

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 52st Year Vol. 52 No. 1 January 2016

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

January 11, 2016 ❖ 6:00 p.m.

**Woodpeckers: Nature's Wood Workers
with Reinier Munguia**

North Indian River County Library

1001 Sebastian Blvd. (CR 512), Sebastian

It's been said that every animal plays an important role in the ecosystem, yet some have a harder job than others. Meet the woodpeckers, a group of highly adapted birds with the ability to chisel through wood better than a power tool and without suffering any injuries. Their work goes beyond the building of a simple shelter or gathering food. When they finish their breeding cycle, many will leave a suitable home ready for other birds and mammals. They are considered a keystone species in forest ecology, and an indicator of forest health. But are we doing the right thing to help them survive? This program will answer many of these questions and will venture the audience into the life of nature's wood workers.

Reinier Munguia is a full-time naturalist and nature photographer based in Lakeland, Florida. He serves as the President of the Lake Region Audubon Society and EagleWatch Volunteer Coordinator. His work has appeared in various publications including books, magazines and scientific publications. In his spare time, he leads photography workshops in exotic destinations including Galapagos, Costa Rica and Panama, among others. He spends great amount of time documenting wildlife and their struggles in our constantly changing environment.

January 25, 2016 ❖ 6:00 p.m.

**Painted Buntings & Banding Basics
with Nancy Laframboise**

Riverhouse - 305 Acacia Road, Vero Beach

Banding is a research tool used to help the researcher understand more about abundance, ages, species diversity, and site fidelity in bird populations. Banding is being used to document Painted Buntings returning to feeders, where overwintering Florida birds go to breed, what makes a Painted Bunting choose a yard, and much more. Nancy Laframboise has been studying and banding birds since 1982 and since December 2013 started banding Painted Buntings in conjunction with volunteers from the University of North Carolina Painted Bunting Research Project.

January 18, 2016 ❖ 7:30 p.m.

**Bitten: My Unexpected Love Affair
with Florida with Andrew Furman**

Vero Beach Community Center

2266 14th Avenue, Vero Beach

In *Bitten*, Andrew Furman shares his amazement at the beautiful and the bizarre of his adopted state, Florida. Over seventeen years, he and his family have shed their Yankee sensibilities and awakened to the terra incognita of their new home. As he learns to fish for snook--a wily fish that inhabits, among other areas, the concrete-lined canals that crisscross the state--and seeks out the state's oldest live oak, a behemoth that pre-dates Columbus, Furman realizes that falling in love with Florida is a fun and sometimes humbling process of discovery. Each chapter highlights a fascinating aspect of his journey into the natural environment he once avoided, from snail kites to lizards and cassia to coontie. Sharing his attempts at night fishing, growing native plants, birding, and hiking the Everglades, Furman will inspire you to explore the real Florida. And, if you aren't lucky enough to reside in the Sunshine State, he'll at least convince you to unplug for an hour or two and enjoy the natural beauty of wherever it is you call home.

Andrew Furman has been an English professor at Florida Atlantic University since 1996 and teaches in its MFA program in Creative Writing. He is the author, most recently, of the memoir, *Bitten: My Unexpected Love Affair with Florida* (University Press of Florida 2014), which was named a Finalist for the ASLE Environmental Book Award. In addition, he has published numerous shorter works of creative nonfiction, fiction, and literary journalism in such publications as *Oxford American*, *the Miami Herald*, *The Southern Review*, *ISLE*, *Poets & Writers*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Agni Online*, *Image*, and *Ecotone*.

Upcoming Events & Field Trips

Call 772-567-3520 for reservations and directions.

Jan 9 - North Sebastian Conservation Area with Jane Schnee

Jan 16 - IRC West Regional Waste Water Treatment Facility with Peter Sutherland

Feb 6 - Orlando Wetlands Park with Steve Goff

Masthead photo: Sacred Ibis by Bob Montanaro.

