



The Pelican Island Audubon Society

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- founded in 1964 to serve Indian River County -

P.O Box 1833, VERO BEACH, FL 32961 772-567-3520 Fax 772-567-3521 www.pelicanislandaudubon.org
Our 41th Year Vol. 41 No. 7 September 2005

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

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

Sat. Sept. 17 – 8:00am–12:00pm Coastal Cleanup 2005 Call 567-3520 to volunteer to clean Indian River County beaches!

Mon. Sept. 19 – 7:30pm General Meeting at Vero Beach Community Center, 2266 14th Ave. TOPIC: *Great Bird & Wildlife Viewing in Central Florida*

Sun. Oct. 2 – 8:00am–12:00pm ORCA canoe trip. Meet at the FMEL boathouse 200 9th St. S.E. (Oslo Road) east of U.S. 1. Reservations are required. Call 567-3520 to sign-up.

Sat. Oct 15 - 7:00am Birding at West County Wastewater Facility, 8405 8th St. Vero Beach. Call 567-3520 for reservations.

Mon, Oct 17 – 7:30pm General Meeting at Vero Beach Community Center, 2266 14th Ave. TOPIC: *Hurricanes, Okeechobee, Estuaries, and People* with Dr. Paul Gray

Oct. 20-22 – Audubon Assembly 2005 in Cocoa Beach.

Sun. Nov. 6 – 8:00am–12:00pm ORCA canoe trip. Meet at the FMEL boathouse 200 9th St. S.E. (Oslo Road) east of U.S. 1. Reservations are required. Call 567-3520 to sign-up.

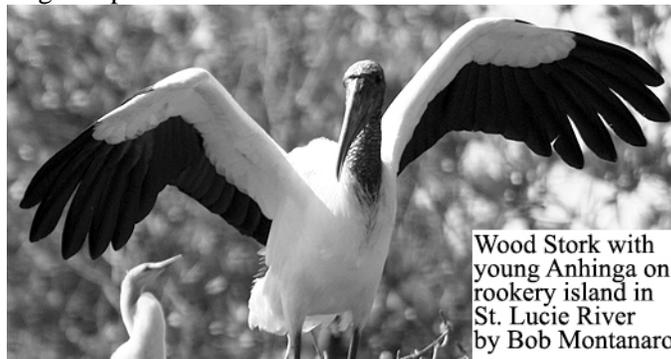
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GREAT BIRD AND WILDLIFE VIEWING IN CENTRAL FLORIDA SEPTEMBER 19TH MEETING

Don't miss the first meeting of the 2005-2006 season of the Pelican Island Audubon Society on Monday, September 19, at the Vero Beach Community Center, 2266 14th Ave. starting at 7:30pm. This meeting will feature a multimedia presentation entitled *Great Bird and Wildlife Viewing in Central Florida*. Many of the locations featured in this presentation will be destinations for Society field trips this season.

Bob Montanaro, the Pelican Island Audubon Society office manager, will give the presentation based on photographs and video he has taken. A lifelong shutterbug, Bob is at home lugging heavy camera gear down some dusty trail or kayaking a local waterway to get an interesting picture. Images of the birds and wildlife found not only around the Indian River, but also at places like Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park, Honeymoon Island State Park, and some other not so well known places will be shown. Join the Society for this preview of some great field trips planned for the coming year and what you might expect to see!



Wood Stork with young Anhinga on rookery island in St. Lucie River
by Bob Montanaro

Pelican Island Audubon Society

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Pelican Island Audubon Society, Inc. is registered with the Florida Dept. of Agriculture and 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

Florida Coastal Cleanup



VOLUNTEER TO HELP WITH THE COASTAL CLEANUP SEPTEMBER 17TH

The Pelican Island Audubon Society in partnership with Keep Indian River Beautiful and The Ocean Conservancy will be taking part in the Florida Coastal Cleanup from 8:00 to 11:00am on Saturday, September 17th. In 2003, a total of 1,822 volunteers cleaned up 57.45 miles of shorelines, beaches, parks, spoil islands, highways and school campuses and removed 7,941 pounds of debris in Indian River County.

We are once again asking for volunteers to assist us in this great effort to clean up Indian River County! With the devastation of hurricanes Frances and Jeanne our job will be more of a challenge this year which is all the more reason why we need everyone's help to assist in getting our coastal areas cleaned up.

