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For newsletters by e-mail send your e-mail address to Kay Parsons at: parsonskg1@cox.net

Message from our President

My name is Dave Clausen, and I want to introduce myself as the new president of the Choctawhatchee Audubon Society. I just moved to Santa Rosa Beach in September as full time resident, although I have been a part-time resident for past 3 ½ years and have vacationed here since 1997. I have been involved with Choctawhatchee Audubon since spring 2013.

I am a retired fishery biologist who worked for the National Marine Fisheries Service in Juneau, Alaska, for 35 years. Specifically, I did research on “groundfish” (marine species that live associated with the bottom) which involved many research cruises on the Gulf of Alaska and analyzing data and writing reports in the office. If you need advice on seasick medication, I am the one to talk to! Although my expertise is fish, I have been trying to learn about our local avian fauna by participating in the excellent bird walks conducted by Choctawhatchee Audubon.

I'd like to especially acknowledge our members who were active this summer in the campaign to prevent the expansion of Wet Willies amusement park adjacent to the great blue heron rookery at Veterans Park on Okaloosa Island. Our efforts included writing letters to Okaloosa County Commissioners, conducting a petition drive, and giving testimony at County Commission meetings. Although we were not able to stop the expansion of Wild Willies, due to our efforts and those of others the County Commissioners did approve a couple of measures that hopefully will somewhat mitigate the expansion. Finally, I encourage more of our members to attend our monthly meetings on the first Thursday of every month at the Northwest Florida State College in Niceville. The heart of each meeting is a slide presentation about birds or some other natural history/nature-oriented subject. Most of the speakers are experts in their subjects, and the presentations I have attended have been very informative and interesting. I hope to see you at these meetings and also on our bi-monthly bird walks!

Dave

November 19 Bird Walk – Eastern Okaloosa County Led by Carole Goodyear

The itinerary for this trip is never a literal “walk” at a single location; it is a series of “hops” to several different habitats in eastern Okaloosa County. At this season we often get a good lesson on the effect of weather fronts, and the species diversity always depends on which birds have (or have not!) arrived for the winter.

On November 19, the arrival of a cold front timed itself perfectly for the beginning of the walk. The wind kicked in as our group of 14 people gathered and within an hour it was a consistent 20 mph from the NNW. The blustery morning kept many birds hidden and quiet. Even normally abundant yellow-rumped warblers were scarce. In addition, aquatic habitats have been affected by this fall's drought, with all or parts of several area ponds completely dry. This has changed species assemblages and can yield surprises, such as.....

Snipe! At our first stop at a large retention pond along the Spence Parkway, three snipe could be seen in a single scope view, sitting in a row in open view in the middle of the dry pond bed. We also had good views here of several killdeer and a red-tailed hawk.

Other highlights of the morning were: At Camp Timpoochee we found a large, active ground-feeding flock of pine warblers, chipping sparrows, and bluebirds, with one palm warbler among them. At the Lakeshore Drive retention pond, we had views of ring-necked ducks, a kestrel, and immature and adult bald eagles. In Raintree, we found a group of three flickers. At White Point Recreation Area, we were treated to a near-shore feeding frenzy of common loons, double-crested cormorants, and diving brown pelicans. Also, a black-bellied plover stalked the shoreline.



C.A.S. Bird Walks & Field Trips Fall 2016-2017

	Date	Area	Leader	Tel. #	Meeting point	Time	Notes
January	14	Hurricane Lake, Blackwater S.F.	Malcolm Mark Swan	210 343 9082	1. Armament Mus. p. lot 2. Whataburger, Rt. 85, Crestview	7:00 am 7:30 am	See ducks and waders with an experienced birder.
	28	Niceville & Valparaiso Shorelines Bird Walk	Walt Spence	850 582 7064	Mattress Depot, Bayou Plaza, Niceville	8:00AM	Bring binoculars and cameras for a mix of birds and local history.
February	11	Choctawhatchee R. Landings	TBD		Publix p. lot, Rt 331, Freeport	7:30	Possible owls, woodpeckers, brown creepers. Wear appropriate shoes. Lunch at Rabbit Creek Café.
	25	7 Pines Native Nursery,	Dara Dobson	850 830 8996	CVS p. lot, Oak Creek Sh.Center, Rt 20, Niceville	7:30	See owls, hawks & sparrows.
March	25	Field Trip to private property near DeFuniak Spgs	Alan Knothe	850 208 1780	CVS p. lot, Oak Creek Sh.Center, Rt 20, Niceville	7:30	Get close to Nature and see a variety of woodland species.
	25	Veteran's Park, Okaloosa Island	Malcolm Mark Swan	210 343 9082	NE corner p. lot Convention Center	7:30	One of our last remaining natural habitats. Wear closed shoes & hat.
April	1	Ft. Pickens. Gulf Islands National Seashore	Lenny Fennimore	850 863 2039	Uptown St, Eglin Pkway, FWB	7:30	Wear long pants, closed shoes & hat. Bring bios, scopes & camera.
	15	Estuary Festival, Fred Gannon SP	Margaret Benner	850 678 6665	Rocky Bayou, Rt 20, Niceville	9:00	Spend a day in the Park teaching children about birds.
	21	CAS Spring Retreat, Port St Joe, FL	Margaret Benner	850 678 6665	MainStay Suites, Port St Joe, 850 229 MAIN		Meet for 'Orientation' at 5:00 pm
May	6	Okaloosa Landfill	Bruce Purdy	305 926 6030	Pepito's, 1313 Lewis Turner Blvd.	7:30	Wear closed shoes, bring binoculars and cameras.
	13	Birding on Eglin Res. to see RCW. Must have a Pass for Reservation prior to this date.	Malcolm Mark Swan	210 343 9082	Armament Mus Parking lot	7:00	Search for Bachman's Sparrows and RCW with an experienced birder.
	20	Field Trip to Laidlaw Plantation, Bay County	Ron Houser	850 381 5651	CVS p. lot, Oak Creek Sh.Center, Rt 20, Niceville	7:00	Bring sack lunch & wear sturdy shoes, hat & bug-spray.

