

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 52st Year Vol. 52 No. 2 February 2016

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

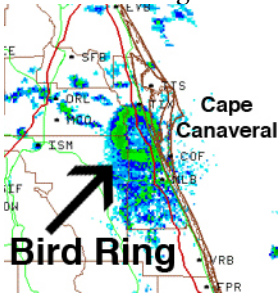
February 8, 2016 ❖ 6:00 p.m.

**Radar Tracking of Bird Migration
with Frederick Mosher, Ph.D.**

North Indian River County Library

1001 Sebastian Blvd. (CR 512), Sebastian

One man's trash is another man's treasure. The National Weather Service radar network is used to track rain patterns. However, the radar will detect anything in the air: precipitation, airplanes, bugs, or birds. Meteorologists are trained to recognize bird patterns and ignore them. However these bird radar patterns can provide useful information on bird migrations and hot spots. The attached image shows a "bird ring" which occurred at sunrise. A trip to the location showed large numbers of tree swallows. The talk will present information on how to identify birds on weather radar and examples of different bird patterns.



Dr. Frederick Mosher teaches meteorology at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach. He currently teaches classes on Aviation Weather, Weather Instruments, Physical Meteorology, and Weather on Other Planets. Prior to coming to Embry-Riddle 12 years ago, he worked for the National Weather Service at the Aviation Weather Center and the Storm Prediction Center.

February 22, 2016 ❖ 6:00 p.m.

Climate Change with Rachel Stewart

Riverhouse - 305 Acacia Road, Vero Beach

Rachel Stewart, a Climate Reality Leader with the Climate Reality Project will give an overview on climate change and the urgent action needed across every level of society to find a solution to the crisis in creating a healthy, sustainable, and prosperous future by making a planet-wide shift from dirty fossil fuels to clean, reliable, and affordable renewable energy. The Climate Reality Project is a diverse group of passionate individuals who have come together to help solve the greatest challenge of our time. They are cultural leaders, marketers, organizers, scientists, storytellers and more, and we are committed to building a better future together.

February 15, 2016 ❖ 7:30 p.m.

**Photographing Wildlife and Florida's
Natural Places with John Nelson**

Vero Beach Community Center

2266 14th Avenue, Vero Beach



John Nelson is President of Audubon of Martin County and the voice of The Audubon Moment which is currently heard on 4 public radio stations in Florida including WQCS-FM 88.9. Additionally, John is a certified Florida Master Naturalist, Toyota Audubon Together Green Fellow, and wildlife videographer and photographer who has shot wildlife video for Florida Audubon, and in 2013 he contributed video footage to National Geographic's "World's Deadliest" television series. His production company (Florida's Wild Outdoors) has also produced educational videos for environmental non-profits including the Manatee Education & Observation Center of Fort Pierce, FL. John has taught a number of courses on wildlife and nature photography through the University of Florida's "Florida Master Naturalist" program and Indian River State College's Felden Learning Institute.

Upcoming Events & Field Trips

Call 772-567-3520 for reservations and directions.

Feb 6 - Orlando Wetlands Park with Steve Goff

March 2 - Pelican Island NWR with Graham Cox

Masthead photo: Boat-tailed Grackle by Bob Montanaro.

Bird of the Month by Juanita Baker

How graceful and elegant is the Mute Swan! We associate them with music and dance. Partners for life, in mating rituals, they synchronically swim. With S curved necks bending and turning, white wings held tucked, yet feathers fluffed and tail participating as they pirouette together, dipping their heads in the water, and stretching their necks high, all in sync. Then suddenly, they turn in the other direction, seemingly on cue, engaging in a magnificent water ballet.

In North America, humans in the 1880s were so fond of the swans; they introduced them to lakes and ponds in their city parks where they thrived. Mute Swans, native to Eurasia, had few natural predators, and quickly spread to the countryside. Populations heavily concentrated in Michigan and the Great Lakes area, then spread to Eastern states southward along the Atlantic Coast. In Florida, the recent Breeding Bird Atlas reported six confirmed nesting areas, while eBird.org shows sightings along both coasts, especially in the Orlando, and Lakeland areas. Douglas Lange photographed this Mute Swan in the reflection pool at Bok Tower Gardens, Lake Wales.



