

Pelican Island Audubon Society

Peligram



- 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. 7 October 2014

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

October 13, 2014 ❖ 6:00 p.m.

**The Manatee Mystique
with Diane Morgan**

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

Come to the magical, mystical manatee tour! Mistaken for mermaids, eaten by pioneers, and saving lives in the 21st century, manatees are possibly the world's most misunderstood and underestimated creature. They've been called stupid, fat, non-native, slow, and graceless. But is any of that true? Discover the myths and uncover the strange facts about our state marine mammal: solid bones, marching molars, and clutching flippers. Participants will get a close up, hands-on view of a manatee skull, flippers, and rib.

We'll also talk little about the manatee's closest relative (and no, it's not the elephant).

We'll also discuss their current conservation status and discuss the regulations surrounding human-manatee interactions.

Diane Morgan is an adjunct professor of English at IRSC and adjunct professor of philosophy at Wilson College. She volunteers for the Save the Manatee Club, is a docent for the Manatee Education and Observation Center, and has worked on the Manatee Project at Harbor Branch.

October 20, 2014 ❖ 7:30 p.m.

**Everglades: America's Wetland
with Mac Stone**

**Vero Beach Community Center
2266 14th Avenue, Vero Beach**

From Lake Okeechobee to Florida Bay, from inside the bone-crushing jaws of an alligator to the storms that race across the blackwater backcountry, award-winning conservation photographer Mac Stone takes us on a visual journey through the Everglades. His striking photographs showcase the natural beauty of this one-of-a-kind wetland, capturing the amazing depths of its landscapes, the diversity of its wildlife, and the resilience of the largest subtropical wilderness in the United States.

As a biologist for the National Audubon Society, Stone traveled to the most remote areas of the Everglades to collect these images and incredible stories. With his camera, he explored Everglades National Park, Corkscrew Swamp, Fisheating Creek, and dozens of sites that few are permitted to visit. His stunning photographs celebrate the innumerable facets of this ecological marvel while speaking to the importance of wilderness conservation and the need to protect this irreplaceable wetland.

Mac Stone grew up in the Sunshine State exploring the swamps, prairies, and springs of North Central Florida. An award-winning conservation photographer and naturalist, he specializes in documenting America's swamps and wetlands and exploring the complex relationships between mankind and the natural world. His images have appeared in countless domestic and international publications, including National Geographic Traveler, BBC Wildlife Magazine, Nature's Best Photography, Outdoor Photographer, Audubon Magazine, and National Parks Magazine.

Field Trips - Call 772-567-3520 for reservations

Oct. 8 (Wed) Captain Forster Hammock Preserve - Fall migration warblers

Oct. 25 (Sat) Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge - Fall migration warblers, shorebirds, and water fowl

Nov. 1 (Sat) Sebastian Inlet State Park - Mostly shorebirds

Masthead photo: Belted Kingfisher by Bob Montanaro.

Florida's Water and Land Conservation Amendment

**VOTE
YES ON 1**

NOVEMBER 4, 2014

www.VoteYesOn1FL.org

PE, and, etc. gold for and sponsored by Florida's Water and Land Conservation, Inc., 3700 N. Monroe St., Ste. 21-286, Tallahassee, FL 32303

September Bird of the Month

Black Skimmer *Rynchops niger*

Order CHARADRIIFORMES – Family LARIDA

Aren't these Black Skimmers graceful gliding over the water in tandem? How did photographer Thelma Eliza Gatuzzo using a Canon 5D Mark III and 100-400 lens catch this fluid pose, wings raised high? Skimmers fish in tidal shallow waters within 6 feet of land where small fish concentrate at low tide. When a fish touches the lower bill that skims just below the surface, the upper bill instantly clamps shut. Skimming on the surface with their distinctively adaptive bills to catch fish is the only way Skimmers have been observed to feed. Feeding primarily at dusk and dawn Skimmers then often laze all day along bays, estuaries, lagoons, rivers, salt marshes, and ditches.

Very social birds, Black Skimmers nest in colonies with various more aggressive terns that help provide early warning and defense against predators. Primarily nesting along coasts of California, the Gulf and Atlantic as far north as Maine. In Florida, Skimmers nest inland as well as on the coast. In September northern skimmers migrate to warmer climates south, some to Costa Rica. In one migratory group at Sebastian inlet in February, we counted over 350 migratory Skimmers all huddled together facing the cold wind. What a sight! They return to New England in April for nesting. One study found that the young banded in Maryland were recovered from South Carolina to Florida.

