



P.O. Box 1833, VERO BEACH, FL 32961 772-567-3520 www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org

Our 50th Year Vol. 50 No. 4 April 2015

*Our Mission: To preserve and protect the animals, plants, and natural communities in Indian River County through advocacy, education, and public awareness.*

## COME HELP CELEBRATE!

**SATURDAY APRIL 25, 2015**

# CELEBRATE OUR 50th YEAR ANNIVERSARY & GRAND OPENING PELICAN ISLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY'S AUDUBON HOUSE

195 9th St. SE, (Oslo Road), Vero Beach, FL

**10:00 am - 3:00 pm**

**Opening Ceremonies at 11 am – learn about all of PIAS'S conservation accomplishments to date, how the house came to be and goals and projects for the future and a Birthday Cake.**

- See the famous Oslo Boat Ramp and the Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area
- Kayak or wade in shallow waters exploring the fish and seagrass
- Learn what Indian River County activists are doing to save it from destruction
- See our native plant landscape garden
- Take a guided nature walk on the Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area trails.
- Activities for kids: Free face painting, activities, art, and nature treasure hunt
- First Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area field trip starts at 8:00 am

## Election Results 2015

At the PIAS annual meeting March 16, 2015, members present voted unanimously for the following slate of six officers and two board members: President: Dr. Richard Baker; First Vice President, Robert Bruce; Second Vice President: Susan Boyd; Treasurer, Steven Goff; Recording Secretary, Darlene Halliday; Corresponding Secretary, Diane Morgan. Elected directors: Dr. William Loftus and Bonnie Swanson.

Our by laws require that the officers serve a two year term, and of the six elected directors, two come up for renewal each year, each serving a three year term. The president, with the advice of the board, also makes six appointments to the board, making that 18 people in total.

Nomination committee members were Dr. Graham Cox, Judy Orcutt and Karen Schuster.

## Guided Pontoon Boat Trip on Blue Cypress Lake

Pelican Island Audubon is offering guided sunrise or sunset pontoon boat rides with refreshments at Blue Cypress Lake to view the many Ospreys nesting, birds, and other wild-life Space is limited to 8 persons only each day. Cost: \$85 per person (\$25 cost & \$60 donation) Put a party of your friends together. Please call 772-567-3520 for reservations and instructions. Richard Baker & Bob Bruce, Tour Leaders.



## February Bird of the Month by Juanita Baker

Isn't this a character? What audacity and verve! The characteristic rattle call of the Belted Kingfisher makes its presence known, usually before we see it. Boaters encounter kingfishers moving just ahead along the banks of our rivers, sheltered coves, and shallow lakes and bays. The kingfisher swoops off its perch to the next bare branch overlooking its fishing area. From a perch, or after hovering in mid-air to spot a small fish or aquatic animals like crayfish, they plunge dive into the water. Notoriously difficult to photograph since the bird flies upon approach, Judge Hart Rufe has caught it with his Nikon D300, f/11, 1/1250, -0.3EV, ISO 400, 600 mm f/4, 1.7 tele-extender, focal length 1000 as it expresses its attitude.

Usually solitary, kingfishers hunt in their own hunting territory, but when breeding, both parents will defend the territory, chasing intruders. Though there is no apparent pre-mating display ritual, the male flies to the branch where the female perches, then after hesitation, mounts. After seven seconds, they both soar in a spiraling aerial climb. As the female returns to her perch, the male dips to the lake surface, then ascends spiraling, and with a somersault, descends while flashing white on its outstretched wings. Using strong bills they dig a one-to-eight foot deep nest in a riverbank. Easy access to provide fish for their hungry babies allows both to share parental duties.

The single blue-gray band across its white breast readily identifies this male; the fancier female is identical but has added decoration--a chestnut brown belt with side-bars, below the blue gray band. Kingfishers lack suitable nesting banks in our flat state, so is a scarce breeder in Florida. However, Florida has many migratory kingfishers in the fall, fishing alongside our migratory human fishers.

View a large color image and learn how to enter your own photos at [www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org](http://www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org)



Belted Kingfisher "Can you hear me now?"

© 2015 Judge Hart Rufe, St. Lucie County Audubon

*Megaceryle alcyon*

Order CORACIIFORMES – Family ALCEDINIDAE

## A great photo day by Linda Chancellor



To my left a large gray bumpy head broke the surface of the water. Then another head close to two feet wide with a mouth showing numerous teeth and a body longer than six feet. I was at Gatorland in Kissimmee, Florida. This attraction has been open to the public since 1949 and has hundreds of alligators and crocodiles on display. I had heard that Gatorland also provided a unique opportunity to photograph the reptiles and the numerous birds that call the place home.

