



Corkscrew
Swamp Sanctuary

Along the Boardwalk

October, 2008

www.corkscrew.audubon.org



Tropical Storm Fay fills swamp to near record levels

Corkscrew Swamp is brimming with water. Gauge B at the Lettuce Lakes peaked at 4.06 feet on August 25, six days after Tropical Storm Fay.

To put this into context, records kept since 1960 indicate the swamp has only been deeper on three occasions. The first was in 1960 when Gauge B hit 4.08 feet, then in 1961 when it hit 4.17 feet, and finally on October 20, 1995, when it hit 4.47 feet, the highest level ever recorded at Corkscrew.

The rain gauge at the visitor center recorded a five-day total of 11.07" associated with Fay from August 19-23. That represents more rain in a five day span than was received during the widespread flooding of 1995.

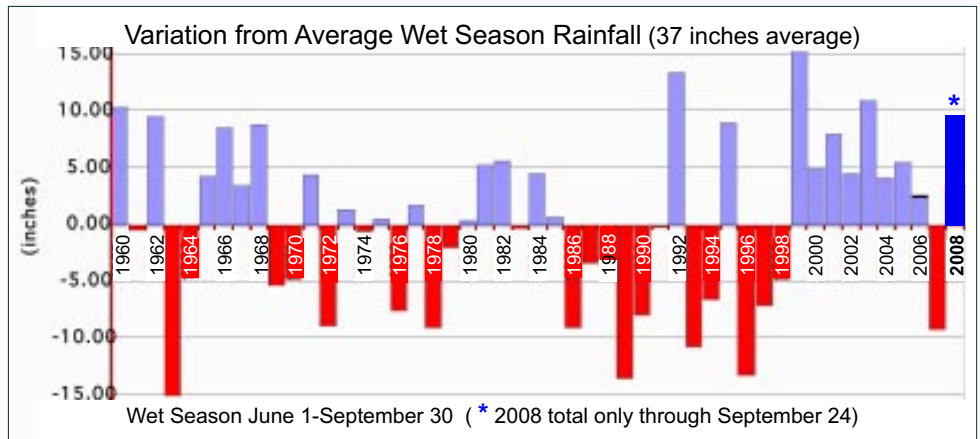
Until Fay, Corkscrew was running a serious rainfall deficit in 2008, but totals are now in the black. By September 24, the Sanctuary received 9.83 more inches of rainfall than

Corkscrew's entire rainy season average of 37 inches, which runs through the end of September.

This sets the stage for a potentially good wood stork nesting season. If water levels don't drop too precipitously and there aren't heavy rains this winter, the fish population should have time to recover enough to support stork nesting again at Corkscrew.

FIVE-DAY RAINFALL RECORDS

| Year | Date | Rainfall (inches) |
|------|--------------|-------------------|
| 1995 | October 14 | 1.05" |
| | October 15 | 4.32" |
| | October 16 | 4.25" |
| | October 17 | .20" |
| | October 18 | .76" |
| | total | 10.58" |
| 2008 | August 19 | 6.00" |
| | August 20 | .72" |
| | August 21 | .60" |
| | August 22 | 2.75" |
| | August 23 | 1.00" |
| | total | 11.07" |



Quick ID Guide: Identifying ducks on the wing: look for contrasts, colors

Four species of ducks might be seen flying overhead. Up close, the differences are distinct, but from below and at a distance, it is harder.

With the exception of the larger male Muscovy, all are close to the same size. So look for color contrasts: white wing patches above and below and how

far down the wing the patch extends; head, neck, and belly color (light vs. dark if colors are not visible); and if at all possible, bill and leg color.



Muscovy Duck female

Muscovy Duck male

Black-bellied Whistling Duck

Wood Duck male

Wood Duck female

Mottled Duck
(drawings from Sibley's)

Bird Trivia

During what time of year are Prairie Warblers found in prairies?

Discover the answer at www.collieraudubon.org/birding.html

Creativity, ingenuity characterize fall intern

Da Vinci once said, “Human subtlety will never devise an invention more beautiful, more simple or more direct than does nature because in her inventions nothing is lacking, and nothing is superfluous.”

My name is Dave Pacetti. I go to Edison State College in Naples, and yes, I am a local, born and raised.



Our environment has always intrigued me, which is why I am pursuing a degree in environmental science and environmental engineering. We need to protect what we have and conserve what we could lose.

I also try to look at new, more efficient ways of doing things. I am currently building a solar powered

Actually I have quite the family history here in the Sunshine State. I am a 10th generation Floridian with family dating back to 1736. If you have ever been to St. Augustine, then you might have met one of my relatives.

boat through my college’s Environmental Studies Club. Along with a team of biology and engineering majors, we plan to highlight alternative energy resources we have and how they can be implemented in all aspects of our lives.

Bobwhite quail return

David Pacetti, left, spotted a covey of quail roaming just outside the visitor center on Tuesday, September 9. Bobwhite have not been seen from the boardwalk since September, 2001.

The birds foraged in the pinelands along the boardwalk before flying toward Ed’s office and the Rigsby Tract.



September Sightings



An Eastern Wood Pewee looks for insects near the Ed Carlson bench (September 9).



A Prairie Warbler finishes preening near the Barred Owl rain shelter (September 23).



Bobwhite pause on the railing behind the library (September 9, photo Mike Knight).

