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## A Sierra Wetlands Walk

- Ina Topper, *Broward Excom Chair*

A recent Sunday morning in late March was a perfect time to visit the Wakodahatchee wetlands. This beautiful nature preserve is known not only for its pristine setting but also as a nesting place for a great variety of birds. We had the pleasure of being accompanied by our Excomm Adriene Barmann, as well as our longtime Sierra member Jackie Fisher, both accomplished chapter outings leaders.

Not having been familiar with this wetlands preserve, it was a true serendipity! It's comforting to know there STILL are locations like this in South Florida, where one can truly witness a great variety of birds, and this time of the year also a nesting environment. Within minutes of starting our walk we saw lots of migratory birds (some on their way to Mexico), wood storks (they sure are noisy!), a nesting green heron, aninga babies, white herons, and a glossy ibis - to name but a few. What's interesting is the fact, lesser known to most of us, that there are some birds who mate for life, keeping the same partnership so to say, as well as those where both bird-parents take care of their young! One would say, something we humans can learn from... They are busy flying back and forth to pick up worms, or any other nourishment fit for bird-chicks, feeding the loudly screeching chicks by regurgitating it in their tiny beaks (yes, we heard them screeching!).

This very peaceful setting, where nature is (still) left untouched, has made his preserve not only one of our nicest South Florida bird sanctuaries, but also a great place for other varied Florida wildlife. Of course we spotted some rabbits, a raccoon, and alligators, which can be found anywhere in Florida where there's open water, as well as a couple of snakes. When it comes to snakes, it's amazing how many FLORIDA residents have an unreasonable fear of these very common reptiles in our area. As one biologist in a recent article said, "When it comes to our snakes, they get a very bad rap".

In general, the same caveat prevails as with almost all wildlife: more often than not, if just left alone, they will simply wander away, slither away, or whichever may apply. The sad thing about snakes is that for many 'the only good snake is a dead snake'... never mind if most are non-venomous, even beneficial to our environment. What does it take to convince many people that snakes consume enormous numbers of all types of vermin? And when it comes to the smaller, dwarf-like snake varieties, they're almost exclusively living on insects. *Continued on next page*

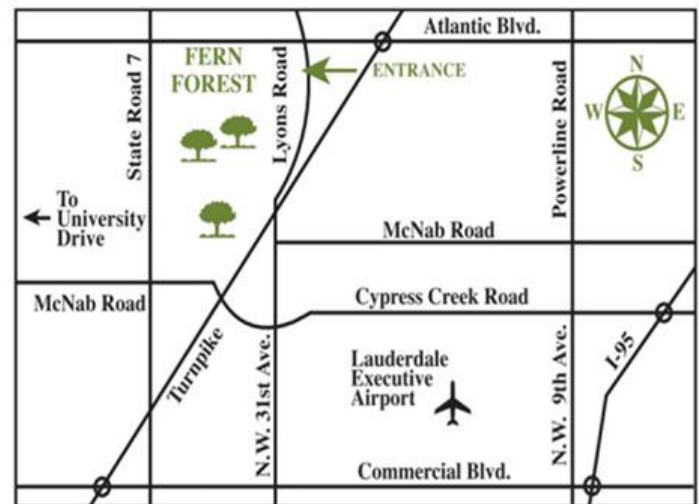


**Broward Sierra Club's General Meetings - The first Thursday of each month we have committee reports and an educational program on conservation or environmental issues.**

**DIRECTIONS:** Fern Forest Nature Center, 201 Lyons Road South, in Coconut Creek is just south of Atlantic Blvd. on the west side of the street. (From the south, NW 31 Ave. becomes NW 46 Ave., and then Lyons Rd. as you pass under the turnpike.) Committee reports begin at 7:30, and the program follows. The meeting is open to the public at no charge.

## Broward Sierra Club's next General Meeting will be on May 2, 2019.

The speaker will be Laura Chaibongsai from Miami Water-keepers (<https://www.miamiwaterkeeper.org>). She will be talking about their "1,000 Eyes on the Water" campaign.



