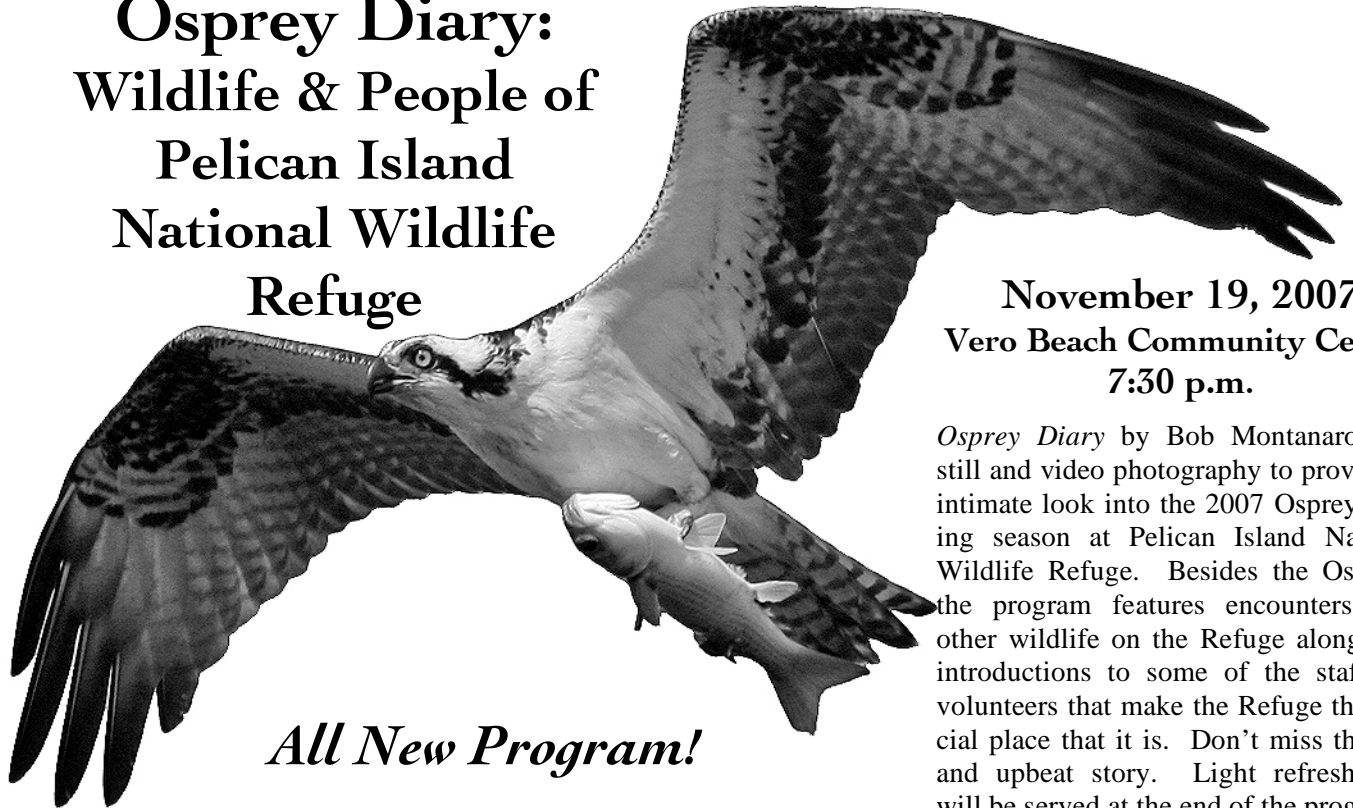




P.O. Box 1833, VERO BEACH, FL 32961 772-567-3520 www.pelicanislandaudubon.org
 Our 43rd Year Vol. 43 No. 7 November 2007

**Osprey Diary:
 Wildlife & People of
 Pelican Island
 National Wildlife
 Refuge**



All New Program!

**November 19, 2007
 Vero Beach Community Center
 7:30 p.m.**

Osprey Diary by Bob Montanaro uses still and video photography to provide an intimate look into the 2007 Osprey nesting season at Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge. Besides the Ospreys, the program features encounters with other wildlife on the Refuge along with introductions to some of the staff and volunteers that make the Refuge the special place that it is. Don't miss this fun and upbeat story. Light refreshments will be served at the end of the program.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

More information on all these events may be found at www.pelicanislandaudubon.org

Mon Nov 8 – 6:30-8:30pm - Public Workshop – Greenways Master Plan for Indian River County, IRC Admin. 1800 27th St, Vero Beach, Building B, Room B1-501

Sat Nov 10 8:00am – Birding field trip to Sebastian Inlet State Park, see page 2 for details.