The front of the attraction contained areas designated for viewing alligators and crocodiles of all sizes, alligator wrestling demonstrations, alligator jumping contests and a splash/water park for humans. Other wildlife on display included flamingos, parrots and peacocks. All of these were things you would expect from a Florida tourist attraction but the rear of the property held the true treasure. In 1991 Gatorland created an alligator breeding marsh surrounded by natural vegetation. The marsh has attracted over 20 different species of birds and provides them with protected nesting and roosting areas. Many birds including

blue herons, white egrets, cattle egrets, double crested cormorants and wood storks build their nests in the small trees and shrubs overhanging the edges of the marsh. The birds know they are safe from snakes and raccoons that might try to raid their nests and yet are still out of reach of the alligators.

A trail connected by boardwalks and observation towers surrounds the entire marsh. This allows visitors to observe the birds and their nests at close range, often at eye level and only a few feet from the railings. It was early June and the numerous nests held baby birds of many species and sizes. Imagine juvenile birds that stood over 2 feet tall but still have downy head feathers. A lot of them had the look that said, "I am having a bad hair day." I noticed that many of the baby birds were opening and closing their bills rapidly and emitting an unusual sound. I later learned this was a technique known as gular fluttering that helps the birds to cool their bodies during periods of warm temperatures. It truly was a great experience to photograph and observe the birds and reptiles in this unique setting.

FYI: Until June 14th Gatorland offers an option for photographers and birding enthusiasts to enter the park at 7:30 am Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday and stay until dusk every Saturday. Check them out at [www.gatorland.com](http://www.gatorland.com).

Wood Stork chick by Bob Montanaro.

Like Pelican Island Audubon on Facebook at  
[www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org](http://www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org)  
for all the latest news and information

facebook

# Our 2015 Audubon Heroes

Many folks have contributed to the success of our chapter, hundreds of volunteers participated in our rallies, developed courses, birding field trips, wrote grants for funding, continued our ongoing projects, and helped finish the Audubon House. At our annual meeting on March 16, 2015 we recognized the outstanding community contributions individuals have made not only to our chapter but to our community. These awards highlight our activities and inspire us all to work together to improve our quality of life and make Indian River County a sustainable, environmentally, and happy place to live.

**Phyllis Stockburger Award** to **Elsbeth Eibs**, longtime PIAS member, contributor, support at special events.

**Board Member of the Year** to **Bill Halliday**, for generous time and effort he put into helping build the Audubon House and his always encouraging and cheerful enthusiasm for PIAS

**Maggy Bowman/Conservationist of the Year** to **Julianne Price, Tony Brown, & Dr. Graham Cox** for persistence & helping the quality of life indicators concept progress in the Gifford community and removing 10 acres of junk and old tires next to the Gifford Youth Activity Center.

**Environmental Educator Award** to **Dr. Juanita N. Baker** for developing and teaching our birding course, bird essay

for photo of the month, constructing life-size wooden birds for a bird ring toss at festivals, and teaching kids how to draw birds.



**Environmental Citizen** to **Steve Goff** - for years of weekly removing exotic plants from Audubon House and Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area and making a new nature trail for the new Audubon House.

**Environmental Landscaping** to **Mark Borak & Robin Pelensky** at redoing the landscaping at Oak Park Terrace incorporating native plants that require less water, fertilizers, and pesticides.

**President's Award** to **Corry Westbrook and Buffy Turner** for their tremendous effort in organizing multiple efforts and to stop or delay on the County's dredge and fill Oslo Boat Ramp expansion project.

**Eleanor & Bud Kleckner Award** to **Janice Broda and Bob Bruce**, PIAS members who generously gave both their time and money to support the construction of Audubon House.

**Special Recognition** to **Lorraine Sutherland** for her organizing our refreshments at meetings and banquets and to **Susan Boyd, Bill Loftus, David Cox, & Bonnie Swanson** all on the grants committee for their efforts, initiatives, & grant writing.

## April Meetings

**April 13, 2015 ❖ 6:00 p.m.**

**Living with Sandhill Cranes: An insight to the biology of the Florida Sandhill Cranes and their current threats with Reinier Munguia**

**North Indian River County Library**

1001 Sebastian Blvd. (CR 512), Sebastian

The Florida Sandhill crane has been displaced from its natural environment as a result of urbanization. Today, this subspecies is facing challenges like loss of habitat, human disturbances and other factors causing their decline. Learn how to coexist with these magnificent birds to ensure their survival.

