



The Village Birders

Volume 11 Issue 1

www.villagebirders.org

January 2011

Precious Cargo

Birding the Gulf Stream by Alice Horst

Our precious cargo on the Pastime Princess was not the thousands of dollars worth of binoculars, camera equipment, and lenses; it was two open cardboard boxes with nineteen very small passengers. In November 2010 Al Roush, Barb Athanasiou, and I went on a Pelagic Trip out of New Smyrna Beach. Pelagic birds are oceanic species that come to shore only to nest. It took hours by boat for us to reach our destination, the Gulf Stream, about 40-50 miles offshore. Our most precious cargo, turtles, was housed in two small boxes. YES, we were carrying nineteen sea turtle hatchlings, eighteen Loggerheads and one Green Sea Turtle, most of them smaller than five inches long. Our job, when we reached the Gulf Stream, was to release these tiny turtles into the floating Sargassum or seaweed. If you are as passionate about birds as I am, you probably love other creatures like butterflies, frogs, and turtles. I was ecstatic to see these small sea turtles and know that we were going to help send them on their way.



I learned that within the first 24 hours of hatching on the beach these little creatures swim 40-50 miles to reach the Gulf Stream. These particular hatchlings were “washback” turtles because, newly hatched, they had been washed back to shore by rough seas and deposited on the beach. Washbacks are typically found during sea turtle nesting season August through November. Our hatchlings on board were so tiny and helpless that it was hard to imagine that adult males reach about three feet in shell length, weighing about 250 pounds or more.

Our trip was sponsored by the Marine Science Center www.marinesciencecenter.com in Ponce Inlet. One of the main goals of the Marine Science Center is sea turtle rehabilitation. Many washback turtles do not get a second chance because they are not found or are too weak. These nineteen sea turtles were the lucky ones who had been found and rehabilitated by the Marine Science Center.

As we approached the Gulf Stream and the boat slowed I watched these tiny turtles start to clamor at the sides of the boxes. I think that they sensed the ocean and were anxious to go. We picked them up and waited for the boat to be close enough to the sargassum to drop them on the floating island. One by one we released them. They were free. I will never know if any of the females will live to swim back to New Smyrna Beach to lay eggs and perpetuate the sea turtle cycle, but at least we gave them a second chance.



Our search for pelagics was also a huge success. Some of the most notable sightings were Greater, Cory's and Manx Shearwaters with many, many Cory's, Long-tailed and Pomarine Jaegers, Common, Bridled and Sooty Terns, Black-capped Petrel and Red Phalarope. There was a possible juvenile Thayer's Gull that followed the boat for about 30 minutes, but the trip organizer sent photos out to Gull experts throughout North America, and the consensus appears to be that it was a Herring Gull hybrid (photo at left by Maureen Leong-Kee). Al got six lifers, I added five to my life list and Barb is still counting.

Welcome New Members

Joanne M Bateman

Jean & John Begg

Sally Bell

Marion T. Fey

Jo Magram

Connie Prine

Samuel & Louise Schwartz

Bird Walk & Special Events Committee

Swallow-tailed Kites - I just received the results of the 2010 survey from the Citizen Science for Swallow-tailed Kites Program. There was a record 2216 reports and Florida reported 1394 of those sightings along with SC 574, GA 97, AL 46, TX 44, MS 15, LA 31, MS 15, NC 6, Other 9. There are on going projects for the conservation of this bird and you can help by reporting your sightings to www.thecenterforbirdsofprey.org/swallowtail-kite.php.

The 111th Audubon Christmas Bird Count - A big THANKS to all you hardy birders who braved the freezing cold temp's on Dec. 14th. We had 24 devoted souls from The Village Birders that counted birds in the cold. The total bird



Birding in Canada? No – Florida!!

count was low but the species count came in at 136, not bad for a blast from the north. The Birds and I Thank You!

Bird Walks - The Village Birders would like to express their gratitude to our Walk Leaders: Norm Lantz, Jim Dinsmore, Paul Nistico, Linda Felker, and Mary Lou Miller. Our first calendar of walks with different leaders has been a great success and I have received lots of great input from our members. Birders, when you attend a walk please remember to thank the walk leader who has volunteered time and expertise - without them we would have no walk.

Wishing you good birding for the New Year,

Barb Gay
Bird Walk & Special Event Chair.

In Memoriam

Roland William Bauer, 81, Vice-President of The Village Birders, died Thursday, Dec. 16, 2010. Memorial contributions may be made to Trinity Lutheran Church Building Fund, 17330 S. Hwy 27/441, Summerfield, FL, or Villagers for Hospice, 601 Casa Bella, The Villages, FL 32162.

Winter's Arrival

Do you remember “up north” when the leaves were departing the trees, with the exception of some beech and a few difficult oaks? The weather had turned colder, maybe a few snowflakes swirling about, and suddenly your car battery was acting a bit strange? Perhaps early one morning or at evening you could hear the barking of “aerial dogs” somewhere so very high above you. You strained to hear and then locate Canada Geese on their way to locations south. There, high in the sky, great triangular shaped formations stretched across the gray, windy horizons. Yes, they were geese. Maybe sadness enveloped your heart and soul, as the reality of another season passing became so evident. “Time is passing, slips so quietly, minutes yes the days pass by, all unnoticed treading lightly till the years behind us lie.”