Besides volunteers to pick up garbage, site coordinators will be needed to distribute cleanup supplies to areas such as South Sebastian Inlet State Park, Jaycee Beach, South Beach and Round Island. Please call 772-567-3520 to volunteer.

IN MEMORY OF BILL HOEFT

BY JENS TRIPSON

It was with great sadness that we recently learned of the death of Bill Hoeft, Sr. Bill and his wife Janet were long time members in good standing. They were regulars at our monthly meetings and the Christmas party as well. They both volunteered regularly in the afternoons at the office. Janet died several years ago and now with Bill's passing an era of PIAS history is slipping away. Their son, Bill, Jr., has become a member in Audubon due to his parent's interest and influence, so the family tradition continues. He has asked that any contributions be made on behalf of PIAS. Our prayers go out to the Hoeft family.

IT'S IN YOUR AUDUBON LIBRARY

BY TINA MARCHESE

Field Days: Journal of an Itinerant Biologist by Roger B. Swain
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Most of us think of the old VICTORY GARDEN program on TV, or the current Saturday offering on HGTV (People, Places, & Plants) when we hear the name "Roger Swain." However, Swain is a noted biologist, science editor of HORTICULTURE MAGAZINE, and a contributor of essays which have appeared in THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE, DISCOVER, and TECHNOLOGY ILLUSTRATED. His writing is engaging and in FIELD DAYS he writes about "the science of the familiar," from the probable dissemination of avocado pits, to the virtues of chemical plumbing in his "indoor outhouse," to rock proliferation in New England gardens, and the relationship between hamburgers and houseplants. His Ph.D. is based on his study of ants in tropical South America, making his chapter on the fungus gardens of the Attini ant an eye-opening and informative lesson on the industriousness and efficiency of these hardworking little creatures. An essay or two a night makes for great reading whether you're at home or on vacation.

This book, along with over 1,500 others on various nature topics, is available for loan to members from the library located in the Pelican Island Audubon Society office at 1931 14th Avenue, Vero Beach.



THE PRESIDENT'S HOOT!

CITRUS CANKER--- IS ERADICATION THE ONLY SOLUTION?

I am very concerned about the loss of commercial citrus groves and agricultural lands due to the current citrus canker eradication program. The burning and disking associated with eradication may be a temporary solution that may severely impact wildlife and the fragile Indian River Lagoon environment and pave the way for housing developments and excessive population that will ultimately replace them. The organism causing canker is a bacterium called *Xanthomonas axonopodis* pv citri (Xac), which most likely originated in southeast Asia and has spread worldwide, primarily to warm, moist, coastal regions, generally vectored by wind driven rain, human movement, and sometimes by insects and birds. The canker disease is not usually fatal to the tree, but the damaging effects range from leaf damage and fruit blemishes to some defoliation, twig dieback, and fruit drop. Options for canker control include spraying copper fungicides, pruning affected shoots, and installing windbreaks.

About 1912, canker first appeared in Florida when introduced on infected seedlings from Japan. In 1933, canker was declared "eradicated" from Florida. Infestations were again found in 1986, mostly along the Gulf Coast, but after destroying many thousands of infected and exposed trees, eradication was prematurely declared in 1994. However, a year later, in 1995 more canker (although its DNA was different) was found in Miami, and again in 1997 in Manatee County on the Gulf Coast. Thus, canker is not a stranger to Florida, and one would even expect it since a susceptible monocultural crop of citrus, present in large areas year after year for over a century provides an ideal habitat for the plant pathogen. Additional information can be found on the Internet, e.g. <http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/canker/>

In 2000, the state legislature passed the "1900 foot rule", which stated that all trees within a 1900-foot radius of an infected tree shall be removed and destroyed. In practice, this amounts to about 260 acres or a little less than ½ of a square mile (0.41). Owners of grapefruit acreage are compensated at \$27 per tree destroyed up to \$2704 per acre for the trees and \$3,342 per acre for the crop for a total of up to \$6,046 per acre. With the recent hurricanes, canker has been found in many locations throughout the state with numerous finds in St. Lucie, Martin and Indian River Counties. See map on page 6.