Bird of the Month by Juanita Baker

Handsome Red-winged Blackbird flashing red! One of our most abundant bird species in the US, breeding in all lower 48 states, they reside in our pastures, roadside ditches, freshwater marshes, and suburban ponds. Photographer J.R. Williams took this audacious male, identifiable by yellow-lined, red wing patches on an all-black bird, in full display calling out with characteristic rattling song in territorial defense. The female is brown with a lighter eyebrow stripe and streaking on the breast, resembling a large, narrow billed sparrow. Nonbreeding females roost and gather together without males so one might not immediately think to identify them as Red-winged Blackbirds.

One of the reasons for their abundance is that 90% males, staking out their territory, are polygamous, with an average of five partners. Each female had its own nest and brood. One male had mated with 16 females in his territory during one breeding season! Females were also polygamous as extra-pair males sired 23-48% of their nestlings serving to increase number of nestlings/nest.

Because our vast agricultural lands have replaced more diverse habitats that supported many other bird species, this open-habitat species has been encouraged. After nesting, they form huge aggregations that can stretch for miles. They are accused of devastating fields of rice, corn, and sunflowers. Farmers and municipalities often consider blackbirds noisy, destructive pests. Professionals kill blackbirds by poison, hunting, trapping, or spraying with detergents to remove the oils that protect, insulate, and waterproof their feathers so the bird dies of exposure to cold. Yet diet studies show that during spring, blackbirds' primary food is 50-80% insects and 3-20% waste grain in agricultural areas. In summer, the diet is 40-70% corn and grains. However, in winter their consumption of 60% weed seeds like ragweed and cocklebur and harmful insects make them valuable to farmers and habitats.



The Patriarch in Song Spread Display. Red-winged Blackbird © J.R. Williams, Canon EOS 50D with a 100-400mm lens, f/8, 1/250, ISO 320. April 3, 2012 IRC West Regional Waste Water Treatment Facility

Book Review

My Adopted State Too

by Linda Chancellor

Sometimes I rely on friends' recommendations when choosing my next book but often I just browse the shelves for something that looks interesting. When I saw a book with the word *Bitten* in the title - it got my attention. *Bitten: my unexpected love affair with Florida* by Andrew Furman provided many hours of enjoyable reading. Visitors and new residents often have the impression that life in Florida is just sun, fun, beaches and warm winters but there is so much more to living in Florida. Mr. Furman has discovered the real everyday experiences of Florida living, embraced them and delivers them packaged up in amusing and fact filled chapters. His chapters cover subjects including a visit to the Cellon Oak, fishing for the elusive snook, FAU's burrowing owls, seeking a rare Cuban pewee, "on stealing fruit" and adapting to our famous Florida heat - many of the things that make living in Florida interesting. After reading this book I gained a new appreciation for Florida - my adopted state too.

Book Review

H is for Hawk by Helen Macdonald

Reviewed by Diane Morgan

The book has won the Samuel Johnson Prize (the U.K.'s most prestigious non-fiction award), and been selected as the Costa Book of the Year. Helen Macdonald is a writer, historian, naturalist, and research scholar at the department of history and philosophy of science at the University of Cambridge. When her father died unexpectedly, her raging grief pushed her down a strange and wild path. A falconer from childhood, she "upped her game" by acquiring a goshawk, which she calls "the birdwatcher's dark grail. You might spend a week in a forest full of gosses and never see one... Looking for goshawks is like looking for grace: it comes, but not often, and you don't get to say when or how." But Macdonald is not content with looking, and *H Is for Hawk* relives her experiences with her first goshawk, a much frowned upon species by early falconers. "Goshawks were ruffians: murderous, difficult to tame, sulky, fractious, and foreign." *Bloodthirsty...* A goshawk then. It suited her. (I won't tell you the bird's name, it's part of the

surprise of the book.)

