

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. 8 November 2016

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

November 14, 2016 ❖ 6:00 p.m.

Amazing Alligators

with Jerry Walls

Live Gator Show!

Unravel the mysteries of these giant reptiles!

Informative &
fun for the whole
family!

North Indian River
County Library
1001 Sebastian Blvd.
(CR 512), Sebastian



Birding Trip to Ecuador Raffle!!!

Tickets only \$10 each!

Fundraiser for Pelican Island Audubon!

Learn more and buy tickets at
www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org

A Taste Of Honey *From Around The World*

- Friday, November 4 - doors open at 7:00PM
- Audubon House - 295 9th Street SE (Oslo Rd.) -
Proceeds benefit Pelican Island Audubon Society -
Tickets \$25 in advance/\$30 at the door

Honey tastes very different depending upon where the bees collect their pollen. Using crackers, cheese, chocolate, etc., you will have the chance to try different honeys from around the world including local honey. Reserve your place today! Space is limited. This event is family friendly with raffles, gifts, & prizes. For tickets, go online to PelicanIslandAudubon.org or call 772-567-3520 or email piaudubon@yahoo.com

November 21, 2016 ❖ 7:00 p.m.

Birding Northern Ecuador along the Magic Birding Circuit with Bill & Becky Loftus

Vero Beach Community Center
2266 14th Avenue, Vero Beach

Join us for a presentation of our recent visit to Ecuador, South America on a 12-day birding tour with Dr. Jorge Cruz of the Magic Birding Circuit. Ecuador is one of the most biodiverse nations on earth, guaranteeing visitors the opportunity to see many bird species. Dr. Cruz owns three comfortable lodges and several nature reserves where birders may see and photograph hundreds of colorful native bird species, butterflies, and unusual mammals. We appreciated his efforts in preserving land for conservation and employing local people in his lodges and preserves. Dr. Cruz is an artist, photographer and incredible birder with expertise in medicinal plants and archaeology. His unbounded energy and enthusiasm ensured that our trip was a success. We enjoyed delicious food, magnificent scenery and friendly people while in Ecuador. Now it is your chance to visit Ecuador through Pelican Island Audubon Society thanks to a donated trip from Magic Birding Circuit. **Continued on Page Two** ⇨

Audubon House Open House

Saturday, November 12, 2016 - 11AM - 2PM
195 9th Street SE (Oslo Road), Vero Beach

- Food & fun for the whole family
- Learn about landscaping for butterflies
- Kayak the Indian River Lagoon
- And more!

For more information call 772-567-3520

Upcoming Events & Field Trips

Call 772-567-3520 for reservations and directions.

Nov 17 - T.M. Goodwin Waterfowl Management Area -
Guide: David Simpson

Nov 19 - Birding the Indian River Lagoon by Kayak -
Guide: Kristen Beck

Masthead photo: Brown Pelican by Bob Montanaro.

Bird of the Month by Juanita Baker

Unlike other swallows, Tree Swallows nest in trees, not banks, cliffs, caves, or barns, the locations where other swallows nest and get their names. When young are raised and insects decline in their nesting grounds, Swallows stay longer, eating wax-coated Myrtle berries which provide fuel for their high-energy migration. Gathering across Northern U.S. and Canada, by December vast numbers reach Florida, streaming high overhead, searching for Wax Myrtle thickets. Ellie Van Os, with Canon, 100-400mm photographed this flock with iridescent blue backs and white bellies.



Photo credit: Tree Swallows acting together © Ellie Van Os

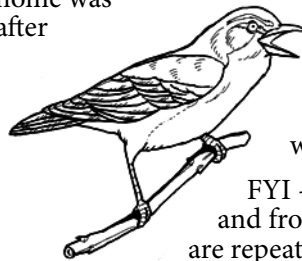
After sunset, swallows gather from all directions, in gigantic flocks. The spectacular, rarely seen phenomenon is called murmuration, seemingly choreographed and at high-speed. Undulating pattern of waves of swallows fly in tandem, twisting and turning filling the sky. Thousands circle an isolated roost site, even visible on NASA's radar. An hour after dusk, as if on cue, thousands begin funneling into one roost on an isolated wetlands or island. During the day they disperse, smaller flocks dart after insects with acrobatic flying or together covering trees to feed or rest.

