

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 50th Year Vol. 50 No. 3 March 2015

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

March 9, 2015 ❖ 6:00 p.m.

Live Birds of Prey with Michael Brothers

North Indian River County Library

1001 Sebastian Blvd. (CR 512), Sebastian

Raptors- LIVE! – No group of birds captures our imagination quite like the birds of prey. Join us for this rare opportunity to meet a collection of live raptors. From the diminutive Eastern Screech Owl to the power of the Red-tailed Hawk, this program will introduce visitors to the wide range of raptors found in Central Florida. Learn about the extraordinary adaptations that have made these the rulers of the air.

Mr. Brothers is currently the Director of the Marine Science Center in Ponce Inlet, Florida, where he has worked since 2004.

He has over 30 years of experience in museum administration in city, county, state, and private non-profit museums, being the former Executive Director of the Museum of Arts and Sciences in Daytona Beach; serving as Executive Director of the Museum of Arts and Sciences in Macon, Georgia and the Curator of Education and Statewide Services for the Museum of Florida History in Tallahassee.

Mr. Brothers has a Master's Degree in Natural Resource Management and also served for nine years as visiting associate professor at Florida State University in the graduate program in Museum Management having extensive natural resource and natural science interpretive experience including specializations in the bird life of Central Florida, as well as leading natural history tours throughout Florida, the Okefenokee Swamp, the Everglades, the Galapagos Islands, Kenya, Machu Picchu and the Amazon.

He has actively studying the birds of Florida for 40 years and is currently working on *The Birds of Volusia County*, a summary of the avifauna of this area. His research specialty is in the coastal and oceanic birds of Florida, leading pelagic birding trips off of Florida's east coast for the last 9 years. These trips extend to the Gulf Stream and even out 100 miles to the 3,000 foot deep canyons beyond the Gulf Stream. Mr. Brothers serves on the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee and is a Florida regional editor of the ornithological journal of record – "North American Birds." He is also the Flagler County Coordinator for the Florida Breeding Bird Atlas II project.

March 16, 2015 ❖ 7:30 p.m.

"Ding" Darling - The Man, the Refuge, and the Legacy with Paul Tritaik

Vero Beach Community Center

2266 14th Avenue, Vero Beach

Former Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge Manager Paul Tritaik will talk about the life of J. N. "Ding" Darling, a renowned editorial cartoonist who advocated conservation of our nation's natural resources. Darling is also the Father of the Federal Duck Stamp Program, founder of the National Wildlife Federation, and creator of the Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit Program. Additionally, "Ding" Darling laid the groundwork for the system of today's National Wildlife Refuge. Paul Tritaik is currently the Manager of J.N. "Ding" Darling NWR on Sanibel Island and will talk about the legacy left by "Ding" Darling that is still with us today.

Guided Pontoon Boat Trip on Blue Cypress Lake

Pelican Island Audubon is offering guided sunrise or sunset pontoon boat rides with refreshments at Blue Cypress Lake to view the many Ospreys nesting, birds, and other wildlife. Space is limited to 8 persons only each day. Cost: \$85 per person (\$25 cost & \$60 donation) Put a party of your friends together. Please call 772-567-3520 for reservations and instructions. Richard Baker & Bob Bruce, Tour Leaders.



Field Trips - Call 772-567-3520 for reservations

March 7 (Sat) Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area - Call 954-270-2840 for reservations and information.

March 19 - (Thur) - Wakodahatchee Wetlands & Green Cay Nature Center

March 21 -(Sat) - Orlando Wetlands

Masthead photo: Barred Owl by Bob Montanaro.

January Bird of the Month by Juanita Baker

The Bald Eagle, our national symbol of strength and fearlessness, is majestic. The bold white head and tail of adults contrasts with their brown body and seven-foot wings, held flat when soaring. This eagle feeds by swooping down to pluck fish from the surface of lakes or rivers. Its massive yellow feet have three strong front talons to snag a fish from the water, with the fourth rear talon used to puncture and thus kill the prey. Sometimes a marauding pirate, a Bald Eagle will steal fish from other birds, particularly the Osprey. Once, after an eagle's chase, an Osprey dropped a fish on a town sidewalk, but neither bird pursued the fish among the pedestrians! Did anyone wonder how that fish appeared on the sidewalk? A supreme opportunist, Bald Eagles also eat reptiles, birds and mammals, including carrion.

Bald Eagles have spectacular courtship rituals in which they soar to great heights, lock talons, and tumble/cartwheel to earth, breaking away just before hitting the ground. As with most raptors, the coloration is similar but the female is larger than the male (up to 12 vs. 9 lbs.). Bald Eagles in northern states and Canada are considerably larger than Florida birds, aiding heat conservation and fat storage. Eagles prefer nesting far from human disturbance in tall, secluded, living pine trees in mature forests near their food sources along coastlines, rivers, and lakes. Eagles often add to the nest year after year, building the largest tree nest (up to 13' x 8') of any animal. Nest building in Florida begins in October, and incubation, taking about a month, starts two to three months later. In January, using his Canon Camera EOS 7D, f/6.2, 1/500 sec., 600 mm, Don Schuster took this photo of a huge stick nest in open view, just as the parents switched nest-tending duties.



