



*The Pelican Island Audubon Society*

# *Peligram*

*-founded in 1964 to serve Indian River County -*

P.O Box 1833, VERO BEACH, FL 32961 772-567-3520 Fax 772-567-3521 [www.pelicanislandaudubon.org](http://www.pelicanislandaudubon.org)  
Our 42nd Year Vol. 42 No. 1 January 2006

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

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

More information on all these events may be found at [www.pelicanislandaudubon.org](http://www.pelicanislandaudubon.org)

**Sun Jan 8 – 8:00am–12:00pm** ORCA canoe trip. Meet at the FMEL boathouse 200 9<sup>th</sup> St. S.E. (Oslo Road) east of U.S. 1. Reservations are required. Call 567-3520 to sign-up.

**Mon Jan 16 – 7:30pm** general meeting with Dr. Merritt.

**Fri Jan 20 – 10:00am** Walking tour of historic downtown Vero Beach with guide Joan Edwards. Please call the office at 772-567-3520 for reservations and precise directions.

**Sat Jan 21 –** Field Trip to Adams Ranch. Please call the office at 772-567-3520 for reservations and precise directions.

**Sun Feb 5 – 8:00am–12:00pm** ORCA canoe trip. Meet at the FMEL boathouse 200 9<sup>th</sup> St. S.E. (Oslo Road) east of U.S. 1. Reservations are required. Call 567-3520 to sign-up.

**Mon Feb 20 – 7:30pm** General Meeting at the Vero Beach Community Center, 2266 14<sup>th</sup> Ave. Topic: The Endangered Florida Grasshopper Sparrow & Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park with Paul Miller.

**Sat Feb 25** Field trip to Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park led by Paul Miller. Please call the office at 772-567-3520 for reservations and precise directions.

**Sun Mar 5– 8:00am–12:00pm** ORCA canoe trip. Meet at the FMEL boathouse 200 9<sup>th</sup> St. S.E. (Oslo Road) east of U.S. 1. Reservations are required. Call 567-3520 to sign-up.

### ***Buy a copy today!***

You can now purchase your copy of *Reflections of Blue Cypress* on our website using Visa or Mastercard! Visit us at [pelicanislandaudubon.org](http://pelicanislandaudubon.org) to see how!!

## **WARBLERS OF FLORIDA & THE BAHAMAS JANUARY 16 MEETING**

Dr. Peter Merritt will show video of warblers that were videotaped in Florida and the Bahamas Merritt at the Vero Beach Community Center, 2266 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, on Monday, January 16 at 7:30pm. The presentation will show close-up video of resident and migratory species singing and foraging. The program will emphasize features used to identify these colorful, but sometimes confusing species. Highlights include rare video footage of the endangered Kirtland's Warbler on its wintering grounds in the Bahamas. Refreshments will be served following the program. Learn more on page 2.

## **WALKING TOUR OF VERO BEACH JANUARY 20**

Enjoy a walking tour of downtown Vero Beach on Friday, January 20, led by knowledgeable guide Joan Edwards who will go over the history of this old city center. Fascinating stories of Vero's past along with insights into the art and architecture of the area will help fill in the historical details of an area too easily overlooked when speeding along the "Twin Pairs." Space is limited. Call 772-567-3520 for reservations.

## **TOUR ADAMS RANCH JANUARY 21**

The Society will be given a unique opportunity to tour Adams Ranch on Saturday, January 21. Largely untouched by urbanization, the ranch looks much the same as it did 70 years ago and harbors some of Florida's most beautiful and rare species of birds along with other wildlife that we hope to catch a glimpse of. Space is limited. Call 772-567-3520 for reservations. All participants will need to sign a liability waiver to enter the ranch. A suggested donation of \$5 will be requested.

## Pelican Island Audubon Society

### Officers

President, **Richard H. Baker**  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, **Lynne Larkin**  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, **Robert Adair**  
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Pelican Island Audubon Society, Inc. is registered with the Florida Dept. of Agriculture and 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

## **RICH PAUL REMEMBERED**

**BY JOE CARROLL**

Audubon in Florida has lost one of its great leaders in the fashion of the late Herb Kale – Rich Paul.