Recipe for homemade suet: Materials: • 1 1/2 cups shortening (look for palm oil free options) • 3/4 cups peanut butter (any kind) • 3 1/2 cups wild bird seed • 1 cup quick oats • 1/2 cup corn meal • Ice cube tray
Steps: 1. Mix the dry ingredients of bird seed, oats, and corn meal together and set aside. 2. Combine the shortening and nut butter in a separate bowl and melt. Stir until completely combined. 3. Pour the melted mixture into the dry ingredients and stir until combined. 4. Spoon mixture into the ice cube tray. 5. Freeze for one to two hours and place in your suet feeder!

Note: Not recommended for outdoor temperatures above 50 degrees.





Explore the Outdoors Festival

Live Oak Landing, Freeport

Saturday 15th October

It was a gloriously sunny but cool morning when Walt and Margaret loaded up tables and headed for Freeport. Traffic was light and we were there in an hour where Dee greeted us and we all began the set-up process. We hung the wing-span banner, strung up the binoculars, laid out the games and set up the 'scope. This was all in a perfect shaded spot under trees with picturesque views of the bayou.

Lori reported a record of over 800 visitors in attendance, with two thirds of them children.

Naturally they were in a hurry to pick up their free fishing poles and lures, but on the way back stopped at all the booths. The wing-span banner is always popular and watching little kids look at Walt through the wrong ends of the binoculars is always entertaining.

Many thanks to Dee and Walt for helping, three is the absolute minimum to function and takes it out of us, so please consider trying it next year. The RV site also has tiny cottages which are very appealing!

Margaret Benner

Fort Pickens Bird Walk

Saturday 8th October 2016

A small, but stylish group showed up to meet Alan Knothe at Battery Langdon last Saturday. The weather could not have been better with some high cirrus clouds in an otherwise clear, blue sky. The Gulf Fritillaries were flitting over the wild flowers. The species count was only 31 but those we saw were interesting, including a Merlin polishing off prey. As we stood on the bridge we looked down on a large snapping turtle with a long tail and wide yellow head. Further along the creek we spotted a juvenile Yellow-crowned Night Heron perching in a pine tree. Some of us glimpsed a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, but all enjoyed prolonged sightings of the golden Summer Tanager. Two Indigo buntings showed in rather drab coloration but some Redstarts made up for it. The woodpeckers were lively as we saw a Flicker and two Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. Some of us had help to climb on top of the Battery where we enjoyed a tremendous view. We wondered if the Barn Swallows live in the Battery as a flock were swooping around as we left. Submitted by Margaret Benner

Choctawhatchee Audubon Society

Program for January 2017

5 Jan: Monthly Meeting: Presentation: Sex in the Sitta (nuthatches): the Complex Social World of the Brown-headed Nuthatch. By Jim Cox, Director Stoddard Bird Lab at Tall Timbers Research Station. There is a ton of intriguing biology wrapped up in the diminutive Brown-headed Nuthatch. The nuthatch is one of three bird species found only in southern pinelands. The treetop antics and rubber ducky calls make these inquisitive birds a pleasure to watch, but population declines coupled with interesting behaviors call for closer scientific attention. Like Florida Scrub-jays and Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, adult nuthatches often forego the chance to breed and instead help other adults raise young. Unlike woodpeckers and jays, cooperative breeding among nuthatches frequently includes assistance provided to adults that are not close relatives. This creates complex social arrangements with many intriguing twists and turns.

The meeting will be held in room 130 of the student services building 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.



Choctawhatchee Audubon Society Membership

Name: _____ Address: _____
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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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