

Pelican Island Audubon Society

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- founded in 1964 to serve Indian River County -



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

Our 53rd Year Vol. 53 No. 9 December 2017

Our Mission: To preserve and protect the animals, plants, and natural communities, and the land and water on which they depend in Indian River County through education, advocacy, and public awareness.

You are invited to the
Annual Potluck at Audubon House
Monday, December 11, 2017 from 6 - 8 p.m.

Pelican Island Audubon Society invites you to our annual potluck holiday party at our very own Audubon House! As it will be dark and parking is on the street, consider bringing a flashlight. Please bring a favorite potluck dish for 6-8 people. Refreshments will be provided. We have lots of electrical outlets for cookers and warmers. And please bring your own utensils and plates to save paper. And the Pelican Nest Gift Shop will be open from 5-9 p.m. for your holiday gifts and possibly something for yourself. We have lots of one of a kind items and great stocking stuffer gifts for children of all ages! Please stop in and support Pelican Island Audubon!



**Nature Education, Advocacy, & Volunteer
Opportunity Classes: How to be an Audubon Activist!**

Our second free monthly class on Dec 15, 9 am-12:00 pm, is about Scrub-Jays (Bob Montanaro) and their Habitats (Ellie Van Os) followed by a South ORCA Scrub Walk that includes a view of our Eagle nest (Ken Gonyo). Join us! Open to all.

Field Trips For more information, call 772-567-3520
or email piaudubon@yahoo.com

December 8 - Friday - Indrio Savannahs - Guide: Diane Morgan - Start time 9:00AM - This preserve was purchased by St. Lucie County to protect the savannahs wetland system, this site features three miles of trails that cover the 297-acre site, including an observation tower and a fishing pier. The 35-acre lake is designated as a "catch-and-release" area. Location: Indrio Savannahs: 5275 Tozour Road, Fort Pierce - No signup required.

December 16 - Saturday - South Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area (ORCA) - Guide: Barbara Riebe - Start time 9:00AM - South ORCA, located on the south side of East Oslo Road is comprised of approximately 70 acres of maritime hammock, xeric uplands, and impounded wetlands. The new link connection trail also traverses mesic hammock and a disturbed area through reclaimed abandoned citrus groves. There is an active Bald Eagle nest on the site. Location: South ORCA: Audubon House, 195 9th Street SE (Oslo Road) - No signup required.

January 5 - Friday - Toni Robinson Waterfront Trail - Offered in partnership with the Indian River Land Trust - Guide: Nancy Soucy - Start time 9:00AM - This 50-acre block of conservation lands is situated on the west side of the Lagoon a mile south of the Wabasso Causeway. It contains oak trees, scrub forest, mangroves, and beautiful views of the Indian River Lagoon. Location: Toni Robinson Waterfront Trail: 79th Street, east off U.S. Highway 1 - No signup required.

**Transforming Landscapes
for a Sustainable Future
Conference**

January 19 & 20, 2018

at the

Emerson Center

1590 27th Avenue, Vero Beach

Many species could live in sustainable harmony with us if we redesign our landscapes to accommodate those species by providing food, shelter, and nesting sites using native plant species. Our conference is an opportunity for you, as a builder, landscaper, homeowner association board member, and/or homeowner in Indian River County, to learn how to landscape in a way that is sustainable, cost-effective and helps enhance our quality of life and our community's health.

Learn More At

www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org

Masthead photo: Anhinga by Bob Montanaro.

Bird of the Month by Juanita Baker

Roseate Spoonbill - *Platalea ajaja*

Can we ever have enough of Roseate Spoonbills?

