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See us on Facebook and Choctawhatcheeaudubon.org

Christmas Bird Count 2016

On the 19th of December 2016, forty-two birders with the Choctawhatchee Audubon Society headed into the field and braved the frigid conditions and harsh winds to count birds for the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). The CBC is the largest and oldest wildlife survey in the world. Birders all across North America go out for one day each year during the count period and count all the bird species they can find. They record not only the species found but also the number of individuals. Each count is done within a circle with 7.5-mile radius. This circle is further divided into smaller territories that are covered, typically, by a group of two to four birders. In the US data from the CBC is compiled by the National Audubon Society. This data is then made available to scientists who use it to determine trends in bird populations, determination of winter ranges and other scientific endeavors.

This year's Choctawhatchee Bay CBC was a success despite the harsh weather conditions. We reported 127 species, down a bit from the previous two years (2015 – 137 species and 2014 – 147 species). We counted 11,830 individual birds, again lower than the two previous years (2015 – 15,061 individuals and 2014 – 15,217 individuals). The drop in species and individuals is most likely due to the cold, windy conditions on the day of the count. Some of the more interesting birds found included Black Scoter, Common Goldeneye, American White Pelican, 28 Bald Eagles, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, **Ash-throated Flycatcher**, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Black-and-white Warbler, **Bachman's Sparrow**, **Fox Sparrow**, and Summer Tanager. It was an exciting day of birding, and fun was had by all.

Submitted by Alan Knothe

Choctawhatchee River Landings Field Trip

11th February 2017

Eighteen adventurous birders met and traveled in convoy to the banks of the Choctawhatchee River. Almost immediately, Malcolm spotted a couple of Rusty Blackbirds and everyone was able to get a good look at them. We walked under the Hwy 20 bridge to the beginning of the Trail, we only walked into the woods a short way and came to the conclusion that birds were not around so drove west to Hwy 81 and then north parallel to the river. We forayed into the floodplain to be faced with water over the road at Tilley Landing. We managed to find a Golden-crowned Kinglet flitting among the trees. We ventured on and saw an Anhinga in a pond and some Pied-billed Grebes in a roadside lake. We went to Bruce Creek Landing but were able to walk only a short way along the river bank due to the high water. We saw 32 species which was quite good considering the habitat. Lunch at the Rabbit Creek Cafe was a highlight and everyone was happy to tear into the more than substantial burgers and ear-shaped fries.

Submitted by Margaret Benner

Fort Pickens Bird Walk April 1, 2017

A large group of local birders and out of town visitors joined our bird walk at Fort Pickens on Saturday. The walk started late because the leader got “stuck” behind a large crowd of “walkers for a cause” slowly walking down the street in Navarre Beach. Even though we were late, when we reached our meeting point at Fort Pickens an anxious group of birders were patiently waiting.

We started at Battery Langdon and almost immediately had a close encounter with a very confiding Prothonotary Warbler. The sound of clicking shutters became obvious given the number of photographers in the group. We no sooner had our fill of the warbler when a stunning male Northern Parula flew in for his closeup. White-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos and singing Towhees kept the group looking for birds.

Our walk along the bike path gave a few of us a quick look at a Green Heron and we heard the call of a Sora. A short hike down the well-known “dump” trail had our photographers again clicking away. This time it was at an adult Great Horned Owl at the nest with two owlet nestlings nicely dressed in their new downy coats, eyeing the birders and photographers from their tree-top perch.

Before completing our checklist of birds seen, a few of us had very satisfying scope looks at a nearby Pacific Loon from the pier at the fort.



Lenny

The Sora is a small, secretive bird of freshwater marshes, the Sora is the most common and widely distributed rail in North America. Its distinctive descending whinny call can be easily heard from the depths of the cattails, but actually seeing the little marsh-walker is much more difficult.



The Pacific Loon is perhaps the most abundant loon in North America. It spends most of the year on the Pacific Ocean, returning to inland Arctic tundra lakes only for three months in summer to breed.

