



Corkscrew
Swamp Sanctuary

Along the Boardwalk

November, 2009

www.corkscrew.audubon.org

Corkscrew receives international honor

Corkscrew has been designated a Wetland of International Importance by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

The Ramsar Convention is an intergovernmental treaty recognizing the commitments of its member countries to maintain the ecological character of their Wetlands of International Importance and to plan for sustainable use of all wetlands.

Corkscrew joins Everglades National Park and Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge as the only Florida wetlands on the list, and it is one of only 25 Ramsar sites in the United States.

The designation puts the sanctuary on the map as one of the most valuable wetlands on the planet.

“It’s like winning an Oscar,” said Corkscrew executive director Ed Carlson.

“This designation underscores the importance of protecting and preserving our wetlands around the world,” said Audubon president John Flicker. “These wetlands are essential not only to birds and other wildlife, but provide natural flood protection for humans and their homes.”

The Ramsar designation includes 2,700 acres that were restored as part of the Panther Island Mitigation Bank and added to the sanctuary. The designation marks the first time Ramsar has recognized a mitigation bank.

As summarized by Ramsar’s Nadia Castro, Corkscrew was recognized for providing “a vital link between several south Florida watersheds.”

A formal recognition ceremony will be held at Corkscrew on Thursday, January 21.

Dinner to honor Ed’s 35 years with Audubon

The Corks & Storks dinner on Wednesday, January 20, will honor Ed Carlson’s 35 years with National Audubon Society.

The dinner/roast will be held at the Naples Hilton on North Tamiami Trail.

Guest speakers will relate interesting tales of some of Ed’s less well known activities during those years.

For reservations to the dinner, either by individual or by table, contact Candace at 348-9151, extension 111.

Quick ID Guide, black snakes: Black Racer, Water Moccasin, Banded Water Snake

Three common adult black snakes are often confused. Whether in adult (black) or juvenile coloration, each can be identified by looking head markings.

The Black Racer, thin-bodied, has an unmarked creamy white lower jaw.

The Water Moccasin, below, is heavy-bodied, has a wide brown band through the eye, and has large dark blotches on the lower jaw.

The Banded Water Snake, right, is heavy-bodied and has many thin, dark



Volunteers of the Year

Audubon of Florida announced Derek and Helen Day as its Volunteers of the Year during the Audubon Assembly in St. Pete on October 23-24.

The Days have progressed from



being keen birders to being successful interpretive guides sharing their knowledge of nature on the both the European and North American continents.



Far removed from their professional histories in air traffic control, the pair was a bit hesitant at first about their ability to be effective outdoor educators.

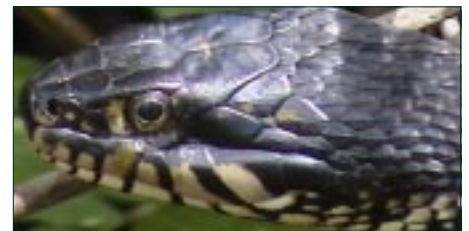
Now, they spend every day in Southwest Florida at Corkscrew as boardwalk naturalists, second grade and fifth grade program leaders, and as guides for other group field trips.

Their enthusiasm has resulted in both being often requested as leaders by returning classroom teachers.

Their pleasure in sharing nature at Corkscrew led them to pursue volunteer opportunities at home in England. In 2008, they completed the rigorous Interpretive Guide Training at the British Natural History Museum, becoming truly international nature educators.

vertical stripes on the lower jaw.

Head shape is not always a reliable way to distinguish between the moccasin and water snake. When the water snake is threatened, it flattens its head and body to mimic the moccasin.



What's that cute little house? What is back there behind the gate?

No kidding. A visitor actually asked that first question while looking toward the Bunting House from the boardwalk.

The Bunting House has a storied past. When the Sanctuary first opened, there was no Blair Center, no library, no Living Machine, and no offices.

An original chickee hut where a new one now stands in the Wesley Strickland Outdoor Education Center was the admissions "building," manned by one person with a manual adding machine/cash register. Visitors paid there, walked along a path through a grassy field to a second chickee near

where the wildlife crossing is now, and then entered the one mile boardwalk.

The only restroom for the visitors and staff was a very small building on a separate path near the second chickee. The restroom is now the Bunting House. Then, it was just the section with the concrete floor—no porch or front room where volunteers eat.

The back door in the current restroom was the entrance to the women's restroom, and a separate men's restroom entered through the front door. It was known as the "potty pad" because that's where the potties

were. One of Ed's first jobs at Corkscrew was cleaning that restroom.

When the library (then the nature store, admissions building, and offices) was built in 1972, a small two-stall restroom was built next to it which is now the mechanical building between the library and Living Machine. A front room was added to the old restroom, the men's side was converted to a kitchen, and it became the intern dormitory. Ed renamed it Bunting House.

With the construction of the Gator Hole, the Bunting House became a storage and a volunteer shelter.

October Sightings



A White-eyed Vireo pauses on a branch to watch visitors on the boardwalk (October 20).



One of the first blooms of a Fragrant Water Lily blooms along the entrance trail (October 9).



