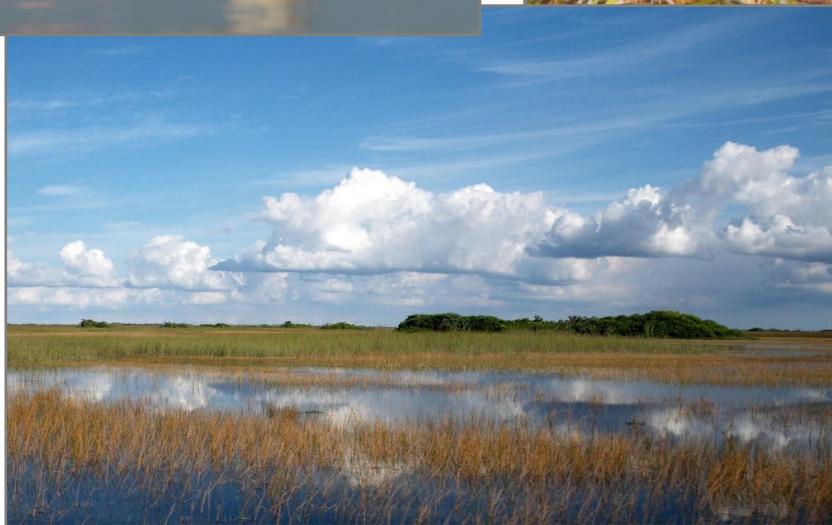
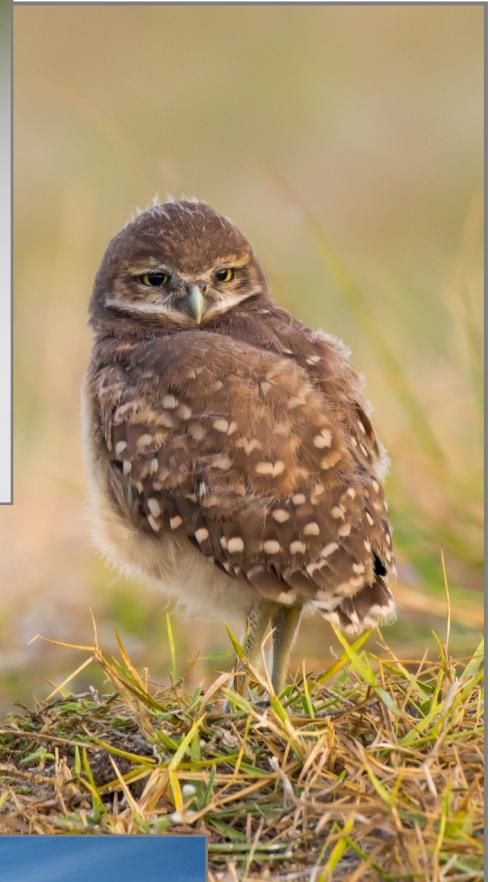


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Audubon of the Western Everglades Annual Report 2016-2017

Defending Southwest Florida's Natural Resources and Wildlife

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Paul Arsenault, **Keeywadin Afternoon**, Original oil on linen painting. View other Arsenault originals at the Arsenault Gallery, **1199 3rd St. South~Naples, FL~34102**, www.arsenaultstudio.com



Photographs on Cover: **Burrowing Owl Chick, Reddish Egret and Roseate Spoonbill** courtesy of Wildlife Photographer, Jean Hall, who is AWE's Project Leader for the Owl Watch Program and Shorebird Steward.

Who We Are

Audubon of the Western Everglades (AWE), is the oldest conservation organization in Collier County, is an independent chapter affiliated with National Audubon Society and Audubon Florida and has over 2,000 members comprised of National & Chapter members. We have a volunteer board of directors, a paid staff of three and many regular volunteers.

We believe that our environment must be protected for the mutual benefit of both **nature & people**. Current and future generations are counting on us to preserve and improve the environment. Our Audubon Western Everglades staff and volunteers **dedicate themselves** each and every day to make this happen.