Notice the smooth pale bill and white, fully feathered, fuzzy head and pale pink wings. These features are unlike the adult spoonbill whose head is bald and bill has a rough texture, thus indicating that this is a juvenile. Standing on branches within dense foliage, this youngster is likely near its birth nest, situated on a protected island with available shade. Mating and nest building begins from December to January in the St. Augustine area where Arlene Willnow photographed this Roseate Spoonbill. Within 10-15 days of building the nest, the female lays her eggs and incubates them for 22 days until hatching. The newly hatched chick has a straight bill less than an inch long. The bill starts widening and flattening at the tip by nine days to become "spatulated," like a spoon. For two months, the juvenile depends upon both parents for feeding but will learn to swing its bill back and forth while wading through shallow water. Its wide spoonbill contains fine sensors that detect moving prey. On sensing fishes or invertebrates, the bill snaps shut with such a fast reaction time that the prey is captured. This photo, taken in March, illustrates the Spoonbill's rapid growth from tiny chick to nearly adult size in just a few months.



Rapid Growth! © Arlene Willnow
St. Augustine, FL
Nikon P510, f./4.8, 1/400 sec, ISO 100

Last year, at the Indian River County Spoonbill colonies on two islands near Fellsmere, between the Stickmarsh and the T.M. Goodwin Wildlife Management Area, water levels were apparently too high for spoonbills to find food easily for their young, so their nesting was delayed a month or so. With all our rain this year, this timing likely will repeat. Roseate Spoonbills also nest with pelicans, herons, egrets, and other colonial birds in other Indian River County rookeries like Pelican Island and Oslo Island in the Lagoon.

Amazing Wood Storks by Linda Chancellor

The November Pelican Island Audubon program:

"Wood Stork response to human induced landscape changes", presented by Betsy Evans, brought back memories of the first time I saw a wood stork. Twenty-six years ago, shortly after moving to Florida, I spotted a large three foot tall bird standing along the canal near our development. The bright white feathers with black tips were attractive but the head of the bird was frightening.

The head reminded me of the bald head of a vulture or at least something very prehistoric looking. No doubt about it - it was ugly! There were no feathers on the wrinkled skin of the head and neck. The bill was very large and heavy looking. I later discovered that there was more to these birds than meets the eye. I discovered the educational booklet on Wood Storks published in 1985 by the Florida Power and Light



Company. They had published five educational booklets on endangered species that live in Florida. Since then, with new appreciation, I have enjoyed observing wood storks as they fly in low, and land on the narrow strips of land between the road and canals in Vero. Recently I observed a wood stork that appeared to be sitting beside the canal. His bent legs did not allow him to sit directly on the ground. I noticed that his knees bent backward and his feet pointed forward. I thought how uncomfortable he looked. When I returned home I decided to look up the anatomy of a wood stork's legs.

FYI: The anatomy of a wood stork's legs are different from human legs. Their knee is located closer to the body hidden by feathers and the upper leg is similar to our shin. The part that bends like a knee is really the ankle and the lower bone is connected to the toes. All birds walk on their toes and have the same leg structure.

Take part in the Christmas Bird Count

It is that time of year again for the South Brevard/North Indian River Counties Christmas Count!

- **Date:** Saturday, December 30, 2017
- **Count Dinner:** Immediately following count at Marsh Landing in Fellsmere
- **Fee:** NONE! If you plan to participate in this year's count, please RSVP to the following email address: southbrevardcbc@gmail.com





Proposed “Improvements” for the Oslo Boat Ramp will harm the Indian River Lagoon

In 2014, over 2,300 citizens signed petitions against the Oslo Road boat ramp dredge-and-fill project. Over 100 protested before the Indian River County Administration and then filled the commissioner chambers. Anglers from the Coastal Conservation Association, professional fishing guides, boaters from the Power Squadron and kayak renters, Marine Resources Council, Save the Manatee Club, Sierra Club, Audubon, and scientists like Drs. Grant Gilmore and Edie Widder raised serious questions about this project to pave the road, expand the parking, and dredge the channel. These groups and individuals made it very clear to the Commissioners why this critical habitat is so important for the gamefish. Few spoke in favor of expanding the boat ramp area. The commissioners voted 3-2 to postpone a decision for three to five years.