Rich was guardian of Tampa Bay's coastal rookeries and nesting grounds for more than 25 years. Paul went about protecting Florida's avian future with a quick wit, formidable intelligence and tireless passion as an employee of National Audubon and then Audubon of Florida. He died of cancer in

November at the age of 59. He received Audubon of Florida's Guy Bradley Award, recognizing a lifetime of achievement, as a warden and biologist. For decades he posted warning signs at bird colonies, patiently explained how some species are flirting with extinction and shoed people away from protected island rookeries. Much of his work was concentrated on protecting the Roseate spoonbill and Florida's most rare heron, the reddish egret. Anyone who took a field trip with Rich or heard one of his talks knew he loved birds and he lived the life he loved. PIAS members join in wishing his wife Ann the best of luck as she continues his work.

## **EXPLORE ORCA & MORE!**

Don't miss out on the *FREE* guided nature walks at the Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area on every Saturday morning at 9am. Meet in the ORCA parking lot; no reservations necessary. Be prepared for a 2-hour stroll through oak hammock, scrubby pine flatwoods and coastal wetlands.



10<sup>th</sup> ORCA volunteer training class begins Saturday, January 14, 2006. Learn more about the natural and human history of ORCA through a series of 6 classes led by staff of the adjacent Florida Medical

Entomology Laboratory, University of Florida, and PIAS President Richard Baker. The class schedule is available at <http://www.ourorca.org/volunteer.htm> Pre-registration is requested; please email Janice Broda at [jcb@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:jcb@ifas.ufl.edu) or call her at 772-778-7200 x 173

## **MORE ABOUT DR. MERRITT**

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE**

Dr. Merritt received a Ph.D. from the University of Miami, where he conducted research on the singing behavior of the Northern Mockingbird. He is employed as an ecologist at the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council. He is past president of the Florida Ornithological Society, and former editor of the Florida Field Naturalist.



In 2001, he published *Video Guide to Identifying Florida Birds*. In 2004, he published the *Everybody Loves Birds* DVD, which is designed to teach children about birds. He is presently working on *Birds of the Bahamas*.

## **APPEAL HELPS LOCAL CHAPTER**

An appeal from the Pelican Island Audubon Society to its members was sent out this December requesting support to help fund the chapter's activities. We are happy to report that, so far, close to \$1,500 has been raised! Thanks to everyone who gave so generously and to those planning on doing so!

## THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS

At the PIAS office, we are **getting calls about not seeing as many birds this year** as one would expect. A few days ago I received a call from a reporter asking if in fact there are less birds as he had heard that Pelican Island had less birds this year than before. I told him it is very difficult and really not scientific to determine either from a single impression or even from a single season if we do in fact have less birds. Many wonder, "What were the effects of the hurricanes?"

Weather probably determines

whether or not birds are seen on a given day. We do know from observations here in Indian River County that habi-

tat loss from development, deforestation, pollution, invasion of exotics, and global warming are altering and changing our environment and our planet. With the loss of many citrus trees to development in Indian River County, I am sure the painted bunting populations are decreasing. Are they going extinct? **Less than 95 years ago, at Blue Cypress Lake, there were 100's of nesting wood storks, ivory-billed woodpeckers and roosting sites for the Carolina parakeets; now there are none!**

Actually even after doing Audubon's Christmas Bird Counts for years it is difficult to tell what the trend is. After doing it for a number of years, in the same area, we get better at knowing where to find the birds. A favorite place for us was the wetlands where now the North County Library and a development complex now sit. We could usually count on seeing a snipe there. **Where could those snipes go? They are gone from this site forever as they require a certain habitat (water source, fish for food, marsh reeds to hide in, protect their nests).**

**But what does the data indicate?** A recent study (2004) reported by researchers from Stanford, provided a very detailed analysis of all 9,787 living bird species. They determined that in the next 95 years up to 14% of all bird species may be extinct and "as many as one out of 4 may be functionally extinct." This is alarming, as only 1.3% of bird species have become extinct since the year 1500 although the number of individual birds has been reduced by 20 to 25% during the same period.