What We Do

Conservation

AWE is one of the most effective environmental policy and lobbying organizations in Southwest Florida. We are active in Collier, Lee, Hendry and Glades counties, whose eco-systems are inextricably interlinked. Conservation in all four counties is critical for water quality and availability; for the health of our estuaries, beaches and the Gulf of Mexico; and for the survival of the bird, fish, and other animal species that make Southwest Florida a special place.

Our staff is widely recognized for policy expertise; negotiation skills; timely provision of scientific environmental information to politicians, economic decision makers and other influential groups such as fishing and hunting associations as well as to the general public; effective advocacy for conserving as much environmentally significant land as possible through public acquisition, rural land stewardship, transfer development rights, alternative agriculture, and ecotourism. As necessary, and typically as a last resort, AWE joins in lawsuits against egregiously harmful development and other strategic legal measures.

Education

AWE supports in school Environmental Education. Students are introduced to environmental concepts and the importance of conservation. They are encouraged to "take the message home" and educate family members as well.

- Our support of Environmental Education programs at FGCU & Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary are environmental education reaches over 6,000 second, third, fourth and fifth graders in public schools.
- Students taken on field trips to Florida Gulf Coast University, Corkscrew Regional Ecosystem Watershed and Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary are provided age appropriate information on habitats, environmental conservation, and species of special interest such as the Florida panther.
- 400 FGCU students participated in the Panther Posse and Wings of Hope programs
- 12,000 adults reached through the students
- The Audubon Explorers Program is now focused on 3rd Grade classes in Collier County Public Schools educating them on Birding 101.

Adult Programs

AWE sponsors an annual lecture series of topics relating to habitats, conservation issues, specific bird and other animal species with an attendance of over 800 for the season. Topics included *150 Million Years of Birds, Least Terns, Purple Martins, Coral Reefs, Burrowing Owls and Shorebirds*.

Adult Field Trips

Our field trips and eco-tour adventures take place in prime habitats and birding locations throughout the region.

- 35 field trips conducted to birding "hot spots" in Collier, Hendry, Lee, Broward, and Glades counties. Attendance varied from 10 to 25 per trip. Trips introduce participants to environmental concerns as well as to birding.



Message from the Board of Directors

**Eileen Arsenault, President
Ted Below, Director Emeritus
Lu Lackore, Treasurer
Andrew Sillin, Secretary
Alan Keller
Katie Laakkonen
Sharda Spahr
Roberta Marten**

Our eighth Annual Report covers the second half of 2016 and the first half of 2017. Founded in 1961, Audubon of the Western Everglades (AWE) is the oldest conservation organization in the county and one that remains a major force in environmental conservation and education in Southwest Florida.

We are proud of the fact that we finished our 2016-2017 June to July fiscal year without reducing our policy and advocacy activities while major political decisions affecting the prospects for the future health of our environment were taking place. Similarly we did not reduce our education programs. Our support of those programs is aimed at the next generation of citizens and decision makers, our public school youth. We owe this achievement primarily to the ongoing generosity of our donors. The list of our committed donors and the details of our financial situation are found later in this report.

During 2016-2017 we experienced increasing attendance at our monthly educational programs held at the FGCU Kapnick Education Center at the Naples Botanical Garden. In this beautiful venue, we hosted speakers who covered a variety of topics ranging from Coral Reefs to Burrowing Owls. At each of the 6 programs, we usually filled the spacious room with interested attendees. In addition, we continue to make great strides in our Coastal Shorebird Monitoring program and our Owl Watch Program monitoring Burrowing Owls on Marco Island. The Shorebird program involves volunteers educating visitors on the various types of birds nesting on our local beaches with the intention of dissuading the beachgoers from disrupting the nesting birds. The Owl Watch Program is a citizen science based program monitoring the burrows to see how many chicks survived the season as well as maintaining the burrows by roping off new burrow locations and landscaping inside the burrow area.

As will be seen in the achievements section of this report, AWE once again this year contributed to some important environmental successes. However, conservation efforts continue to face large obstacles with smaller budgets at both governmental agencies and privately funded organizations. Given the ongoing threats to our environment and the need to continue encouraging responsible growth, we sincerely hope that our donors find ways to increase their support to AWE.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge, as we do every year, that environmental achievements are rarely the product of single institutions but rather stem from the concerted action of coalitions. While we are certain that AWE has been and will remain a vital partner in regional environmental struggles, we wish to express our appreciation for the efforts of our fellow environmentalists and partner organizations during the past year.