Sun Nov 11 – 8:00am – noon - ORCA canoe trip. Meet at the FMEL boathouse, 200 9th St. (Oslo Rd) east of US-1. Call 772-567-3520 for reservations.

Mon Nov 19 – 7:30pm - General meeting, *Osprey Diary* by Bob Montanaro, Vero Beach Community Center, 2266 14th Ave.

Sat Nov 24 – 8:00am - Birding Field trip to Treasure Hammock Ranch with Jens & Melissa Tripson. Reservations required by calling 772-567-3520. See page 2 for details.

Sat Dec 8 – 7:15am – Birding field trip to Viera Wetlands, see page 2 for details.

Mon Dec 10 – 6:00pm –Vegetarian Potluck, Vero Beach Community Center, 2266 14th Ave.

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**

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Joe Carroll '08	Nancy Irvin '10
David Cox '09	Roz James '09
Debby Ecker '08	Susan Richardson '10

Appointed Board Members

Joel Day	Melissa Tripson
Tina Marchese	Craig Weyandt

Advisory Board Members

Janice Broda	Bob Smith
Kevin Doty	Paul Tritaik
Lynne Larkin	Billi Wagner

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.



Visit Trinidad with Pelican Island Audubon

The Pelican Island Audubon Society invites you to join us February 16-23, 2008 on a fun-filled birding trip to the lovely island of Trinidad. Over 400 species of birds have been recorded on the island, which is also home to 100 mammal species, 600 butterfly species, and nearly 100 amphibian and reptile species!

We will be staying at the Mt. Saint Benedict Guest House located amidst a bird rich habitat some 800 feet above the Plains of Caroni. Besides the beautiful scenery, the trip features daily birding trips to various locations around the island utilizing expert local guides.

Cost is \$1,500 for a room with a shared bathroom or \$1,600 for a room with a private bathroom. Price includes airfare, hotel accommodation, all meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner, and evening rumpunch), guided trips with all entrance fees to nature centers and boating trips, and all taxes. **A \$500 deposit is required by November 9, 2007 to reserve airfare.** For more information, including a preliminary itinerary, call the PIAS office at 772-567-3520.

Don't miss this unique opportunity to bird one of the world's tropical treasures!

FIELD TRIPS

Sebastian Inlet State Park November 10, 2007

Rick Lucas will lead a birding field trip to Sebastian Inlet State Park starting at 8:00 a.m. on November 10. Enter through the north entrance to the park in Brevard County under the bridge. Participants are advised to bring binoculars or a spotting scope, also bug repellent. Directions: A-1-A north, go over the Sebastian Inlet bridge, make a left into the park. Entrance fee required.

Treasure Hammock Ranch November 24, 2007

The Pelican Island Audubon Society will host a field trip led by Sean Sexton and Jens and Melissa Tripson to the Treasure Hammock Ranch owned by the Sexton family starting at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, November 24, 2007. This working cattle ranch is a haven for wildlife in Indian River County and the visitors should expect to see a large variety of bird species with some examples including Meadow Larks, Sharp-shinned Hawks, Loggerhead Shrikes, American Kestrels, Pileated Woodpeckers, Crested Caracaras and Bald Eagles to name a few. Additionally, this late November trip also coincides with the migratory bird season, which will make for an interesting and rich bird watching experience. The field trip is limited to 20 participants. Reservations are required by calling 772-567-3520. Directions to the Ranch, located in Indian River County, will be provided with your reservation confirmation.

Participants should wear sturdy footwear suitable for hiking through dew-soaked grass and mud as the field trip expects to cover from one to two miles of the ranch on foot. The participants are advised to bring a hat for protection from the Sun, insect repellent, and a bottle of drinking water.

Viera Wetlands (aka South Central Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility) December 8, 2007

Rick Lucas will lead a birding field trip to the Viera Wetlands in Brevard County. Carpoolers meet at 7:15 a.m. in the McDonald's parking lot located at I-95 and County Road 512 (Sebastian/Fellsmere exit). We will leave McDonald's at 7:30. Directions: Take I-95 to Wickham Road. Go westbound on Wickham to the South Central Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility. All vehicles must be registered at office prior to entering.





