

Pelican Island Audubon Society

Peligrum

- 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. 2 February 2017

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

February 6, 2017 ❖ 6:00 p.m.

Indian River Lagoon:

Problems and Potential Solutions
with Duane De Freese, Ph.D.

River House - 305 Acacia Road, Vero Beach

Dr. Duane De Freese currently serves as the Executive Director of the newly formed IRL Council, a special district of the State of Florida, and host of the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program. The goals of the Indian River Lagoon National Estuary Program are to attain and maintain water and sediment of sufficient quality to support a healthy estuarine lagoon system along with a functioning, healthy ecosystem which supports endangered and threatened species, fisheries, commerce and recreation while achieving heightened public awareness and coordinated interagency management of the Indian River Lagoon ecosystem. Concurrent with this is identifying and developing long-term funding sources for prioritized projects and programs to preserve, protect, restore and enhance the Indian River Lagoon.

Dr. De Freese will discuss the current health of the Lagoon, identifying its current problems, and suggest possible solutions. Dr. De Freese received a B.S. in Zoology, University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island in 1976, a M.S. in Marine Biology, Florida Institute of Technology in 1982, and a Ph.D. in Marine Biology, Florida Institute of Technology in 1988. Through an active public speaking schedule and community leadership, Dr. De Freese is changing public perception about the value of ocean and coastal research and conservation. His numerous public presentations and workshops have a central message – “our oceans and coasts are an engine that drives the economy and quality of life of Florida and the nation.”

February 13, 2017 ❖ 6:00 p.m.

Nature Photography
with George Bollis

North Indian River County Library
1001 Sebastian Blvd. (CR 512), Sebastian

Local award-winning photographer George Bollis presents a program of his nature photography along with providing a few tips on how to take better nature photographs.

February 20, 2017 ❖ 7:00 p.m.

Swallow-tailed Kite Conservation:
27 Years of Applied Research
with Ken Meyer, Ph.D.

Vero Beach Community Center
2266 14th Avenue, Vero Beach

Kenneth D. Meyer, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor at the Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation at the University of Florida and a co-founder, Research Ecologist, and Executive Director of Avian Research and Conservation Institute (ARCI) in Gainesville. In the course of conducting 38 years of field research and producing management and conservation plans, Meyer and his team have captured, radio-tagged, and studied the behavior and ecology of over 830 individuals of 17 species in eastern Canada, Maine, North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Mexico, Belize, Brazil, Bahamas, British Virgin Islands, and Jamaica.

Avian Research and Conservation Institute (ARCI) is a publicly supported nonprofit corporation [501(c)(3)] whose mission is to conduct rigorous research on vulnerable species of birds that will stimulate and inform effective conservation action. Of interest to Audubon members is ARCI's research on the nesting and wintering ecology, habitat selection, demography, migration, and conservation biology of Swallow-tailed Kites, along with numerous other species including the avian communities of south Florida's pinelands.

Upcoming Events & Field Trips

Call 772-567-3520 for reservations and directions or sign up online at www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org

Feb 4 - Pelican Island Audubon Society - Guide: Joe Pescatore

Feb 12 - Fort Drum Marsh Conservation Area - Guide: George Glenn

Feb 18 - STA 5/6 Driving Birding Tour in Hendry County

Feb 22 - Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area/Joe Overstreet Landing - Guides: Carolyn Cimino and Bill Loftus

March 16 - Green Cay Nature Center - Guide: Bill Loftus

Masthead photo: Painted Bunting by Bob Montanaro.

Bird of the Month by Juanita Baker

What a gorgeous blue, blending in with sky and waters! The color camouflages giving some protection for the Little Blue Heron from predators and allowing it to better hunt along the edge of a pond for small fish and aquatic animals less detection. We often overlook its darker form against nature's background when it is alert, lurking in solitary, hunting stealthily and slowly along the shallow edges of ponds and wetlands, then darting after prey. However, Edward McCool out for a stroll too, was able to photograph this Little Blue using his Sony Camera a6000, 1/500, F8.0, ISO400, Raw+J, 16:9. Lens 70-210mm.



