



Corkscrew
Swamp Sanctuary

Along the Boardwalk

February, 2007

www.corkscrew.audubon.org

New interns bring experience, enthusiasm

Matthew Muller, a Miami native and proud University of Florida graduate, likes birding, fly fishing, and long walks on the beach. In the fall, he will begin his graduate education probably at Florida State University (his soul will be in forever turmoil) in urban development and economics. His experience at Corkscrew has thus far been surreal. He never realized there was this much wildlife and this many friendly people in the South Florida area.



She enjoys nature and studying relationships between plants and animals. She has already researched materials for use in Corkscrew's Insect Adventure.

Katherine Parfitt graduated in May from Westminster College in New Wilmington, Pennsylvania, with a Bachelor of Science degree in biology. Her degree courses focused on marine biology and ecology, and she has previous experience as a pre-school teacher in Gainesville.



Kristin Samples will receive her Bachelor of Arts degree in art from Brevard College in Brevard, North Carolina, in May of this year. Her focus there is on the human form and on natural settings, which has led her to work at an environmental education camp for gifted children. That, in turn, has interested her in working with the environment as a wilderness steward. As a counselor at the Green River Preserve, she led children on hikes and backpacking trips to educate them about plant species, animal identification and tracking, and environmental concerns.



A note about storks...

Dear Volunteers,

Over the past few months, Jason and I have been very busy monitoring Wood Storks, making on average two flights per week since October.

Your assistance was sought to identify feeding locations and even to observe foraging storks. The response was overwhelmingly positive! I apologize for not responding to each and every email or phone call (it really has been that busy!), but please know that all of your reports have been recorded.

Your service as "Stork Watchers" has been invaluable! Thanks in large part to your reports, we have been able to pinpoint foraging locations and document them with satellite imaging.

Also, your observations uncovered many new and important behaviors. For example, we now know that Wood Storks feast heavily on snails and other invertebrates during the autumn months before the nesting season (and yet, the species recovery plan has been based primarily on fish as food items).

Thank you so much for all your observations, your emails and phone calls, and your dedication as volunteer naturalists. Keep them coming!

Respectfully,

Mike Knight

Natural Resources Manager

Quick ID Guide

How does one distinguish between the little white waders: Little Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, Cattle Egret?

Use a combination of field marks, time of year, water levels, and common sense.

Although the bills are colored differently, the angle of lighting can lead to errors. So don't rely solely on bills. Instead, look at legs and feet.

Immature Little Blue Herons are seen all year. Bills are two-toned (light near the head, dark near the tip) and legs and feet are light greenish-gray.

Snowy Egrets are seen toward the end of the dry season when the water is shallow and the fish are concentrated. Bills are uniformly dark, legs are black, and feet are bright yellow.

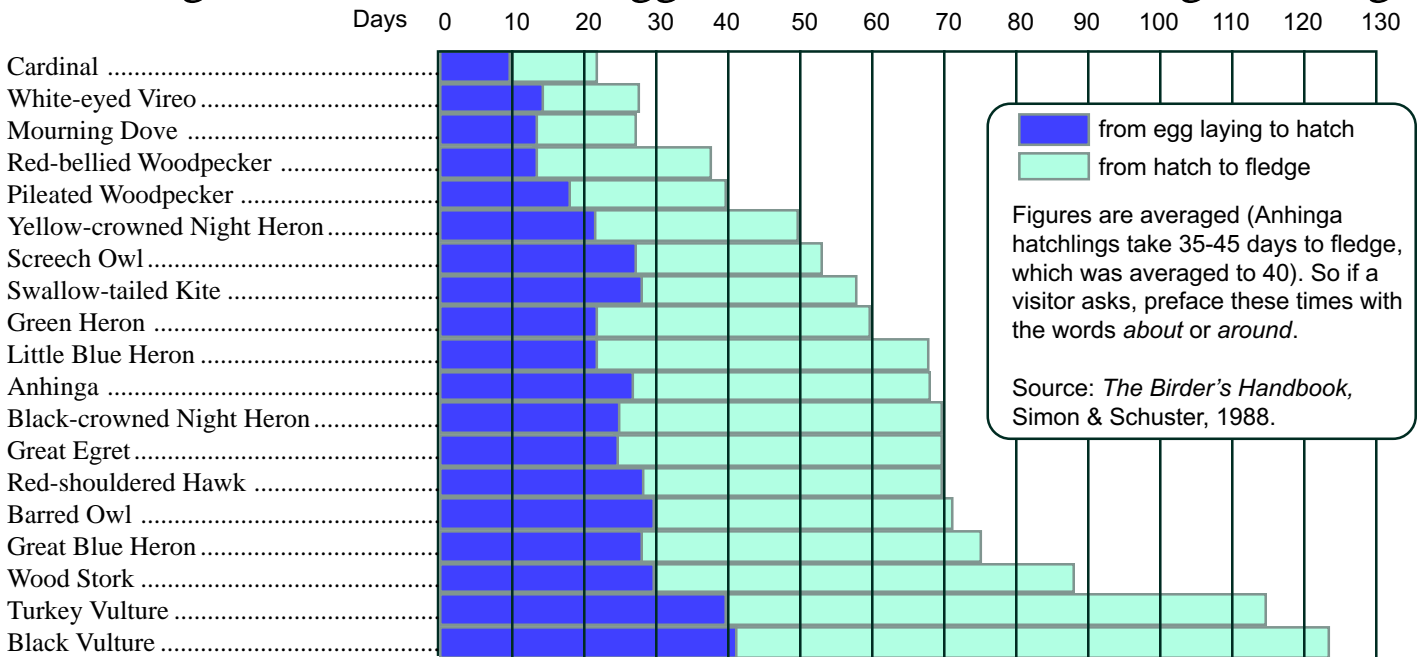
Cattle Egrets are hardly ever seen. Bills are yellow. Non-breeding birds (Aug.-Feb.) have dark legs while breeding birds (Mar.-July) have orange legs.



