

Audubon Nature Walks
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Vilano Boat Ramp and the old Mission

Tuesday, March 10, 2009

9 am until 11 am

Leader: Tina Van Ghent

Meet at the Vilano Bridge Boat Ramp Parking Lot

Exactly a year ago we saw 52 species of birds and a lot more on this walk! Here is part of my report.

"The usual marsh waders were busily feeding on the incoming tide while a kingfisher with a beak full of fiddler crab fluttered overhead. A possum wandered the parking lot, dolphins chased bait fish near shore, ring-billed gulls argued over ownership of a small squirming snake, and dumpster-diving loggerhead shrikes put on a show. Great black-backed gulls, ruddy turnstones, puddle-bathing grackles, and 9 of us looked on."

"At the Mission a young male Baltimore oriole, a lifer for Fran, foraged in the new growth of the oak trees. Parulas, yellow-throated and palm warblers, titmice, and bluegray gnatcatchers shared the trees with soon-to-leave yellow-rumped warblers and ruby-crowned kinglets. A bobbing spotted sandpiper shared the deck of a small dinghy with double-crested cormorants. Wandering tourists with cameras stopped to ask questions as we all soaked up the warm morning sunshine. To quote Katie, "I just love these little nature walks!"

Find out for yourself on this March 10 with Tina! (797-5997)

Princess Place Preserve

Thursday, April 2, 2009

From 9 am until 11 am

Leaders: Melinda Clemons and Katie Brower

Melinda and Katie call Princess Place Preserve one of their favorite places. It has everything nature walk enthusiasts enjoy: birds galore, including nesting eagles, a wonderful diversity of native plants, marshes, trails through both hardwood and pine forests, and quite an interesting history. Although our walks are only two hours long, the ladies suggest that you might choose to bring a sandwich and stay longer. You might even want to visit the new Florida Agriculture museum down the road. Although this is a little farther than usual, it's bound to be a super walk. Why not invite your friends and carpool down?! See you there.

Directions: Travel south on US 1 until you go under Interstate 95. Cross Pelicer Creek and look for the signs to Princess Place Preserve. You will be turning left. Meet our leaders at the Visitors' Center parking area inside the park. Melinda's contact numbers are cell, 904-540-1777 or home, 904-829-0406.

Heritage Park Nature Walk

Saturday, April 11, 2009

9 am until 11 am

Leaders: Ned and Teddy Shuler

Heritage Park Conservation Area is a welcome green oasis contrasted to the rapidly developing suburbs all around it. Trails and small bridges wander through cool, dark mixed deciduous forest. A small cypress swamp runs along a rippling stream. Large pines edge a sunny field. Dead snags have been left for cavity nesters, insect foragers, and for perching hawks. Native plants await identification. Birds can be heard and seen, some enjoying backyard feeders. Odors and scat suggest animals using these woods at night. Enjoy spring with an Audubon Nature Walk in the conservation area.

Directions: Take Highway 16 from St. Augustine across the San Sebastian River. Turn right on Lewis Speedway and go down past St. Augustine High. Turn left on Woodlawn and go less than a mile to the Heritage Park entrance. Look for red flags near the gate. Meet our leaders at the big yellow clubhouse building on the right. Call Debra Willis if you need additional information. Home: 903-825-1231, Cell: 386-566-7040

Elkton Revisited

A Big Favorite Last Year!
Saturday, May 16, 2009
From 9 am until 11 am

Renee and Phil Stambaugh's property in Elkton is a treasure trove of native wildlife. Even the ditches, fields, and power lines leading to the property abound with bird life such as ibis, wood storks, egrets, herons, kingfishers, and kestrels. Last year, visitors enjoyed a variety of wildlife from hummingbird to marsh rabbit.

Participants included both birders and plant enthusiasts, making a unique adventure of identification of a variety of bird calls (titmouse, downy woodpecker), wildflowers (lyre leaf sage) and native plants (Florida elderberry). In the potato fields, we identified tracks of deer, raccoon, (possibly) skunk, heron and killdeer, to name a few. We shared knowledge of scat (droppings), analyzing the difference between carnivorous, herbivorous and omnivorous. Sighting a Northern Harrier, flying low over the fields, we were reminded of the association with the Harrier British Aircraft - the hovering ability of both.

Bring binoculars and field guides if you have them. Dress for the weather and prepare to have fun!

Directions from I-95 and SR207: Travel west on SR207 for 4 miles. Turn right on CR305 for another 4 miles. Turn right again onto CR13-A for 1.2 miles. The Stambaugh property is at 1660 CR13-A.

For questions you may contact Renee at 904-692-3927 or email her at renee1660@windstream.net