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

A morning visitor by Linda Chancellor

My husband and I had decided to make the drive to the west coast of Florida to avoid Hurricane Matthew. We returned home after having confirmed that our home was safe and we had electricity. The next morning, after removing several aluminum shutters from the back porch, I sat down with my first cup of coffee. The sun was shining and the sky was a bright cerulean blue color. I looked out at my backyard that was littered with cabbage palm fronds, palm seed stalks, and lots of broken branches from my neighbor's pecan and laurel oaks. I knew I had a lot of work ahead of me that day.

Then a mockingbird began to sing. I could not see him but he sang for several minutes changing songs frequently. As he flew into view I could clearly see his white wing bars



against his slate gray feathers. Recognizing birds by their voices is definitely not my strong point but I did wonder which birds he had learned to mimic and how many songs he knew. This morning's musical display was so different from the scratchy chat calls the mockingbirds used when they were driving away other birds from the ripe red berries of their favorite Simpson Stopper bush. After a few more minutes of song he flew away but what a great way to start the day.

FYI - Mockingbirds can mimic the sounds of birds and frogs. Their songs are comprised of phrases that are repeated two to six times before changing. A study at Elon University, N.C. found that mockingbirds mimic those birds that have songs similar in pitch and rhythm to the mockingbird's own vocalizations. These included Cardinal, Blue Jay, Carolina Wren, Eastern Bluebird and Tufted Titmouse.

↳ Birding Ecuador from Page One

Dr. William F. Loftus is an Aquatic Ecologist, now retired from the U. S. National Park Service and the U.S. Geological Survey after 32 years of service. He served as program manager for Everglades freshwater ecology studies and was the south Florida Biology lead for USGS. Dr. Loftus received a B. S. in Biology from King's College, and an M. S. from Central Michigan University where he studied food habits of Alaskan salmon. He received a Ph.D. from Florida International University in 2000 for his dissertation on mercury in the Everglades. His career has focused on the ecology of freshwater communities in southern Florida and the Caribbean basin to develop restoration alternatives and monitoring for the Everglades. He has authored more than 70 publications on fish, butterflies, reptiles and plants. Dr.

Loftus has done international research in Mexico, Belize, US Virgin Islands, Brazil, and, most recently, the Galapagos Islands. Work has included inventories of fishes for Everglades, Big Cypress, and Virgin Islands national parks and Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve in Yucatan, development of a long-term research and monitoring program for Everglades fishes and invertebrates that continues, experiments to resolve predator-prey and native/non-native fish interactions, and the of subterranean aquatic habitats by fishes. Though retired from federal service, Dr. Loftus continues to study the ecology of non-native fishes in Florida through his biological consulting company focused on aquatic research and science communication. He is a board member of Pelican Island Audubon and a volunteer for several environmental groups in Florida and Pennsylvania.

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Like Pelican Island Audubon on Facebook at www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org for all the latest news and information

Pelican Island Audubon Receives the Audubon Florida 2016 Best Conservation Projects Award

At the annual Audubon Assembly 2016, PIAS received the Audubon Florida 2016 Conservation Projects Award for our developing a new **Spoonbill Watch and designation of the Indian River County Stick Marsh as a Critical Wildlife Area (CWA)**. Dr. Jerry Lorenz, State Research Director for Audubon Florida, has reported that Roseate Spoonbill populations in Florida are abandoning historical Florida Bay and Everglades nesting and foraging areas coincident with wetland loss in the Keys and salt-water intrusion from sea-level rise in their Everglades foraging habitats. Dr. Lorenz hypothesizes that the Spoonbills may be moving to central Florida to find better habitat for feeding and nesting. *Spoonbill Watch* is designed to collect data to test that idea in our area.

As part of National Audubon's Climate-Change Initiative, PIAS received a small grant to develop **Spoonbill Watch**, a citizen-science project designed to monitor Roseate Spoonbill colonies in our region. PIAS focused first on the Stick Marsh islands in southern Brevard County where birders had, for several years, noted a colony of Spoonbills on two tiny islands within a 6,500-acre impounded wetland located in the 150,000 acre Upper St. Johns River Basin project. PIAS enlisted the help of some 20 volunteers to monitor the colony and determine flight lines to and from foraging areas. A census of the islands conducted on April 1st by Dr. Lorenz and Dr. David Cox revealed 588 wading- and water-bird nests, including 140 Spoonbill nests. According to Dr. Lorenz, the Stick Marsh colony ranked among the two or three largest nesting aggregations of Spoonbills in Florida in 2016.

