

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 49th Year Vol. 49 No. 6 September 2013

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

September 9, 2013 ❖ 6:00 p.m.

Beginning Birding with Heidi Grooms

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

Heidi Grooms is a Park Services Specialist with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Savannas Preserve State Park. She has a degree in Environmental Science and over 15 years experience as a professional biologist. She enjoys spending outdoor time with her family (all boys) which includes birding, hiking, boating, fishing, and so much more. In addition to field biology, Heidi has a specific interest in educating others about the amazing and diverse array of birds in Florida. Please join her as she teaches you all about "Birding for Beginners", an introduction to the birding basics.

Don't miss the 2013 Audubon Assembly October 25-26 - Palm Harbor, Florida

The 2013 Audubon Assembly is a celebration of the people who put their "boots on the ground" for conservation. Get inspired and get involved in citizen science, habitat stewardship, and grassroots advocacy. Florida's signature conservation event brings together representatives of Audubon's 35,000 members and 44 chapters with conservation leaders, scientists, educators and policy makers. Through nature-inspired walking workshops, inspiring speakers and thought-provoking learning sessions, Audubon plans to join together people of all ages and backgrounds in our common interest of protecting Florida's remarkable natural resources.

This year's event is being held at the beautiful Innisbrook Resort and Golf Club in Palm Harbor, Florida – about 30 minutes from downtown Tampa. Please note, hotel reservations must be made separately. Early-bird tickets and hotel rooms are going fast, learn more and reserve your spot today: <http://bit.ly/AudubonAssembly2013>



September 16, 2013 ❖ 7:30 p.m.

The Life of Birds with Reinier Munguia

Vero Beach Community Center
2266 14th Avenue, Vero Beach

This presentation covers all aspects of a bird's life, from the adaptations that allow them to survive in their environment to their amazing flights and displays. Some of the topics to be covered include: physical adaptations as well as behavioral adaptations, communication, foraging, courtship, nesting, brooding, and many bird facts and real life stories. This presentation brings a lot of detailed information about many species around the world but with special interest on Florida Birds.

Reinier Munguia is a nature photographer and illustrator with a strong education and conservation vision. His work has appeared in several publications including textbooks and magazines. His passion for nature started at an early age, and was later reinforced while doing field research in college. This passion has taken him to become an advocate for causes related to the protection of species. Educating people about nature has become his most important goal. He reaches thousands of people every year through his nature presentations in schools and nature events and through his workshops.

For the past two years, he has worked as the president of the Lake Region Audubon Society, where he oversees not only the Chapter's activities, but also the Street Audubon Nature Center in Winter Haven, FL. His main focus is on education and conservation, spending long hours preparing educational materials and teaching programs on Florida's wildlife and ecosystems and reaching more than 10,000 students a year. Additionally he provides more than 60 educational programs a year at different nature centers, including Lyonia Preserve, the Enchanted Forest and the Polk Nature Discovery Center, among others.

Reinier has spent the last 20 years documenting wildlife and their struggles with still photography, but has recently added filmmaking to his arsenal of educating material. He uses his talent to send a conservation message by means of captivating images and natural history footage.

Masthead photo: Loggerhead Shrike by Bob Montanaro.

Audubon Community Center/ORCA Update

Detailed building plans were submitted to the county for permits to begin building our Center. Received approval to remove the vegetation from the construction site. Ron Turner will relocate twenty-six beautiful mature palms on site pro bono. The following volunteers have potted 190 native plants in the construction area that will be returned to the site when major construction is complete: **Susan Boyd, Bob Bruce, Joe Carroll, Ken Gonyo, Darlene Halliday, Katie Kitchener, Cynthia Lord, Doreen McLeod, Jean McGovern, Laurie Null, Woodrow Peterson, Jean Romano, Karen Schuster, and Susan Warmer.** Thank you to **Bob Smith & Tim Glover** for donating pots.