©photo by Jean Hall



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Wilson's Plover Mom & Chick
Photo by Jean Hall

Reddish Egret in Flight
Photo by Jean Hall

Conservation Achievements during 2016-2017

Audubon of the Western Everglades pursues a proactive conservation mission with six principal goals:

Restoration of the Western Everglades including the Caloosahatchee River watershed and coastal habitats where preserving largely intact ecosystems such as Corkscrew, the 10,000 Islands and Big Cypress Swamps accompanies efforts to restore more degraded areas.

Protection and Restoration of Wetlands and Water critical to aquifer recharge, water supply, flood protection and fire resiliency, and critical to the recovery of imperiled wood storks and many other species.

Protection of Fragile Coastal Habitats assuring that communities and agencies plan for shoreline retreat due to sea level rise, and stewarding shorebirds and seabirds dependent on these ephemeral habitats.

Climate Change and Regional Energy Policy: Support regional adaptation to sea level rise and adoption of energy policies encouraging the fastest practical reduction in dependence on fossil fuels and the substitution of renewable energy sources. Participate actively with groups of interested citizens, utilities, businesses and local governments to complement state and national organizations, to address one of the biggest threats to Florida.

Land Use/Growth Management through better regulations and more effective incentives for developers and landowners to embrace environmentally sustainable, smart-growth across Southwest Florida.

Increased Lands in Conservation Status through full title purchase and easements. Support for Florida Forever, Florida ranch easements (Rural and Family Lands Protection Program), U.S. Farm Bill easements, National Wildlife Refuges in the Everglades, Lee Conservation 20/20 and Conservation Collier.

Selected AWE achievements since July 2016:

Restore the Western Everglades:

Caloosahatchee River (C-43) West Basin Project including a huge reservoir and associated nutrient reduction water quality areas. These projects are essential for restoring and sustaining the Caloosahatchee River estuary's ecosystem. The \$600 million C-43 reservoir is now under construction by the State using over \$100 million in State funds that AWE and allies successfully urged the Florida Legislature to appropriate in 2017, including \$1M for sea grass restoration. Florida has committed to completing the entire project by 2022. The C-43 Reservoir will hold huge amounts of water in the wet season to be released for estuary health during the driest months. AWE helped increase awareness at agencies and media of importance of Nitrogen control to stop algal blooms, including helping get funding to start BOMA and Lake Hicpochee water quality projects in River basin.

Western Everglades Restoration Project (WERP), AWE staff continues to be fully engaged in the planning effort to identify projects to move more clean water south in the western Everglades flowpath incorporating an existing L-28/Seminole Reservation project, and possibly moving Lake Okeechobee water into Big Cypress Swamp thus implementing hydrologic restoration for Big Cypress National Preserve. AWE has led efforts to initiate such a planning process for years to complement eastern and central Everglades flow path efforts. This project, once developed will be submitted to Congress for authorization and funding in future Water Resources Development Acts (WRDA) in accordance with the long term comprehensive Integrated Delivery Schedule which AWE staff helped to develop. AWE is pushing to implement Big Cypress Preserve components that have already been engineered sooner than the conceptual Lake O water portions.

Lake Okeechobee Watershed Restoration Planning- AWE is actively participating along with Audubon Florida in advocating for cost effective water storage and treatment options in the Lake Okeechobee watershed to provide water supply storage and enhanced management options that lessen negative impacts on Lake Okeechobee and the coastal estuaries. AWE has been active in efforts to reduce excess nutrients flowing from the Lake watershed to Lake O and ultimately to Southwest Florida coastal waters.

Picayune Strand Restoration Project received the needed WRDA 2016 authorization for increased costs, with AWE support, and has moved significantly toward completion. Unfortunately, work is again coming to a stop as both Tallahassee and Washington failed to allocate funds in FY18. AWE pushed hard to get funds into the budget, and now is focused on FY19. It's time to finish a major Everglades project!