Much of their beach-nesting habitat is no longer available due to human construction for homes, commercial buildings, and recreational facilities. Ants, gulls, hawks, owls, crows, rats, raccoons, dogs, and cats eat eggs and young, thus nesting on salt marsh mats or islands is preferred. Summer storms and floods may cause mortality when 2-week-old young are vulnerable. Birds disturbed by humans getting too close, by off-road vehicles, or vandalism led to egg/chick abandonment. The solution essential for their survival is total beach closure for the full breeding season.

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



Photo Credits/Title: Black Skimmers in Tandem © 2014 Thelma Eliza Gatuzzo

Crows on the beach

by Linda Chancellor

Bird watching fascinates me, unusual bird behavior intrigues me. Crows are not on my watch list for interesting bird watching but when I spotted four crows on the deserted spit of beach I grabbed my binoculars. They had flown in and landed without uttering a sound. Usually their normal loud nasal “caw, caw, caw” alert me that they are in the area. Even though this area abounds with small creeks and marshes that is typical habitat for fish crows these birds were American crows a.k.a. common crows. I wondered why they were on the beach when there was probably better scavenging opportunities in the surrounding farm fields that were less than a mile “as the crow flies.”

Their stocky, solid black bodies sharply contrasted against the bisque colored sand. They ambled around for a few minutes and then they all gathered near the waters edge where the small waves were lapping the shore. They did not run from the incoming waves as shore birds often do but stood there in the small area between the constant wet sand and the higher drier sand. Three of the crows watched as one crow used his bill to probe the sand - up and down, up and down, like a sewing machine needle. The crow moved to a new spot and again started probing the sand. Soon he was using his bill to swing back and forth and fling sand from the hole. Still using my binoculars, I could not see that he was successful in finding something to eat but all of

a sudden the other three crows began to mimic his behavior and started digging in the sand nearby. Could these crows be learning a new behavior? What prompted the first crow to probe the sand I wondered? What had he found that encouraged the other three to dig? After several minutes either from frustration or becoming satiated they stopped probing, walked a few steps and then flew away.

An hour later I was still curious about their behavior and so I paddled, in my kayak, over to the beach. The numerous holes where they had probed were still evident. I had brought a small trowel to dig with. I tried scooping sand quickly from the holes but found nothing in the packed, damp sand. I wondered if they had found something that maybe had dug deeper since the tide had retreated. This behavior will continue to remain a mystery for me.

FYI: Crows are opportunistic feeders. They have been observed eating fruit, seeds – even from bird feeders, nestlings of other songbirds and shorebirds, marine invertebrates such as crabs and shrimp and turtle eggs. They even will steal food from gulls. They are very intelligent, can be trained to perform tasks and are good at problem solving ways to obtain food.



Volunteers needed

Pelican Island Audubon is looking for volunteers to help out in all areas of our operation. Contact the PIAS office at 772-567-3520 or leave a message for Darlene at 772-569-9148. Thank you.

Will County Commissioners Answer these Oslo Boat Ramp Questions October 7?

Please join us on behalf of the fish, manatees, seagrass, birds, and taxpayers.

Over 2,300 signed petitions against the Oslo Road boat ramp dredge and fill project presented to our county commissioners on September 23. More than 100 protesters demonstrated in front of the commission chambers. Anglers from the Coastal Conservation Association, fishing guides, boaters from the Power Squadron and kayak renters, Tea Party, Marine Resources Council, Save the Manatee Club, Sierra Club, and Audubon members, and scientists filled the chambers.

Speakers raised serious questions about this expansion, which will seriously impact the lush seagrass and highly productive mangrove fish nursery that will disturb this very peaceful place. What a sad example of a total failure of our county, state, and federal agencies to protect our environment.

Hearing the strong opposition and speakers each week, the commissioners decided to bring in county and St. Johns River Water Management District staff on October 7 to "educate the public!"

Please join us at the county commission meeting, Tuesday, October 7th, at 8:30 am, to help us protect the lagoon from further harm. **You don't have to speak**, just be there with family, fishing buddies, friends and fellow birders to hold a protest sign. **See our website** www.pelicanislandaudubon.org for letters, articles, and actions taken, and sign our petition.

