



Corkscrew
Swamp Sanctuary

Along the Boardwalk

November, 2006

www.corkscrew.audubon.org

One of Corkscrew's own is named AoF's 2006 Volunteer of the Year

Susan Schumann-Skehan is Audubon of Florida's 2006 Volunteer of the Year. AoF Executive Director David Anderson described the reasons for Schumann-Skehan's selection:

"Susan has been a Boardwalk Naturalist for 15 seasons. She is an avid and expert birder who shares her deep appreciation of nature in an incredibly cheerful and positive way.

"The magnitude of her volunteer spirit is evident in her eagerness to do special projects beyond her Boardwalk Naturalist schedule. Susan was a key member of the Capital Campaign Committee to build the Blair Audubon Cen-

ter at Corkscrew. She participates in monthly bird counts, guides for the Adult Education Program, and assists with a variety of administrative tasks.

"It is said that some birders have a special talent of teaching rather than competing when birding. Susan is the guide everyone wants to go out with as she is generous with her information. Her talent for identification by sound is legend.

"Her love of birds and her dedication to the Audubon mission are contagious and inspire her colleagues, the staff and visitors to be better environmental stewards."

Both Lettuce Lakes cleared to breathe

This summer the Resource Management team attacked both exotic vegetation (Cuban Nut Sedge) and floating tussocks (chunks of floating peat like organic icebergs) in both lakes.

When the lakes are covered with vegetation, anaerobic organic materials build up in the bottom of the lake. Opening up the Lettuce Lakes occa-

sionally is good for them. The water becomes more oxygenated (aerobic) and allows bacteria to break down those organic materials. This adds to the life of the lakes, which would otherwise eventually fill in.

New areas of open water have already attracted Belted Kingfishers, herons, Anhingas and a Pied-billed Grebe.

Volunteer donations provide more wish list items

More thanks, first to volunteer Bruce Froyland whose donation added another boardwalk radio for volunteer and staff use.

Another donated item from the wish list comes from Eloise Ingram who provided the library with back copies of *American Butterfly* magazine.

South Florida stamped

The large Wood Stork poster currently on display in the Blair Center is from a new United States Postal Service release that features southern Florida wetlands and some of the special species found in them.

Nov/Dec art exhibited

Batiks by Natalie Guess and watercolors by Phil Fisher are featured in the Blair Center foyer during November and December. For information about the artists and future displays, visit the Corkscrew web page.

Volunteer refresher

New Volunteer Basic Training will be taking place on November 17, 18 and 20 from 8 am until 3 pm each day.

Any current volunteers wanting a refresher course are invited to attend all or part of this program. Please see the schedule which is posted in the Bunting House and contact Sally Stein at Sstein@audubon.org to register.

What do you say if...

...a visitor on the boardwalk is talking on a cell phone?

Approach the visitor with empathy and say, "Excuse me for interrupting, but cell phones tend to scare the animals in the sanctuary and disturb other visitors. So, I need to ask you to please finish your call and turn off your cell phone. We appreciate your cooperation." Then, once the visitor ends the call and shuts off the phone, depending on his or her demeanor, try to point out something of interest.

Quick ID Guide

What's an easy-to-see difference between Louisiana and Northern Waterthrushes?

There are two easy-to-see differences. First, look at the throat. The Louisiana Waterthrush has a clear throat; the Northern's is striped.

Second, look at the tail movement. According to Sibley's, the Northern's tail bobs straight up and down while the Louisiana's tail swings back and forth while bobbing up and down.

Northern



Louisiana



In Case a Visitor Asks

How can some snakes climb up smooth tree trunks?

Snakes use *concertina movement* to climb trees – the act of gripping with some parts of the body while pulling or pushing with other parts of the body in the general direction of movement.

Concertina movement is very irregular and appears to be quite strenuous. Thus, it takes snakes much longer to climb a tree than to move on the ground or in the water.

This push/pull motion is made possible by scales that are *keeled*, or ridged. Unlike smooth scales, a keeled scale has a raised ridge on the center of each scale which enables the snake to grip smooth surfaces, much like a good tread

on a tire grips the road better than a bald tire can.

All snakes either have smooth or keeled scales, and one way to distinguish is that smooth scales typically reflect light, making the color pattern of these snakes shiny, glossy, or iridescent, whereas keeled scales tend to make snakes dull and non-reflective because of the raised ridge.

Tip: To explain the idea of concertina movement to a visitor, illustrate the push/pull movement of the musical instrument, the accordion. For you non-musicians, a concertina is a type of accordion.



The Yellow Rat Snake is Florida's best tree-climbing snake.

October Sightings



Narrow-leaf Sunflowers bloom near the wildlife crossing (October 3).



A River Otter rests in front of the pond cypress bench along the exit trail (October 10).



A Philadelphia Vireo stops for some insects before heading further south (October 20).

Below is the list of bird and butterfly species spotted by volunteers during October. For mammal and herp sightings plus frequency of all sightings, go to the Corkscrew web page (www.corkscrew.audubon.org) and click on "Wildlife."

