

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 51st Year Vol. 51 No. 7 October 2015

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

October 12, 2015 ❖ 6:00 p.m.

The beautiful mosquitoes of Florida (and the somewhat attractive birds that they bite) with Nathan Burkett-Cadena

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

If you've never looked at a mosquito up close, you probably don't know how beautiful (yes, this is not a typo) they are. There are roughly 80 different species of mosquitoes in Florida, and they are as diverse and colorful as the animals that they feed upon. It's no secret that mosquitoes bite people, but you may be surprised to know that mosquitoes also bite birds, snakes, alligators, shrews, frogs and even fish! While this may seem like a mere interesting tidbit, the fact that mosquitoes feed upon such a wide array of animals is important for your health. Mosquitoes that bite birds are especially important, because some birds are hosts for viruses, such as West Nile virus, that can kill. Mosquitoes that feed upon virus-infected birds and then later feed upon a person can infect them. But which birds are good hosts for each virus? Are the good host birds fed upon by the mosquitoes that carry the virus? Are those birds avoided? Why would one species be avoided and another bitten? Come find out!

Nathan D. Burkett-Cadena, PhD, is Assistant Professor of Entomology at the University of Florida, Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory, in Vero Beach. He is co-author of over 30 scientific research articles and the new book *Mosquitoes of the Southeastern United States* (2013), from University of Alabama Press (Book offered at Amazon: <http://www.amazon.com/Mosquitoes-Southeastern-United-States-Burkett-Cadena/dp/0817317813>). He is an avid photographer and naturalist. Dr. Burkett-Cadena obtained his M.S. and PhD degrees from Auburn University, studying mosquitoes that transmit West Nile virus and eastern equine encephalitis virus in Alabama. His postdoctoral research position at the University of South Florida (Tampa) took him to Burkina Faso (West Africa) and Chiapas, Mexico to develop a trap for the flies that transmit river blindness. He is a native of Mobile County, Alabama, and has been living with his wife, Marleny, and son, Daniel, in Florida since 2010.

October 19, 2015 ❖ 7:30 p.m.

Indian River by Air
with John & Kimberley Massung

Vero Beach Community Center
2266 14th Avenue, Vero Beach

Flying. Breaking the bonds between heaven and earth. It's synonymous with freedom and adventure, exploration and travel. But sometimes the most exciting things can be seen in your own backyard ...

Come hear John Massung, the pilot and photographer of the website Indian River by Air (www.indianriverbyair.com), discuss what it's like to fly a powered parachute over the Indian River region. Catch sight some of the wildlife that can be spotted just offshore. See the familiar in a whole new light.

A Pittsburgh native, John has been a resident of Sebastian for the past 30 years. His hobbies of flying and photography came late in life, but by combining them he has shown how employing a different perspective can take you to new heights.

The running of Indian River by Air is truly a family affair.

The pilot and photographer is John Massung, a Pittsburgh native who got his sport's pilots license to fly powered parachutes in 2008. John worked for the city of Vero Beach for 27 years before retiring in 2013, giving him more time to fly. He and his wife Kim have lived in Sebastian for over 30 years.

Their daughter Elaine started Indian River by Air as a retirement gift and is the webmaster of the site. She is responsible for scheduling the photos and ensuring the smooth day-to-day operation of the website and social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube and Instagram).

Audubon Advocates for the Indian River Lagoon," PIAS innovative After-school Program

PIAS needs your help! Come volunteer! Provide healthy snacks! Launch our new after school education – discovery and out in nature for 5th graders. Come to set up Audubon House for the teachers, a healthy snack, and welcome the children each day and/or help children clean up. One afternoon a week or four you will help launch conservation-minded citizens. For details, please call PIAS office, 772-567-3520.

Masthead photo: Common Gallinule (Moorhen) by Bob Montanaro.

June Bird of the Month by Juanita Baker

Have you noticed a solitary brown bird in a nearby pond, floating like a small duck on the surface? Suddenly it disappears, often for a minute, then pops up elsewhere. It is a Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*), not a duck. No other family of birds can rotate their lobed (not duck like) feet 90° making them especially adapted for navigation, hunting and escape beneath the water. Look carefully; its beak is not like a duck's bill, but smaller like its body and tail. It dives for its food of frogs, invertebrates, insects, and small fish. Strong jaw muscles allow it to crush and devour large crustaceans like crayfish.

Rarely do we see Pied-billed Grebes fly. They are much more comfortable diving to escape dangers or swimming to floating nests. One of the most widespread Grebes in the Americas, it ranges from northern Canada to southern South America. Floridians have year-round resident Grebes, but Grebe numbers increase September-February when Northern migrants come for Florida's warmth and abundant food.



Pied-billed Grebe © 2009 Richard H. Baker

During breeding season, both sexes' bills turn white with a black vertical band, giving its name "pied-billed," meaning two colors. The fledgling's eye-ring, beak, and lores (skin between eye and beak) turn crimson (when infused with blood) during food begging, signaling its degree of hunger. Both parents take turns feeding fledglings for at least a month after hatching until they can feed independently. Nearly half of their diet may be their own feathers, evidently to prevent fish bones and crustacean shells from entering their intestines until fully disintegrated. Feathers and indigestible matter are periodically ejected as pellets. Parents, tuck their pied-bills into their feathers when resting, removing the signal for young to beg.

