

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 48th Year Vol. 48 No. 7 October 2012

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

October 8, 2012 ❖ 6:00 p.m.

Florida's Endangered Butterflies:

Agency Actions and In-Actions
with Marc Minno, Ph.D.

North Indian River County Library

1001 Sebastian Blvd. (CR 512), Sebastian

The Schaus' Swallowtail was one of the first insects listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the early 1970s under the Endangered Species Act. Rather than recovery, this unique butterfly may now be extinct. More recently the Miami Blue and three other blue butterflies occurring in southern Florida were listed. The Florida Leafwing, Bartram's Scrub-Hairstreak, and the Keys population of the Palatka Skipper are candidates for listing in Florida. However, there are more than 18 imperiled butterflies in Florida. The fauna of southern Florida, especially the Keys has been especially impacted. Three butterflies in southern Florida are now presumed to be extinct. Two others are now extirpated from the U.S. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission have sole legal authority over these butterflies, yet have done very little to conserve or restore populations of the listed butterflies and have done nothing to protect the numerous other imperiled butterflies. How these agencies have handled/mishandled our precious natural resources will be discussed. What is needed is cooperative partnerships between the agencies, conservation groups, botanic gardens, zoos, and scientists to 1) monitoring populations of imperiled butterflies, 2) begin captive rearing of the most-endangered species, and 3) conduct research on why the butterflies are in such terrible trouble.

Dr. Minno received a Bachelor's degree in entomology from Purdue University, a Master's in entomology from the University of California at Davis, and a Ph.D. in zoology from the University of Florida. For 21 years Marc worked as a wetland scientist for the St. Johns River Water Management District in Palatka, Florida, but is now Lead Ecologist for Eco-Cognizant, Inc., an environmental consulting and education firm.

Dr. Minno has written and co-authored many scientific and popular articles on butterflies and moths as well as books of local interest.

October 15, 2012 ❖ 7:30 p.m.

Conservation in Florida:

Its History and Heroes
with author Gary White

Vero Beach Community Center

2266 14th Avenue, Vero Beach

Florida has been at the heart of American environmentalism since before it was a state and before "environmentalism" was a word.

William Bartram established American naturalist writing in the 18th century with his celebrated accounts of his sojourns in the Southeast, including Florida. Bartram's writing, displaying a reverent attentiveness to the natural world, resonates backward to Florida's original inhabitants and forward to today's environmental activists.

"Conservation in Florida: Its History and Heroes," focuses on the modern era of environmental activism that began on March 3, 1900, when 15 people met at a mansion in Maitland and formed Florida Audubon Society. They gathered in reaction to disturbing reports about the unchecked slaughter of wading birds in the Everglades and elsewhere in Florida. With no laws in place to stop them, so-called plume hunters could make fortunes selling the feathers of egrets and herons to northern hat-makers.

The small core of early advocates successfully lobbied for bird-protection laws in Florida. Eventually, they expanded their scope, working to preserve crucial areas of land, such as the Everglades, in the face of increasing pressures to drain, dike and pave.

"Conservation in Florida" covers the major environmental battles of the 20th century, including the quest to establish Everglades National Park, the fight to halt construction of the Cross-Florida Barge Canal, the push to create state land-buying programs.

The presentation also draws attention to some of the Floridians who have made the most significant people contributions toward environmental protection, among them Arthur Marshall, Marjorie Harris Carr and Nathaniel Reed.

Masthead photo: Red-shouldered Hawks by Bob Montanaro.

Bird of the Month by Juanita Baker

Title: Florida Scrub-Jay Sentinel: on the lookout!

Photo by Lynn Walsh

Florida Scrub-jays are the only Florida endemic bird species--found nowhere else in the world. These differ from Western Scrub-jays by their behaviors and smaller size. Scientists have found specimens in Alachua County dating to early Pleistocene, two million years ago, long before humans arrived. The photograph taken by Lynn Walsh with a Canon Powershot reveals this particular Florida Scrub-jay in close detail as delicate and vulnerable. Fitting, as the US Fish and Wildlife Service classifies Florida Scrub-jays as a threatened species. Humans have converted high and dry scrub-oak habitat to highways, groves, ranches, subdivisions and malls and suppressed natural fires. Thus, humans have been responsible for 90% Scrub-jay population loss.

Their scrub habitat must be burned for two reasons. One, Scrub-jays need open space so the designated family sentinel can look out for predators (snakes, hawks, house cats). Two, open sand is primarily where each Scrub-jay caches up to 8,000 acorns per year for winter months! Yes, they can find most of them again as jays have excellent memories. In fact, they spend time digging them up and burying them again. Is that to remember locations, check acorn quality, or hide them from fellow jays? Forgotten acorns become the scrub oaks of tomorrow.

Unique even compared to Western Scrub-jays, our truly native Floridians have traditional family values: monogamous, life partners, small family groups, no incest, homesteading in specific natural areas. They do not leave central Florida. Young usually stay several years as helpers to the parents: defending the family's territorial rights, feeding fledglings and watching for and mobbing predators. After 2-3 years, young birds leave to find mates from other family groups and establish their own family territory. Their biggest challenge is finding a new, unoccupied territory when their scrub habitat is rapidly disappearing.

