kind of noise: it was so huge and dynamic. Brad and I were so involved in the whole atmosphere of this eerie, wonderful night, that we nearly jumped out of our skins when a cow, only a few dozen yards away but completely invisible, lowed quietly. A half hour later, a coyote howled away off in the distance. Within a few moments, we were surrounded by their singing. It lasted less than a minute, and for a long time, neither of us said anything. It was perfect.

The next morning, before heading home, we went on a tour of the nearby Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge. It's a very interesting place, with captive herds of bison, elk, and Texas longhorns. Of course, it's also filled with other wildlife. Any place that has a prairie dog town is a good place to me. The Niobrara River (a National Wild and Scenic River at this point in its course) runs between beautiful bluffs here.

We went on this trip during the last few days of March, right around the time you should be receiving this issue of the Kingfisher: if you have a couple of days, I strongly encourage you to go. The cranes are one of the highlights, and they leave in the first couple of weeks of April; but the cranes are only a part of the fun. Hale-Bopp won't be in the sky, but the night sky always has something beautiful to offer, especially to those of us who already have binoculars and spotting scopes!

—Paul Kinzer



A Winter Retreat—Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary February 2001



As winter continues its merciless grip on us Minnesotans, many have been forced southward in order to maintain some small semblance of sanity and skin color. My temporary escape led me to Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp just west of Naples, Florida. For those of you unfamiliar with Corkscrew, it is a 6000-acre cypress swamp managed by the National Audubon Society since 1954. It contains the largest remaining tract of bald cypress forest in the world. The management goal is to maintain native flora and fauna and to preserve the ongoing natural processes that have shaped the ecosystem for thousands of years. My last visit there was five years ago and the development pressures surrounding the once isolated swamp are clearly in evidence today.

In addition to the human pressures, a southwest Florida drought has held the area hostage for the past two years. I looked at it as an opportunity to experience the swamp in a way that is not usually possible.

Black Vultures soared overhead as we checked in at the newly opened visitor center and prepared for our 2.25 mile hike on the boardwalk. This structure snakes its way through the six different environments the swamp encompasses. When we started in the pine flatwoods, the temperature was in the mid 80's and the sounds of grackles and Red-winged Blackbirds filled the air. The slash pines, with their charred bases, towered over us as we approached the wet prairie. The thick bark on the trunk helps protect these trees from the ravages of fire. This allows them to survive for as many as 200 years.

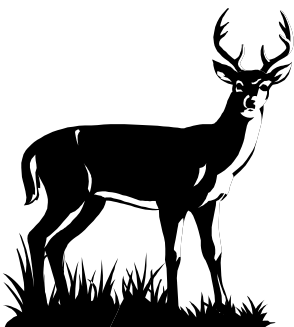
Nearing the wet prairie, we saw a Red-shouldered Hawk perched low in a tree next to the boardwalk. There was no need to use the binoculars. As we strolled further, it was clear that drought conditions had persisted for a long time -- the resurrection fern on the trunks and tree limbs was brown and dry. It is called resurrection fern because within hours after a rainfall the dried, curled leaves will uncurl and green up. As we stopped to enjoy the view, we heard a rustling under the boardwalk. Peering over the rail we were delighted by four Bobwhite Quail just three feet below us.

Next, we walked quietly along the boardwalk through the pond cypress zone and entered the bald cypress swamp. This cypress loses its needles in the winter, hence the name bald cypress. Although the shade made the temperature much lower, the dry conditions persisted, and the ferns, air plants and Spanish moss growing on and around the trees looked distressed and in need of the now absent water. The trees, however, looked fine. Speaking as a Minnesotan, it is always interesting to see red maple trees leafed out in February. Some trees were playing host to the strangler fig, whose roots are often mistaken for vines growing up the tree trunk. Actually, the strangler fig usually begins life in the canopy, sending roots earthward which can completely surround its host and, over time, kill it. By then, the parasitic tree is capable of supporting itself. Its fruit is eaten by many birds, most notably, the Pileated Woodpecker. While resting at one of the bench areas, we spotted a Barred Owl perched nearby. The bird stayed perfectly still and we were able to see it in detail. Then, as if on cue, the owl took off and flew silently right over us.

Walking on, we came to the Lettuce Lakes area of the bald cypress swamp. Here, the slow moving river maintains pools of water, resulting in a concentration of wildlife. Here, we saw our first alligators, in addition to Wood Storks, White Ibis, Anhinga, Little Blue, and Black-crowned Night Herons, Purple Gallinule and Egrets. As we watched the avian activity around us, one of the naturalists pointed out an American Bittern. It was fun to watch perplexed visitors look directly at the bird but not see it. Its motionless behavior and the camouflage plumage make this species the stealth champion in the swamp.

The longer we stayed in the lakes area, the more we saw. As we viewed an area of water lettuce, we could hear some activity but could not easily see what was there. Patience paid off as two river otters emerged from beneath the water. Visitors often consider their constant movement as play, but these creatures are in constant search for a meal of fish, snails and crayfish.

Visitors must leave the swamp by dusk. As that time was quickly approaching, we made our way back toward the visitor's center. Much to our surprise, we saw three white-tailed deer grazing in an open area of pine flatwoods. These mammals are the same species as those here in Minnesota, but a process known as adaptive radiation has resulted in their being much smaller than their northern counterparts. The scene was reminiscent of one from home, except for the palms and palmettos scattered throughout the forest. The afternoon had been a marvelous nature watching experience. When it comes to visiting Florida in winter, my friends and I will leave the theme parks for someone else.



—Frank De Steno



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7XCHA

Calendar of Events

April

- 3 Chapter Program, 7:30 p.m.
"Redesigning the American Landscape:
Embrace Wildlife and Butterflies"
- 6-8 Spring Membership Meeting (see p. 3)
- 10 Chapter Board Meeting, 6:45 p.m.
- 28 Beginning Birding Class, 9:00 a.m. (p. 4)

May

- 1 Chapter Program, 7:30 p.m.
"Bird Nest Identification"
- 5 Field Trip, Wood Lake Nature Center
- 8 Chapter Board Meeting, 6:45 p.m.
- 10 Field Trip, Crosby Park
- 12 Field Trip, Rice Creek
- 17 Field Trip, Spring Lake Park
- 19 Field Trip, Springbrook Nature Center
- 26 Field Trip, Old Cedar Ave. Bridge

**Field trips usually begin at 7:30 a.m.,
call the Field Trips Chair for details.**

All are welcome to the Chapter Board Meetings!
Board Meetings are held at North Regional Library
1315 Lowry Ave. N. in Minneapolis
Call the president for details.