*Stroll at Sunrise LITTLE BLUE HERON.
NOVEMBER 2016 © Edward McCool*

A member of the heron family with dagger-like bills, their long necks reach the surface of the water matching the length of their legs. Their medium long legs permit them to forage for bigger aquatic animals and fish in waters deeper than shorebirds' stubby legs allow. With their 6th vertebrae having a unique shape, they curve their neck in an S shape and thus fly with retracted necks, unlike the stretched-out necks of other similar wading water birds like cranes, storks, spoonbills, and ibis. These herons, often solitary feeders during the day, yet may hunt in cooperation with one or two other species as each stirs up prey for the other. However, at night they gather in mixed flocks to roost on safer islands with added vigilance protection in numbers. They breed colonially in rookeries. In preparation for breeding season, they grow especially long plumes to attract a mate and indicate their readiness. Birds see in the UV spectrum, and especially in breeding, evidently gender differences are perceptible to them, but not discernable to us. Do look carefully for these beautiful Little Blue Herons along the edges of waters you pass by.

So many birds! by Linda Chancellor

2,863, 2,864, 2,865, 2,866. Someone asked, "Did you see the Whooping Crane?" Darn I lost count again! I had come to see the Sandhill Cranes and according to the visitor center there were close to 8,000 of them in the wetlands at the end of the Chaluá trail at Paynes Prairie. We had started out around 9:40 am, from the parking lot, and took off along the wide trail. One side was bordered by a small wetland area and canal. Signs warned of dangerous wildlife including alligators, bison and wild horses that are descended from Spanish stock.

I was glad the temperature had been a low of 41 that morning hoping that would keep the alligators at bay. The banks were lined with the giant reptiles, with the sun glinting off their dark black backs, soaking up what little warmth they could. During our three hour walk wading birds were spotted frequently and eventually we tallied twenty-three bird species that day. But I had come to see the Sandhill Cranes. After walking for about thirty minutes I could

hear faintly their calls and then the sound began to increase. We rounded the corner and there they were. Hundreds, no thousands of them. Many of them were feeding in the muck, some just standing there, a couple would squabble and flap wings but mostly it was just the constant sound of their unusual voices. Now and then a group would take flight or others would fly in and land. They did not seem to be bothered by people walking along the trail. We approached the raised platform that looked out over the entire wetlands. A couple of experienced birders pointed out the lone Whooping Crane among the masses of sandhills. It was a sight I will never forget. As we turned to leave the platform a group of the wild horses with a colt had blocked our return. We waited patiently for them to move on and then continued our walk back to the parking lot.

FYI - The Sandhill Crane's unique vocal sound is due to a coiled trachea. The birds are usually at Paynes Prairie until mid February but one should check with the visitor center before going.

Artist at Work!

Come help or watch the progress of the
Audubon House Habitat Mural
Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday
from 1-5pm!!



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Like Pelican Island Audubon on Facebook at
www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org
for all the latest news and information

You can make a difference for our Environment!



What can you do to help protect our local environment? You can take action on at least three important issues affecting our environment that will be decided in the coming weeks at the Federal, State, and local level:

1. **Scott Pruitt is a Dangerous Pick to head the EPA.** David Yarnold, National Audubon Society's president and CEO, says the former Oklahoma

Attorney General is unfit to head up the agency. Audubon opposes the nomination of Scott Pruitt to lead the Environmental Protection Agency because of his extensive record seeking to weaken or end the very protections he should be enforcing on our behalf. Pruitt has consistently opposed the work of EPA and especially its work on climate change. David Yarnold writes: "In the largest scientific investigation of birds and climate change, Audubon found that more than half of all birds in the U.S and Canada are likely to lose 50 percent or more of their current ranges by 2080 unless the greenhouse-gas emissions that cause global warming are significantly reduced. We need to do more to protect our environment, not less. The EPA does life-saving work for the birds we cherish, the wild places we treasure and the families we love. The Senate should not hand the keys to the EPA to a man who has shown by his words and his actions that he has every intention to undo nearly a half-century of progress." **Please email and/or call Senator Bill Nelson (202) 224-5274, bill@billnelson.senate.gov and Senator Marco Rubio (202) 224-3041 and urge them to oppose Scott Pruitt's nomination and to demand a nominee who is committed to protecting our clean air and water and implementing common-sense solutions to address climate change.**

