

Lake County

Dade Battle
re-enactors
ride again, H3

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The Florida scrub-jay, listed as a threatened species, is the subject of the television show 'Birding Adventures.'

By AMY C. RIPPEL
SPECIAL TO THE SENTINEL

CLERMONT

They're friendly little blue birds with larger-than-life personalities. And in a few weeks, Florida scrub-jays in Lake County will take center stage in an upcoming television show.

A crew from *Birding Adventures* television show recently wrapped up several days of filming at the Florida Scrub-Jay Trail and surrounding areas. The new program, which begins Jan. 23 on cable television, features rare and threatened birds and their locales, said James Currie, the show's host and managing director.

"Lake County is great for bird watching," Currie said. "It's got great birds and it's got birds that people will come to see from around the country."

Although the filming took place the last weekend of December, the show started coming together months ago. Greg Mihalic, the county's tourism director, said he started talking to the show's producers months ago about shooting a segment locally. Mihalic said Lake is known in bird-watching circles as a hotbed of activity.

"Bird watching is one of those things that we have that brings people to Lake County," he said.

The bird filming took place at a portion of the trail located on a 12-acre parcel at B.B. Brown's Garden in Clermont. The trail was started about six years ago as a natural habitat for the scrub-jays, which are on the federal list of threatened species.

Cathy Brown, who owns the gardens with her husband, Bruce, said it would bring more attention to the jays and, in turn, bring out more volunteers.

"I think it will be a tremendous asset in terms of visibility for the trail," she said.

"Every time you have an opportunity to have more visibility, absolutely it helps."

Brown said it was amazing to watch Currie with the birds. It was almost as if the birds knew him, she said.

"For us, the interaction he had with the wildlife was phenomenal to watch," she said.

Currie, a professional bird guide who is originally from South Africa, said he was amazed by just how friendly scrub-jays are.

TV discovers scrub-jays' star power



Jeff Aderman (left) and James Currie of 'Birding Adventures' interview Cathy Brown of Clermont on Saturday.



A fledgling scrub-jay sits on a barbed-wire fence in May 2007. The federal government lists the species as threatened.

"These birds are so trusting," he said.

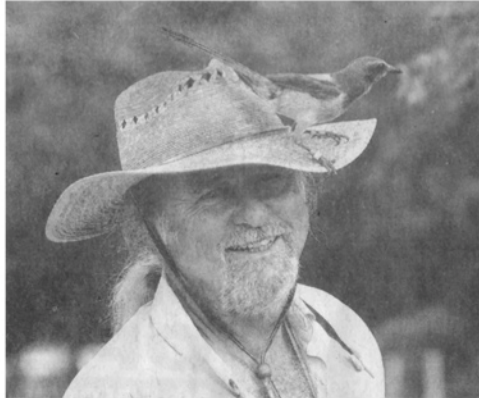
Currie said *Birding Adventures* will be shown on Fox Sports Net Florida and Comcast Southeast. The episode that features Lake County's scrub-jays is set to air the first week in February.

He said the television program not only features birds but also looks at locales in the surrounding areas. While in Lake County, the three-person crew shot footage along the Dora Canal, Lake Dora and downtown Mount Dora, among other things.

"There's a perception that bird watching is a passive hobby," Currie said. "We're trying to change that perception and make birding almost like an active sport."

"I think it will be a tremendous asset in terms of visibility for the trail. Every time you have an opportunity to have more visibility, absolutely it helps."

CATHY BROWN
CO-OWNER, B.B. BROWN'S GARDEN,
CLERMONT



A male scrub-jay demonstrates the species' celebrated friendliness by alighting on Bruce Brown's hat in this file photo from May 2007.



Volunteer Kathy Williams of Umatilla plants a scrub oak Saturday on the Florida Scrub-Jay Trail in Clermont. A crew from the television show 'Birding Adventures' spent 2 days shooting on the trail.



Jeff Aderman (left) shoots an interview with Bruce Brown of Clermont on Saturday.

PHOTOS BY **TOM BENITEZ**/ORLANDO SENTINEL

Brown and his wife, Cathy, own B.B. Brown's Garden in Clermont, a portion of which is part of the Florida Scrub-Jay Trail.



During a guided tour in December of the Florida Scrub-Jay Trail, Cathy Brown of Clermont points out native plants to Shelby, Debra, Sue and Samantha Rogers.

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