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



Whoooo are you? by Linda Chancellor

It was a dark, eerie night with a full, ivory moon. The only sound was the lonely voice of an owl high in a gnarly, old pine tree. That could be the first line of a novel but that is not how this story went. It was an unusual night. I had signed up for Owl Prowl Night which was one of the events offered during the Ocean to Lake Hiking and Nature Festival last March 30th.

Dennis Miranda, then Executive Director of Florida Trails, met our small group at Riverbend Park in Martin County at 9 p.m. Without flashlights, we proceeded to follow him into the woods. The almost full moon cast shadows of palm fronds on the white ground limestone paths. He stopped our group when we came to an intersection of several trails. Dennis, who has the skill to imitate many bird voices, intended to "call out" a Barred Owl. He took several steps away from the group, cupped his hands around his mouth, and boomed out a startlingly loud call. It was very quiet, not even the sound of insects disturbed the night. Several more times he repeated the call. Then there was a response, he responded, again a response. Suddenly two dark shapes, with large wing spans, flew in and landed on a branch of the pine tree closest to us. The owls continued to respond to his calls



and then two smaller shapes appeared and landed next to the adults. Too far up for a flashlight to provide light and yet I could clearly see their outline against the moonlit sky. They continued to voice their displeasure at the sound of his calls. Dennis whispered that Barred Owls were very territorial and they were trying to determine his intentions. He said if they viewed him as an intruder they would attack.. Dennis discontinued his calls and we walked back the way we had come leaving the owls in peace.

Barred Owls have been referred to by a variety of names including Florida Barred Owl, Eight Hooter, Rain Owl, Wood Owl, Striped Owl, and Hoot Owl. Their call has been described as a series of eight sounds. Some claim it sounds like "Who cooks for you? , Who cooks for you all? Barred Owls were first described in 1799 by amateur naturalist Benjamin Smith Barton who gave them the name *Strix varia*. Scientific names prove invaluable when talking about a species as common names can be very variable depending on location.

Actual voice recordings can be found at http://www.al-labourbirds.org/guide/barred_Owl/id

Barred Owl at Treasure Hammock Ranch by Bob Montanaro.

◆ **Audubon Assembly 2012: Conserve Water to Sustain life**, Oct. 26-27, 2012 at the Hyatt Regency in Sarasota focuses on Florida's incredible natural water resources. Learn how Audubon is using cutting-edge science and policy to preserve and protect our state's most precious resource. Learn more at <http://fl.audubon.org/audubon-assembly-2012>

◆ **Treasure Coast Birding Festival**, October 26-28, 2012, Vero Beach. Lectures, birding trips, art show and more. Keynote speaker: Bob Montanaro. Learn more at <http://www.cultural-council.org/-b-Treasure-Coast-Birding-Festival-b-.html>

Cats 'Out on the Town' kill more birds, mammals, and reptiles than you think!

I know many of you are cat lovers.

In all animals, there is a wildness that we can learn much from as humans. We appreciate and love them, and thus cats and pets help us relate to wildlife too, each having unique personalities. However, most of our pets are non-native. Domestic cats were brought over by the European colonists, originating from Africa. A 2007 genetic study revealed that all domestic cats are descended from as few as five African wildcats. Therefore, cats are an invasive species to the U.S. that have few natural enemies to check their numbers. Cats are found almost everywhere in the world where people live. They currently are the most popular pets in the world. Cats are another way we humans impact our natural environment.

Do you know what your cat does when it goes outside? To find out, recently, Scientist Kerrie A. Loyd outfitted sixty domestic cats in the Athens, GA area with "KittyCams" (small video cameras) around their necks and allowed them to roam freely outdoors during the day and night. Factors these domestic cats faced were: 45% cross roadways, 25% eat and drink things they found, 20% explore storm drains, and 20% enter crawl spaces where they could become trapped. A video is available from one of the kitty cams: <http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2012-08-06/house-cats-kill/56831262/1>

In order to survive, one of the cat's instincts is to hunt. Surprisingly, in this University of Georgia/National Geographic project, she and a colleague found that of the cat's kill, 41% were reptiles (e.g. lizards, snakes, and frogs); 25% mammals like chipmunks and voles; 20% insects and worms; and 13% birds. However, these cats brought back to the house only a quarter of their prey, ate about 30%, and left nearly half to rot. So, just because your cat does not bring back birds or other prey, does not mean that it does not hunt. Previous estimates of birds killed were thus low. Cats like to stalk, capture, and kill. They are born that way.

The Humane Society estimates there are 86.4 million cats owned in the U.S. with 33% of U.S. households owning an average of 2.2 cats. **Not to mention an estimated 70 to 100 million feral cats roaming about.** That means millions of birds die yearly, especially nestlings. George Fenwick, president of the American Bird Conservancy says: "Cat predation is one of the reasons why one in three American bird species are in decline" (also see www.abcbirds.org). In contrast wind turbines kill an estimated 440,000 birds and 7,000 killed by the BP Gulf oil spill. So more fuss must be made about cats. A University of Nebraska study released last year found that feral cats were responsible for the extinction of 33 species of birds worldwide.