An old artesian well was given new life, and **Bob Bruce, Jim Kirley, and Ken Gonyo** laid new pipe for irrigation and future ORCA restoration. **Bob Bruce, Joe Carroll, Bob Bruce, Jim Kirley, and Ken Gonyo** removed a metal pipe structure over an existing slab on the property, and Peter Sutherland trucked it to a recycling center. The slab is part of our new plant nursery.

ORCA is also getting a new look:

- **Ken Gonyo, Susan Warmer, Jean Romano, Susan Boyd** are clearing all the ORCA trails on both sides of Oslo Road and repaired the bridge going over a drainage ditch on the south side of ORCA.
- **Beth Powell**, County Land Manager installed much-needed new county direction signs on the trails. It should be less easy to get lost now at ORCA.
- The Indian River Mosquito Control District repaired the kiosk near the impoundment.

Oslo Boat Ramp issue. Bad News: FIND may still provide \$437,000 in matching funds to go with \$462,000 in county money to complete the project, but that money is not final as the county still needs state and federal permits. **Good News:** The Coastal Conservation Association of Florida, a state wide environmentally fishing organization, “strongly opposes any and all proposed expansion of the Oslo Road boat ramp based on scientific data illustrating the prolific significance of the post-larvae and juvenile fish nursery at the current boat ramp location.” Many thanks to CCA Treasure Coast Chapter President **Lange Sykes.**



Guided Pontoon Boat Tours Blue Cypress Lake



For information and reservations, call 772-567-3520 or e-mail piaudubon@bellsouth.net

Morning Tours 7-10AM

Evening Tours
4:30-7:30PM

\$85 donation per person

All proceeds benefit Pelican Island Audubon

Limited to 8 persons per trip.

Includes food & drinks.

Tour Leaders:
Richard Baker
Bob Bruce

A “TV” in the backyard *by Linda Chancellor*

The strong smell of dead fish reached my nostrils as I opened the sliding glass door. I stepped out onto the deck, looked around and tried to pin point the location of the offensive smell. At the bottom of the steps I spied the body of a large fish, about 12 inches, with no head. Three ragged fins laid nearby. I wondered how it had got there. Had an Osprey dropped its catch as it flew overhead? Several summers ago I had watched as a Bald Eagle harassed an Osprey until the Osprey had dropped its catch. The Eagle then caught the falling fish and flew away. I didn't care how this fish had landed in my yard but I thought it would make great bait for the crab trap. After I put it in the trap I threw the three ragged fins into the nearby wooded area and went back inside.

Several hours later I looked out the window to find a large Turkey Vulture had landed in the backyard. I had heard that Turkey Vultures have an incredible sense of smell but I found it hard to believe that he could have smelt the fishy odor from the high heights

at which these birds fly. The first thing I noticed was how large this bird was. Prior to this I had only seen Turkey Vultures at a distance soaring high in the sky or passing them quickly on the highway where they were feeding on road kill. This Turkey Vulture appeared to be over two feet tall. He had large black wings that dragged along the ground as he walked and hopped around on his big flat feet that resembled chicken feet. I had always thought that they had talons like other raptors. His head was bright red shriveled skin, with no feathers, and he had a short but dangerous looking, ivory, hooked beak. He spent several more minutes trying to locate the source of the smell, then raised and flapped his large wings until he finally got enough lift to fly away.

Did you know? Turkey Vultures locate their food with their incredible sense of smell. They can detect the gases from carrion in as little as a few parts per trillion while dogs

can detect odors in as little as eighteen parts per million. Black Vultures cannot smell and often will follow Turkey Vultures to locate their food.



Homeowners Can Save the Lagoon Too!

Big Thank You to County Commissioners Peter O'Bryan, Joe Flescher, and Tim Zorc for showing leadership in passing a strong fertilizer ordinance that includes a summer fertilizer ban (June through September), 50% slow release nitrogen, no phosphorus without a test, and ban within 10 feet of a water body. This is a **Big Deal** and our cities now need to do the same.

Fertilizer is TOXIC, not a nutrient to our lagoon! ALL human introduced chemicals, oil, mercury, PCBs, sunscreen, herbicides, insecticides, anti-depressants, hormones, body wastes, fertilizers are TOXIC to our natural environment.

