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Santa Fe Audubon Society - Florida

Santa Fe Audubon Society

Melrose, FL

JUNE 2022

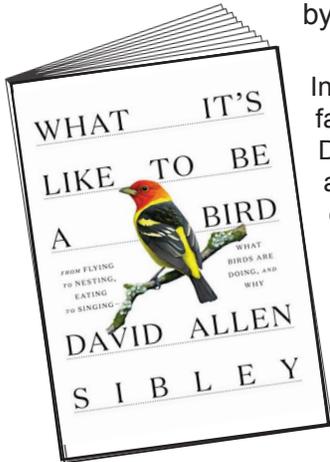
NEWSLETTER

RECOMMENDED READING

by Jacqueline Williamson

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A BIRD

by David Allen Sibley



In "What It's Like To Be A Bird", famed naturalist & bird illustrator, David Sibley answers frequently asked questions about commonly observed birds in this large format book geared for the novice birder to the hard core watcher.

GOOD NEWS

WE DID IT... AGAIN!

DESANTIS VETOES LAKE OKEECHOBEE WATER SUPPLY BILL (SB 2508)

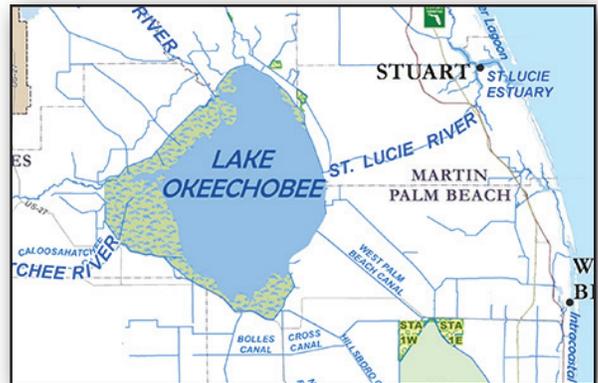


Photo from South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD)

BLACK LAKE PRESERVE

BLACK LAKE PRESERVE
OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS MAP
JUNE 1, 2022



by Jacqueline Williamson

Santa Fe Audubon President Sallie Carlock and Conservation Chair Jacqueline Williamson attended the June 1st public input meeting for the newly acquired 288 acre Black Lake Preserve located just west of Melrose.

The purpose of this meeting was to gather input from community stakeholders in planning the best balance of public recreation and resource protection. Attendees were encouraged to ask questions and voice concerns. Issues raised were parking, traffic flow, trail accessibility and environmental education opportunities.

A second public input meeting is planned for the week of August 15.

June, 2022

Thank you to the THOUSANDS of Floridians who called, emailed, wrote, and tweeted at Governor DeSantis. You helped defeat the bad Everglades and conservation bill, SB 2508. This budget-conforming bill wrongly contained significant policy changes that would have allowed for the faster destruction of our wetlands, slower restoration of the Everglades, and competition between our valued conservation programs, like Florida Forever. In addition to containing bad policies, there was only one opportunity for public comment.

Thanks to people like you and the advocacy of dozens of other environmental organizations and activists, Governor DeSantis listened and vetoed this bad bill. Congratulations to everyone and every organization that helped make this a reality.



Kestrel Corner

by Bill Chitty

All photos courtesy of Duncan Kabinu, unless otherwise noted.

The box monitoring phase of our Kestrel box project is just about over. Only the young in box 18 have not left the box. The parents are still feeding them, but the young will leave the box within the next several days. The parents will continue to feed and look after them for an additional couple of days. After which, they will be on their own. Our other four viable nests have already fledged their young. When the three very healthy nestlings in box 18 “fly the coup,” that will



be a grand total of fifteen new Kestrels in Etoniah Creek State Forest this nesting season. Two of our nesting pairs this year were early nesters (box 17 and 26). The new falcons (8 altogether) were grown and gone before we could get out and band them. We have banded all the young Kestrels from all the other boxes, as well as fitted them with radio transmitters that emit a beep every 30 seconds; meaning we can track their movements for the next six months,

discovering what direction and how far they disperse. The tiny radio transmitters only have a range of about 1.5 miles, so in order to find them consistently as they move away from their birth place, we must go out and find them every second or third day. That effort has already started with the young of box 1 and box 24. Last year, all the young with transmitters headed in an easterly direction for around 6 miles before we lost track of them (radio batteries died).