Exotic Species Threat

New insect-borne disease in Florida may target Cabbage Palm trees

Cabbage palms (*Sabal palmetto*) are dying in Manatee and Hillsborough counties, and preliminary analyses indicate the phytoplasma pathogen which causes Texas Phoenix palm decline (TPPD) may be responsible for decline of the cabbage palms.

Primary palm hosts for the TPPD phytoplasma are four species of date palms and queen palms. Cabbage palms will likely be added to this host list.

The newly identified cabbage palm disease was first confirmed in Manatee County and since has been confirmed in date palm species from south-

ern Sarasota County to Pinellas and northern Hillsborough counties and eastward to Polk County. TPPD has not yet been reported in Charlotte, Lee or Collier counties.

The first clue that a cabbage palm may be infected is an excessive amount of dead lower leaves, more than what is normally seen with aging or nutrient deficiencies. The second clue is death of the spear leaf, prior to death of all other leaves in the canopy.

Palms infected with the phytoplasma show the following symptoms.

The oldest (lowest) leaves appear to be a grayish-brown in color; then an unusually large number of leaves in the middle of the canopy will be a reddish-brown or bronze color with a few young, green leaves in the upper canopy, along with a dead or dying spear leaf which is desiccated or off-color. Other symptoms are death of flowers and fruits and early drop of large quantities of green or ripe fruit. However, this symptom is only speculation with cabbage palms. Currently, the insect transmitter is unknown, but it is probably in the leaf hopper family.

The Pileated Woodpecker is the largest woodpecker found in most of North America and is best recognized by its large black body and its red crest.

It is well adapted for climbing on vertical surfaces and is awkward on small branches and vines when reaching for fruit such as Strangler Figs. It occasionally hops on the ground when going short distances between fallen logs and limbs where it looks for food. The Pileated is a strong flyer with slightly undulating flight. Its flight is rather slow but vigorous and direct.

Because of its size and chisel-shaped bill, the Pileated is particularly adept at excavating, and it uses this ability to construct nests and roost cavities as well as to find food.

Pileated Woodpeckers sleep in roost cavities for the night, each bird normally sleeping alone, one per roost. Cavity roosting and nesting provides protection from the weather as well as from predators which include Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, and squirrels. Roost trees may have multiple entrance holes to provide alternate escape routes from predators.

The sound of Pileated Woodpecker hammering carries long distances.

When excavating cavities or looking for food, the hammering is loud, slow, and methodical.

Pileated also drum to attract mates and to establish the boundaries of their territories. Drumming usually occurs atop a dead tree that resonates sound, and is most frequent in the morning. It increases in frequency during early spring as courtship activities begin.

Drumming is done at 14.5-16.8 beats/second and tapers off at the end rather than ending abruptly as does the drumming of a Red-bellied Woodpecker.

Pileated Woodpecker

Dryocopus pileatus



Drumming is used to proclaim a territory. When territorial conflicts occur, there is much chasing, calling, striking with wings, and jabbing with bills.

When foraging for food, the Pileated Woodpecker characteristically drills rectangular holes in trees to find its favorite food, Carpenter Ants. They also eat wood-boring beetle larvae, fruits, and nuts. The feeding excavations can be so broad and deep that they can weaken smaller trees, causing them to break.

The birds also use their chisel-like bills to pry and strip pieces of bark from trees looking for food. Generally, they help keep a forest healthy by eating



wood-boring insects and helping keep insect populations under control.

The Pileated Woodpecker has a long, barbed tongue and sticky saliva which it uses to capture prey like ants and beetle larvae (*photo at bottom of previous column*).

Pileated pairs establish territories, live on them throughout the year, and defend the territory in all seasons, but will tolerate floaters during the winter. They prefer large, older trees for nesting, usually dead, but in young forests, they will use any large tree. Pileated Woodpeckers are monogamous, staying with the same mate for life.

Both sexes excavate a cavity in tree from 15 to 125 feet above the ground. The oval entrance is taller than wide, about 4-6 inches in diameter. The cavities measure between 10 and 24 inches deep, and the birds construct a new one in their territory each year.

It can take a pileated pair six weeks to finish making the nest cavity. The cavity is unlined except for wood chips. During the day, both parents take turns incubating the eggs. At night, only the male incubates the eggs.

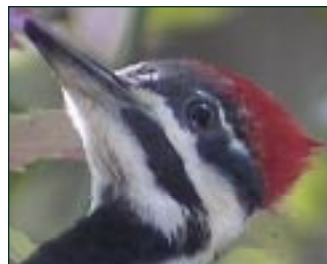
Four eggs are usually laid. They hatch in about two weeks and the young birds fledge after about a month. After fledging, the young depend on their parents for several months, at least until early autumn. The parents provide food for them and teach them to acquire their own food during this time.

In the fall, young leave their parents and wander until spring when they will nest and acquire their own territories.

Cool Fact...

The Pileated Woodpecker has yellow bristly feathers over its nostrils that keep out wood chips when excavating a hole.

Identification: male, near right, has red mustache starting at lower bill and the red crest comes down to bill; female, center, lacks a mustache and red is only on crest.



"Pileated" comes from "pileus," a felt cap worn by ancient Romans. The bird's crest resembles the shape and placement of the pileus (pronounced pi-le-us).