**Is this bird loss an indicator for the future of humans as well?** Many say yes. We are merciless in reducing our forests, rangelands, and fisheries, on which we depend for food and housing, and in the process we are



### *The President's Hoot!*

also destroying many of the plant and animal species with which we share the planet. We do know that starting in the 1980's, human consumption was outgrowing the earth's capacity to support it. A few years ago the annual growth was measured in the billions of dollars, but today it is in the trillions. During this season, we certainly feel this consumption when we visit our malls or fill up with gas. It is not only in the U. S. **The U.S. population, third in the world**, which accounts for 5 % of the world's population consumes one third of the world's resources. Now China with 1.3 billion people accounts for 20% of the world's population, and understandably as it is coming into modernization, it is consuming more than the U.S. in food (grain, meat), energy (coal), and industry (steel). **The U.S., with the largest human population of the developed world**, still leads in oil consumption, but China is second and is increasing more rapidly than the U.S. Thus the world will soon have two major countries' whose development, deforestation, pollution, invasion of exotics, and global warming are altering and changing our environment. **Moreover, there will be three, as India's population (1.1 billion estimate) will be surpassing China in population in a couple of years and will be demanding our consumerist lifestyle.**

Thus, we need not only be concerned about just what is happening in Indian River Lagoon, our county, state, or nation, but birds and our existence depend on the health of the whole world. For example the osprey that are so plentiful along the lagoon and at Blue Cypress Lake, spend two years in South America after fledging and before becoming breeding adults. Not only do we need to be concerned about the health of the Indian Lagoon and Blue Cypress Lake, but also **we need to insure that South America is a friendly place for ospreys.**

**How much will it cost** to reforest the earth, protect the earth's topsoil, restore rangelands and fisheries, stabilize water tables, and protect biological diversity? Estimates to restore the Everglades are estimated to be over \$8 billion. **One estimate for the Earth is \$93 billion a year. How long was not given. Can we afford it? For our human species' survival can we afford not to?**

Richard Baker, President



## THE BIG 'UNS: FEATHERED ROYALTY BY BOB WINDISH

William Shakespeare dubbed it "king of birds!" Persian forces and Roman legionnaires bore its image on their standards. Scottish Highlanders and American Indians surged into battle adorned with its feathers while the armies of Napoleon, the Kaiser, Russia's Czar and the Austro-Hungarian emperor fought beneath banners emblazoned with its image. In falconry, it was the king's exclusive right to own one of these majestic birds of prey.

The Golden eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos*, lives only in the Northern Hemisphere. It flies above vast areas of the U.S. from Alaska, the Rockies and as far east as the Mississippi. Mexico and all of Canada, save for the far northern islands and Hudson Bay, it calls home. All of Europe, excluding the open plains of the center, Africa's northwestern tip and most of the Asian continent sees this royal raptor diving and looping in stunning acrobatic mating rituals accomplished by few other feathered creatures its size.



Measuring three feet in length and with a wing span of some 82 inches, the 20-pound golden is the fourth largest eagle in the world, ranked in size behind only the South and Central American Crested Harpy, the gray sea eagle of Iceland/Greenland and the Steller's maritime eagle inhabiting Siberia's Kamchatka Peninsula and the offshore Kuril Islands of northern Japan.

Preferring rocky mountainous crags on which to raise the young, both sexes build a nest of sticks and twigs on cliff ledges but will also construct nests on open ground using heather and ferns. The slightly larger female joins her lifelong mate in a courtship display of steep dives and soaring climbs which often sees her rolling upside down beneath him and flying on her back inches below his breast. After mating, she lays two and sometimes three white eggs, flecked with brown or gray, which she incubates for 40 days. She remains in the nest for the entire incubation period, the male feeding her only occasionally.

When the chicks hatch, the female stands guard at the nest while the male then hunts for the entire family, she still eating only sparingly, while the young are provided with up to a pound of meat daily. Helpless balls of down initially, the chicks must be fed by their parents but soon they become strong enough, after pecking at the sticks in their nest, where they can tear at the meat dropped to them. The female nestling is the "house bully," often pushing her brother away from the food in

an attempt to get it all. The mother eagle has to chastise the aggressive female by nudging her to another section of the nest while dividing the food equally. The eaglets fledge after two weeks but remain near the nest where they are fed by the parents until strong enough to go out on their own after about 75 to 80 days.

