

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hi everyone, have just returned from the Annual Florida Audubon Assembly. It was an exciting few days to meet other chapter leaders, catch up on activities at the state level, and meeting new and interesting people. The theme of this year's assembly was "PARKS: THE HEART OF NATURAL FLORIDA". I learned that Florida is rated #1 in the US for its many parks and natural settings.

Some points that struck home from the meetings I attended were as follows:

1. There was a lot of frustration and disbelief at the state legislature for refusing to follow the tenets of Amendment Number 1 to purchase and maintain more state park land, despite the fact that it had been approved by 75% of the popular vote at the last election. It was emphasized that this was a long term issue and Audubon was in it for the long run, and to maintain a positive attitude.
2. "All politics is local" meaning the importance of getting involved with your local commissioners and working with them on environmental issues. Get to know them on a personal level and volunteer your help and advice if needed.
3. If you like to bird, this requires good habitat. Good habitat requires conservation of our natural resources. The bottom line is 'conservation and protection of our natural resources'.
4. Florida's state parks are bordering on the overcrowded status presently. We recognize the need to recharge and reconnect with nature through our state park system. We expect a large population increase in Florida in the next decade – thus the need for additional parkland to accommodate the demands of this change.
5. A position paper was presented at the state level outlining Audubon's posture on 'The Future of Florida's Parks' - see accompanying attachment. It has been said, 'what's good for the environment, is good for the economy'. Hopefully, we will see a more balanced approach to this from our state legislature in the future.