Besides pushing and burning infected and neighboring trees, the state is requiring that these citrus lands be disked four times with a 24 inch disk to a depth of 10 inches to insure that there will be no regrowth from citrus trees roots. Extensive disking will cause enormous damage to our soils by disturbing surface soil structure and organic material with further damage by extensive soil erosion. Off-site sediment movement will pollute our streams and waterways and ultimately, the Indian River Lagoon. Studies have shown that certain agricultural pesticides are bound to clay and organic soil components and if disturbed by aggressive disking, may be carried by surface water to the Indian River Lagoon. Regrettably, this is now occurring when agricultural land is leveled and converted into subdivisions. Fortunately, there are ways to disk the tree rows to kill roots and avoid regrowth while leaving the grassed furrows and swales intact to prevent soil erosion and offsite sediment movement. But will this be done?

Moreover, if the current citrus acreage destined for removal is over 20% as the report at the above website for St. Luce County indicates, should the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services reconsider the logic of the 1900 ft rule? This rule was based on a study in a South Florida urban setting with typical thunderstorm weather patterns and not a rural setting impacted by three major hurricanes. Will they continue to push and burn citrus trees until the last tree is standing, and if infected they will have to destroy that as well? So much of our economy and our environment depend on the citrus industry. Should we destroy our citrus groves without reassessing the science and the economic repercussions to our county and state?

Also disturbing, there are many abandoned citrus groves especially within the Urban Service Area that are not being inspected, and thus may be harboring not only canker but also other pests and diseases. Even more troublesome is the likelihood of future introductions of canker bacteria arising from the illegal entry of infected plant materials brought into our state by international travelers arriving each day. We have had canker introduced in the past this way, and why should we not expect it again?

Perhaps citrus canker management is a desirable alternative to eradication. Scientists will be able to conduct canker research here in Florida, develop resistant varieties, and test new control strategies and products. This might provide a long-term solution to citrus canker instead of the current dubious approach that appears to be failing and is further jeopardizing an already weak citrus industry. What percent of the citrus groves need to be burned before we stop?

Richard Baker, President

THE BIG 'UNS: AVIAN GARGOYLES BY BOB WINDISH

People have been known to lose their lunch just looking at them! Victor Hugo's Quasimodo is a beauty contest winner when compared to these guys! Dr. Frankenstein's monster could be considered a Hollywood leading man when stacked up against these descendants of old *Teratorius incredibilis* who flapped around the America's a few million years ago. Yet, these Ugly Ducklings of the bird world are one of nature's valuable creatures, and, when on the wing, they're as graceful as any of our favorite feathered friends.

Condors! Both the California version, *Gymnogyps californianus* and its Andean cousin, *Vultur gryphus*, are the ugliest of all birds capable of flight. With a body length of some 50 inches, a wing span reaching that of 11 feet, and weighting a good 25 pounds, condors are also the world's largest flying species. (Only the wandering albatross has a slightly longer wing, but the total mass of the sea bird's appendage is thinner.)

Condors possess a repulsive looking, grotesque, and featherless head, as do the vultures of the Old World to which they are not related. (Neither are the turkey and black vultures of the U.S. incidentally.) The Californian's facial skin is a vivid pink while the Andean's complexion is a dark gray color. Each has a sharp, hooked beak for tearing at flesh and around their necks are tufts of downy feathers like a collar, our western bird's black, while the South American's is white. Under the wings, the scheme is reversed, frontal plumes being opposite colors. Over both birds' bodies, however, the plumage is the same, a dull, sooty charcoal and black lacking in any sheen or radiance.

The U.S. bird, which once extended its range from Oregon to Nevada and New Mexico, and which scientists believe possibly included the entire North American continent before the arrival of Europeans, is now limited to a small area of Southern California in the mountains northeast of Los Angeles. The Andean variety, which is slightly larger and which has also reduced its numbers due to man's incursion, fares better and soars above the peaks from Venezuela to Chile's Patagonia and almost to the tip of South America's Tierra del Fuego, the Land of Fire.

Condors are a picture of beauty as they fly over hundreds of square miles in search of food, using thermal drafts that lift them from the ground and which they glide upon in circles. They have been recorded as high as 15,000 feet drifting over thunder storms but usually stay around 2,000 feet easily spotting a meal on the ground.

Carrion eaters, they serve nature by plunging their heads into carcasses, consuming what other predators pass up. Their heads have adapted to baldness since they cannot preen themselves there of the decaying matter that accumulates on that part of their body as it does in other places.

