



Corkscrew  
Swamp Sanctuary

## Along the Boardwalk

June, 2009

[www.corkscrew.audubon.org](http://www.corkscrew.audubon.org)

### Summer construction projects begin

Changes and improvements are in the works for Corkscrew during the slower summer months. Three projects are either done, in progress, or in the planning stages.

The largest project is replacing the last three bridges along Washout Road with culverts. This will make access to the north observation tower

and the wells and water gauges much easier and safer.

Ed was involved in building the original bridges in 1983 from recycled lumber. The timbers are still in good shape.; however, the bridges are narrow, especially for the swamp buggy and the larger trucks.



The culverts replacing the bridges are made from recycled plastics.

Another project is adding a lower deck to the dock on Lake Rebecca so that second graders doing dip netting during their science field trips will have an easier time reaching down to catch fish and insects as the dry season

progresses and the water levels drop. Jack Wheeler is working on the new deck in the photo above.

The final construction project is to add a new roof to the Bunting house so that during heavy rains, there is no chance of water leaking in and damaging books, radios, and equipment.

The final construction project is to add a new roof to the Bunting house so that during heavy rains, there is no chance of water leaking in and damaging books, radios, and equipment.

### Native gardening day set for June 5

Volunteers can help plant native wildlife-friendly plants and work on signs for the native plant gardens around the Blair Audubon Center and the xeriscape garden in the parking lot.

The work date is Friday, June 5, from 8 AM to around noon. See Sally or email her at [ssstein@audubon.org](mailto:ssstein@audubon.org) if interested in helping and learning.

### Butterfly census planned for July

Come join in the fun and be part of the 2009 butterfly census at Corkscrew.

The count will begin at 9 AM on Tuesday, July 21, and end at approximately 3 PM. There is a \$3 participant's fee. Contact Sally if you are interested in helping.



Gray Hairstreak

Ruddy Daggertail

Viceroy

Black Swallowtail

### Quick ID Guide: Ferns commonly seen along the boardwalk, part 1

- ① **Strap Fern:** simple undivided frond; usually grows on cypress knees
- ② **Swamp Fern:** pinnate frond (blades divided into leaflets); distinguished by an end pinna (leaflet) that sticks up like a candle flame.
- ③ **Virginia Chain Fern:** pinnate-pinnatifid (pinnate because it has separate leaflets on the main axis; pinnatifid because each leaflet has cuts); pinnules cut almost all the way to the main axis and point toward the tip; grows at edges of wet prairie.
- ④ **Shiny Thelypteris:** pinnate-pinnatifid; pinnules rounded, shiny on top and cut only half way to main axis; grows in cypress forest.



### Bird Trivia

What is the smallest wood warbler that is found in Collier County?

Discover the answer at [www.collieraudubon.org/birding.html](http://www.collieraudubon.org/birding.html)

---

## In Case a Visitor Asks

---

### What birds nest in Corkscrew during the summer months (June–August)?

Although wading birds, hawks, and owls have finished raising their broods by summer, there are at least 18 species that will nest in Corkscrew during the three summer months.

Some birds are just finishing up with the young fledging at the start of June, such as Swallow-tailed Kites.

Others are just beginning.

The largest of the summer nesters are the Black and Turkey Vultures, but most of the summer nesters are small to medium size.

Small summer nesters include the Red-eyed Vireo, Chimney Swift, and

Northern Parula Warbler. All three nests are hard to locate. Red-eyed Vireos nest in the very tops of trees, the Chimney Swift is a cavity nester, and the Northern Parula typically nests high in clumps of Spanish Moss. Occasionally Prothonotary Warblers, which are also cavity nesters, will nest in Corkscrew during the summer.

The medium birds include Blue Jays, Common Nighthawks, Chuck-will's-widows, Mockingbirds,

Common Grackles, Great-crested Flycatchers, Mourning Doves, and Ground Doves. The two dove species have many broods and will nest throughout the year.

A number of other birds first nest in the spring but will have second or third broods during the summer months. These include Red-bellied Woodpeckers, White-eyed Vireos, Carolina Wrens, Common Yellowthroats, and Northern Cardinals.



A White-eyed Vireo broods.

---

## May Sightings

---



A Florida Panther uses the boardwalk from the pine flatwoods to the cypress forest (May 12).



A Swallow-tailed Kite perches on a snag near the observation platform before flying off (May 19).



The youngest Ruby-throated Hummingbird chick receives nourishment (May 2, Rod Wiley).