The President's Hello? Hoot

Why doesn't St. Johns River Water Management District Listen to their own Biologists?

And now SJRWMD do not want the Governor or Cabinet to see their own top Biologists' Study!

PIAS, Friends of St. Sebastian River (FOSSR), David Cox and separately, Indian River County (IRC) have appealed to the Governor and Cabinet to reconsider the SJRWMD Governing Board 7-2 approval of an exchange 1,265 acres of public conservation lands called the Sand Lakes Tract for only 460 acres owned by the Corrigan's. In addition, this sweetheart deal gives the Corrigan's \$657,300 for not pursuing a threatened lawsuit (see October Hoot). Surprisingly, SJRWMD now is trying to prevent consideration of one of its own technical reports concerning the conservation value of Sand Lakes.

After the appeals were made, Kathy Wegel from FOSSR discovered a study made by SJRWMD in 2001: (Technical Publication SJ2001-3) entitled *Assessing the Potential Occurrence of Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species in the Upper St. Johns River Basin* written by the SJRWMD's scientists, Marc C. Minno, Ph.D., Steven J. Miller, and Kimberli J. Ponzio which evaluated Sand Lakes in (See <http://sjr.state.fl.us/technicalreports/tpubs1.html#2001>). This study ranked 29 project areas, including the Sand Lakes area as to their size, habitat diversity, and the potential occurrence of rare, threatened, or endangered species all of which are critical for their management.

Another Example of Government suppressing Science?

other project areas examined, it contained some of the rarest and most variety of habitat types surveyed that are critical for some wildlife species. *This report should have been provided to the Governing Board before they were asked to vote on whether the Sand Lakes Tract was needed for conservation purposes. Instead, the Governing Board was repeatedly told by SJRWMD staff that Sand Lake was "pretty average" environmentally. This is simply untrue by their own report.*

This 53 page study found that although the Sand Lakes project is relatively small compared to

In fact, St. Johns best biologists' reported that Sand Lakes has the following 10 of the 13 commonly analyzed habitats:

Agriculture and Disturbed Lands	33 Acres
Shrub and Brushlands	354 Acres
Dry Prairies/ Savannahs	322 Acres
Pine Flatwoods	153 Acres
Hardwood Hammocks	10 Acres
Zeric Oaks	5 Acres
Wet Prairies	145 Acres
Freshwater Marshes	155 Acres
Shrub Wetlands	42 Acres
Forested Wetlands	116 Acres
Total for Sand Lakes	1,335 Acres

Interestingly, only 33 acres are listed as agriculture and disturbed lands.

In our county, Sand Lakes and Fort Drum Marsh Conservation Area ranked first of six other parcels. In the whole six counties Upper Basin (Indian River, Osceola, Brevard, Orange, Seminole, and Volusia) only 6 of the 29 parcels (21%) ranked higher than Sand Lakes! Not the average SJRWMD said!

In our county, Sand Lakes ranks first in potential to support 149 rare or listed species (e.g. peregrine falcons, snail kites, wood storks, Fl. scrub jays, sandhill cranes, crested caracaras, gopher tortoises, indigo snakes, and wading birds), and 2nd of 29 in the six county area. Only Bull Creek Management Area was higher, and this was because it has 21,759 acres versus 1,335 for Sand Lakes.

The last sentence of the publication's Conclusion says it all: **"Large project areas** such as the Lake Poinsett/Canaveral Management Area ...Fort Drum Marsh Conservation Area, and St. Johns Marsh Conservation Area have the greatest number of different habitats and thus **hold the greatest potential for harboring rare plants and animals. However, areas that are smaller, but relatively rich in natural communities, such as the Sand Lakes Restoration Area, may also be very important for some species."** If the Governing Board had this information it may well have made a different determination on September 11th.

Because this report was only discovered after the Governing Board meeting, both PIAS/FOSSR/Cox and IRC, filed a joint motion to supplement the record that will be provided to the Governor and Cabinet, asking that the report be included. Astoundingly, the SJRWMD is adamantly opposed to its own report being provided to the Governor and Cabinet. They not only opposed our request to supplement the record, they even opposed us attaching a copy of the report to the motion!