What can we homeowners do to save it? Commissioner Bob Solari is getting rid of his turfgrass as the best way to save the lagoon. Moreover, he wants to lead a community effort to do so.

Lawn care is now a huge industry including, researchers, equipment manufacturers, chemical companies, grass cutters, chemical applicators, and even the Vero Beach and County's reuse water is mostly for turf. The alternative of planting our native plants that survive on less water and chemicals is commendable, because if everyone did this, it would be better than the summer ban, as less water and chemicals are needed.

Most homeowner associations (HOAs) requiring turfgrass should change rules to allow native plants and natural ground covers. Some even require St. Augustine turfgrass that requires excessive precious water resources, fertilizers and herbicides that pollute our Lagoon.

The insanity of our infatuation with lawns becomes obvious when we see lawn care personnel applying fertilizer on grass surrounding lakes and canals while, at the same time, water-management personnel are spraying herbicides to kill the aquatic weeds that feed on those fertilizers. As homeowners and taxpayers, we are paying doubly for pretty lawns and weed-free lakes! Folks spend so much money to plant turfgrass, fertilize/water/mow it over and over again wasting time, money plus polluting. Not to mention the contribution to global warming from constantly running gas-powered boisterous lawn mowers and blowers. Let's remember our relationship to our Earth.

Our 4'x4' gardening project was a terrific success and will be continued for a second year! We are looking for volunteers. Please call 772-567-3520.

In addition to the Principals and Teachers involved, **we heartily thank** the following, who so willingly helped

with our Square-Foot-Gardening project:

John Beukers, Christine Kelly, Mary Kramek, Chloe Potras, Karen Stabile, Adam Sutherland, Linda Urban, Desha Baker, Richard Baker, Susan Boyd, Graham Cox, Elsbeth Eibs, Steve Goff, Bill Loftus, Sharon Marable, Judy Orcutt, and Peter Sutherland.

Anytime Waste Systems
Indian River County Master Gardeners

Neighborhood associations and HOAs are the ideal groups to ask Commissioner Solari and experts to speak about yards with reduced turfgrass that do not add toxic chemicals to our Lagoon and take irrigation water from our depleted aquifer. If you cannot afford lawn maintenance nor even a sprinkler system, and do not live in a community with an HOA, there are ways to have attractive yards without much expense. Each homeowner in Indian River County can thus help save our Lagoon by reducing turfgrass. Perhaps the County Commission can showcase and award attractive, low-polluting yards.

The websites www.PlantRealFlorida.org and www.fnps.org show how to add native plants to landscapes and bring home the beauty of real natural Florida. They provide resources for working and preserving within an HOA and how to revamp landscapes to:

- Work within HOA rules requiring a minimum percentage of turfgrass
- Compost and recycle to reduce energy and chemicals
- Save water, money, and time with a beautiful distinctive and low-impact landscape
- Bring life to your backyard with diverse native plants-birds, butterflies and more
- Enrich your home and community
- Select native plants (over 3000 in Florida) that use little water and no chemicals to survive.

Other ideas to save our lagoon:

- **If everyone in our county planted just one tree**, we would reduce grass coverage and our electricity bills by providing shade. This would lower our community's carbon footprint, reduce global warming, provide more habitats for birds, butterflies, and other wildlife while conserving water and reducing runoff to the Lagoon. Research shows that cities with trees in neighborhoods also reduce the crime rate. Let's be known as the "Garden County!"
- **4x4 foot vegetable and herb gardens can also replace turfgrass in our year round planting seasons:** http://www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org/Fragments/square_foot_gardening.html
- Connect to your available sewage system.

These positive actions will help reduce algae blooms, increase seagrass habitat, provide nurseries for fish, clean water for swimmers and boaters, and help our economy.