The big question EVERYONE has is "Why is the county spending \$1,000,000 in local taxes dredging a 210 ft. channel..."

- if it is not about allowing larger boats (eventually) to use the ramp? **Small boats do fine** with existing shallow depths.
- in an area with the **only seagrass left** in our county.
- harming the best critical habitat for **spotted seatrout, red drum, snook and tarpon** nurseries?
- **in a Federal Shellfish Area** that by law is not allowed without granting an exception?
- **next to an aquatic preserve** and surrounded by a conservation area and bird rookery?
- where **wading fishers and small boats** have gone for the last 70-1,000 years?
- violating the county's own **Manatee Protection Plan**?
- causing more traffic, thus **more manatee deaths** in the

- county's largest manatee area?
- producing 210 feet more **for muck to accumulate**, ruining the water and beauty?

Why spend \$1,000,000 paving and expanding the parking lot and road 25-42 feet into healthy mangroves...

- for 12 boat trailers when county survey **shows 9 boat trailers is average**?
- **removing 1.4 acres of healthy mangroves** nursery for snook, but mitigating 18 acres with no snook?
- when the **existing road has not harmed seagrasses** for the last 50 years?
- **adding more oil**, grease, rubber and pollution running off the impervious surface?

• when the county has **nearly twice the number of public boat ramps** needed to meet State recommendations?

- **installing NO PARKING signs** along Oslo Road when not needed?
- **When nearby are Riverside Park** has a wide boat ramp, two 40 ft. docks, 28 paved boat trailer parking spaces, bathroom, picnic tables, drinking fountains and outdoor shower **and MacWilliams Park** with four boat ramps and 10 parking spaces?

Why spend \$1,000,000 on a project when Commissioners refuse to have an open hearing to discuss the boat ramp with the public while the economic and ecological health of the lagoon is dying?

Why Oslo when you can spend \$1,000,000 at other locations with fewer natural resources, low manatee abundance, low manatee mortality, less seagrass beds, no fish nurseries, and no mangrove destruction, or you can spend the \$1,000,000 on many other needs for our county?

It makes no sense. Not just an environmental problem, but also a social, economic, and moral problem for our county, state, nation, and world. Recently, citizens have not spoken out FOR this harmful dredge and fill project, and commissioners have not provided any valid reasons to do it. **Why do it?**

See you October 7 at the county commission chambers, 8:30 am for the public rally!

Richard H. Baker, Ph.D.



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**, **David Peabody**, **Buffy Turner** 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 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

About 500 species of passionflower (*Passiflora*) vines are found throughout tropical regions of the world. Only nine species are native to the United States, and six of these species are found in Florida, three of which are endangered or endemic.

Maypop (*Passiflora incarnata*) has the widest distribution of the passion vines native to the U.S. and occurs throughout the southeast from Virginia to Florida to Texas. Its egg-sized (or larger) fruits are as delicious as the fruits of the passionflower vine of commerce (*Passiflora edulis*).

The flowers of the maypop are larger than a silver dollar and as showy as the flowers of many exotic passionflowers. The intricate flowers are said to depict the passion of Christ. They are pollinated by bumblebees, carpenter bees, and other insects.

Native passionflower vines are a larval host plant for the Florida State butterfly, the zebra longwing (*Heliconius charithonia*), the gulf fritillary (*Argaulis vanillae*), and julia (*Dryas julia*). Butterflies often are unable to complete their life cycle on non-native passion flower vines.

Maypop has extrafloral nectaries --glands that exude nectar on vegetative parts – at the base of each leaf and on its bud and floral bracts. Some ants, attracted to this nectar, consume butterfly eggs.

Maypop is a fast-growing, drought-tolerant perennial vine that climbs by tendrils and sometimes dies back to its underground rhizomes in the winter. Maypop thrives in sandy, well-drained soil in sun or light shade. Before planting this vine, be aware that it suckers and can be aggressive.

Its yellowish egg -sized(or larger) fruits contain many seeds with delicious yellow pulp that can be eaten fresh, used to flavor tropical drinks, or made into a jelly. The vine is called maypop, because the outer ‘shell’ of the fruit will make a popping sound when you step on it. Wildlife also esteem passionfruits and spread their seeds.



MAYPOP