Disturbance is a major factor affecting nesting success. We have seen photographers getting too close, and even landing on the Stick Marsh islands to photograph chicks, causing the adults to leave the nests. The result is that, without parental protection, the eggs and chicks are vulnerable to predators such as vultures, crows, and snakes. Presently there is little we can do to stop this disturbance. However, the Stick Marsh colony is so significant that it is

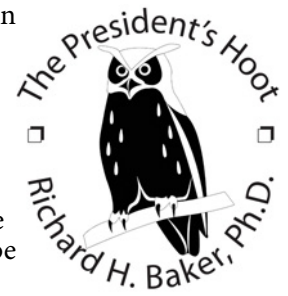
now being considered for designation as a Critical Wildlife Area (CWA) by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). At the first FWC public hearing to consider the Stick Marsh islands as a CWA on July 25, 2016, most of 40 people attending were in favor of the designation. The final decision will be

made at the FWC meeting at the University of South Florida in St. Petersburg on November 16th .

Meanwhile, we have worked with St. Johns River Water Management District to install temporary signs around the Stick Marsh islands to provide a buffer for nesting birds. If the islands are designated as a Critical Wildlife Area, more robust signage will be posted in the water and boats will be prohibited from approaching too closely to the islands. FWC wildlife officers will be able to cite boaters who violate those boundaries.

PIAS scientists expect the pilot *Spoonbill Watch* citizen-science monitoring program to grow over the years and to include additional locations. At PIAS meetings and on our website, we are asking volunteers to report new colonies and foraging sites in the region. PIAS is developing a volunteer training manual, similar to Audubon Florida programs such as Jay Watch and Eagle Watch. *Spoonbill Watch* will be successful only with the help of trained citizen volunteers observing and tracking birds throughout Central and coastal Florida. Monitoring birds and wildlife and protecting habitats is an important part of what PIAS does throughout our region. One hundred years ago, Audubon fought the plume hunters to conserve wading birds in Florida. Today, habitat destruction and disturbance are imminent threats to our birds and their habitats. We must continue to be advocates for

animals, plants, and natural communities in Indian River County though our actions, **Continued on next page** ⇨



David Cox, Ph.D., holds the Conservation Projects of the Year award flanked by Audubon Florida's Jacqui Sulek and Eric Draper. Photo by Richard Baker.



Roseate Spoonbill by Bob Montanaro.

Pelican Island Audubon Society Officers & Directors

Officers: President **Richard H. Baker, Ph.D.**, 1st Vice-President **Donna Halleran**, 2nd Vice-President **David Cox, Ph.D.**, Recording Secretary **Darlene Halliday**, Corresponding Secretary **George Glenn**, Treasurer **Steve Goff** — Elected Directors: **Graham Cox, Ph.D. '17, Nancy Irvin '19, Bill Loftus, Ph.D. '18, Toni Robinson '19, Bonnie Swanson '18** — Appointed Board Members: **Bill Halliday, Tina Marchese**

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**

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

➤ Award continued from previous page

as that is the mission of PIAS.

Climate change poses serious challenges for conservation scientists and policymakers in protecting the environment. National Audubon Society's 2014 Birds and Climate Change report found that 314 North American bird species may lose over half their breeding or wintering ranges by 2080 from climate change. Yet with these challenges come opportunities to engage communities of concerned citizens in climate science and conservation. With a \$5,000 grant from National Audubon and their birds and climate science team, PIAS initiated not only *Spoonbill Watch*, but also produced "Spreading the Word on Climate Change," a Florida-focused set of Power Point presentations and videos entitled *Birds and Climate Change*, showing how climate change is predicted to affect the ranges of familiar Florida birds: 7-, 14- and 17-minute versions of these YouTube videos are available at our website: http://www.pelicanislandaudubon.org/video_archive.html. These videos will be used to deliver presentations to a variety of audiences, including our regional Audubon chapters, over the coming months.

Osprey monitoring: PIAS members **Bob Bruce, Dr. Bill Loftus, Susan Boyd, Donna Halleran, and I** completed the second successful survey at Blue Cypress Lake, locating by GPS all 298 tagged Osprey nest trees this nesting season, and observing 265 active nests. Geo-Mapping of the GPS data visually displays the nests on a satellite image of the lake. This yearly survey is crucial in providing monitoring data collection to track changes in the nesting population to understand what is happening in our environment. However, the funding for the monitoring survey is finished and PIAS needs additional funding for future surveys.

Yearly, we add to our bird-monitoring efforts to help preserve Florida's Scrub Jays, Eagles, shorebirds, Ospreys, and now Roseate Spoonbills. No experience is needed - Come volunteer, learn how, get involved!



A nest-building Osprey with a big stick to add to the nest. Photo by Bob Montanaro.