WRDA (Water Resources Development Act) 2016 was passed by Congress in late summer, 2016 with strong AWE support. It includes Congressional authorization for the water management infrastructure outlined in the Central Everglades Planning Project and additional funding for Picayune Strand. AWE now is working with our congressional leaders and the agencies to advance important projects in WRDA 2018.

EAA Reservoir Funded by New Money: AWE worked with Audubon Florida to push for new money to avoid delaying current prioritized projects in southwest Florida and get the EAA Reservoir built.

Protection and Restoration of Wetlands and Water:

Wetland Protection and Restoration is progressing strongly in collaboration with Corkscrew Swamp science staff. AWE continued to lead a statewide, long-term effort to reform development permitting regulations to stem well-documented wetland losses, especially of shallow, seasonal wetlands. AWE submitted substantive comments on a new draft rule proposed by the State DEP. AWE also continued using the Corkscrew permit tool to evaluate several pending egregious permits in southwest Florida. AWE is moving this conservation effort toward large, connected off-site mitigation outcomes instead of on-site, less functional tiny preserves onsite.

Flooding, Fires and Tidal/Storm Surge Resiliency: AWE has drafted a new strategy in collaboration with Corkscrew Swamp and other allies to advance public support for wetland protection, restoration and coastal habitat restoration (dunes). This campaign will be further developed and is in response to major 2017 threats from King Tides, 7,000 acres of wildfires in over-drained N. Golden Gate Estates, and regional flooding from heavy June, 2017 rains (not to mention Hurricane Irma on September 10, 2017).

Conservation Achievements (cont'd)

Protection of Fragile Coastal Habitats:

Shorebird Stewardship Programs in Lee and Collier Counties were greatly enhanced for the 2017 nesting season through the addition of Audubon Anchor Stewards, overseen by AWE and Audubon Florida (AF) and funded by an AF BP Oil Spill grant. As in 2016, nesting season stewardship saw tremendous volunteer participation in Lee County and moderate involvement in Collier, but 2016 and 2017 both saw huge productivity on Marco Island and disappointing outcomes on Ft. Myers Beach due to beach raking disturbance. New volunteer stewards were again recruited and trained, and stewards have been a very positive factor in nesting success and beachgoer awareness. AWE continues to play a key role in facilitating the shorebird partnerships in southwest Florida (with Florida Wildlife Commission, Rookery Bay, AF, local governments, and law enforcement teams.) AWE led robust media outreach on Memorial Day and July 4.

AWE Burrowing Owl Watch Program- Jean Hall continued to manage the AWE Program, with another well-attended training in March, 2017 and successful monitoring, data collection and engagement of needed law enforcement. AWE has forged productive media relationships, especially with Maria Lamb of Coastal Breeze, and with Marco City Council/staff. Owl population and burrows have grown, and so has Program, with 35 active monitors, professional site maintenance, and a waiting list for new volunteers. AWE is making plans for funding a research component and has provided substantive input to State FWC rules on permitting for this newly "threatened" species. AWE is being consulted on new guidelines for urban owls such as Marco's.

18 New and Enhanced Critical Wildlife Areas (CWAs) approved by Florida Wildlife Commission with strong support from Audubon Florida and AWE, including one Shorebird Steward volunteer who traveled the entire state photographing 19 potential new CWAs. FWC has invested heavily in expanding its protections via CWAs for coastal water birds. Seven are in southwest Florida, and AWE played a key role in advancing approval of these seven, all of which became the most controversial in the state. Final approval was Nov, 2016.

Climate Change and Regional Energy Policy:

Sea Level Rise – Adaptation/Oil and Gas/Energy Policy- AWE has continued advocating with strategic agencies for sea level rise adaptation planning encompassing habitats and infrastructure. AWE supported a UF/FGCU research project to develop a sea level rise model to test adaptation strategies. Final approval planned for fall, 2017.

