



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
Our 42nd Year Vol. 42 No. 5 May 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

Sun May 7 – 8:00am–12:00pm ORCA canoe trip. Meet at the FMEL boathouse 200 9th St. S.E. (Oslo Road) east of U.S. 1. Reservations are required. Call 567-3520 to sign-up.

Mon May 15 – 7:30pm General Meeting at the Vero Beach Community Center, 2266 14th Ave. Topic: *ORCA: Critical Habitat for Fishes of the Lagoon* with Dr. Grant Gilmore.

Sat May 20 9am–11am Guided pontoon boat cruise down the St Lucie River to a rookery island. Cost is \$20. Please call the office at 772-567-3520 for reservations and precise directions.

Wed May 17 - 4:00pm Field trip to view nesting Ospreys at Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge. Call 567-3520 for reservations.

June 3 - 9am-1pm *Birds as Art Photo Workshop* with Artie Morris. Indian River Community College main campus, Ft. Pierce. Visit www.irphotoclub.org for details.

Sun June 4 – 8:00am–12:00pm ORCA canoe trip. Meet at the FMEL boathouse 200 9th St. S.E. (Oslo Road) east of U.S. 1. Reservations are required. Call 567-3520 to sign-up.

Wed July 12 – 9pm-midnight Sea turtle walk at Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge. Call 567-3520 for reservations.

Oct 19-21 Audubon Assembly 2006, Holiday Inn Cocoa Beach Ocean Front Resort.

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ORCA: CRITICAL HABITAT FOR FISHES OF THE LAGOON MAY 15 MEETING

Dr. Grant Gilmore, Fish Ecologist and Senior Research Scientist with Estuarine Coastal and Ocean Science, Inc., will present a program entitled “*ORCA: Critical Habitat for Fishes of the Indian River Lagoon*” focusing on the declining health of seagrasses during the May 17 general meeting at the Vero Beach Community Center, 2266 14th Avenue, in Vero Beach starting at 7:30pm. Dr. Gilmore states, “There is little question that seagrass is on the decline, particularly those that support the most diverse faunas in the Lagoon.” As chief scientist at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute from 1971-1998, Dr. Gilmore has undertaken as one of the world’s foremost fish ecologists many expeditions around the planet to study marine life supported by federal, state, and private sources. He continues to study Indian River Lagoon habitat management and reclamation, which should provide unique insights into this abused waterway during the May 15 meeting. Refreshments will be served following the program.

CRUISE ON THE ST. LUCIE RIVER TO A ROOKERY ISLAND MAY 20 FIELD TRIP

Deena & Dana Wade will reprise the successful tour they led last year aboard their pontoon boat, the *River Lilly*, on Saturday, May 20. The trip departs from Port St. Lucie and will descend the St. Lucie River to a rookery island for close-up views of a variety of nesting birds including Wood Storks, Anhingas, Cormorants, a variety of Egrets & Herons along with other birds. Space is limited to 36 passengers. The cost is \$20 per person. Please call 772-567-3520 for reservations and precise directions.

Pelican Island Audubon Society

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SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES IRC LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATION, CHAPTER 926. LANDSCAPING

Proposals drafted by: Jean Catchpole, David Cox, Deborah Ecker, Jens Tripson, Billi Wagner and Bonnie Veron, under the auspices of The Pelican Island Audubon Society. Submitted to the IRC Board of County Commissioners, 3/05. Revised submissions to the IRC Department of Community Development, 3/06 and 4/06.

A major goal of managed growth is achieved when the landscaping of a development improves the appearance of its surroundings, protects Florida native plants and preserves water resources.

The goals to be achieved through proposed changes:

- Minimized drawdown of water for the maintenance of landscape materials
- Preservation, and increased use, of native trees, shrubs, groundcovers and other drought-tolerant plant species
- Aesthetic and opaque buffers between developments and public roadways
- Enrichment of the quality of life for residents of new developments

MINIMIZING THE DRAWDOWN OF WATER

Turf grass limited to 50% of irrigated area (and must be planted in a separate zone that consolidates uses requiring it. Temporary or drip irrigation systems required for buffers. Must meet Florida Irrigation Society Standards and "Green industries Best Management Practices for Protection of Water Resources in Florida." One year after installation of new vegetation, irrigation must be abandoned. Moisture-sensing devices are required. Irrigation systems must have separate high and low water use zones. Installations must minimize overlap and over-spray of impervious surfaces. Irrigation system must be set to meet SJRWMD requirement of 4PM to 10

PM. Reuse or retention water must be used for irrigation where available.

