

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 44th Year Vol. 44 No. 6 summer edition 2008

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

Pelican Island Audubon awards scholarships

Pelican Island Audubon awarded two \$1,000 scholarships to Vero Beach High School graduates Jillian Askren and Christopher O'Bryan on May 13, 2008. The Society annually gives scholarships to local graduates based on a competitive essay contest with an environmental theme. This year's theme was "Preservation of the Earth's environment is one of our greatest challenges. Explain how you can or will help meet the challenge to preserve Earth's environment in your future endeavors."

Christopher O'Bryan will be attending the University of Florida in the fall majoring in Engineering. He writes in his essay that "as his adult life looms on the horizon, I hope to continue to preserve the environment through my college education.... The field of engineering offers countless ways in which I may help.... to one day use my education as an engineer to help save the environment around the world as well as in my own community."



Jens Tripson, Jillian Askren, and Christopher O'Bryan at the awards ceremony held at Vero Beach High School on May 13, 2008. photo: VBHS

Jillian Askren will be attending Rollins College where she will be majoring in Economics and Spanish. Jillian writes in her essay, "If people continue to treat the environment with indifference, it will start to deteriorate and will be seen as a thing of beauty only in memory. However, if people start to overcome this apathy and think about how their actions affect the community in which they live, the earth's landscape and its ecological habitats may be preserved for future generations to continue to enjoy."

Pelican Island Audubon congratulates the winners of this year's scholarship competition and wishes them success with their college careers.

Special thanks and appreciation goes to Ruth Moore whose continuing generosity helps fund the scholarship program.

Scholarship Committee chair Susan Boyd notes the task of judging the essays went to Jens Tripson, John Kennedy, Billi Wagner, Joel Day, Nancy Irvin and Darlene Halliday. Pelican Island Audubon appreciates the time and effort these volunteers put in selecting two candidates from all the entries received.

August 26th Primary Election

Don't miss your chance to vote!

We have an important primary on August 26th. It is crucial that all of our members be sure to vote as this election will determine how our county government will be run and how our growth will be managed or mismanaged for at least the next four years.

There are 3 county commission seats up for grabs: Districts 1, 3 and 5.

In Districts 1 and 5 there are Republican and Independent Candidates running so only those registered as Republican or Independent can vote in each of these two races. ***IT DOES NOT MATTER WHERE YOU LIVE IN THE COUNTY YOU CAN VOTE FOR A CANDIDATE IN EACH OF THESE DISTRICTS AS LONG AS YOU ARE REGISTERED AS A REPUBLICAN OR AS AN INDEPENDENT!!!***

District 3 is an Open Race and YOU CAN VOTE for One of the three candidates ***REGARDLESS OF YOUR PART AFFILIATION and NO MATTER WHERE YOU LIVE IN THE COUNTY!!!***

If you are going to be out of town be sure to get your absentee ballot before you leave by calling the Supervisor of Elections Office at (772) 226-3440

REMEMBER YOUR VOTE REALLY DOES MATTER, ESPECIALLY IN THIS ELECTION!!!

County Commission Candidates by District

District 1: Susan R. Boyd, REP., Wesley Davis, REP., Fred Mensin, NPA

District 2: Bea Gardner, REP., Gary T. Parris, REP., Gary C. Wheeler, REP.

District 5: Sandra Bowden, REP., Brian T. Heady, NPA, Honey Minuse, REP., Bob Solari, REP.

REP = Republican NPA=No Political Affiliation

Keep up-to-date with all the latest news & information from Pelican Island Audubon on the web at www.pelicanislandaudubon.org



Corkscrew Swamp Nature Store

Support Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary by shopping for all your nature-related gifts at the Corkscrew Swamp Nature Store.

www.corkscrewnaturestore.org

Pelican Island Audubon Outreach Center update

Budget cuts by the State legislature have delayed Pelican Island Audubon's request for matching funds from the University of Florida to build the Pelican Island Audubon Outreach Center. This is the first year that the University of Florida did not fund any requests of this kind. The monies raised by PIAS have been returned to our chapter and have been deposited in an interest bearing account. It is our intention to resubmit the application this December in anticipation of funding for 2009.

The Outreach Center is to be a "green" building constructed under a joint County, University of Florida and Audubon partnership adjacent to the Oslo River Conservation area. It will have indoor and outdoor classrooms and offices for Audubon and ORCA staff. Additionally, the Outreach Center will house a valuable 1,500-book nature library and provide restrooms for visitors.

Our campaign to raise \$200,000 towards the Outreach Center's construction fell slightly short of that goal at \$187,000. In order to request matching funds of \$200,000 from the University of Florida, PIAS lent the campaign \$13,000 from its treasury to make up the difference. Pelican Island Audubon appreciates your past generosity while respectfully asking if you would consider making an additional contribution to help us reach our original goal. Additional funds will allow us to repay our treasury to continue our environmental work in Indian River County.

*Forging a New Partnership
for the Benefit of Indian River County.*



OUTREACH CENTER DONORS

We continue to recognize the generous donations made toward building the new Audubon Outreach Center. May & June donors include:

Robert Kugelman
David Brower
Ruth Moore

Thank you to all who contributed so far! If you have not done so, please consider giving to this wonderful cause to enhance environmental education in Indian River County.

The Oslo Road Slippery Sloped Ramp



Indian River County Public Works Department has requested from St. John River Water Management District a variance to construct an enlarged replacement boat ramp and a new, separate fishing pier within the Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area (ORCA) which would extend into an Indian River Lagoon Aquatic Preserve.