Well, the other day while walking around the Polo Club area I once again heard barking, squawking sounds calling from a distant high place. I strained my neck as I looked into the glaring eastern sunrise and again I saw great stretches of giant birds angling their way south, but this time they were Sandhill Cranes, harbingers of an approaching winter season in Central Florida. I thought, how precious it is that God reminds us of the changing of the seasons in a very special manner. Winter, spring, summer, fall - all play out their times with a certainty and a message, be it in the Arctic Circle, northern New York, Maryland, Minnesota, or Iowa and even here in the Sunshine state.

My mind, tugged in a poetic bent, prompted me to express these feelings with a Japanese poetry form, called haiku. Trust you enjoy.

Barking calls draw eyes
Sandhill Cranes fly high in sky
Cold north winds move birds

Happy Winter, John Affleck

Binocular Evaluation

Leupold and Stevens, Inc., the makers of *Leupold* and *Redfield* binoculars and scopes, has generously donated some of their products to the club. Some of our members have tried them in the field and subsequently purchased something for themselves. They are comparable yet less expensive than some other brands. If you would like to borrow a pair to evaluate them, please call or e-mail Alice Horst 751-6943, ahorst@comcast.net

Answers to Birdy Wordy (Page 4)

*1. bobbin robin 2. best nest 3. bummer, hummer
4. loose goose (but aren't they all) 5. hawk talk*

Cheep Talk

Published five times per year by

The Village Birders

The Villages, FL

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THE VILLAGE BIRDERS

Calendar of Events

January 2011 – May 2011

Meeting date, day, time and place for all trips and meetings are indicated in the left-hand columns:

B - Belk's parking lot at the lower end, close to Burger King (our traditional meeting place)

P - Paradise Recreation Center

WM - Walmart parking lot on CR466, garden end, close to Perkins Restaurant

SPECIAL EVENTS (members only) are announced 30 days prior to the date of the event and reservations are accepted on a first come basis.

<u>Date/Day</u>	<u>Meeting Time/Place</u>	<u>Trip Location</u>	<u>Walk Leader</u>	<u>Walk/Drive & Estimated Time</u>
January				
13 Thursday	6:00 am – B	Merritt Island N.W.R.	Barb Gay	D – All Day (PL)
22 Saturday	9:00 am – P	REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING Norm Lantz – All in the Family		2 Hours
29 Saturday	7:15 am - B	Zellwood Reclamation Area	Barb Gay	D – All Day (PL)
February				
4 Friday	7:30 am - B	Sabal Bluff Preserve & Herlong Park	Paul Nistico	W - 3 Hours
11 Friday	7:45 am - B	<i>Special Event - Blue Springs State Park</i>	Jim Dinsmore	<i>Boat - Half Day (L)</i>
18 Friday	7:30 am - B	Wood Duck Drive	Linda Felker	D - Half Day (L)
26 Saturday	9:00 am - P	REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING Florida Fish & Wildlife - Red-cockaded Woodpecker		2 Hours
March				
4 Friday	7:30 am - WM	Fort Cooper State Park	Paul Nistico	W - Half Day (L)
10 Thursday	7:30 am - B	PEAR Park	Jim Dinsmore	W - 3 Hours
17 Thursday	7:00 am - WM	<i>Special Event - Inglis Dam</i>	Norm Lantz	W/D - Half Day+ (L)
26 Saturday	9:00 am - P	ANNUAL MEETING		2 Hours
31 Thursday	7:00 am - WM	Withlacoochee Bay Trail (Felburn)	Barb Gay	W/D - Half Day+ (L)
April				
10 Sunday	10:00 am	Annual Picnic and Birding - Lake Panasoffkee Arrive early (8:00 am) for birding		
15 Friday	7:30 am - B	Wood Duck Drive	Steve Norton	D - Half Day (L)
18 Monday		Passover		
21 Thursday	7:15 am - WM	Potts Preserve	Linda Felker	W - Half Day (L)
23 Saturday	9:00 am - P	REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING Fred Dietrich - Hummingbirds		2 Hours
24 Sunday		Happy Easter		
28 Thursday	7:30 am - B	Bay Road Subdivision (off CR 25) & Moss Bluff Rookery	Barb Gay & Steve Norton	W/D - Half Day (L)
May				
5 Thursday	7:30 am - WM	Gatorland - Rookery	Steve Norton	W - Half Day+ (L)

HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY SUMMER & SEE YOU IN OCTOBER

NOTES: Optional stop for Picnic (PL) or Lunch (L) at a location on or near the walk

PLEASE SAVE THIS CALENDAR FOR FUTURE REFERENCE

Check the website for any last minute changes: www.villagebirders.org