Land Use/Growth Management:

Collaborative Panther and Habitat Conservation continued to move forward. Florida Panther Protection Program (FPPP) partners (AWE, several other conservation groups, and eight major SW Florida landowners) collaborated on a Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan for 170,000 acres of eastern Collier County. It relies on incentives and regulations for landowners to restore and permanently protects wetlands and habitat in exchange for development of impacted agricultural lands at a 3:1 ratio. Those are the basis of Collier County's Rural Land Stewardship Program with FPPP improvements added like the \$150 million Marinelli Fund to build wildlife crossings and restore corridors. AWE continued to strongly support incentive-based strategies statewide to help expand panther range and resolve human/wildlife conflicts. Extra motivation now because female panthers were documented breeding north of the Caloosahatchee River. Funding and slow implementation remain challenges. Collier County's rural land use programs, based on incentives and including Rural Land Stewardship, Golden Gate Estates, and Rural Fringe Mixed Use District, are being updated. AWE continued to proactively meet with commissioners to advocate improvements such as incentives to retain 40,000 acres of farming and restoration of wildlife corridors, as well as adjusting an out of balance Transferable Development Rights program. The HCP is approaching completion and public comment periods in coming months.

Specific Project Permitting: AWE continued to monitor several large development permit applications. We submitted substantial comments in opposition to the Corkscrew Crossing project in Lee County near Corkscrew Sanctuary. AWE used Corkscrew's permit evaluation tool and shared the very negative results with the agencies. Several other permits are in the midst of AWE review, including Rural Lands West, and development in N. Golden Gate Estates.

Increased Lands in Conservation Status:

Florida Forever and state land conservation - AWE, working with allies, submitted an application for a new 2,800 Florida Forever project called CREW Headwaters. After significant effort advocating it with DEP, including AWE staff going to Tallahassee for the final hearing, it was approved last October, 2016! That shifted AWE's work to campaigning for Legislative funding, which has been abysmal. AWE also strongly advocated for another new SW Florida project called Bear Branch/Hog Branch Tributaries Project, which also was approved. AWE also played a vital role in advancing three other CREW and nearby possible project acquisition deals that are still pending but total close to 9,000 acres

Corkscrew Swamp Watershed Protection- AWE helped push to move the Lee Board toward approval of Conservation 20/20 buying the 4,000 acre Edison Farms.

Lee Conservation 20/20 Referendum on Nov 8. - AWE was a lead organization staffing the "YES on Conservation 20/20!" campaign, which succeeded in reauthorizing 20/20 with 84% approval on Nov 8, 2016!

Conservation Collier Referendum and Restart: AWE, with allies, supported the restarting of Collier County buying environmentally significant land. Support has also been given publicly and in community discussions for a ballot referendum on a more long term restart of the funding tax. The decision on how and when that referendum will occur is still pending. AWE strongly supported the Half-Circle L Ranch being added to the acquisition list – now a pending application.

NOTE: AWE is a major supporter of Eco-Voice which sent its 5 millionth daily email summary of environmental news in South Florida to thousands of advocates and decision makers - done every night for eight years.

Donations July 2016-2017

\$10,000-\$100,000

Audubon Florida
Barron Collier Jr. Foundation
Collier Enterprises
Newman's Own Foundation
Pearson Family Charitable Foundation
Joseph Tompkins

\$5,000- \$9,999

Arthrex, Inc.
Epple Holdings, LLC
SW Florida Community Foundation
Mrs. William Whaley

\$2,500-\$4,999

Robert Andrews
Lorne & Carolyn Belden
Tom & Paige Campbell
Cummings & Lockwood, LLC
Florida Power & Light Co.
Alan Keller Fund
Medcore International, LLC
Richard & Carol Munro
Nicholas & Linda Penniman

\$1,000-\$2,499

Alico Inc.
Lew & Dawn Allyn
Stephen & Cynthia Anderson
Mike Assaad
Donald Comstock
John Eimerman
Peter & Joan Fortune
Stephen Foss
Jean-Pierre & Danyele Garnier
Annelise Gerry
Corrie Grado
Robyn Pfister Griffin
Jean Hall
Maurice & Dorothy Kent
Lu Lackore
Robert & Gwen Langley
Mike Miske
John & Kathleen Passidomo
Patsy Schroeder
Andrew Sillin
Gail Smith
Fred & Anne Stratton
Sutton Family Foundation
Semrod Family Private Foundation
Drs. Jonathan Sonne & Rebecca Lambert
Jerri Wolfson
Ken & Paula Zeisler