To correctly identify the bird, know the time of year and water levels. Look at the bill coloration as an aid, but legs and feet are what count. If black legs and bright yellow feet aren't clearly visible, it's an immature Little Blue Heron.

Left: imm. Little Blue Heron
Center: Snowy Egret
Right: Cattle Egret

How long does it take for the eggs to hatch and the nestlings to fledge?



January Sightings



Black-and-white Warbler behind the Barred Owl rain shelter (January 9).



Moonvine blooming early in the morning between the two lakes (January 9).



A trio of Zebra Longwings on a Firebush wait for the morning to warm up (January 12).

Volunteers Step up to Help

Volunteers contribute to operations at Corkscrew in many ways: service hours as boardwalk naturalists, resource management workers, guides for youth and adult education programs and Discover programs, administrative assistants, library catalogue support, carpenters to build and repair signs and trail, and hosts for off site programs.

There are also volunteers who in addition to hours make financial contributions.

Special thanks and appreciation go to those who have responded in that way to the needs of the Sanctuary this fall and winter.

Kris Gabel and Greg Nelson donated the new overlook platform.

The 31 new small interpretation signs on the boardwalk trail were made possible by the contributions of Dick Brewer, Susan Schumann-Skehan, Phil Nye, Edie Blair, Leslie Burgess, Judy Johansen, Don & Barb Metcalf, Bill Meador, Squire Knox, Murray Yost, Jack Wheeler, and Doug and Carolyn Machesney. Jack, Doug and Dick also donated their time for installation.

Those who responded to the Wish List for radios and magazines are Bruce Froyland, Bob Mellor and Eloise Ingram.

Birds in Art

Native Visions Gallery is presenting a "Birds in Art" show during the month of February. The gallery is located at 737 5th Avenue South in Naples and the show is open to the general public.

A special reception will be held the evening of February 8 at the gallery, and during the week of February 8 through February 13, 10% of all sales from the Birds in Art show will be donated to Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary.

Native Visions Gallery features the finest nature artists from around the world. The gallery's web site is at www.callofafrica.com.

Swallows return to Capistrano, buzzards return to Hinckley, Ohio, and Swallow-tailed Kites return to Corkscrew, all on uncannily predictable schedules. Kites arrive at Corkscrew within a day or two of February 17.

Scientists have been using tiny transmitters and space satellites in an attempt to find out where they've been. It's a far cry from an early try at tracking John James Audubon used: tying silver cords to the legs of nestling phoebes and identifying two of them as adults when they returned to his Philadelphia neighborhood the next year. But he had no clue where they had been.

Today we spy on birds from space using tiny solar-powered transmitters weighing less than a penny that track species such as Swallow-tailed Kites on their previously unknown journeys.

Kite migration routes and destinations were unknown until 1996 when Ken Meyer of the Avian Research and Conservation Institute in Gainesville used six small transmitters on kites and tracked by satellite their 5,000-mile journey through Central America to southeastern Brazil.

Researchers now know that the kites from Southwest Florida fly south to a savannah very similar our habitat that borders the Brazilian Pantanal, a vast wetland, during its six-month rainy season (our dry season). There they join a resident population of Swallow-tailed Kites

Conservation was the reason for satellite tracking. "Finding out which areas are linked by a bird's migration gives us a powerful argument for conserving those habitats," wrote *Canadian Wildlife's* Guy Morrison.