Bald Eagles Switching Places © 2015 Donald Schuster

Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

Order FALCONIFORMES – Family ACCIPITRIDAE

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

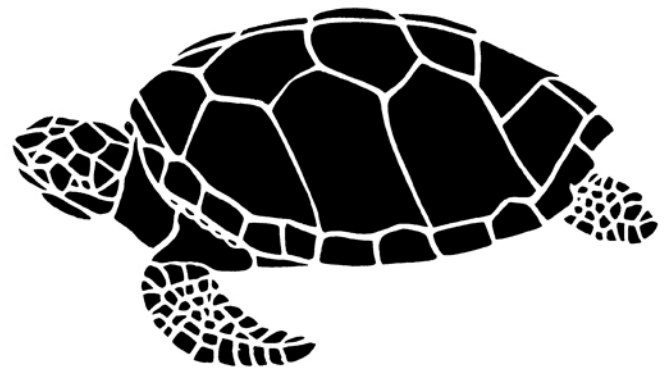
Florida Symbols by Linda Chancellor

How well do you know Florida? Beginning with the 1909 designation of the Orange Blossom as the State Flower the legislature has designated many other state symbols. Here are some of them.

1927 State Bird – Mockingbird
1953 State Tree – Sabal Palmetto
1967 State Beverage – Orange Juice
1969 State Shell – Horse Conch
1970 State Gem - Moonstone - American astronauts landed on the moon in 1969. Moonstone is a form of mineral feldspar not found naturally in Florida.

1970 State Name - The Sunshine State
1975 State Marine Mammal – Manatee
1975 State Freshwater Fish - Largemouth Bass
1975 State Saltwater Fish – Atlantic Sailfish - found off the coast of Ft. Pierce, Miami and Keys
1975 State Saltwater Mammal – Porpoise
1976 State Stone - Agatized Coral (actually a fossil) found in 3 locations - Tampa Bay, Econfinia River and the Withlacoochee/Suwannee river beds
1982 State Animal – Florida panther
1987 State Reptile – Alligator
1991 State Wildflower – Tickseed - Coreopsis
1996 State Butterfly – Zebra Longwing

2006 State Pie – Key Lime Pie
2008 State Saltwater Reptile – Loggerhead Turtle
2008 State heritage horse – Florida cracker horse (marsh tacky)
2008 State Tortoise - Gopher Tortoise



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Welcome to Subirdia

Will Johnson, age 14, sent a wonderful email describing the birding opportunities he has discovered in his new Indian River County neighborhood. He describes his area as having “many small houses with very little vegetation” with “only a couple of oak trees that probably are too small to attract birds.” Fortunately, “three empty lots nearby have Sea Grapes, Strangler Figs, Hercules Club and various grasses and other plants.” Will says “the bird diversity in these lots is astounding!” Will noticed that the lots have different habitats which attract different birds: “For instance, this fall, the weedy areas attracted Indigo Buntings, Painted Buntings, Common Yellowthroats, and a White-Crowned Sparrow while the trees and bushy areas attracted three types of thrush, two types of Vireo, Scarlet Tanagers and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, around seventeen species of warbler, two species of flycatcher, and other miscellaneous migrants such as cuckoos. I was really surprised how these small areas can funnel in so many birds! I have also had some really good sea watching since our neighborhood is near the beach. I have seen more scoters (Including my first White-winged Scoters!!), jaegers, gannets, and other migrating waterfowl over the ocean than I have ever seen before!”

Will's observations are similar to John Marzluff's book entitled *Welcome to Subirdia: Sharing Our Neighborhoods with Wrens, Robins, Woodpeckers, and Other Wildlife*. While we humans have caused a great loss of biodiversity by our actions removing natural habitats for monocultures and development, the greatest variety of birds are often found where there is diversity of plants, and that can be in suburbia. In an article published in the February/March issue of *Nature Conservancy*, Marzluff states “Subirdia...is a richly interwoven mixture of residential, commercial and wilder land. Houses, allotments, and gardens, derelict and vacant land, golf courses and other outdoor sport sites, cemeteries, schoolyards, highway and railway verges, municipal utility stations, business parks and shopping centers occur among places dominated by natural vegetation such as greenways, river and stream corridors, parks and nature reserves, pipelines and power lines, steep slopes and quarries. Functionally, subirdia is the confluence between city and country that promotes a mutual exchange of plants and animals.”

Over 40 million U.S. acres (nearly the size of Wisconsin) are non-native lawns. At the U.S. current growth rate, 2.1 million acres will be lost to residential landscape yearly. Just think what we could do in Indian River County if we removed most of the St. Augustine grass lawns and planted native shrubs and trees to increase our bird and butterfly populations. Plants provide both food (fruit, seeds, and beneficial insects) and shelter for protection and nesting. Many birds feed on insects, which feed on various native plants. Cornell Lab of Ornithology lists seven important plant groups at www.allaboutbirds.org/Page.aspx?pid=1143 and other suggestions to attract birds to your yard.