➔ *Continued on page 4*

→ *The President's Hoot - Continued from page 4*

The stakes are high here as the decision to divest the public of its ownership of the Sand Lakes tract places all our Florida public lands in jeopardy for future sale at the whim of the SJRWMD Board. SJRWMD has misinterpreted Florida's Constitution and Laws and did not provide unbiased scientific analysis. Unfortunately, this was done solely to avoid a threatened suit and is an example of giving away public conservation lands for a future private development (see box below, for further reasons).

Many of you have written great letters already and made a donation, but if you have not and **if you as a taxpayer and conservationist are so outraged by 1) the decision to betray the public trust by giving an ecologically significant piece of public land to development and 2) that the SJRWMD is so hell bent on giving away our public land that its lawyers would try to prevent the governor and cabinet from considering its own technical report, please email the Governor and Cabinet via Aides (See box below for addresses and phone numbers. Call our office for assistance.)**

Richard Baker, President

We thank those who have generously donated nearly \$1,000 for our legal fees in fighting the St. Johns River Water Management District's Sand Lakes-Corrigan Land Exchange. Our legal expenses will be around \$8,000. Therefore, if you have not given please consider a donation to PIAS.

Also consider emailing or calling the Aides of the Governor and Cabinet:

Diana Sawaya-Crane (diana.sawaya-crane@eog.myflorida.com) (850)488-5152

Yvonne Gsteiger (yvonne.gsteiger@fldfs.com) (850) 413-2825

Jim Boxold (boxoldj@doacs.state.fl.us); (850) 410-6747

Kent Perez (kent.perez@myfloridalegal.com) (850) 245-0145

The street address for all is: The Capitol, Tallahassee Fl. 32399.

Citing one of the numerous reasons why the Sand Lakes Tract exchange is a bad decision for the citizens of Indian River County:

- The subject property, Sand Lakes, which is to be traded to the Corrigan family, was purchased with tax funds for the purpose of conservation in 1999.
- In a 2001 SJRWMD report authored by their own top three biologists to assess the potential occurrence of rare, threatened, and endangered species in the Upper St. Johns River Basin, SJRWMD ranked the property 3 out of 9 properties it owned in Indian River County.
- Nothing about the property has changed. It is **still** an important piece of property for conservation. In fact, it is so important that the county wanted to partner with SJRWMD but they said they would do it alone, but now they give the county no opportunity to have first option to buy it.
- The property is in an important wildlife corridor to the St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park.
- The property is habitat for endangered species peregrine falcons, snail kites, wood storks, Fl. Scrub jays, sand hill cranes, crested caracaras, gopher tortoises, indigo snakes, and wading birds.
- The property is situated to be a gateway for Fellsmere expansion (allowing Corrigan to have extensive tracts of contiguous lands with Fellsmere) down the west side of I-95.
- It is a bad precedent for a conservation agency to decide that it is OK to sell or trade conservation lands purchased by public funds set aside for this purpose.
- It is also a bad business practice (encouraging future intimidation) to settle a threatened lawsuit without entering a court of law. If the Corrigan's deserve damages for "the flooding of their land" then let the court decide. Then fair priced damages can come from the entire district, as they should, instead of from our county alone.
- There was no consulting with local officials until deal was made.
- Most important Staff did not listen to their own Biologists who rank Sand Lake in the top 1/3 of both the Upper Basin and in Indian River County in their Technical Publication SJ2001-3, which is on line at SJRWMD.com

Indian River County has no representation on the SJRWMD Governing Board. The only way for our voice to be heard is to loudly protest this land swap.

**For more information, visit this Pelican Island Audubon Society web page:
<http://www.pelicanislandaudubon.org/protectconservationlands.html>**

Joe Michael 1918-2007

A true conservation hero

by Paul Tritaik and Richard Baker

We at Pelican Island Audubon are saddened to hear of the passing of Joe Michael at his home the morning of 17 Oct. He was born in 1918 in a log cabin in the Community of Buttermilk, near Clayton, GA. His father had rented the cabin for the Michael family of 6 to "get out of the FL mosquitoes", for the summer.