Richard Baker's artistic photo illustrates how well the patterning on the chick's head camouflages it amongst the reeds and the water's reflections.

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

The art of preening by Linda Chancellor

It had been light for an hour but the sun had just risen high enough to break through the tops of the trees and cast rays of light on the rippling water. A blue heron glided in and landed standing on the neighbor's dock. He was a beautiful specimen of a mature breeding adult. His tawny neck feathers were highlighted by the early morning sun. Wispy light gray feathers, lifted slightly by the breeze, covered his chest and slate blue back. I had often thought that blue herons were somewhat awkward due to their spindly, stiff long legs and this one's landing approach had not been the most graceful. However, for the next thirty minutes I was captivated as I watched him move slowly and gracefully through a series of postures as he preened himself.

It was almost like watching a ballerina going through her warm-up exercises at the barre. The sinuous neck slowly lowered the head in a controlled movement enabling him to use his pointed bill to work down through the feathers like he was following the seam in a shirt. He yanked and a large flight feather fell to the dock. Lifting his wing

slightly he nuzzled his bill underneath. When he lifted his head several downy feathers stuck to the end of his bill. He shook his head sideways as if to try and dislodge them. Then he slowly straighten out one leg in front while keeping his balance on his other leg. He flexed the toes downward and lowered his head. In this position he proceeded to scratch the back of his neck. Again still balancing on one foot he raised his head and neck and then flexed the toes up to scratch under his chin. Amazing! Slowly lowering his leg, he returned to a stately standing position before finally raising his wings and taking flight.

FYI: Birds must preen often to keep their feathers in good condition, clean and free of parasites. Multiple vertebrae enable the blue heron to have a very flexible neck that allows the head a great range of mobility. They also have specialized feathers called powder down that are replaced continually on their chest. Using their bill or the fringed claw on their middle toe they can "comb" these feathers and use the powder to remove fish slime and other oils that have accumulated on their bodies. www.seattleaudubon.org

Upcoming Events & Field Trips

Call 772-567-3520 for reservations and directions.

- Oct. 10 - Introduction to Birding with David & Dee Simpson
- Oct. 10 - eBird Class with David Simpson
- Oct. 11 - Captain Forster Hammock Preserve with David Simpson
- Oct. 31 - Sebastian Inlet State Park photo field trip with Juanita Baker

NEW E-MAIL ADDRESS

Make a note that Pelican Island Audubon has a new e-mail address: **PIAudubon@yahoo.com**

Surgeon General's Prescription for Americans: "Take a walk with PIAS!"

U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, in a call to action, prescribes that all Americans (including children) walk to reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. Walking can ease symptoms and improve quality of life for 1 out of 2 adults already living with these and other chronic diseases. Only 50% of adults meet the Surgeon General's 2008 Guidelines that recommend adults walk at least 2 ½ hours a week, and only 27% of high-school students are active at least 60 minutes every day. Being physically active can lessen the severity of one's ill-health conditions, prevent disease progression and premature death, improve one's quality of life and emotional well-being, and encourage positive mental health and delay cognitive decline in older adults (<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/calls/walking-and-walkable-communities/exec-summary.html>).

So fulfill the Surgeon General's recommendations by taking a walk "with PIAS!" We extend an invitation to you to sign up for its 2015-2016 field trips (see our yearly schedule at www.pelicanislandaudubon.org/programs_field_trips.htm). This month:

- Oct. 10 at 8:30 am: **Introduction to Birding** at the Audubon House **taught by David & Dee Simpson** that will also include a hike.
- Oct 10 from 1:00-4:00 pm: **eBird course** with ornithologist **David Simpson**, a regional monitor for our eBird.org area and **Dr. Juanita Baker**—a great way to get your walk in and learn to be a citizen scientist recording the birds you see, adding to the worldwide database sponsored by The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon, and so important in this age of climate change. Experienced birders and beginners... there is much to command, to understand, much potential to learn what eBird can do. This class will demonstrate: how you can use eBird to enhance your birding, find birds you want to see, see where rare birds have been seen, enter birds you have seen and maintain your birding lists and life list, plan a birding trip anywhere in the world, enter your photographs of birds on eBird, share your bird list with others, analyze data from multiple lists over time, use smart phone apps in the field to enter straight into eBird, what to enter, how to count bird flocks easily, and the importance of using eBird to be a citizen scientist contributing to the largest scientific data base in the world.
- Oct. 11 at 8:00 am: **Captain Forster Hammock Preserve** looking for migration warblers led by **David Simpson**.
- Oct. 31 at 7:30 am: **Sebastian Inlet State Park** with the Indian River Photo Club, led by **Dr. Juanita Baker**.