"Kite habitat is threatened in both places [United States and Brazil] by large-scale agricultural development," said Meyer. "Saving



private ranch land in Florida and Brazil has to be the focus of our planning effort."

Corkscrew, Big Cypress, and the Fisheating Creek areas are the major breeding areas for kites in Florida, which harbors most of the North American population.

Kites are most conspicuous during the courtship and nest-building stages and while feeding young. Nests are made of small sticks, usually from cypress trees, and large amounts of Spanish moss and lichens. They are built mainly in the tallest pine and cypress trees that emerge above the canopy so that parents can approach unimpeded and drop to the nest.

"Despite their aerial prowess, kites don't maneuver well at low air speeds," said Meyer. "We suspect that's one reason why they build their nests in wind-exposed tree tops. Watch when an adult kite leaves the nest – it won't simply flap away."



A young kite peers out from its nest near the Ed Carlson bench (March 23, 2001).

Egg laying typically begins between mid March and mid April. The average clutch consists of two eggs, but the first chick hatched frequently kills the younger chick (obligate siblicide). Incubation lasts about 28 days, and the young fledge at five to six weeks of age.

Kites eat, drink, and bathe on the wing. Food is gleaned from tree tops and flying insects are taken and eaten in flight. The favored food is large flying insects such as dragonflies, but kites sometimes take nestlings and eggs of other birds, small lizards, and arboreal snakes. They also skim the tops of prairie grasses looking for grasshoppers. Drinking and bathing behavior is similar to swallows where the bird skims the surface of open water.

Large numbers of kites gather in post-breeding communal roosts before migrating to South America. The largest of these is around Fisheating Creek in Glades County but hundreds of kites also gather in Corkscrew.

Adults leave for the Brazilian wintering grounds in mid July and, arrive from early October to early November. Satellite tracking has revealed that juvenile kites, who leave as much as six weeks after the adults, travel at about twice the rate and arrive on the winter range soon after the adults.

Kite Notes

- The voice is a high-pitched *peet* repeated several times, or a high-pitched hissing whistle.
- Almost 85% of fledged kites do not survive the first year.
- Kites weigh 13-17 ounces, have a body length of about 24 inches, and have a wingspan of four feet.
- Kite feet are small and weak compared to those of other raptors.
- Good book: *Tracking Desire. A Journey After Swallow-tailed Kites* by Susan Cerulean

REFERENCE: Florida Breeding Bird Atlas (www.floridaconservation.org/bba/astk.htm)

February Calendar

For more informaton, including times, go to www.corkscrew.audubon.org/calendar/02_Feb.html

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Blair Center Art Exhibit Judie Stevens watercolors <i>all month</i>			1 DC-Day Walk	2	3 DC-Early Bird Walk	4
			5 <i>Training:</i> New volunteers	6 <i>Training:</i> New volunteers	7 DC-Sunset Walk	8 <i>Training:</i> New volunteers DC-Day Walk
			** Birds in Art show to benefit Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary			
12	13 DC-Early Bird Walk	14 DC-Night Walk	15 DC-Day Walk	16	17	18
*** Birds in Art show			Great Backyard Bird Count			
19	20 DC-Deep Sky *CCAS program	21 DC-Sunset Walk	22 DC-Day Walk	23	24 DC-Digital Photography & PhotoShop	25
Great Backyard Bird Count						
26	27	28 DC-Night Walk	* Collier County Audubon Society program (February 20): Marine Shells of Collier County with Gary Schmelz. Information and directions at www.collieraudubon.org/programs.html ** Birds in Art: Corkscrew benefit (<i>see article on page 2</i>) DC = Discover Corkscrew program.			

Great Backyard Bird Count

The tenth annual Great Backyard Bird Count, sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, is February 16-19 and gives people of all ages and levels of experience a chance to discover the birds in their neighborhood and help bird conservation efforts in the United States and Canada. You can help.

Count birds for at least 15 minutes

during February 16–19. Count at as many places and on as many days as you like and keep a separate list of counts for each day and/or location.

Tally the greatest number of individuals of each species seen together at any one time, and write it down.

Enter your results on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site at www.birdsource.org/gbbc

Last year, 60,000 checklists reported 7.5 million birds and 623 different species. The count helped chronicle the early spring migratory routes of Sandhill Cranes, documented lingering migrants such as Orange-crowned Warblers and Tree Swallows, revealed the range expansion of Eurasian Collared-Doves, and recorded declining numbers of American Crows.