To create a Bird-Friendly Yard (and healthier for us humans too):

- Eliminate or use minimal amounts of pesticides and herbicides.
- Where safe, let dead trees stand to attract insects and woodpeckers and provide bird roosts.
- Provide a variety of seeds in bird feeders, put up bird houses, and provide a water source via a pond, bird bath, or mister. Bird feeders are for us to learn about birds, not for the birds' sake.
- Plant a diversity of native plants (exotic plants often host no native insects and grass reduces diversity of plant species and provide little food for birds - see “Bringing Nature Home” by Douglas Tallamy for more information).
- Keep cats indoors only. Indian River County's estimated 37,000 pet cats, and its additional 29-49,000 stray/feral cats may kill locally a half million birds annually. Scientists estimate that cats are responsible for killing 1 to 4 billion wild birds nationally. Protect your cats. They are safer indoors. Pet dogs may also kill birds.

Some references that give more information about birds and gardens:

- www.nsis.org/garden/garden-native-birds.html
- www.netpamj.com/08attractinghummers.htm
- www.floridaplants.com/landscape/birds.htm
- <http://www.bringingnaturehome.net/>
- gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/giam/fyn/florida_friendly_yards/bird_gardening.html
- www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/cats/pdf/Loss_et_al_2013.pdffestic cats on wildlife in U.pdf
- [Attracting Backyard Birds: Bird Feeder Selection: edisi.fas.ufl.edu/uw192](http://edisi.fas.ufl.edu/uw192)

In addition, here are local plant resources so we can get started right away to enhance our yards by finding plants that grow in Florida and attract birds through their seed and fruit production:

- Florida Native Plant Society: www.fnps.org/plants (put in your zip code and find plants that thrive)
- Natives for your Neighborhood: regionalconservation.org/beta/nfyn/default.asp
- Florida Association of Native Nurseries: www.floridanativenurseries.org/plants/
- Recommended Florida Native Plants for the Treasure Coast: edisi.fas.ufl.edu/ep348

See our website for these links, and booklists, and ideas on how to enhance your yard to attract birds: pelicanisland-audubon.org

Our goal at our Audubon House is to provide examples of native landscaping plants. We also encourage you, our members, to enhance your yard to attract birds. Based on Will's experience in his local neighborhood, we could enjoy more wildlife if we kept some areas of our yards wild.

Pelican Island Audubon Society Officers & Directors

Officers: President **Richard H. Baker, Ph.D.**, 1st Vice President **Bob Bruce**, 2nd Vice President **Susan Boyd**, Recording Secretary **Darlene Halliday**, Corresponding Secretary **Peter Sutherland**, Treasurer **Steve Goff** — Elected Directors: **David Cox, Ph.D. '17**, **Graham Cox, Ph.D. '17**, **Nancy Irvin '16**, **Bill Loftus, Ph.D. '15**, **Toni Robinson '16** — Appointed Board Members: **Bill Halliday**, **Tina Marchese**, **Diane Morgan**, **David Peabody**, **Bonnie Swanson**, **Corry Westbrook**

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.

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

Credit card payments call (772) 567-3520 M-F 9AM-1PM

Please email us if there is a local environmental issue which concerns you at piaudubon@bellsouth.net

Plant of the Month by Janice Broda

The “cherries” on cherry laurel (*Prunus caroliniana*) are for the birds!

Cherry laurel, as know as Carolina cherry or laurelcherry, as you might guess from the species name is native to the southeastern United States beginning in the Carolinas. Its blue-black, small (1/2”) oblong fruits contain one seed, as do plums, which are referenced by the genus name *Prunus*.

A member of the rose family (Rosaceae), cherry laurel trees flower in the later winter or early spring. Racemes (stalked bunches) of creamy flowers now adorn the cherry laurels growing in the moist hammock area at the Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area. One of the two newly planted cherry laurels in the landscape at the Audubon House still has some fruits on it. Fruits often persist through the following winter, when new flowers are formed.

Birds, squirrels, and other small mammals eat and spread the fruit of this small (to 20’) tree. Often, it is found growing under power lines, bird feeders, and other popular bird perches.

Cherry laurel is pest-resistant, as its leaves, branches, and bark contain prussic acid (cyanide). When crushed, the leaves emit a fragrance that has been likened to almond extract, maraschino cherry, or marzipan.

Densely foliated in full sun with glossy, dark green alternate leaves, cherry laurel sometimes is trimmed into a hedge. In shadier locations, it naturally grows into a pyramid-shaped tree form. Cherry laurel, once established, is drought-resistant and tolerant of a wide variety of soil conditions, though in very alkaline soils, its leaves will yellow.

Consider adding some cherry laurel trees to your landscape to attract and sustain birds.



Cherry Laurel