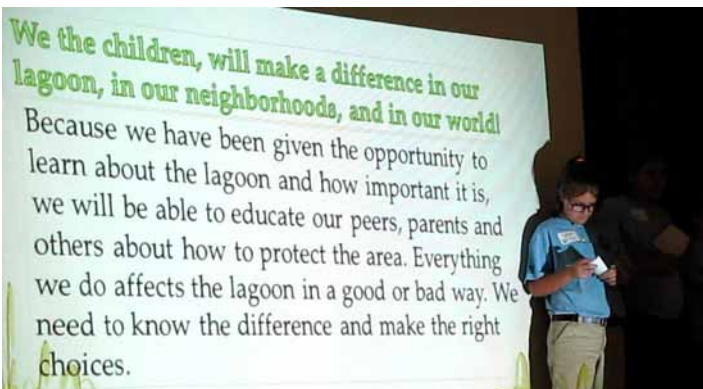
Macdonald becomes an *austringer*: one who hunts with accipiters. We learn the ancient terms of the falconer's trade: *bating*, *creances*, *tiring*, and *arak*. We discover the critical importance of "flying weight," (with merlins, an eighth of an ounce makes a difference in how a bird flies). We learn the mysteries of the hawk's hood, with its intricate stitching and rich symbolism. We make the connection between falconry and Nazis. We share Macdonald's pain, triumph, and depression. We rejoice in the goshawk's successes as we pity her quarry. Part falconry guide, part autobiography, part psychoanalysis of T.H. White, part historical exploration, part ethical inquiry, and part magic, this luminous, terrifying book takes us deep into the human heart. We don't always like what we find, but we can't look away.



2015 Pelican Island Audubon Society Annual Potluck

Audubon Advocates

for the Indian River Lagoon



Annual Potluck & the Audubon Advocates continued:



Participate in the Christmas Bird Count

If you would like to participate in this year's Christmas Bird Count on January 2nd, please RSVP to the following email address, southbrevardcbc@gmail.com and please include the following information:

- Name: (your real name, not your email address)
- If you participated previously, do you want to be on the same team as last year? (yes/no)
- Will you be willing to lead a team? (This requires knowledge of the area and responsibility for turning in the paperwork.)
- Do you have access to a 4 wheel drive vehicle that you can use on the day of the count? (yes/no)
- Will you be participating for the full day? (yes/no, and if no, what hours?)
- Will you be willing to be on the boat team?

Watching Birds is more than Fun! *The President's Hoot by Richard H. Baker*

Bird watching is fun and addictive, as you can tell from the movie "The Big Year." Some birders travel the world just to see one bird. There is even a great website <http://www.birdingisfun.com/>. Moreover, birding also benefits our economy, personal health and even science.

Birding is Big Business! In 2011, Florida's wildlife-viewing activities generated \$4.9 billion, and 72 million U.S. wildlife watchers spent \$54.9 billion. More enthusiasts come to Florida to view our great birds and varied habitats than visit any other state (http://floridabirdingtrail.com/index.php/business/birding_economics1/).

Birding keeps you healthy: Makes you happy, makes friends, keeps you physically active, takes you places, feeds the brain, and leads to new experiences (<http://www.birdsandblooms.com/birding/birding-basics/birding-health/>). Furthermore, exposure to nature improves wound healing, blood pressure, tension, depression, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Unfortunately many adults and children do not spend time outdoors. The average child spends only 15 minutes daily outside, usually waiting for the school bus, but spends 7-8 hours/day with computers, games, and TV. Two generations of kids and adults have Nature-Deficit disorder, which makes them prone to obesity, depression, and lower grades. Unfortunately, parents are often frightened of nature and wildlife! In Florida, just 16% of African-American students taking the American College Test for college-readiness assessment met the benchmark in math; just 10% in science; with girls, just 35% met the benchmark in math, 29% in science. Research shows that learning about and being out in nature improves these scores and increases minority and female student participation in science and math. Learn about "medicalizing nature" and "ecotherapy" at <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/10/the-nature-cure/403210/>.

Birding contributes to the Science of Climate Change. Christmas, Backyard Bird, and eBird counts around the world have provided strong evidence for Climate Change. Of the 588 selected bird species in North America, 314 species are threatened or endangered (Audubon.org/climate). Locally, PIAS volunteers are monitoring certain bird species in our county: Eagle Watch, Jay Watch, Breeding Bird Atlas, and Osprey Watch at Blue Cypress Lake. PIAS member Joe Carroll received the 2015 Audubon Florida Jay Watch Volunteer of the Year Award.