Mr. Mulch
Waste Management Okeechobee Com-
posters
Himanshu Mehta, Indian River
County Solid Waste Director
Fellsmere Community Gardens
Indian River County School District,
Dr. Fran Adams, superintendent

Video Production: Bob Montanaro

View a video about the garden project
at www.pelicanislandaudubon.org

Birds of the Month by Juanita Baker

Special End-of-Summer Edition

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

April 2013

Title: "My eye is on you" by Crystal Samuel
Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus*

The most amazing acrobatic flier is the Swallow-tailed Kite! Such extraordinary aerial skill, and with its striking black-and-white pattern and sharply forked tail, this unique raptor is such a graceful beauty. Weighing only a pound, kites can hang motionless on the wind, rarely flapping their 4-foot long wings. However, hundreds of kites in a "kettle," with a slight tilt or flick of their forked tails, can dart, dive, and twist this way and that, even astoundingly reverse direction, to chase insects; yet they never collide!

Such sights are possible in south central Florida from early March-May where thousands gather to roost post-migration before dispersal to Florida and surrounding states' nesting sites. Using one or both feet, they expertly capture insects in mid-air, then transfer prey to mouth. Although 98% of their diet is insects, including fire ants, they also pluck frogs, snakes, anoles, or nesting birds from the surface of vegetation, more often to feed their young than themselves. Kites not only eat on the wing, but also dip low over rivers, ponds, or lakes to skim water for a drink.

To maintain their feathers for their aerial feats, they spend early morning, just after dawn, grooming, sunning, and drying each feather as shown in this photograph by Crystal Samuel taken with her Nikon D3000 and 200-mm zoom lens.

Gregarious, Swallow-tailed Kites return in early March to our swamps, lowland forests, and marshes edged with tall pine trees where, at the top, several pairs may nest. Although non-breeding kites may also associate with these monogamous pairs to provide extra eyes for predators, they will not help in caring for the fledglings. All hunt and communally roost at night near the nests. They gather again in August in large, pre-migratory groups to store energy for their long journey to Central and South America.

May 2013

Title: "An Appetizer Before Breakfast" by Maria Heffernan
Red-shouldered Hawk *Buteo lineatus*

The most vocal raptor, the Red-shouldered Hawks' "Kee'-ah" "Kee'-ah! Kee'-ah!" can be heard far away. They loudly announce their territory or give alarm when other males or predators (e.g. Great Horned Owls) are in their territory. Common in human habitats with nearby woodlands, they usually are seen on an open perch or telephone wire overlooking their territory.

These hawks often sit very still (its light coloration blends with the bare tree), watching for unsuspecting prey: small mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, insects, crayfish, then swooping down to snatch them. Maria Heffernan photographed (with a Canon, 100-400mm lens set at 370mm) this Red-shouldered Hawk after it had caught a frog and returned to its regular perch to enjoy the meal.

Once, an immature night-heron landed in the same bare tree where a Red-shouldered Hawk was sitting at the top, not moving. The hawk seemed to be part of the tree, watching silently, waiting. Seeing the heron take flight, "Red" rapidly attacked along the birds' trajectory - out of sight. Squawk!

Nesting occurs once a year. Red-shouldered Hawks are monogamous. Pairs often use the same nest year after year. After the nest is refurbished or built, courtship lasts about three weeks. One early February morning in Sebastian, a male was observed doing the courtship "sky-dance," soaring high and calling. With repeated dives toward the female, who sat on a bare tree perch, he made a wide spiral around her, then rapidly ascended. When she crotched low on the branch, indicating her receptivity, he alighted on top of her, with copulation taking only five seconds. Then he stood down on the branch beside her for a minute of "pillow talk" and left. She fluffed her feathers and stayed about five minutes.

Beware. During nesting season from January-May, if humans venture near nests, they may be dive-bombed as the hawks try to protect their nests and young.



Swallow-tailed Kite ©2013 by Crystal Samuel, Pelican Island Audubon



Red-Shouldered Hawk ©2013 by Maria Heffernan, Pelican Island Audubon

July 2013

Title: Northern Mockingbird at Sunrise by Bob Montanaro
Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*

The Florida Scrub-jay, found only in Florida (endemic), deserves to be our Florida State Bird, yet our State chose the Northern Mockingbird. The Mockingbird, found in all lower 48 United States and introduced into Hawaii, is beloved and known to everyone, singing gaily, cheering us up. Bob Montanaro's photograph shows this Mockingbird is an early riser, typically beginning to sing a variety of complex songs at first light.