## A Sierra Wetlands Walk (Continued)

We encountered one of those small snakes just crawling off our walkway, most possibly a small so-called wetland brown snake, which as adult size is usually no more than 10 inches in length, and which are very common in all south eastern swamps, Unfortunately, it's easily confused with a copperhead even though it's markings are somewhat different. Alas, the difference is, one is venomous and the other one isn't. Same goes for the other snake we saw resting on a bed of swamp grass well below our boardwalk. It very well could have been a Florida Cottonmouth OR possibly a harmless Indigo or water snake. The thing is, the Indigo snake has been on our threatened and even endangered species list whereas the Cottonmouth is everywhere in the southeast US. Yes - it can be difficult to distinguish between them, as the Indigo (the name says it all) has a slightly purplish glow when seen in a certain light. But then again - we wouldn't want to approach a serpent to make sure, would we? In any case, do NOT kill the snake, just stay away from it: live and let live (goes for all native wildlife).

Thanks for the great narration, Adriene, and we're looking forward to our next hike.

Hope many of our Broward Sierra members can join us again - we had a great turnout this time!

Pictures can be found at: <https://www.meetup.com/Broward-County-Sierra-Club-Group/events/259517324/>

## LOCAL SIERRA CLUB OUTINGS AND EVENTS

To preserve a place, you must believe in it. To believe in it, you must see it.



**Sunday, May 19:** Help plant a bird sanctuary

The Broward Sierra Club is sponsoring a bird habitat at Markham Park (16001 W. State Road 84, Sunrise, FL 33326). We will be planting bird-friendly vegetation from 9:00 AM until about 1:00 PM. Stay the whole time, or join us for a couple of hours. Learn what plants will work in your own backyard, too! Please contact Sue Caruso at [susancaruso.sierra@gmail.com](mailto:susancaruso.sierra@gmail.com) or 954-684-6747 or more information

**Nature Walk at Wakodahatchee and Green Cay Wetlands** led by Adriene Barmann



Our intrepid Wakodahatchee bird watchers



Glossy and white Ibises



**Paddling at Mizel-Eula Johnson State Park:** We had a great outing with wonderful weather. There were about a dozen of us with Sue Caruso as our capable leader: <https://www.meetup.com/Broward-County-Sierra-Club-Group/photos/29894782/>





April 22<sup>nd</sup> is the official date that Earth Day is celebrated every year, not only in our country, but across the globe. A milestone: next year's celebration will be Earth Day's 50<sup>th</sup> year! There are many who had never expected this particular event to last this long. However, now more than ever, the importance of preserving our wonderful planet for future generations is increasingly being understood.

It was in 1970 that a Senator by the name of Gaylord Nelson made it a point of setting the date of April 22 as the day to recognize and promote preserving our natural environment. Amazingly, on that day in 1970, some 20 million people were willing to give it some thought to safeguarding our environment, resulting in large gatherings across our nation! What's a lesser known fact is the incident that compelled Senator Nelson to turn his attention to the increasing disregard of all around pollution; an oil spill in the bay of Santa Barbara the year before, in 1969. As a result of this (by current standards 'minor') mishap, Nelson's dismay and aggravation at the time was made worse by what seemed like a blatant lackadaisical response to this disaster. Hence forward, the senator declared April 22 to be the date of 'The Birth of Modern Day Environmentalism'.

In 1990, the Earth Day movement went global, when some 200 million people in 141 countries joined the Earth Day event. No doubt this now worldwide happening brought about a much greater awareness regarding the need for drastically decreasing air and water pollution, as well as finding ways to limit wasteful uses of our earth's NOT unlimited resources.

In 1995, Senator Nelson was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Clinton. By this time, the Earth Day celebration had come a long way. Little did anyone know that, although this localized disaster in California had brought about more environmental awareness, in hindsight this oil spill was bad enough to become a turning point for saving mother Earth. Thereafter, some horrendous oil spills would dwarf this one by a mile.... We'll only need to mention the Exxon Valdez disaster, when an oil tanker spilled millions gallons of oil into a pristine Arctic environment. While there have been, since then, far too many oil spilling incidents to count, the one that beat all records was the BP oil spill in our own backyard: the Gulf of Mexico just a few years ago.

This year's Earth Day events were commemorated in Washington D.C. on the national mall by holding a variety of events, and speeches by well-known scientists and environmentalists. Teach-ins were held around the Washington Monument on how to further promote awareness on a local level, and getting even more citizens everywhere involved in cleanups.

Specific emphasize was also put on drastically reducing usage of pesticides and all types of toxic sprays in our parks nationwide.

May we suggest to not only continue the Sierra motto of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle, but also becoming a local neighborhood advocate, if even in a very small way!



**There is no  
Plan(et) B**