A Swainson's Thrush rests in the undergrowth just beyond the north lake (October 13).

Woodpecker Trivia

- Considering the pounding it takes, a woodpecker's bill should wear down to a ragged nub. It doesn't because special cells on the end of the bill are constantly replacing the lost material. This keeps the chisel-pointed bill strong and resilient and actually allows it to be sharpened with every blow.
- The feather pattern on the back of the head of Downy Woodpeckers is unique to every bird and downies may use them to recognize other individual Downies.
- Scientific tests have determined that Downy Woodpeckers use the presence or absence of the red patch on the back of other Downies' heads to determine whether they are male or female.
- Woodpeckers may find their hidden prey by sound and/or smell...
 - ...As the woodpecker strikes the tree, hollow sounds may echo off of the tunnels of wood boring insects (like thumping a watermelon.)
 - ...When feeding on wood, grubs make an audible sound that could be heard by a woodpecker.
 - ...Woodpeckers have a better sense of smell than most birds and may be able to detect the strong odor of the formic acid that ants, bark beetles and termites excrete (it smells a little like Sweet Tarts).
- The barbed tip of a woodpecker's tongue is very sensitive to touch and can both detect and impale insect larvae. The tongue is coated with sticky mucus that is secreted by large salivary glands; this coating helps to ensure that its prey does not slip away.
- Most woodpeckers' tongues are two to three times longer than their bills.
- The base of some Woodpeckers' long retractable tongues reaches entirely around the back and top of the skull and ends behind the right eye socket.
- Woodpeckers have tufts of stiff feathers over both nostrils to prevent small bits of debris from entering the nostrils while excavating trees.
- Woodpeckers have a third eyelid to help protect their eyes from debris while drilling into trees.
- Woodpeckers have a thicker skin than most other birds, an adaptation that has probably evolved from their constant contact with the rough bark of trees.

Profile

Downy Woodpecker

Picoides pubescens



Downy Woodpeckers are North America's smallest woodpeckers, about six inches long and weighing less than an ounce.

The chest and back are white, wings are black with white spots, and the tail is mostly black with a trace of white on the sides. The head is black with a white mustache and "eyebrow," and the male has a red patch on the back of its head. A whitish tuft of feathers at the base of the short, thick, bill keeps debris out of the nostrils when drilling. The bill is only about half as long as the head as opposed to the Hairy Woodpecker whose bill is much longer than the head.

As with other woodpeckers, the male is larger than the female. He chisels deep into wood with his longer, stronger bill, while the female pries under the bark with her shorter bill. This way, each one of the pair can share food resources without competing with the other.

The diet is about three-fourths insect, which benefits humans because most of those insects are considered destructive to orchards and forest products. With their special chisel-like bills and sticky, recurved barbed tongues, Downies are adept at plucking out great numbers of beetle grubs, insect cocoons, or batches of insect eggs. The remainder of the diet is berries and seeds.

Downies are non-migratory and are solitary except during courting season, but they occasionally forage in loose association with other small birds.

Males defend a territory against other males, and females defend a territory against females. Initially, a pair will hold a large territory, but it shrinks after a nest site is selected and excavated. When an intruder enters a Downy Woodpecker's territory, the resident woodpecker uses threat displays such as wing flicking, or fanning the tail, raising the crest and holding the bill high.

Downy Woodpeckers form monogamous breeding pairs in late winter. Courting and territorial displays include dancing (a side-to-side "weaving" motion while balancing on the tips of the tail), drumming, bill waving, crest raising, and a floating butterfly-like flight. Courtship also includes duet singing.

Both male and female excavate the nesting hole, which can take up to two weeks to dig out. They generally prefer dead or dying wood, and there is a correlation between the density of Downies and the number of dead trees in an area. Optimal habitats contain five or more suitable snags per acre; habitats without such snags are not used.

The entrance hole, one and a quarter inches in diameter, is just large enough to admit the bird's body and is perfectly circular. The nesting cavity is roughly gourd-shaped, turning downward and widening soon after penetrating the wood, and extending to a depth varying from eight to twelve inches.

Both parents incubate the 4 to 5 eggs for about 12 days, and both feed the

young. The young leave the nest after about three weeks, but they follow the parents around for a few weeks more. Each pair typically raises one brood a year, but birds in southern locations may raise two broods.

The young woodpeckers are hatched naked and blind. During the first few critical days after hatching, adults take turns in the cavity, one brooding while the other gathers food. The male usually broods at night.

Once the young have fledged, the parents divide the brood and only take care of their individual charges. The male will usually take one or two of the young and the female takes the others.

The most common sound Downy Woodpeckers make is rapid drumming on tree trunks, branches and hollow logs. The drumming sound tapers slightly toward the end. Other adult sounds include a sharp, high-pitched "pik-pik" and a shrill "whinny" with a descending tone.

INTERESTING FACTS...

- The tongue is twice as long as the Downy's head.
- The outer hind toe is longer than the rest of the toes to help keep the bird from swaying when perched.
- Males often feed in the tops of trees on branches that are small in diameter while females feed midlevel and lower on larger diameter branches.
- In the wild, Downies live 2-5 years.