Golden eagles prey on small mammals such as gophers, hares, rabbits, squirrels and other rodents. They also eat snakes, including rattlers, and often team up by going after larger game such as the newly born lambs and kids of Big Horn sheep and mountain goats respectively. One will attract the attention of the prey in front, while the partner attacks from behind. Golden eagles have also been observed chasing deer over cliffs where the animals fall to their deaths. Like all birds of prey, they eat carrion, and stillborn calves and lambs of domestic flocks, but myths of the birds carrying off the young of livestock are greatly exaggerated. No eagle is capable of lifting more than eight or ten pounds.

Despite this, tribesmen in both the Kirgizstan section of central Siberia and Outer Mongolia train the golden eagle to capture wolves preying on their herds. The raptors attack the predators, sinking their sharp talons into the victim's spines while flapping their wings vigorously, thus preventing the wolves from escaping. The riders then kill the predators and feed pieces of the carcass to the birds as a reward.

The same method is used in the hunting of deer. The eagles are trained to seize only the bucks, for in addition to preserving the hide and consuming the venison, the herdsman sell the animals' antlers to the Chinese who use them for medicinal purposes.

Tales about babies carried away and being eaten by golden eagles in high mountain aeries are simply untrue. There has never been a confirmed story about a golden eagle attacking a baby and no human remains have ever been found in the thousands of nests examined by researchers throughout the world. Golden eagles have been known to attack adults molesting their nests, however, and there are numerous reports of them retaliating against hunters shooting at them. The birds also have been known to deliberately smash into the fuselage and windows of small planes, tearing at the occupants inside who were trying to eliminate them.

Fortunately, after a 20 year study beginning in 1947 showing that ranchers and farmers killed an average of one thousand golden eagles a year, a U.S. law was enacted in 1967 prohibiting the slaughter of these magnificent birds. Prior to this period when the 20,000 birds met their demise, it is not known how many golden eagles were destroyed by the white man from the 1860s to slightly after World War II as the western states developed in America

## GOOD NEWS ON THE POLLUTION FRONT

BY DEBORAH ECKER

It's been 100 years but it's now in the works: Indian River County's vast network of canals may soon stop dumping wastes directly into the Lagoon. The county's Stormwater Engineering Division has designed several ameliorating approaches to clean the system. In early January, these will be published for bids with the final proposal expected to go to the Board of County Commissioners in February.

### The problem

Today most of us are unaware that the land between the ridge on which the railroad tracks are located and a ridge (ever so slight) about 10 miles west is a low lying bowl, one from which water has no natural drainage. Not to be deterred, in the early 1900s, developers overcame the bogs by digging over 300 miles of canals. All drained through three outlets, the Main, South and North Relief Canals, directly into the Lagoon.

Over the succeeding century the county's canals have handled a lot more than rain water. From land used for agriculture the canals carry stormwater runoff mixed with high concentrations of phosphates, nitrates and other fertilizers, while the canals produce their own crop of vegetative debris. From landscaped house lots, the drainage ditches receive the same mix of fertilizers plus a huge collection of household wastes: plastics, scrap metal, tires and a wide range of et cetera. An unheralded result of the recent hurricanes is the job they did on canal cleaning: the storms flushed most of this junk into the Lagoon.

Its been several years now since Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution scientists began reporting tumors and open lesions on the Lagoon's porpoises along with deterioration in the seagrasses that form the habitat for numerous, and in some cases rare, estuarine species. The diminution in the Lagoon's water clarity is something even non-scientists can observe. Sadly none of this can be a surprise given the cavalier way in which over 50,000 acres, from this county alone, have been draining into this waterway.

### The solutions

Indian River County's Stormwater Engineering Division has plans for two major approaches for reducing, if not eliminating, pollution into the Lagoon.

One: Working with the Indian River Farms Water Control District, the Division plans to construct water quality control facilities. The new screening devices have been

successful in other locations. Initially there are to be three, installed as improvements at existing water-level control gates. The equipment will have the capacity to filter out all of the trash and a large percentage of vegetative and fertilizer pollutants.

Two: The county also has plans for an entirely innovative filter system. It's to be a man-made marsh and they already have a name for it: The Egret Marsh Regional Stormwater Park. The marsh will cover 35 acres at the southeast intersection of 4<sup>th</sup> Street and 74<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The water from the Lateral D Canal will be pumped into a pond and from there into an "algal turf scrubber." (It's the scrubber that makes this an innovative system.) From the scrubber the water will flow into a wetland before going on to the canal system. The Division anticipates this will be a park-like area, a veritable "birder's paradise."