Photo: Janice Broda

Michael Hutchins, Executive Director/CEO of The Wildlife Society, the leading organization for wildlife professionals says this study shows without doubt "There is a huge environmental price that we are paying every single day that we turn our backs on our native wildlife in favor of protecting non-native predatory cats at all costs, while ignoring the inconvenient truth about the mortality they inflict."

So why is it good for you to keep your cat indoors? You will know your cat is safe, healthier, and happier and your cat will not likely be fearful of the real predators and hazards in the neighborhood and nearby nature. What's more, the cats will be safe from: vehicle accidents, disease, parasites, poisons, fights with other animals, theft, and live trapping. Outdoors cats live between three and five years, while indoor cats have a life expectancy of 10-17 years. And you will prevent many millions of wild birds from dying. Show your cats you love them, care for them...inside your home.

Some suggestions on how to keep your cats happy and more active indoors:

- Provide a safe outside enclosure, such as a screened porch.
- Provide window shelves so your cat can monitor the outdoors from inside.
- Plant kitty grass (available at pet supply stores) inside so your cat can graze.
- Clean litter boxes regularly.
- Play with your cat each day, give good nutrition and give treats, and snuggle.
- Provide toys and climbing areas allowing them to get exercise

Love and have fun with your cat and wild birds! Keep your cat safe inside, the birds safe outdoors!

Richard Baker, President

PIAS needs volunteers in the following areas

To volunteer call 772-567-3520 or e-mail piaudubon@bellsouth.net

1. Newsletter production/ mailing
2. Write letters to the Editor (PJ, Hometown News)
3. Special Projects for community involvement
4. Quality of Life Indicator Project
5. Audubon Alert - advocacy outreach
6. Fundraising - develop and help with fundraising projects
7. Field Trips - help organize or lead field trips
8. Cookies & Refreshments for our general meetings
9. Library - help with various library projects
10. Square-foot Gardening Project - help school age children with vegetable gardens on school grounds
11. Other - share your special skills

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: **Joe Carroll '14**, **David Cox, Ph.D. '14**, **Nancy Irvin '13**, **Bill Loftus, Ph.D. '15**, **John Orcutt, Ph.D. '15**, **Toni Robinson '13** — Appointed Board Members: **Graham Cox, Ph.D.**, **Bill Halliday**, **Tina Marchese**, **Jane Schnee**, **Neil Stalter** (*Billi Wagner - Ornithological Consultant*)

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 member 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 and a free gift cookbook!

- \$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
Natural Mosquito Repellent: Native Beautyberry ?

Clusters of tiny bright magenta berries encircle the stems of beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) and ripen during the late summer and early fall. These beautiful berries often persist throughout the winter and even into early spring, and, when few other fruits are available, become an important food source for migratory robins and cedar waxwings. Squirrels, raccoons, foxes and other small mammals also consume the fruits. Mockingbirds, cardinals, woodpeckers, robins, brown thrashers, and bobwhite quail reportedly are especially fond of these copious little berries.

Humans, by contrast, describe their taste as insipid and slightly astringent. They are not poisonous, though eating excessive amounts will give you a dry, “cotton-mouth”.

Beautyberry has an open growth habit with long cascading straight branches that grow to be from 3 to 8 feet long and often are festooned with fruits along the entire length of the stem. In early spring in Florida, new leaves quickly replace the existing rough-textured leaves. Deer browse upon the these new leaves.

Pioneers placed fresh, crushed leaves under animal harnesses to repel mosquitoes, and recently, the US Department of Agriculture isolated a terpenoid compound, callicarpenal, from beautyberry leaves. In laboratory tests, callicarpenal proved to be as effective as a mosquito repellent as DEET, the active ingredient in most commercial mosquito repellents. Callicarpenal also repelled ticks and imported fire ants.

The genus name for this plant, *Callicarpa*, means beautiful (*calli*) fruit (*carpa*). The species name, *americana*, tells us where this plant is found. Its ranges from Virginia to Florida, Bermuda, Cuba, and Mexico. In Florida, beautyberry is found growing in sandy, well-drained soils from our beachside hammocks to our pinelands.

A member of the Verbenaceae (verbena) family, beautyberry thrives in sun or shade, has few pests, is a wonderful wildlife food source, and truly is beautiful in the landscape. Would not it be beautiful if, in the future, beautyberry turned out to be the source of a safe and effective botanical-based mosquito repellent ?



Photo by Janice Broda.

Field Trips

October 13 - Saturday - West Regional Water Reclamation Plant - Guide: Peter Sutherland - An excellent local site for birding numerous species - Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the entrance to the facility, 8405 8th Street, Vero Beach.

October 21 - Sunday - Sebastian Inlet State Park - Guide: Juanita Baker - 8:30 a.m.-10:30 a.m. - Catch the migrating shorebirds at Sebastian Inlet State Park at low tide when they gather to feed. Enter the North Gate to the parking lot on the right which is closest to the Tide pool where we will meet. Photographers welcome.