

Chapter of the Year Nomination Form 2017

Name of chapter _____ Tampa Audubon Society _____

Note: There are now, based on chapter size, TWO Chapter of the Year awards.

Membership is (check one): 500 or less _____ Greater than 500 XX _____

Person submitting nomination _____ Mary Keith, President _____

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Each of the following categories is worth 20 points towards a perfect score of 100. Please describe as succinctly as possible your activities during the past year as they relate to the statements below. The one-year period you are to report on is July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017.

1. How has your chapter extended your sphere of influence over the past year?

TAS was the main sponsor/organizer of a new Florida Birding and Nature Festival in October, celebrating the Migratory Bird Treaty. Over 300 people participated, from 17 counties, 7 states and 1 other country, in 26 field trips and 40 seminars. We had 65 on-site volunteers, plus 50 different field trip leaders from across the state, plus students and faculty from Hillsborough Community College, the majority of whom were not TAS members. An additional 40 experts from across the state donated time to present seminars and 3 international experts gave keynote presentations. Articles in local newspapers, magazines and on TV shared the interest in birds, wildlife and conservation to thousands of people across the state. The YMCA coordinated a children's art contest and activities that brought school children and their parents to the events.

TAS conducts an annual 8-week Natural Hillsborough class through USF-OLLI for retirees. Each class is a 1 hr presentation and 1 hr bird walk at a local park. Classes usually sell out at 20 participants, some of whom usually become TAS members.

2. Is your Chapter financially sound?

TAS is financially sound, and all reports and taxes have been filed.

The Festival as a separate entity also ended in the black, with enough funds remaining to pay for national ads in Bird Watcher's Digest and Living Bird print, and All About Birds on-line for this year's Festival. A total of 6 other Audubon Societies, 6 other conservation organizations, 8 local businesses and several government agencies helped to support the Festival. The sponsorships and ticket sales from the Festival were in excess of \$36,500, while the value of the in-kind donations was estimated to be over \$206,000.

3. List any innovative conservation and/or education programs that you feel are worthy of special recognition, including objectives and documented results.

In addition to the major effort of the Festival: TAS's Hooked Bird Project, led by our VP, has been working successfully with Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, several other Audubon groups, local marinas, fishing boat captains and more to reduce the number of hooked birds by educating fishermen, by the removal of cleaning tables and/or installation of carcass chutes. From a high of over 500 hooked birds, mostly pelicans, the year the project started, the numbers now needing to be rescued and rehabilitated annually are only a few dozen. The project received a grant of \$1000 from Audubon of Florida, which has been matched by Manatee and Tampa Audubons, to construct carcass chutes and/or purchase macerators to put at boat ramps to further reduce

the attraction of pelicans and other birds to fishing areas. It also received the 2017 Conservation Award from the Tampa Bay Association of Environmental Professionals.

Our Colony Watch, Eagle Watch and Raptor Rescue programs all have volunteers who are not members of TAS, or who become members after joining the programs.

We have negotiated a new agreement with the County Conservation and Environmental Lands Management Department regarding our volunteers and other activities at the Audubon Resource Center (ARC) at Lettuce Lake, one of our best county parks, and installed a new Director of Volunteer Activities at the ARC to replace the retiring previous Director. We have volunteers in the ARC every weekend, to answer questions and talk about the birds and wildlife of the park to visitors.

We worked with the management of Tampa International Airport to select designs of local birds to grace the sides of the new trains that shuttle between the terminals. One of our members spoke when the new trains were unveiled to the public.

We had booths at 7 different Earth Day, Clean Air Day or other nature-related events in the county, raising awareness and bringing in new members and donations.

We co-sponsored a month-long Nature Photography exhibit at a community college campus in Tampa for members of our Photo Club to show off their work.

Three members maintain Blue Bird Box trails. Members are invited to 'adopt a box'. A donation to the Blue Bird fund helps maintain the boxes and gives the donor a weekly report on the occupants of the box, fledgling numbers and more throughout the nesting season. Eagle Scouts help to improve and maintain the boxes.

- 4. Does your Chapter actively participate in a regional conservation committee? If so, how many representatives regularly attend most meetings.** Yes. Our Conservation Committee chair and usually one other member attend most meetings. At some meetings we have had 4 or more members in attendance, including several university students. We hosted one of the RCC meetings.

Our Conservation Committee is very active. We sent speakers and wrote letters to 6 FWC hearings for the new Critical Wildlife Areas in our vicinity. We sent speakers to the Planning Commission's and 3 Board of County Commissioners' meetings in Manatee County to object to a proposed dredging of a mangrove area for a high-rise development. Our Committee chair or president participate in the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Commission meetings. Our conservation committee members have been active writing letters regarding use of land in local state parks. Our president has been on the Citizen's Advisory Committee for the management plans of 1 state park and 2 FWC-managed areas in the county.

We help maintain a mangrove preserve area owned by the Port Authority, via clean-up days and by working with the EPC on building or trimming permits in the area.

- 5. Does your Chapter have an effective program for annual planning with defined goals and strategies to meet those goals? If so explain.** Yes. We held one board meeting with Jackie Sulek to help define and prioritize our goals as an organization and how we want to allocate our funds toward those goals. We have tried to look back to that priority list as we decide how to spend funds and spend time and effort when we consider other projects or requests. We have one board meeting each year devoted to financial discussion, and one meeting devoted to planning a wide variety of field trips and meeting speakers. We solicit member suggestions for field trips and programs at least once a year at a general meeting.