### Conclusion

Although the state, as administrators of the federal Clean Water Act, is in the position to press the county to clean up discharge into the Lagoon, the county's Storm Water Engineering Division deserves praise for being so close to implementation of their plans. Presumably the Commissioners will approve the construction of these much-needed improvements.

### GIVE FLORIDA'S BIRDS A VOICE!



Audubon of Florida's online Advocacy Center keeps you up-to-date on issues facing our environment! Sign up for free monthly e-newsletters and learn how you can help birds with the click of a mouse!

<http://ga1.org/natureadvocate/home.html>

### HOLIDAY POTLUCK WRAP-UP

Thank you to Nancy Irvin, Melissa Tripson, Ellsbeth Eibs, Sharon Marable, Darlene Halliday, Peggy Bentley and Tina Marchese for all their hard work putting together the annual holiday potluck and making it, once again, a big success. Also, thanks to all who pitched in after the event to help clean up. And a special thank you to B.J.'s Rainbow Garden, 2035 13<sup>th</sup> Ave, Vero Beach, for supplying the lovely poinsettias. Pay them a visit today and let them know you heard about them through the Peligram!

Pelican Island Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 1833  
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## NEWS FROM THE NEST

**Welcome to new members:** Katheryn Beindorf, William J.H. Frey, John Keller, Edwin L. Pohlson, Lois B. Prince, Claire T. Whitman, Milt & Judy Reisen, Garry Luke, Trish White, Michael & Britt Gardner, Julie Tinsley, Herman Boehm, Angela Scele, Bob & Marsha Makomson, Gail Keefer, Joseph M. Barnard, Ella Buckman, Edward Buckhart, Dorothy P. Endress, Morris A. Gibbons, Miriam J. Hansen, Ralph T. Holmes, Jr., George Kelley, Susie Komarinetz, Diana Krupa, Sandra Kunkel, Judith Kurtha, Angus Mc Phail, Sandra Obradovic, Virginia Olk, Marasala B. Pellegrino, R.P. Plyler, Susan Richardson, Joan Vogdes, Carol Warner, Donald Willey, Julie Tinsley, Michael & Britt Gardner, Herman Boehm, Angele Scele, Bob & Marsha Makomson, Gail Keefer, Deborah Crum & Robert R. Harris.

**We appreciate all the hard work by Harris, Cotherman, Jones, Price & Associates**, especially Robert R. Harris, CPA and Deborah Crum, in helping to keep us within the good graces of the I.R.S. Thank you for your support!

**More thanks are in order to Treasurer Tony Barr** for his generous donation of a new color printer for the office. It is an appreciated addition to our limited resources.

**Thanks to Jan Miller for her donation** from pottery sales at the Annual Potluck & Holiday Bazaar. Also for the painting donated by Rene Guerin and the scarves sold by Tina Marchese.

**A very special thank you** for the donations by Peter & Nancy Benedict, James Potter, the Indian River Club, Bud Kleckner and to all who give so generously when "passing the hat" at the general meetings. Without the continuing support of our members, we would not be able to offer interesting programs and pursue important environmental issues that protect us all!

**Thank you to Katherine Schenk** for not only volunteering her time to help in the Society office but also in taking on the daunting task of sorting the numerous postage stamps to be donated to the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey.

### VISIT PIAS ONLINE!

For all the latest news, activities, and photographs of events, visit Pelican Island Audubon Society on the web at [www.pelicanislandaudubon.org](http://www.pelicanislandaudubon.org)

## BECOME A MEMBER OF THE PELICAN ISLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

Membership benefits include subscriptions to *Audubon* magazine, *Florida Naturalist*, and the PIAS newsletter *The Peligram*. Additionally, members have full borrowing privileges to the PIAS nature library and much more!

Please choose a membership:

- \$20 one-year introductory membership
- \$30 two-year introductory membership
- \$15 one-year student membership
- \$15 one-year senior rate (62+)
- \$15 Friend (receive *The Peligram* only)
- Check box if a *MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL*.

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

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

Please send your name and address along with a check payable to the "**National Audubon Society**" to: Pelican Island Audubon Society, P.O. Box 1833, Vero Beach, FL 32961