2. **"Buy the Land and Move the Water South."** Eric Draper, Audubon Florida Executive Director, strongly supports Florida Senate President Joe Negron's plan to buy land south of Lake Okeechobee to eventually be utilized as a reservoir to store and clean Lake Okeechobee water. Rather than send polluted water to our beautiful estuaries, this project would allow governmental agencies to send the polluted water south where it would be cleaned, and later released into the Everglades during periods of drought. This was the natural flow of the water before the Herbert Hoover Dike was built along the rim of Lake Okeechobee and water was pushed east into the St. Lucie Estuary and Indian River Lagoon and west into the Caloosahatchee River rather than south. The money is available thanks to the 75% of Florida Voters who passed Amendment One! However, even though the sugar industry once supported this concept and even executed option purchase agreements with the State of Florida to sell the land, because sugar prices have risen, they no longer want to move forward with this needed project. They have assembled a massive team of lobbyists walking the halls of the Legislature trying to convince our elected officials to do their bidding. Unfortunately, special interests have been the big winners in years' past, even over the interests of our citizens and natural environment. We must change this! Senator Negron is from the Stuart area that has witnessed much of the damage done from releases of polluted Lake Okeechobee water, and he faces a tough fight to get

this passed by the Florida Legislature and Governor Scott. **Please email and/or call the following: The most important is the Speaker of the House Richard Corcoran, (850) 717-5650, richard.corcoran@myfloridahouse.gov, Governor Rick Scott (850)-717-9337, rick.scott@eog.myflorida.com, Representative Erin Grall (772) 778-5005 erin.grall@myfloridahouse.gov, Florida State Senator Debbie Mayfield (321) 409-2025. Tell them to "Buy the Land and Move the Water South!"**

3. **Create a Vero Beach Stormwater Utility.** At a recent joint meeting between the City of Vero Beach Finance and Utility Commissions, Commissioners voted 11-1 to support the creation of a Vero Beach Stormwater Utility. Communities up and down the Treasure and Space Coasts are laying the foundation to provide funding sources for necessary water-quality projects. The cities of Melbourne, Stuart, Ft. Pierce, Sebastian, and Fellsmere have created stormwater utilities, and voters in Brevard County recently passed a ½-cent sales tax to fund lagoon oriented projects. Vero Beach derives a significant economic value from the Lagoon, and yet only 34% of the City's urban area has any form of stormwater treatment. The areas of the City drained by the Lateral E canal currently have no stormwater treatment.

Penny wise and pound foolish is not a viable policy. We cannot expect other jurisdictions to clean up their sources of pollution while we continue to foul the Lagoon with nutrients. City engineers have developed a five-year plan to treat an additional ~20% of the City's urban area at a projected cost of \$2.3 million dollars. While that is not an insignificant sum, given the substantial increase in stormwater-treatment- area coverage, it is a bargain. To achieve this, the City needs a funding source: the creation of the stormwater utility is a step in the right direction.

For too long communities have profited from the economic value created by the Indian River Lagoon without adequately funding projects to protect this major economic driver. A recent study estimates the total economic value of the Lagoon at \$7.64 billion. Just as any business must protect its greatest assets with investments in order to thrive, so must our community. Despite there being 11 to 1 vote in favor of the utility from the two committees, the Mayor of Vero Beach suggested the City send a referendum for the creation of the proposed stormwater utility. Referendums are usually proposed when issues are controversial. Yet protecting our Lagoon is one of the least issues we face because we depend upon it for our health, our recreation, our businesses, and the beauty and attractiveness of our community. The City Council should follow the recommendation of its advisory committees and approve the creation of the stormwater utility now, not delay with a referendum. **Please email and/or call: Mayor Laura Moss ((772) 978-4700 Lmoss@covb.org, Vice Mayor Harry Howle (772) 978-4700 Hhowle@covb.org, Councilmember Dick Winger (772) 231-0580 Rwinger@covb.org, Councilmember Lange Sykes (772) 473-7983 langesykes@gmail.com, Councilmember Tony Young (772) 321-2692 awyoung76@att.net. Tell them to approve!**

Participate in our democracy! Make your voice heard. Write a letter to the Press Journal stating your concerns too!