BIRDS

Anhinga
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Little Blue Heron
Green Heron
Black-crowned Night Heron
Yellow-crown'd. Night Heron
White Ibis
Roseate Spoonbill
Wood Stork
Wood Duck
Sandhill Crane
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Snail Kite
Red-shouldered Hawk
Short-tailed Hawk
Cooper's Hawk
Bald Eagle

Moorhen
Limkin
Mourning Dove
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Barred Owl
Nighthawk
Chimney Swift
Ruby-thr. Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
Pileated Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Eastern Phoebe
Great-crested Flycatcher
Acadian Flycatcher
Eastern Wood Pewee
Tree Swallow
Blue Jay
Tufted Titmouse

Carolina Wren
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Brown-headed Nuthatch
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Swainson's Thrush
Catbird
Mockingbird
Brown Thrasher
Veery
White-eyed Vireo
Blue-headed Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Philadelphia Vireo
Northern Parula Warbler
Magnolia Warbler
Black-throat. Blue Warbler
Black-throat. Green Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Yellow-throated Warbler
Pine Warbler
Prairie Warbler

Palm Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
American Redstart
Prothonotary Warbler
Worm-eating Warbler
Bay-breasted Warbler
Golden-winged Warbler
Chestnut-sided Warbler
Blackburnian Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Ovenbird
Northern Waterthrush
Louisiana Waterthrush
Common Yellowthroat
Hooded Warbler
Summer Tanager
Scarlet Tanager
Cardinal
Painted Bunting
Red-winged Blackbird
Boat-tailed Grackle

Common Grackle

BUTTERFLIES

Zebra Longwing
Gulf Fritillary
Ruddy Daggertail
White Peacock
Viceroy
Monarch
Queen
Black Swallowtail
Tiger Swallowtail
Giant Swallowtail
Palamedes Swallowtail
Zebra Swallowtail
Long-tailed Skipper
Brazilian Skipper
Skipper spp.
Phaon Crescent
Sulphur spp.

Strangler Fig

Ficus aurea

The Strangler Fig is a native of South Florida and the West Indies, growing primarily in tropical hardwood forests. It can be a large tree, 50-60 feet in height, and it is a unique plant.

Strangler Figs begin as epiphytes, usually growing on another tree where birds or other animals have deposited seeds through their droppings. At Corkscrew, hosts are typically Cabbage Palms and Bald Cypress.

The seeds are sticky and attach to the tree. After germination, the fast-growing fig sends down aerial roots which reach the ground and establish a soil-based root system. As the roots enlarge, the fig becomes self-supporting.



A Prothonotary Warbler eats a fig above the Box 5 bench at the north lake. Figs are favorite foods of Red-bellied and Pileated Woodpeckers.

the top of the host tree and develop a dense canopy which shades out everything below. It may eventually kill the host tree, but not by strangulation.

However, we are at the far northern end of the fig's range. Because the fig is a tropical tree, it is not cold-tolerant, so when temperatures in our late December and early January mornings drop to the low 30's or less, the cold retards the fig's growth. Consequently, no dense canopy ever develops to deprive our host trees of needed sunlight.



Reproduction is what makes the Strangler Fig unique. The fruit is actually a hollow, globular receptacle with hundreds of small fleshy flowers facing each other on the inside. The figs are pollinated by a tiny gall wasp that enters the receptacle through a small opening. Each flower inside the receptacle then produces a tiny fruit containing seeds.

Each one of the more than 700 fig species in the world is pollinated by only one, or rarely two, species of fig gall wasp. The species of tiny gall wasp that pollinates our Florida Strangler Figs is *Anidarnes bicolor*. The mutualism between figs and the wasps that pollinate them is one of the most spectacular examples of coevolution.

The fruits (figs) grow in clusters on short stems that grow directly from the tree trunk and branches. Each fig has a tiny hole, a bract-lined entry pore, that is just large enough for the female gall wasp, full of eggs, to enter.

As she squeezes through the entrance, she loses both of her wings and is unable to leave. She deposits the pollen that she has carried and lays her eggs in the stigma of the flowers inside the fig fruit. Then she dies, and the hole in the fig wall closes.

After a few days, the young male wasps, which develop faster than the females, hatch, chew open the eggs of the females, and mate with them. The males then chew a hole in the wall of the fig fruit and die.

On the way out, the winged females are tagged with pollen. The new female



wasps, full of eggs now, can only make one flight with their delicate wings. In that one flight, the female must not only find the right species of fig, but a fruit in the right stage of development. If she fails, she will not have the strength to make another flight.

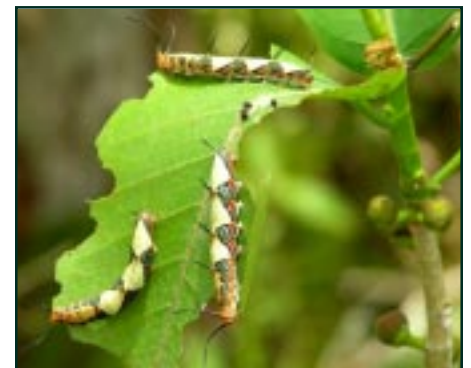
It is essential for the fig, too, that she succeed. The tree aborts unpollinated fruit.

If she happens upon the correct species of fig tree with the right characteristics, she will

reenact the process of her mother to ensure new generations of fig gall wasps and Strangler Figs.

Strangler Fig Trivia

- Broken twigs exude a milky sap, which may cause a skin reaction in some people.
- Strangler Figs are in the family *Moraceae* (mulberry family).
- The Strangler Fig is the host larval plant for the Ruddy Daggerwing butterfly, whose caterpillars can be seen eating fig leaves in the late summer and early fall, *below*.



References:

FLORIDATA (www.floridata.com)
Florida Entomologist, Sept. 1999, p. 54