Mute Swan © 2015 Douglas Lange Photo: Sony DSLR A-100, 70-210 f4 1/320 sec. f4.5 +0.3 EV ISO 100

Mute Swans, large waterbirds, are voracious eaters. Males consume 35% and females 44% of their body weight per day, primarily feeding on aquatic plants. They use their bills to skim the surface plants or thrust their neck deep into the water, upending themselves to reach the bottom to uproot plants. With their appetite, as an invasive species, they may damage Florida's ecology, particularly aquatic habitats. Along with human-generated pollution, and agricultural, suburban and urban development destroying Florida's natural habitats, introduction of aggressive foreign wildlife completes the destruction. Since these swans tolerate being near to humans and thrive in degraded habitat inundated by invasive plants, Mute Swans may displace some of our native bird species. More of natural Florida is lost forever.

View a large color image and learn how to enter your own photos at www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org

Winter Shorebirds by Linda Chancellor



The red and purple flags were a warning of high surf and the possibility of dangerous marine life. Pounding surf had left two distinct wrack lines on the beach. The upper wrack line was composed of dried brown seagrass and the lower wrack line, left by the current ebbing tide, was a 12 inch wide swatch of chartreuse green manatee seagrass. I was searching the wrack for sea beans and shells but had only spotted two Portuguese man-of-wars

and a couple of plastic bottle lids when I noticed several gulls and a group of sanderlings. They were hunkered down in the sand above the upper wrack line. Below them a lone ruddy turnstone was checking out the newly deposited seagrass.

Ruddy turnstones are one of the easiest shorebirds to identify. They are a short stocky bird with orange legs, a white belly, mottled brown feathers and dark markings on their breast. A small piece of brown Sargassum weed had caught his eye and he used his wedge shape bill to turn it over and over as he examined it from all sides. Losing interest he ran ahead, stopped and began to jab up and down with his bill. If it was edible why were the gulls not more interested. I didn't want to bother him but my curiosity got to me. I crept closer and he backed away. Using a small mangrove propagule, that was laying nearby, I poked at what looked like a live oyster without its shell. There was a dark spot in the center and the edges looked almost transparent like a slice of raw fish. I dropped it and backed away. He had been watching me the whole time for he scurried back to claim it but his interest did not last long for he soon continued his search among the seagrass.

FYI: Ruddy turnstones can be observed in Florida during the months November to May and then they migrate to the arctic tundra to breed. They have a large global distribution and can be found on many shorelines that fall between 30 degrees north and south of the equator.

Ruddy Turnstone photo by Bob Montanaro

We are looking for volunteers to help, IN OUR BOOTH, at :

- ELC's EcoFest, on Sunday, March 6, 2016 from 10:00am-4:30pm
- Pelican Island Wildlife Festival, on Saturday, March 12, 2016 from 9:00am-4:30pm

Calling all PIAS members!

Volunteers are needed to help set up and breakdown booth and to assist the children with a couple of games and greet event-goers. Whether you would like to help all day or have an hour or two to spend, we could really use your help. These are booth fun events. Please call Darlene at 772-713-0917 to volunteer.

PIAS Spoonbill Watch to start in February

by *Graham Cox, Ph.D.*

National Audubon's Birds and Climate Change science team has awarded Pelican Island Audubon Society a \$5,000 grant to spread the word about the effects of climate change and sea level rise on bird populations on the Treasure Coast. It is part of a national effort to explain the changes in bird habitat and bird ranges as climate change is taking hold.

There are two parts to the PIAS project. First is to develop a set of power point presentations available for discussions in classrooms for students of all ages, and also available on the PIAS web site and for chapter and public presentations. This part of the project is now under way.

The second part of the project we are calling Spoonbill Watch, modeled on JayWatch and Eagle Watch and also on our on-going Osprey monitoring at Blue Cypress Lake.