Pelican Island Audubon Society Officers & Directors

Officers

President
Richard H. Baker, Ph.D.
1st Vice-President
Donna Halleran
2nd Vice-President
David Cox, Ph.D.
Recording Secretary
Darlene Halliday
Corresponding Secretary
George Glenn
Treasurer **Steve Goff**

Elected Directors:

Graham Cox, Ph.D. '17
Nancy Irvin '19
Bill Loftus, Ph.D. '18
Toni Robinson '19
Bonnie Swanson '18 —
Appointed Board Members:
Bill Halliday
Susan Lovelace
Tina Marchese
Maria Maul

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.

The Garden Club at Pelican Island Elementary

It is refreshing to see kids so enthusiastic about vegetable gardening as the students at Pelican Island Elementary. They take an active interest in what is being grown, what seasons to grow the vegetables in, and what benefits to the environment, including to insects and wildlife, the gardens produce.



Pelican Island Elementary teacher Susan Flak, far left, works with the students to make the gardens a success.

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. 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 _____

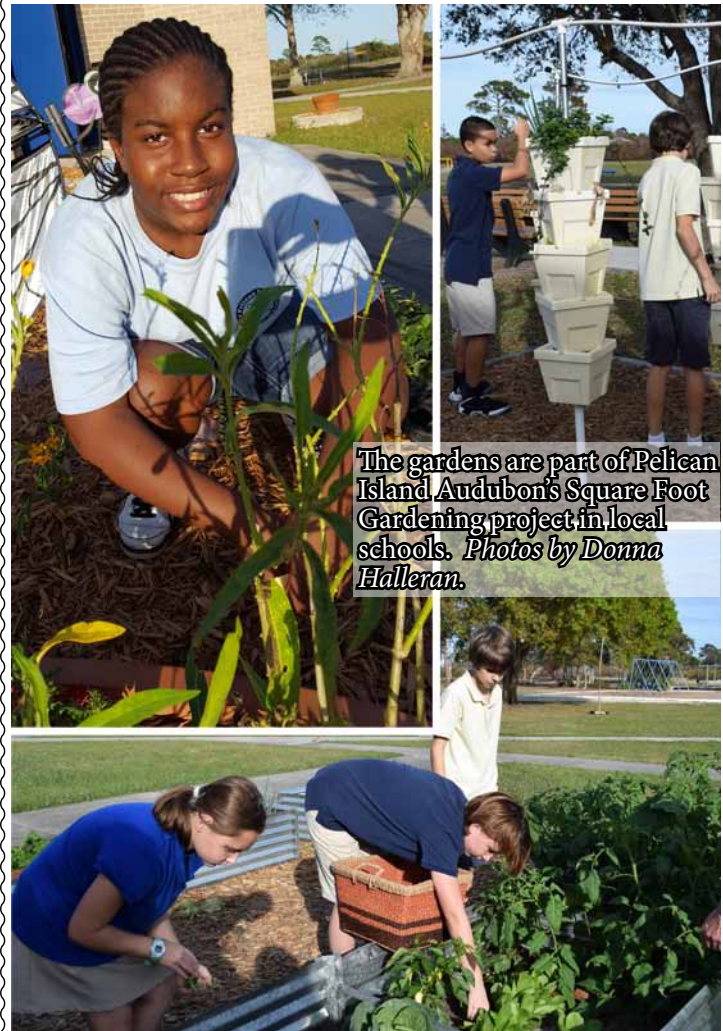
Please send your name and address along with a check payable to the "Pelican Island Audubon Society" to:

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



The gardens are part of Pelican Island Audubon's Square Foot Gardening project in local schools. Photos by Donna Halleran.