While the condor's diet is composed mainly of carrion, they have been known to snare live lambs, young llamas and goats, deer and other animals that have been wounded by hunters. They will also eat dead fish, young seals, shellfish, eggs and sea birds such as petrels and gulls. They are often shot be-

cause they have a special liking for the eggs of guano producing cormorants whose manure is highly prized as fertilizer.

Condors have a very slow reproduction rate. They breed only starting at about six or seven years of age and, while they mate for life, and can live for more than 50 years, the female lays but one egg every two years. Nests are in a bare rock on a mountain ledge and incubation lasts from seven to nine weeks, with both sexes handling the nesting duties. The young chick remains with its parents up to a year before going out on its own. For several years it can be distinguished from an adult because it retains a coat of downy feathers on its head and neck. It gradually loses this down when it begins to feed on its own.

Early scientists felt there was some form of communication among condors signaling the discovery of food on the ground when they saw flocks of 20 or more eating together. Others like Charles Darwin originally believed it was the odor of decomposing matter that attracted the birds. It was James Audubon, however, who argued against that theory when he covered a long dead carcass with a tarpaulin and placed a dummy animal nearby. The condors attacked the decoy proving they, like all birds, have a poor sense of smell. It is now held that sight is the main factor in detecting food especially among birds of prey. As the first condor descends to the dead matter, others simply watch it and then join the feast.

While the Andean species is surviving despite man's interference, California's condors have been destroyed almost to the point of extinction. There are known to be only 40 surviving in the wild. They have been shot simply because they present a large target or because it was felt they spread disease. Many have also died when they ate the carcasses of poisoned wolves and coyotes.

Fortunately, two sanctuaries have been established in the Los Padres National Forest in the Sierra Madre mountains north of Los Angeles and east of Santa Barbara and conservationists believe the California condor can exist in balance if illegal shooting is stopped and if the birds are left in peace.

Others are concerned, however, about the proposed dam to be established in the reserve that will set up a recreational facility for water skiing and camping which might eventually doom the birds to extinction.



PIAS BOARD MEMBER JOE CARROLL RECOGNIZED FOR EAGLE WORK

The recent issue of the *Florida Naturalist* contained a story on the partnership between Audubon of Florida and Ginn Clubs and Resorts of Celebration, FL, involving eagles living in the Tesoro community being developed by Ginn in Port St. Lucie.

“Ginn hired biological consultant Joe Carroll, ...of Pelican Island Audubon Society in Vero Beach, to monitor the eagles’ activity on Tesoro property for four nesting seasons. He observed the pair’s varying success rate and shared the information with agencies and interested parties, including Audubon. ‘The first year, three eaglets reached fledgling (a rare event); the second year, no young were produced, even though the pair re-nested,’ Carroll recounts. ‘The third year, two young fledged, and this past season one young eaglet fledged. Add to this the fact that their nest was taken over by a great horned owl, forcing them to relocate and build a new nest, and the next year two hurricanes blew down the nest and they had to rebuild, and you have a very interesting period of eagle watching.’”

This collaboration between Audubon of Florida and the Ginn Company has resulted in a partnership entitled Friends of the Eagle which includes three components: an Eaglecam, satellite tracking of eagle fledglings, and the Eagle Ambassador program based at Audubon’s Center for Birds of Prey in Maitland, FL.

“The Eaglecam project, slated to begin this fall, will provide live streaming video of the Tesoro nest. Tesoro residents, Audubon members, local classrooms and anyone with Internet access will be able to view live video of eagle nest activity during the 2005-2006 nesting season.” For more information, including links to the Eaglecam and the other components of the partnership, visit the Pelican Island Audubon Society web site at www.pelicanislandaudubon.org



Joe Carroll, Katie Warner, Center Administrator, & Lynda White, EagleWatch Coordinator, Center for Birds of Prey, Paige the eagle, AOF Director of Development Tim Bachmeyer, Ginn Company CEO Bobby Ginn, Executive Director of the Institute of Wildlife Sciences Brian Mealy, and AOF Vice-President Charles Lee

PIAS FOUNDER MAGGY BOWMAN MADE DREAM COME TRUE

One of the founding members of PIAS, Maggy Bowman, was the subject of a guest editorial by past PIAS president Stuart Miner in the August 27th Press Journal detailing Ms. Bowman’s critical role in the founding of the Environmental Learning Center.