The requested variance would allow dredging in waters within two protected areas which have the best seagrasses in Indian River County. Scientific studies by noted scientists, including Dr. Grant Gilmore, have identified these seagrass beds as an important nursery for the spotted seatrout. In addition, the variance would contravene the county's Manatee Protection Plan, which prohibits boat ramp facilities in this portion of the lagoon.

We do not oppose fixing up the ramp and providing needed trash bins and toilet facilities for this one location much used by kayakers, canoeists, waders and small boat fishermen. We are willing to work with the county to find more appropriate sites for future boat ramps and piers as needed in the county.

We suggest that the county utilize the County's Conservation Land Advisory Committee and experts in the community to develop a plan for the designated placement of all future needed ramps to avoid putting them in our Aquatic Preserves or conservation areas. We also need a plan for siting boat ramps that follows the county's Manatee Protection Plan. We can then find funding to facilitate the access and construction in an environmentally safe way. The Oslo location is not one of those sites.

The county originally requested a 30 space parking lot and a wider paved road, which would have resulted in filling 2.5 acres of mangroves forest in addition to a fishing pier and a new extended ramp. The county now decided to postpone their request of the paved road and parking places until after the ramp and fishing pier are built. The county's new plans still call for constructing a 118.5 ft long fishing and observation pier, extending the boat ramp to 60 ft and building two new 70 and 50 ft long docks on either side, and dredging for the construction, which will enable larger boats through the mangroves to the shallow channel which contains thriving seagrasses, thus further destroying the habitat in an Aquatic Preserve.

The channel has never been dredged before, but Commissioner Wesley Davis talks of even dredging this at a later date. If they were just repairing the ramp, or replacing a similar size ramp, we would probably not raise a fuss. But this is not the case. The present proposal for an enlarged boat ramp is just the beginning. Later after increased use by larger boats, they will request removing the 2.5 acres of mangroves for more parking spaces than the current 5-8 spaces, paving and widening the road, and finally dredging the channel. We are truly on a slippery slope with the Oslo Road Boat Ramp.

It first appeared that SJRWMD was going to approve the Variance at their August 12th Governing Board Meeting even before receiving input from state and federal agencies. Fortunately, on hearing this, PIAS, Audubon of Florida, Marine Resource Council, Save the Manatee Club, Sierra Club, Dr. Grant Gilmore, Dr. David Cox, Janice Broda, and the Florida Dept of Environmental Protection's own Aquatic Preserve manager, wrote strong letters opposing the variance to the SJRWMD Governing Board. For detailed reasons see their letters on our website. SJRWMD Director, Kirby Green then emailed that the request for variance was removed from the Governing Board August agenda.

SJRWMD staff met with us at FMEL on July 16th and stated they were happy that we brought the issues to their attention and were surprised at the number of letters from qualified individuals over a small ramp. They now know of our concerns of it being in an Aquatic Preserve, sovereign submerged lands with Class II waters, with seagrass and manatee issues, and the possibility of the county again in the future requesting paving and parking lots, and its potential for setting a detrimental precedent. The consensus of all attending including SJRWMD was that the county should do the following:

- Remove the observation pier into sovereign submerged lands from the plans.
- Scale back the ramp to original size and place.
- Give a conservation easement to SJRWMD, Audubon of Florida, and Pelican Island Audubon to avoid future actions that would be detrimental to conservation lands.

SJRWMD indicated that the project will be re-noticed with a new time period for proper public comment.

SUMMARY: This application did not present sufficient evidence of social, economic, or environmental benefits for this requested variance to be approved. However, it is laudable that the county is concerned about what citizens want and that they try to provide for our recreational and tourist needs. What is now needed by the county is to plan ahead for the proper placement of all future needed ramps so they are not placed in our Aquatic Preserves or conservation areas. We can then plan to find funding to facilitate the access and construction of them. Audubon is willing to help. Stay tuned-this is not over yet. Your help may be needed when we get the request for further comment.

I would like to thank Janice Broda, Dr. David Cox, Joel Day Eric Draper, Jim Egan, Dr. Grant Gilmore, Laura Herren, Kayaks Etc, Charles Lee, Sheila O'Connell, Judy Orcutt, Dr. Jorge Rey, Artie Wong, and Julie Wraithmell for the great efforts they put into this.

Richard H. Baker, President

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Who is this?

Cornell Lab notes this is one of the most vocal medium-sized woodland hawks, and the above-pictured hawk that lives at Treasure Hammock Ranch in Indian River County proves this fact. Its loud, persistent cries as it patrols its territory make the hawk's presence boldly known. A year round Florida resident, the tinge of red on its shoulder is an unmistakable field mark for identification. Other identifying marks include a "tail with several wide dark bands separated by thin white ones" along with yellow legs. Though both sexes look alike, the female is larger with mated pairs caring for 2 to 5 eggs during the nesting season. Diet consists of "small mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and crayfish".

Bird info from Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Photo by Bob Montanaro. Answer: Red-shouldered Hawk

Officers

President, **Richard H. Baker**
1st Vice President, **Jens Tripson**
2nd Vice President, **Susan Boyd**
Recording Secretary, **Darlene Halliday**
Corresponding Secretary, **Jean Catchpole**
Treasurer, **Robert Adair**

Elected Directors

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Joe Carroll '08 | Nancy Irvin '10 |
| David Cox '09 | Vacant |
| Debby Ecker '08 | Susan Richardson '10 |

Appointed Board Members

| | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| Joel Day | Melissa Tripson |
| Tina Marchese | Craig Weyandt |
| Neil Stalter | |

Advisory Board Members

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Janice Broda | Bob Smith |
| Kevin Doty | Billi Wagner |
| Lynne Larkin | |

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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!

- \$20 one-year membership
 Donation \$ _____
 \$20 Friend (receive The Peligram only)
 Check box if a MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL.

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