We in particular are thankful for his protecting Pelican Island and birthing our Audubon chapter. Joe was instrumental in the early 1960's in protecting Pelican Island when the State tried to sell the wetlands around the island to Miami developers. In 1959, Joe learned of the expansion of bulkhead lines near Pelican Island. Joe convinced the State to lease 1600 acres south of Pelican Island (and adjacent to his properties) to the Florida Audubon for 10 years. In June of 1962, Joe and his sister, Jeanette Lier, learned that of even more extensions of the bulkhead line into the Indian River lagoon near Pelican Island. Joe and Jeanette rallied local opposition and convinced the County to reject the proposal.

The very next month, Joe established the Indian River Area Preservation League with the main goal of protecting Pelican Island. Joe convinced the State to conduct an aquatic resource survey and a bird survey for the purpose of establishing the biological importance of the area, so it could allow for expanding the refuge. Joe requested the Fish and Wildlife Service to study the area and recommend boundaries for expansion. In 1963, the FWS recommended expanding the boundary to 4,740 acres. Joe worked closely with Tom Coxon of the Florida Audubon Society and Art Marshall of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to broaden the support across the state and nation. Joe and Robert Amos recruited hundreds of local citizens to the effort, receiving the support of 19 local civic organizations and four statewide environmental organizations. The State refused to lease the 4,740 acres because it included bottomlands they wanted to retain and about 300 acres of wetlands they wanted to sell to developers. Those 300 acres are known today as Pete's and Bird's Impoundments.

Not only would those impoundments have been filled for a housing development, but the shallow lagoon bottoms surrounding Pelican Island would have likely been dredged to provide the fill. Joe spearheaded the opposition in Tallahassee and convinced the State to cancel the sale. This was a landmark decision, because for the first time in Florida, state-owned bottomlands were protected for conservation purposes. Joe later worked with the

State to eventually lease those 4,740 acres to the refuge. That land is now protected and open to the public via Pete's and Bird's Impoundment trails and, of course, the Centennial Trail boardwalk and observation tower.

In 1965, Joe established the Town of Orchid, partly as another way of protecting Pelican Island. Because the town boundaries extended into the refuge, bulkhead line approvals and other local matters could be considered by a more conservation-minded town council. Upon successfully protecting Pelican Island, the Indian River Area Preservation League disbanded in 1966 and donated their remaining treasury to the newly formed pelican Island Audubon Society to continue the work of protecting Pelican Island and the Indian River Lagoon.

Joe's conservation commitment extended into everything he did. As a member of the Indian River Mosquito Control Board, Joe convinced the District to leave one mangrove wetland, near his home, completely unaltered by ditching or impounding. Joe also convinced the District to breach two impoundments near his grove, so they would function more naturally. Those impoundments are called the Deerfield Impoundments, and are also part of the refuge. Joe also wanted to see the Pelican Island Refuge expand on the barrier island and sold his old grove along Jungle Trail to The Conservation Fund for eventual inclusion into the Refuge. He shared the vision we had of restoring those old groves to natural communities for the benefit of wildlife.

Both Joe and his wife Anne have made major contributions to our organizations and others in the county in ways most people do not know about. As a result of people like Anne and Joe, land is still being set aside to protect our wonderful Indian River County, a place we all love so much. It must have really been an exciting place to see when Anne and Joe first discovered it so many years ago. All new folks here also get to see a little bit of its ancient charm. We gain inspiration from pioneers like Joe and his legacy lives on in our activism.



Pelican Island Audubon Society
P.O. Box 1833
Vero Beach, FL 32961-1833

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Vegetarian Potluck & Holiday Bazaar

December 10, 2007

Starting at 6:00 p.m.



Vero Beach Community Center

2266 14th Avenue

in Downtown Vero Beach



Entertainment provided by the

Gifford Youth Symphony



We ask that those attending bring a vegetarian dish that will serve eight people. All those attending should, also, bring their own place setting. A variety of beverages will be provided.

Identify This Bird!



Answer: Sandhill Crane

This very large, long-legged, long-necked bird is often seen in the Sebastian area where it is known to nest. It sports a brilliant red crown that offsets its otherwise grayish overall appearance. Its ability to stand motionless oftentimes has it mistaken for a decoration when seen in a yard. To make things more confusing, both sexes look alike though the

male tends to be slightly larger. Researchers have found a Miocene fossil of this bird dating back 10 million years which is structurally identical to the modern version of this bird making it one of the oldest known bird species still surviving!

Photo by Bob Montanaro.

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