---

## Odds & Ends

---

### Bender with binoculars brightens butterfly garden while others feed birds

What began as making simple stick figures rapidly expanded into metal sculpture for Corkscrew maintenance supervisor Steve Corriveau.

The sculptures hold bird feeders in the parking lot garden and watch for visitors through binoculars in the butterfly garden.

The benders, as Corriveau has dubbed them, typically have white hands, yellow feet, and red faces. They are constructed of welded rebar and U-clamps and then painted.



The Little Blue Heron is found throughout the southeastern United States.

Although it often lives near salt water, it is mainly an inland bird, preferring freshwater areas such as ponds, lakes, marshes, and swamps. It may also sometimes occupy flooded and dry grasslands and marine coastlines. It is present at Corkscrew every month of the year, but its numbers around the boardwalk decrease during dry downs.

The Little Blue Heron is the only heron species in which first-year birds and adults show dramatically different coloration: first-year birds are pure white while adults are blue. The first year birds can and do breed while white, but they are generally not as successful.

Adult Little Blue Herons are about two feet tall with a wingspan of around 40 inches. The bill is blue gray (bright blue during breeding) at the base with a black tip. The eyes are yellow (green when breeding), legs and feet are gray to greenish gray (very dark, almost black, during breeding). The sexes are similar but the female is slightly smaller.

The Little Blue Heron breeds in various freshwater and estuarine habitats. Courtship is simple.

Prior to mating, males stretch their necks upward with the bill pointing up, and then assume a crouched posture. Movements include bill snapping, vocalizing, and neck swaying. If a female is impressed, she approaches the male.

Their first encounter can be very aggressive but after a while, this is replaced with signs of affection such as feather nibbling and neck crossing. The male then gathers sticks to present to the female, raising his plumes and nibbling her feathers as she places the sticks into a nest structure.

The Little Blue Heron nest is a platform of long sticks in trees or shrubs, lined with green vegetation. They nest in colonies with other herons and only produce one brood per year.

Eggs are laid in April; four to five eggs are typical. This process takes 5-8 days, with one egg being laid every other

## Little Blue Heron

*Egretta caerulea*



day. Both sexes incubate the eggs until they hatch in 22-24 days, and then the parents quickly remove the egg shells from the nest.

It may take about five days for all of the chicks to emerge. Although the young can raise their heads, they spend most of their time lying on the nest floor. Both parents feed them by dropping food into the nest and later placing it directly into the chicks' bills.

At around three weeks, the young leave the nest for short trips along surrounding branches. At one month, chicks are able to fly and periodically leave the nest area. Soon after, at six to seven weeks, the young are on their own. Little Blue Herons have been recorded as living more than seven years in the wild.

While hunting, adults are loners, but they nest together in small or large monospecific colonies at the edges of colonies of other species.

Little Blue Herons feed mainly during daylight hours. They are carnivorous, their diet consisting of fish, frogs,

lizards, snakes, turtles, and some crustaceans such as crayfish and shrimp. They eat more insects than the larger herons, especially aquatic insects and spiders. They will also walk in branches looking for anoles and treefrogs. When swamps and marshes become dry, they live on grasshoppers, crickets, beetles and other grassland insects.

Adult herons usually forage alone while immatures tend to feed in groups. The white plumage may signal a good foraging place to distant birds.

Little Blue Herons are not energetic birds. They may sometimes walk quickly or even run, but they usually walk slowly and daintily.

Their long legs enable them to wade into the water, where they walk along an area in order to locate prey. They often retrace steps or stand motionless. Foraging is slow and methodical, walking, peering, moving along to a new spot, and stretching the long neck to peer into the water. The long bill is used to jab and eat the prey. The heron's prey capture success rate is about 60 percent.

They are usually silent, but sometimes make a low clucking or croaking sound. Their sounds during fighting are much different and resemble the screams of parrots. Generally, the call is a single harsh croak.

### Cool facts

The Little Blue Heron's middle toe has "teeth" along one side which are used as a comb to scratch its upper neck, throat, and top and sides of its head.

The Snowy Egret tolerates the close proximity of white Little Blue Herons. A white Little Blue Heron catches more fish in the company of Snowy Egrets than when alone. This relationship may be one reason why young Little Blue Herons stay white for a year.

Another advantage of white plumage is that young Little Blue Herons are more readily able to integrate into mixed-species flocks of white herons, thus gaining a measure of protection against predators.