Those who take walks in nature have more energy, are more creative and more focused on their goals. Fortunately, you can follow the Surgeon General's recommendations with hardly any cost, little or no equipment, and have fun on the many nature trails where you can enjoy fantastic birding at our county conservation areas. Planned field trips include Sebastian Inlet State Park, Viera Wetlands, and the North Sebastian Conservation Area. (See our website www.pelicanislandaudubon.org/IRC_Special_Places/birding_home_page.html). Take a walk at the Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area (ORCA), across from the Audubon House by joining the free guided nature walks from Novem-

ber through April on the first & third Saturday. The walks start at 9:00 am (details and great photos at <https://ourorca.wordpress.com/nature-walks>).

Take an opportunity to volunteer for JayWatch, Eagle-Watch, and OspreyWatch to get out in nature. Other opportunities are available to go out with experienced birders to monitor birds at three area golf courses.

In January, we will be again offering two courses at the Audubon House that will get you out walking into Nature:

- **Beginning Birdwatching Course taught by Dr. Juanita Baker:** Come learn all about birds in an intensive course: four classroom sessions Jan. 12th, Jan. 14th, Jan. 26th, and Jan. 28th from 6:30-9:00 pm, with two field trips on Jan. 16 and Jan. 31st, from 7:00 am to 1:00 pm. You will see and learn to identify over 75 bird species
- **The 20th Volunteer Nature Stewardship Class** will be offered by the Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory, University of Florida, in collaboration with PIAS, from 1:30 to 4:30pm on Saturdays from January 16th through February 20th, 2016. Each session includes classroom activities and field experiences that focus on developing an understanding of the Indian River Lagoon and its upland habitats. Topics include ecology, ornithology, botany, zoology, and entomology. Class participants are asked to volunteer back. Visit <http://ourorca.org> for more information.

This summer, we teamed with the **A Florida Outdoor Center** for five weeks of day camps in nature and provided scholarships to underserved Title 1 students from county schools at our Audubon House using a \$5,000 grant from Indian River Community Foundation.

Starting in September through May, funded in part by Impact 100 and West Marine grants, support from the Indian River County School Board, and PIAS member donations, Board Member Bonnie Swanson and others have organized an after-school lagoon science-education program for underserved students from four Title 1 South County Elementary Schools (Citrus, Glendale, Indian River Academy and Vero Beach). We will inspire students to expand their horizons with an innovative, fun, hands-on afterschool outdoor learning program from 3:30 to 5:30 pm that teaches lagoon science and conservation by walking on the land and kayaking in Indian River Lagoon. Students also will learn to draw and write about their experiences. **Please consider volunteering us to assist with the life-changing program.**

We are excited about these field trips, classes and our after-school course to offer truly community-changing experiences that will transform our children, our community, and our environment that sustains us all. These outdoor experiences on the water and land will inspire the youngsters to become the explorers, scientists, future educators and conservationists for our entire community. Let's all work to protect our unique Florida habitats and wildlife and make our community more walkable and bike friendly.

To participate in the courses, please call the PIAS office 772-567-3520 to reserve your spot! **If you would like to improve your health and well-being, take a hike, volunteer, and/or take a class**

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 **Diane Morgan**, Treasurer **Steve Goff** — Elected Directors: **David Cox, Ph.D.** '17, **Graham Cox, Ph.D.** '17, **Nancy Irvin** '16, **Bill Loftus, Ph.D.** '18, **Toni Robinson** '16, **Bonnie Swanson** '18 — Appointed Board Members: **Donna Halleran**, **Bill Halliday**, **Tina Marchese**, **Karen Schuster**, **Corry Westbrook**

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.

Plant of the Month by Janice Broda

Tampa verbena (*Glandularia tampensis*), an Florida endemic wildflower, was first collected in 1927 in Lee County, hence the reference to Tampa in its common name and species name. Limited in range to coastal areas of peninsular Florida, this native verbena grew in moist hammock habitats in light gaps and at edges.

Flat-topped clusters (corymbs) of lavender, 5-petaled flowers with whitish centers adorn this short-lived perennial throughout most of the year. The flowers remain open for many days and attract butterflies and other pollinators.



Tampa verbena



Its leaves are opposite, diamond-shaped, coarsely serrated, and have prominent veins on the undersides. Weak-stemmed, this plant has a sprawling habit and an ultimate height of 1 to 2 feet tall with a width of 2 to 3 feet.

Also known as Tampa vervain, this plant was added to the eastern planting bed of the (Pelican Island) Audubon House on the June 13 planting day by Ellie Klenbonis, who donated plants that she grew from cuttings. Ellie took part in the 2015 volunteer nature stewardship class offered by the Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory, University of Florida and the PIAS. The 2016 class begins on Saturday, January 16, 2016, and more information about it can be found at <http://ourorca.org>.

Since Tampa verbena is so pretty and grows readily from cuttings, it is available at many native nurseries and has even been seen in Home Depot. You could grow it yourself from cuttings from a friend's plant. Tampa verbena thrives in dappled shade or full sun but will become leggy if light is insufficient. Add this lovely lavender wildflower to your garden and enjoy the butterflies, bees, and other pollinators that come.

**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

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@yahoo.com