With advice and assistance from Dr. Jerry Lorenz, head of research for Audubon Florida and director of the Tavernier Research Center, who has been studying Roseate Spoonbills for many years, PIAS will begin a formal survey of Indian River County spoonbill colonies and sightings in February. Board members Bill Loftus and David Cox will need help from chapter volunteers. In due course we will bring in our neighboring chapters and expand this survey to the length of the Treasure Coast. Their first task is to develop the survey protocol and adapt the Everglades survey form so that we collect data in a way that is consistent with the survey work being done by Dr. Lorenz in Southern Florida.

Spoonbills have been moving north from the Everglades as habitat conditions there have been changing. This will be a long term project to identify where they are now roosting and foraging in our area, starting with a survey at T.M. Goodwin Waterfowl Management Area in Fellsmere.

In the power point presentations we are including a variety of other bird species to tell the story about climate change and sea level rise on the Treasure Coast. Basic information about the expected range changes for 588 North American birds over the next 60 plus years can be found at National Audubon's web site, Audubon.org/climate, as well as in the Sept/Oct. 2014 issue of Audubon Magazine. In this Audubon report Audubon scientists listed 314 bird species as being on the brink as climate change affects their current habitats and shifts their ranges north or inland.

Please contact the PIAS office if you are interested in being part of the Spoonbill Watch or willing to work with the power point presentations to talk to other groups or organizations in the county or on the Treasure Coast.

Roseate Spoonbill photo by Bob Montanaro.



PIAS Board elections at March 21, 2016 annual meeting

Nomination and election of PIAS Board members and one PIAS officer will take place at the annual meeting March 21, 2016, at the Vero Beach Community Center. The meeting starts at 7:30 p.m.

Two out of the six elected board seats are up for election each year. All the six officers – president, two vice presidents, treasurer, secretary and recording secretary -- were elected to two year terms in March, 2015; however, there is one vacancy for second vice president to be filled at this

March meeting.

We are also seeking nominations for candidates for the six appointed director positions. These appointments are made each year by the president in consultation with the board officers.

For information and to suggest candidates contact the PIAS office. Nominating committee members are Graham Cox, Judy Orcutt and Sharon Marabel.

Pelican Island Audubon Society Officers & Directors
Officers: President **Richard H. Baker, Ph.D.**, Vice President **Bob Bruce**, Recording Secretary **Darlene Halliday**, Corresponding Secretary **Diane Morgan**, Treasurer **Steve Goff** — Elected Directors: **David Cox, Ph.D. '17**, **Graham Cox, Ph.D. '17**, **Nancy Irvin '16**, **Bill Loftus, Ph.D. '18**, **Toni Robinson '16**, **Bonnie Swanson '18** — Appointed Board Members: **Donna Halleran**, **Bill Halliday**, **Tina Marchese**, **Karen Schuster**
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.

Plant of the Month by Janice Broda

Knitting Needle Plant

Southern needleleaf (*Tillandsia setacea*) looks like a clump of green or reddish smooth knitting needles in the treetops of moist hammocks and swamps. Also known as needle-leaf air plant and quill-leaved wild pine, this epiphyte is quite distinctive.



Epiphytes are plants that grown on other plants (or objects) without harming them. Many epiphytes, including southern needleleaf, are bromeliads, members of the Bromeliaceae family, sometimes called the pineapple family for its well-known terrestrial member. Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) is likely the best-known and widest ranging epiphyte in the U.S. Its grey-green, somewhat curled strands drape from live oak (*Quercus virginiana*) trees throughout the southeastern U.S.



A tropical epiphyte, that ranges as far north as Volusia County in Florida, southern needleleaf is distinguished by its usually dense clusters of smooth and straight “needles” that can be up to 12” long. In shade its “needles” are bright green, but in full sun they appear to be sunburned and take on a dramatic reddish or maroon hue.

Delicate violet flowers on long stalks bloom in the spring and are easily overlooked due to their treetop locations. The ensuing tiny pod splits open to reveal tiny seeds equipped with silken sails. Winds disperse the seeds widely, though it is not unusual to find limbs of live oaks carpeted with southern needleleaf plants that have germinated in the deeply furrowed bark very near to their parent plant.

Photos: Janice Broda

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

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