Our new Audubon House provides opportunities to protect, advocate, and increase public awareness for wildlife and environment by:

- Exposing people to nature.
- Serving as an eco-tourism destination.
- Providing a class and meeting room.

What is PIAS doing to encourage wildlife viewing and birding?

- With A Florida Outdoor Center (AFLOC), ran a five-week summer Adventure Camp, using a \$5,000 Indian River Community Foundation grant to provide scholarships for underserved children.
- Expanding this collaboration to a new outdoor-adventure program for women with AFLOC.
- Partnering with Vero Beach, Citrus, and Glendale El-

ementary Schools and Indian River Academy to provide a 22-week, Life-Changing Lagoon-Changing after-school program, Audubon Advocates, for Title 1 fifth graders, supported by a \$18,000 Impact 100 grant and \$4,000 in donations.

- Teaching birding and eBird classes.
- Organizing wildflower workshops.
- Publishing "Bird of the Month" photos to foster bird appreciation.
- Providing nature field trips, monthly speakers in Sebastian and Vero Beach, and an active website (<http://www.pelicanislandaudubon.org/>) and Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Pelican-Island-Audubon-Society/365598263599458>) attracting us to get out in nature.
- Sponsoring the UF/PIAS Nature Stewardship Class for volunteers to lead tours and remove exotics in our county's conservation lands.

PIAS received Two new exciting National Audubon-funded pilot projects:

- "Spreading the Word: Impacts of climate change and sea-level rise on Treasure Coast birds and their habitats" focusing on Roseate Spoonbills moving north from the Everglades into our region, how climate change affects our "backyard birds," and what actions we can take to reduce impacts (\$5,000).
- A Florida Scrub Jay education program with Pelican Island Elementary School and Indian River Academy fourth and fifth graders, both in the classroom and at Scrub Jay habitats (\$500).

Our students and their parents are key participants in understanding what is happening to lagoon wildlife and the effects of climate change on their habitats.

So join us for birding fun! I hope you will become addicted and volunteer for the above projects!



Congratulations to Joe Carroll, a longtime Pelican Island Audubon Society board member! On November 7, 2015 Joe received the prestigious 2015 Audubon Florida Jay Watch Volunteer of the Year Award from JayWatch coordinator Marianne Korosy and Audubon Florida Chapter Coordinator Jacqui Sulek, honoring his enduring passion and tireless efforts on behalf of this endangered endemic Florida bird.

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**

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**Plant of the Month by Janice Broda
Birds, Bees and More!**

Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) and butterfly orchids (*Encyclia tampensis*) are integral to iconic beauty of the oak hammocks along both sides of the Indian River Lagoon. Both of these plants are exceptional epiphytes, plants that live on other plants (or objects) without harming them.

Birds and other animals use the soft, silver grey strands of Spanish moss that hang from the branches of live oaks to line their nests. Look closely, and sometimes you will find tiny, inconspicuous flowers that release wind-borne seeds. Without any roots or leaves, this plant miraculously manages to perform photosynthesis drawing water and nutrients from moist air through specialized structures.

Butterfly orchid, so named for the fluttering of its in the flowers in the breeze, grows upon the deeply furrowed bark of live oak trees along with Spanish moss. The most common orchid in Florida and the namesake of Orchid Island, the barrier island here in Indian River County, this epiphyte looks like stout grass to the undiscerning. From May through August, stalks of greenish to reddish brown flowers extend out from its grass-like leaves. Native bees pollinate this iconic epiphyte.



Butterfly Orchid by Susan Warmer.

The intricate and enchanting web of life along the Indian River Lagoon – from birds to bees and other bugs to plants like epiphytes and mangroves with amazing adaptations to pollination patterns -- is the focus of the free volunteer nature stewardship class offered by the Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory (FMEL) and the Pelican Island Audubon Society (PIAS) beginning on Saturday, January 16, from 1:30 to 4:30pm. In this 6-week class, you will learn about the habitats along the Indian River Lagoon from FMEL scientists and other experts. A commitment to volunteer back in a way that suits your skills, schedule and interests is required. Visit <http://ourorca.org> to learn more and to register for this class.

**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