7 Pines Native Plant Nursery Bird Walk

25th February



As always, Dara Dobson gave us a hearty welcome and pastries to nibble on as 24 eager birders arrived. It was a sunny morning and the narcissus bobbed merrily in the breeze as the Martins wheeled above us. We took off down the hill toward the pond and Malcolm immediately spotted a Loggerhead Shrike in a tree. We continued down through some pretty squelchy terrain and saw Eastern Bluebirds and an American Kestrel. On reaching the pond we turned into the forested area and saw a Ruby-

crowned kinglet and White-eyed Vireo in some oaks. We continued uphill, reaching the skittish Angus steers. Then we curved around, avoiding the electric fence where Lloyd picked up those who were flagging, in his golf cart. Although the bird count was not high, we all enjoyed a change of scenery and habitats.

Submitted by Margaret Benner

Choctawhatchee Audubon Society Events for April and May 2017

6 April Monthly Meeting and Presentation: “Bug Eyes: What Do Insects See, and How Do We Know” By John Douglass, Scientist. Insect eyes are drastically different from vertebrate eyes, but having good vision can be extremely important for survival whether you’re a tiny insect, or a giant squid. Thus, it comes as no surprise that various kinds of eyes have evolved to be exquisitely tuned to each animal’s visual needs. In this talk, I will aim to describe how insect eyes work, ways in which they differ from vertebrate eyes, and some of the basic features and limitations that all eyes have in common.

The meeting will be held in Room 130 of the student services building (Bldg 400) at the Northwest Florida State College - Niceville campus. Socializing begins at 6:30 PM and the program at 7:00 PM. Admission is free and open to the public. Call or e-mail Dr. Don Baltz at (225) 252-2760, dbaltz@lsu.edu for more information. Please visit our website at Choctawhatcheeaudubon.org and our Facebook page at Choctawhatchee Audubon Society.

8 April Estuary Festival: Join Audubon birders in an opportunity to teach children how to identify birds at the Matti Kelly Environmental Institute Estuary Festival at Gannon Park on Rocky Bayou. Contact Margaret Benner for details at 850 678-6665. Set up begins at 9AM and stay as long as you like. Please visit our website at Choctawhatcheeaudubon.org and Facebook page at Choctawhatchee Audubon Society.

21 April Chapter Retreat at Port St Joe, FL: Celebrate Earth Day touring/birding various species rich venues in Gulf County for this 2 day event. Make reservations at the MainStay Suites (850) 229-MAIN, Port St Joe for the 21st and 22nd. Orientation will be at 5PM Friday at the Benner’s room. Contact Margaret Benner at 850 678-6665 for additional information. Please visit our website at Choctawhatcheeaudubon.org and Facebook page at Choctawhatchee Audubon Society.

6 May Okaloosa Landfill: Bruce Purdy 305 926 6030 Meet at Pepito’s, 1313 Lewis Turner Blvd. @7:30A.M. Wear closed shoes, bring binoculars and cameras.

13 May Birding on Eglin Res. to see RCW: Must have a Pass for Reservation prior to this date. Malcolm Mark Swan 210 343 9082 Meet at the Armament Museum Parking lot @ 7:00 A.M. Search for Bachman’s Sparrows and RCW with an experienced birder.

20 May Field Trip to Laidlaw Plantation, Bay County: Ron Houser 850 381 5651 CVS parking lot, Oak Creek Shopping Center, Route 20, Niceville @ 7:00 Bring sack lunch & wear sturdy shoes, hat & bug spray.



Choctawhatchee Audubon Society Membership

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Introductory New Member- \$20.00 **Individual Member Renewal- \$35.00**

When you join you will be part of national, state, and local Audubon groups and will receive...

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To join, mail this form and a check, payable to National Audubon Society, to;

Audubon National, PO Box 422250, Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250

CAS ONLY memberships are available and include A SHORELINES NEWSLETTER ONLY TO THOSE THAT INCLUDE THEIR E-MAIL ADDRESS ON MEMBERSHIP FORM.

To join CAS **ONLY** mail this form and a check payable to CAS to; *P.O. Box 1044 Niceville, FL 32578*

New Member e-mail Newsletter Only- \$10.00 **Renewal Member Newsletter Only- \$10.00**

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Choctawhatchee Audubon Society

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