Ms. Bowman recognized the need to preserve as much of “old” Florida and its environment as far back as the 1940s when she arrived in the area. As a member of the County Commission and a founding member of the Pelican Island Audubon Society, she worked toward the goal of establishing a “...nature center” where people of all ages could go to learn about their environment and even participate in hands-on projects.”

Under her guiding influence, the dream of a nature center in Indian River County became a reality with the establishment of the Environmental Learning Center. Read how this all came about by visiting the Pelican Island Audubon Society web site at www.pelicanislandaudubon.org



TOP: Ellie Van Os welcomes the passengers aboard the River Queen for the Wine & Cheese Sunset Cruise to Pelican Island. MIDDLE: Joan Edwards, second from left, led the walking tour of historic downtown Vero Beach. BOTTOM: Canoeing ORCA.



Pelican Island Audubon Society
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NEWS FROM THE NEST

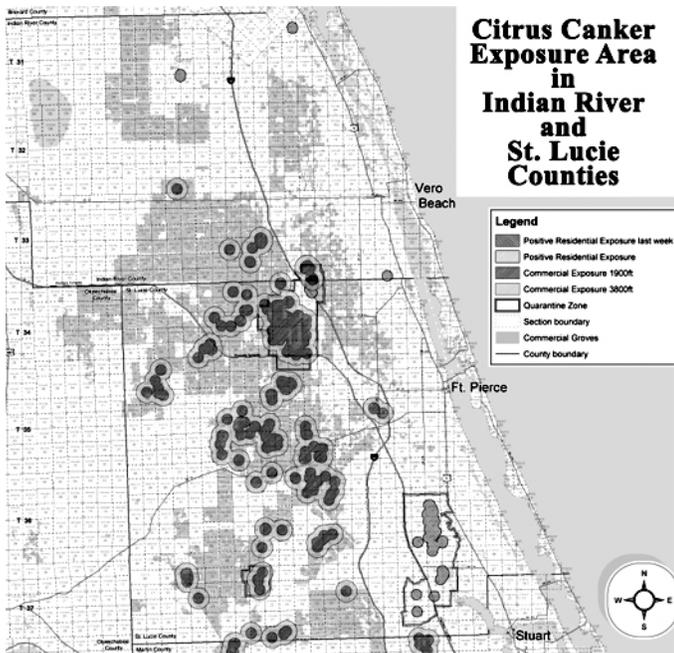
Welcome to new members & transfers into chapter:

Gregory & Suzanne McIntosh, Paul Schwartz, Charlotte Terry, Betsy Callahan, Kimberly Field, Carol B. Haight, Margaret C. Hambleton, Earl B. Hill, Sherri McCormick, James Meehan, Catherine Melbourne, Roger E. Peet, James R. Stanley, Cole Sullivan, Jo A. Benton, William Goodman, Christina Nyakundi, Mr. & Mrs. Charles Pittman, Shelby Barnes, Eugene Callan, Olive H. Detering, Grace Roth, Bonnie L. Schubert, and Chris & Alison Taylor.

Special thanks to Sue Richardson, Jon Moore, and their son, Scott, for representing PIAS at the Observation Station: A Program for Aspiring Young Scientists held August 27 at Gifford Middle School.

VISIT PIAS ONLINE!

For all the latest news, activities, and photographs of events, visit Pelican Island Audubon Society on the web at www.pelicanislandaudubon.org



The gray areas in the map above are commercial citrus groves. The dark spots overlaying the gray are areas of canker exposure. The eradication zone for one infected tree is a circle with a radius of 1,900 feet for a commercial grove. A larger version of this map can be found at www.pelicanislandaudubon.org

JOIN THE PELICAN ISLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

Membership benefits include subscriptions to *Audubon* magazine, *Florida Naturalist*, and the PIAS newsletter *The Peligram*.

Rates are:

\$20 one-year introductory membership

\$30 two-year introductory membership

\$15 students

\$15 seniors (62+)

\$15 Friend (*The Peligram* only)

Please send your name and address along with a check payable to the “**National Audubon Society**” to: Pelican Island Audubon Society, P.O. Box 1833, Vero Beach, FL 32961