PRESERVATION, AND INCREASED USE OF NATIVE TREES AND PLANTS

Requirement that a minimum 50% of new trees must be native, that a minimum 50% of new shrubs must be native, and that a minimum 50% of new vines must be native.

APPENDICES

Extensive listings covering the following: A. Native trees and shrubs, suitable for inland and coastal areas, ground covers, flowers and vines; B. Exotic, invasive plants; C. Preferred grasses; and D. Definitions of soils for use in landscaping. [Note: There are no such appendices in present law.]

AESTHETIC AND OPAQUE BUFFERS

- Redefinition of "buffer" to apply to the area separating a development from a roadway, not just for separation of different land uses.
- Requirements for the soil, slopes, crest and planting of berms
- Requirements for the types of fencing, and their planting on both sides
- Redefinitions of Buffer Types A, B, and C to require more dense plantings of trees and shrubs
- Removal of the option for developers to choose buffer depths within a buffer type. Current law allows less dense (less opaque) plantings for deeper buffers. This would be replaced with required buffer depths depending on intensity of land use
- Requirement that shrubs be spread in an off-set pattern to establish a full and opaque buffer
- Limitation on the height of fences
- Requirement that walls be of masonry or rock (not plastic or other synthetics)
- Clarification of existing law requiring buffers between developments and all roadways.
- Replacement of the requirement in existing law of a 10-foot buffer along a site's road frontage with a new requirement for a minimum 15-foot average buffer (none less than 10 feet) for commercial properties in urban areas and a minimum 25-foot buffer for residential properties.

ENRICHMENT OF THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR RESIDENTS OF NEW DEVELOPMENTS

- Requirement for water retention/detention areas to be configured in an irregular shape to provide an aesthetic focal point
- Increase in the number of required trees in nonvehicular open spaces for all categories of new developments
- Increase in the minimum size of newly planted canopy trees from 10 to 12 feet in height
- Increase in the minimum size of newly planted trees along side buildings
- Prohibition of the installation of nuisance trees
- Requirements for open space for active and passive recreation
- Requirements for guest and service parking

BUILDING BIGGER DOCKS MAKES NO SENSE!

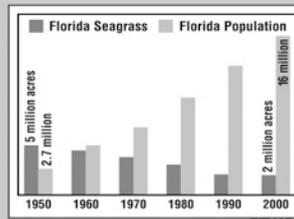
What has caused our sea grasses to become endangered in the Indian River Lagoon (IRL)? In doing research on fish houses on the IRL, I came across a newspaper article where Mr. Charles Sembler Sr., told a reporter that the decline in fishing in the Indian River began when the river channel (Intercoastal Waterway) was dredged in 1952. "He indicated that boat traffic in the river increased substantially, as the population density increased from Melbourne to the south. Outboard motors created much of the destruction of the grass meadows in the river (*Press Journal*, September 17, 1994). This trend continues elsewhere even to day. With the increase in Florida's population since the 1950s, Florida's seagrass has declined from 5 million acres to only 2 million acres.



While Florida's population has been steadily growing, our seagrass meadows have been declining

Notable areas of seagrass loss include:

- **Tampa Bay:** 40% of the seagrass has been lost since 1950.
- **St. Joseph Sound north of Clearwater:** 72% loss of seagrass since 1950.
- **Biscayne Bay near Miami:** 43% of seagrass beds in the northern section no longer exist.
- **Indian River Lagoon:** 30% of the seagrass from Stuart north to Titusville has been lost.
- **Charlotte Harbor between Naples and Sarasota:** 29% of seagrass lost since 1950.



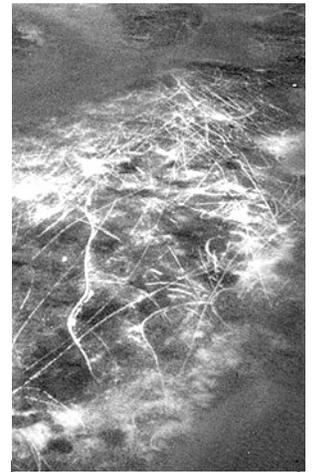
Seagrass decline is also due to stormwater runoff (containing chemicals, fertilizers, silt and debris from yards and agricultural), dredging and building marinas and docks. Seagrasses are marine plants that require light to carry out photosynthesis. Docks and marinas shade out seagrasses so that they cannot grow. Nutrients from lawn and agricultural runoff cause microscopic algal blooms in the water column, and dense epiphytic algal growth on the seagrass blades, blocking out the light that seagrasses need to grow.