\$500-\$999

Paul Barrett
Burrowing Owl Protection Fund of Marco
The Champagne Family
Shannon Clark
College of Life Foundation
Community Foundation of Collier County
Humiston & Moore Engineering
Lois Kelley
Kitson & Partners, LLC
Rita Kusler
Ernest & Sandy Linneman
Carson McEachern
Robert & Linda Morris
William & Nicole Morton
Paul Slater
Robin Stranahan
Paul & Melinda Sullivan
Gerald & Annette Tiffan
James Trunck
UU Congregation of Greater Naples
Becky Troop

\$250-\$499

Paul & Eileen Arsenault
Mike Barnes
Doug Boynton
Stan Boynton
William & Laura Burke
Shannon Clark
Diane Cooley
Steve & Louise Farrington
Jeanne Findlater
Martha Gould
Vincent Green
Alan & Beverly Horton
Scott & Caran Keller
OJ Kelsey, Jr.
Elinor Krier
Geraldine Martin
Alan Marsh
Wallace & Elizabeth Martel
Jacke McCurdy
Craig & Diane McElheny
Julie McCann
Terrence & Andrea McCreanor
John & Tara McGraw
Monica McVicker
Richard Mounce
Margaret Notebaert
Peggy Phillips
Herbert B. & Margaret E. Scheu
Andrew Sillin
Christian Spilker
Robin Stranahan
Bill Van Arsdale

\$100-\$249

Joe Ambrozy
Kitty Arrogobright
Jean Atherton
Susan Bay
Rebecca Beatty
Jan Boyce
Dickson Brown
Patricia Bungert
Chris Curle
Charles Dauray
Rich & Ann Downs
Dennis Glass & Tanya Trinkaus-Glass
Robert Glirdian
George Gould
Lisa Gorman
Jared & Elsa Grifoni
Hal & Beth Hills
Ana Jonas
Tom Jones
Linda Joyce
Paul & Sharyn Kampmeyer
Scott & Kristin Karl
Susan LaGrotta
Marguerite Lauro
Jennie Norman
Judith & Gerald Novak
Caroline Martino
Thomas McBride
Linda Meade
Bill & Arlen Oley
Thomas & Carol Patterson
Lindsey Puder
George Purvis
Diane Regan
Naomi Scheifinger
Michael Seef & Bonnie Michaels
Patricia Semler
Cathy Sharif
Peter Simmons
Tom & Dorie Simota
Sharda Spahr

FINANCIALS

Fiscal Year July 1, 2016- June 30, 2017

Assets at Start of Year \$ 171,812

Income

Dues & Programs	\$ 12,803
Gifts	178,330
Grants	27,900
Change in Market Value	10,914
Total	\$ 229,948

Expenditures

Expenditures	\$ 229,327
End of year assets	\$ 172,433

\$100-\$249 Cont'd

Ann Thanos
Nick Terlizzi
Ben & Kathy Troxell
Andrew Tyler & Karen
Ackermann
Elmer Wheeler

Corporate Membership

Pelican Bay Foundation

Up to \$99

Nicole Anderson
Sharon Arnold
Harriett Barrett
Gregg & Lori Beall
Jean Benz
James Brown III
Floyd Cantrell
Richard & Linda Censis
Jean Comstock
Brad Cornell
Leland Davenport
Dan Fales
The Denaund Family
Richard Fuchs
Gary & Gail Gorran
Henry Harer
Henry & Sandra Hill
Monica Higgins
Joyce Hiller
Lynn Howell
David Huckle
Daniel & Susan Jones
Eric & Carol Judson
Robert & Lara Lang
Sharon Leavy
Peter LeDonne
John Levins
Janet Loos
GayAnn Lugert
Katie O'Hara
Gail Peyton
Kathy MacGillivray
Dianne Magrone
Patricia Meixner
Carolyn Melo
Charlotte Miller
Jerry Morgan
Anne-Marie Rohm
Richard & Susan Rojas
Nancy Sekowski
James & Kitty Shaw
Frankie Ann Tester
Ron Tougas
Jennifer Turner
Robert & Roberta Ury



Brown Pelican Chicks
Photo by Ted Below



©photo by Jean Hall

Thank you for your support!