**April 20, 2015 ❖ 7:30 p.m.**

**Bird Biodiversity In the IRL -- from Anhingas and Avocets to Warblers and Willets with Greg Braun**

**Vero Beach Community Center**

2266 14th Avenue, Vero Beach

Greg Braun is a professional ecologist who has done a variety of bird-related work along the IRL over the last several decades will share with us his rich knowledge about the birds that use the Indian River Lagoon using photos taken at various locations from Martin County through Ponce Inlet and provides insight into the lives of our feathered friends.

**Pelican Island Audubon Society Officers & Directors**

**Officers:** President **Richard H. Baker, Ph.D.**, 1st Vice President **Bob Bruce**, 2nd Vice President **Susan Boyd**, Recording Secretary **Darlene Halliday**, Corresponding Secretary **Peter Sutherland**, Treasurer **Steve Goff** — Elected Directors: **David Cox, Ph.D. '17**, **Graham Cox, Ph.D. '17**, **Nancy Irvin '16**, **Bill Loftus, Ph.D. '15**, **Toni Robinson '16** — Appointed Board Members: **Bill Halliday**, **Tina Marchese**, **Diane Morgan**, **David Peabody**, **Bonnie Swanson**, **Corry Westbrook**

Pelican Island Audubon Society, Inc. is registered with the Florida Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Services. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Div. of Consumer Services by calling toll-free within Florida 1-800-435-7352. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the State.

**Birds migrate-and members can too!**  
**Please consider “migrating” up to one of our Sustainable Memberships- Scrub-jay (\$100) or Osprey (\$200).**

Anyone who contributes \$100 or \$200 per year to the Annual Fund is automatically recognized as a Pelican Island Audubon Society Sustaining or Double Sustaining Member. Think about a \$25 or \$50 per quarter donation, which works out to only \$2 to \$4 a week to support our mission.

Sustaining Members are critical to the Society. If every Society member contributed \$100 or \$200 every year, PIAS could increase its efforts to help fulfill our mission in Indian River County and support the continued growth of our programs. This is a tax-deductible contribution to a 501(c)(3) organization and includes your membership renewal to Pelican Island Audubon!

- \$100 Florida Scrub-Jay Level       \$200 Osprey Level

Other Annual Membership Options:

- \$20 Individual       \$30 Family

Is this a membership renewal?  Yes  No

- Join National Audubon Society for an additional \$20 a year.

- I want to make an additional tax deductible donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please send your name and address along with a check payable to the “Pelican Island Audubon Society” to:

**Pelican Island Audubon Society**

**P.O. Box 1833, Vero Beach, FL 32961**

Credit card payments call (772) 567-3520 M-F 9AM-1PM

Please email us if there is a local environmental issue which concerns you at [piaudubon@bellsouth.net](mailto:piaudubon@bellsouth.net)

**Plant of the Month by Janice Broda**

Tropical sage (*Salvia coccinea*) is one of the easiest native wildflowers to grow and is planted at the Audubon House entryway. Red, red flowers festoon this plant throughout the year.

Tropical sage tolerates a wide variety of soil (acid or alkaline) and light conditions. When grown in full sun, this wonderful wildflower will be more compact in growth and will flower more profusely. In shadier conditions, its growth habit will be lankier and flowering will be reduced in volume.

This plant goes by many common names, including scarlet sage, blood sage, Texas sage, and hummingbird sage. Its red tubular flowers are attractive to hummingbirds, butterflies (including larger butterflies like swallowtails and sulphurs), native bees, and other pollinators. This plant does re-seed freely, and I have seen cardinals and morning doves seeking out its seeds in our yard.

Its genus name *Salvia* refers to healing, but the healing properties of this plant are not well-documented. Its species name *coccinea* means red.

A member of the mint family (*Laminaceae*), tropical sage has opposite leaves and square stems covered with hairs. In sun, tropical sage grows to be about two feet tall. In shade, it is likely to be double that height.

With its striking red flowers, a bed of sage can enliven your landscape with color and life. If you could only plant one native wildflower in your yard, tropical sage would be your best choice for attracting birds, butterflies, bees, and other pollinators.



**Stunning Sage**

We would like to thank the following people for helping at our booth at the ELC's Ecofest and the Wildlife Festival: Sheila Lahan, Ann Malsbry, Peter Sutherland, Bonnie Swanson, Bill & Becky Loftus, Bill & Darlene Halliday, Deb & Dan Farley, Wayne Osborne, Nancy Irvin, Debra West, Graham Cox, and John Erickson.