Why should we care about seagrasses? The shallow-water seagrass meadows are the most important critical habitat in our Indian River, essential for our ecology and our economy. They provide food, habitat, and protection for most of our fish and other animals including manatees, sea turtles, and wading birds.

Today prop dredging continues to damage our underwater seagrass beds, greatly affecting the productivity of our Lagoon, especially our commercial and sport-fishing industries. Boat propellers can rip up seagrasses and dig trenches that create barren areas

where fish and other animals once flourished. These ruts require up to 10 years or even more to recover.

According to the St. Johns River Water Management District, one of the most productive and diverse seagrass areas in the IRL occurs around the Oslo Road & Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area in south Indian River County. All



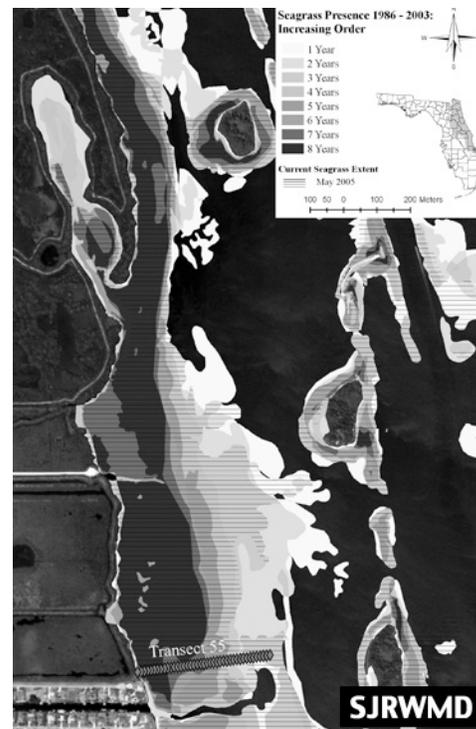
Prop dredging through a seagrass bed. FFWCC

seven species of seagrasses (Turtle-grass, Widgeon-grass, Shoal-grass, Manatee-grass, Johnson's sea-grass, Star-grass, and Paddle-grass) are found in the shallow waters there. Dr. Grant Gilmore, our speaker this month, says the abundance of Shoal-grass in particular near the old Oslo Dock is a major reason why the spotted seatrout uses this area as a nursery. This area is very shallow and

will not take large boat motors.

Yet the county has proposed 4 new docks (2 over 120 ft long) and a new ramp at Oslo Rd/ORCA.

The county proposes no new dredging of an old channel. I am concerned that this will encourage larger and larger boats that in turn



will damage even more of the best seagrasses we have in Indian River County. There are today available boat ramps in South County for large boats only 10 minutes away from Oslo Rd. Thus, it makes no sense to spend county money to build larger docks and ramps for larger boats that will not be able to get out to the Intercoastal Waterway without prop dredging and killing the seagrasses that provide fish for our sport fishers when proper facilities are available.

- - -Richard Baker, President

Pelican Island Audubon Society
P.O. Box 1833
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2006 SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

Scholarship Chair Susan Boyd awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to VBHS student Cole Sullivan on April 27. Special thanks go out to Ruth Moore who has donated so generously to the Scholarship Fund.



REMEMBERING BOB WINDISH

We mourn the passing of Bob Windish on April 17, 2006. Bob was a long time contributor to the Peligram, writing the popular *Bird of the Month* column that recently had become syndicated appearing in other Society newsletters around Florida. Born in New York City, Bob was a veteran of the Marine Corps serving in the Pacific during World War II. He went on to become a professional football scout and assistant coach for the Buffalo Bills during which he took part in four Super Bowls. He was a 1987 inductee to the American Football Association Minor Pro-Football Hall of Fame. We will miss Bob and his contributions to the Society.

OspreyWatch

The Ospreys are raising three hatchlings in the nest at Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge and they are growing bigger everyday! Follow the action at

www.pelicanislandaudubon.org

See calendar for May 17 field trip to see the Ospreys!



WATER QUALITY PROJECT IN IRC

In Indian River County, three relief canals carry more than 100 million gallons of stormwater to the Lagoon every day containing countless organic materials and large amounts of trash from the canals. County officials have estimated that 50 million lbs. of organic matter accumulates in the Lagoon annually which decomposes into muck, accelerating the decline of the area's remaining seagrass beds. SJRWMD in December approved the use of \$1.5 million in Florida Forever funds to vastly improve the quality of water flowing from the three canals by constructing a stormwater treatment system in each of the three relief canals.

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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:

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- \$15 one-year student membership
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