Now exactly three years later, the Indian River County Commission voted 4-1 to revisit paving the road and parking lot, dredging the channel, and installing more channel markers. Let's review some remarks at the October 24, 2017 commission meeting: “Clearing some of the exotics” should mean removing exotics like Brazilian pepper, not mangroves (native plants) that now line the road and parking area. “Removing the muck” should not mean dredging over 270 feet to remove sediment that has never been dredged before setting the precedent for future dredging to the Intracoastal Waterway so bigger boaters can plow through this pristine fish nursery area. “Paving the road” will lead to having larger trucks with boat trailers and traffic speeding down this road, thus justifying building further large boat parking into the mangroves.

“If we don't move forward (revisiting the project), then we really aren't committed to helping the lagoon” said Commissioner O'Bryan in the November 7, 2017 Press Journal article. The lagoon has the healthiest seagrass

beds in our county surrounding the Oslo boat ramp area. Why ruin it with paving and dredging even more? “If it ain't broke why fix it?”

Why does the county want to spend tax dollars to dredge a new channel? It allows larger boats (eventually) to use the ramp. Small boats and low impact wading anglers do fine with existing shallow depths. It harms the best critical nursery habitat for spotted seatrout, red drum, snook and tarpon. It is in a Federal Shellfish Area where by law disruption is not allowed without obtaining an exception, and is in an aquatic preserve, near a bird rookery and surrounded by a conservation area. The county's own Manatee Protection Plan is violated due to the project causing more boat traffic and thus more manatee deaths in the county's largest manatee area. Dredging produces a longer channel allowing more sediment to accumulate.

The existing road has not harmed seagrasses for the last 70 years. Paving will allow more oil, grease, rubber and other pollutants to run off the impervious surface into the water. The county already has nearly twice the number of public boat ramps to meet State recommendations. High impact users with big, deep boats can use existing boat ramps at Riverside Park, MacWilliams Park, Round Island Park, and the North Causeway Park (St Lucie County). The county can work with the City of Vero Beach to provide a marina at the old power plant with fewer sensitive natural resources, without harming manatees, healthy seagrass beds, fish nurseries, and mangroves!

The U.S. Corps of Engineers has NOT approved the project. Please call or write Andrew Phillips (321-504-3771 x 14), Project Manager, ACOE, North Permits Branch, Department of the Army, 400 High Point Dr., Suite 600, Cocoa, FL 32926 and ask they not approve this project.

This project creates a severe environmental problem, and also a social, economic, and moral issue. Please, on behalf of the fishes, manatees, seagrass, birds, and taxpayers, help STOP this project.



An Invitation To All Members:



You are invited to the Audubon Advocates Graduation Ceremony on December 14, 2017 at Citrus Elementary School from 6:00-8:00PM. The Audubon Avocates will present the program. A pizza dinner will be provided. We hope that you will join our party to encourage these youngest Audubon members to become lifelong supporters of protecting our wonderful planet.

RSVP is required by December 8, 2017 by calling 772-567-3520 or email piaudubon@yahoo.com.

Support
Pelican Island Audubon.
Shop our new nature store at
Audubon House.
Open Wednesday & Saturday
10AM - 3PM

Audubon invites you to join our 2018 Intensive Beginning Birding Course with Juanita Baker, Ph.D. & David Simpson.

Learn basic knowledge to understand birds through four "indoor field trips" (Feb 6, 8, 20, 22, 6-8:30 pm) with many beautiful photographs representing Indian River County's variety of Bird Families, plus two "outdoor field trips" (Sat. Feb 10, 7 am-12 pm & Sun. Feb 25, 7 am-1 pm) to local birding Hotspots. Learn what to look for, understand and appreciate our Florida wonders. Limited to 30 participants. Learn more & sign up at www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org. \$95 for members.

Join or renew your membership in Pelican Island Audubon Society

Membership benefits include:

- Monthly Peligram newsletter
- Monthly meetings on the environment and wildlife
- Birding field trips led by expert guides
- Opportunities to volunteer to help the environment
-and much more!

For more information and to join, visit

www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org

or mail in the application ⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨

Pelican Island Audubon Membership

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

\$25 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

or join online using your credit card at:

<http://www.pelicanislandaudubon.org/membership.html>

Questions: call 772-567-3520 or e-mail piaudubon@yahoo.com

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