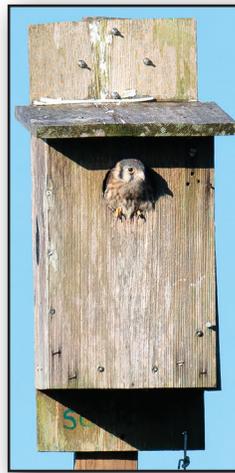


Example of articulating pole from 2021. Photographer was not known at the time of publication.

We are especially proud of the fact we know there are a minimum of 27 live Kestrels (fledglings and their parents) today because it wasn't that long ago that only a single pair could be found. Most years, no Kestrels at all were reported for Christmas Bird Counts, Great Backyard Bird Counts, on eBird, or the Breeding Bird Atlas. Santa Fe Audubon Southeastern American Kestrel box project has fledged a total of 64 young Kestrels since 2018.



Bill Chitty tracking radio tagged birds. Photo courtesy of Dr. Ken Meyer



Box 18 and father with food (above)
Box 18 photos courtesy of Bill Chitty



Eastern Screech-owl



Eastern Bluebird
Bluebird eggs



Just hatched
Great Crested Flycatcher's

Thank you to Dr. Ken Meyer and the Avian Research and Conservation Institute (ARCI) for their collaboration on banding and attaching radio telemetry devices on our Kestrels.

Bird banding photos courtesy of Sallie Carlock

To learn more about ARCI visit their website: www.arcinst.org



Dr. Meyer and assistant, Miguel, weighing the young bird and recording other vitals, prior to banding.



Fitting this handsome young male with a radio transmitter.



THE NATIVE PLANT CONNECTION

FIREBUSH

(*Hamelia patens*)



This native plant blooms for months, attracting both birds and butterflies, and is practically bullet-proof once established.

Firebush is a perennial or semi-woody shrub that is known scientifically as *Hamelia patens*. Gardeners love firebush because it produces flowers from late spring until the first frost, and the bright red flowers attract hummingbirds and butterflies, including the zebra longwing and gulf fritillary butterflies. Song birds also like to feed on the berries.

The plant's mature size will depend on where it is grown. In South Florida it may reach fifteen feet tall, though it can easily be kept to five or eight feet tall. It works well in hedges, mixed borders, or as a stand-alone shrub. In North Florida, it will die back after the first freeze but will re-grow in the spring, making it what some people call a "root-hardy perennial."

It is also a great plant because it is heat and drought tolerant once established, can grow in a range of soils, and has no serious insect or disease problems.

For additional information on native plants for birds:

www.audubon.org/plantsforbirds

www.fnps.org/plant/hamelia-patens

Florida Native Plant Society for info and plant lists and sources.

<https://www.fnps.org>

BIRD OF THE MONTH

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER

(*Archilochus colubris*) band code "PROW"



Photo Courtesy of Michael Drummond

The brilliant Prothonotary Warbler bounces along branches like a golden flashlight in the dim understory of swampy woodlands. This golden ray of light is unique among warblers with its beady black eye and blue-gray wings. It is also one of two warblers that build their nests in holes in standing dead trees. Often called a "swamp warbler" in the southeast, it also occurs surprisingly far to the north along rivers. Its population is declining, due to loss of forested wetlands in the U.S. and mangroves on its wintering grounds.

Finding a Prothonotary Warbler means finding the right habitat. They're most numerous in the Southeast, where you may find them in swamps and bottomland forests. But they also use forests along rivers such as the Mississippi, so they occur farther north than you might expect in Wisconsin and all the way north to New Hampshire along other rivers. Once you find the right spot, head towards water and start looking for a bright yellow bird in the understory. They tend to stay low in the forest and often forage above water and along shorelines. These bright yellow birds are conspicuous, and their loud ringing song can help guide you to them even before you see them. The best times to look for them in the U.S. are from April–July.

COOL FACTS:

The Prothonotary Warbler got its name from the bright yellow robes worn by papal clerks, known as prothonotaries, in the Roman Catholic church.

For more information about Prothonotary Warblers visit:

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Prothonotary_Warbler/id

Fun Fact: A group of Warblers has many collective nouns including a "bouquet", "confusion", "fall", and "wrench" of warblers.