Taken with a Canon EOS 20D, 400 mm, ISO 400, Montanaro's photo clearly illustrates distinguishing features: overall plain gray with white wing bar and black with white edged wing feathers, even the black eye stripe. In flight, outside tail feathers flash white and wings reveal white spots. Males and females are indistinguishable.

This year-round resident has adapted to suburban habitats. Thus, scientists use them to monitor infectious diseases (e.g. West-Nile Virus) and environmental contaminants (lead and pesticides). Nesting in backyard bushes, liking newly mowed grass, they easily forage for arthropods (beetles, ants, bees, wasps, and grasshoppers) and fruits; yet can take quick cover in surrounding shrubs.

Sharing parenting duties allows Mockingbirds to overlap the timing of their broods, having about four clutches per year during breeding season - late January to August. Though the female primarily broods the young, both share feeding of the young and defending the nest aggressively, chasing after intruders like crows, hawks, and humans.

Have you awakened in the middle of the night hearing a Mockingbird's repetitive call? Most likely it is an unattached male trying a variety of calls with short-bout repetitions that are more likely to attract a female. Mockingbirds continue life-long learning, up to 200 different songs, by mimicking other birds and even mechanical sounds. Yet mockingbirds are light sensitive, usually stopping singing at sunset. So males are more likely to be singing their hearts out on moonlit nights—romantic, right?



Northern Mockingbird ©2013 by Bob Montanaro
Pelican Island Audubon

August 2013

Title: Warbler in the Treetops! by Mark J. Eden
Northern Parula *Setophaga americana*

Warblers, though tiny, are often brightly colored and sing wonderfully as they flit through the trees. Although Florida is a great flyway for migrating birds, sadly for us, most warblers pass through, reserving their most beautiful songs until reaching and defending their northern breeding grounds. Small birds like warblers are more likely to leave the North on migration sooner, beginning in August, whereas larger birds (ducks, storks and herons) migrate in peak numbers in October-November. One reason warblers are early migrants is they feed on northern states' summer bounty, especially insects, that become less available in fall. The Northern Parula nesting in the eastern states migrates to the warmer climes in Florida, the Bahamas, Cuba, and Caribbean for the winter.



Northern Parula ©2013 by Mark J. Eden, Pelican Island Audubon

Fortunately, this Northern Parula, our smallest warbler (weighing only 1/3 oz. and 4.5 inches long) also nests in Florida, one of the few warblers that does. The Common Yellow Throat, Prairie, Pine, and likely Prothonotary Warblers also breed in Central Florida. The male Parula's unique song ascending buzz ending with a rising "zip!" is clearly heard from March-June in its preferred oak/pine habitat near water where it searches for insects and spiders in the treetops, and watches over the female who uses Spanish moss to build their hanging nests. With binoculars we scan in the song's direction, often in vain, as it is so difficult to find this tiny imp amongst the canopy, let alone photograph. Mark J. Eden, handholding his large Canon 7D with its heavy 100-400mm lens, persisted in pursuing the difficult, capturing each feather. This male's beautiful blue upper body, back patch of green, distinctive eye white crescents and black mask or lore (area between eye and sharp beak) differentiates it from a female Northern Parula.

Part of the PIAS mission is to encourage education and public awareness of our natural environment. The Bird Photo of the Month's purpose is for members to get involved and out in nature observing and taking bird photos, to learn about specific birds that are selected, and to appreciate and understand good bird photography.

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 '16, Bill Loftus, Ph.D. '15, John Orcutt, Ph.D. '15, Toni Robinson '16** — Appointed Board Members: **Graham Cox, Ph.D., Bill Halliday, Jim Kirley, Tina Marchese, Jane Schnee, (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.

Plant of the Month by Janice Broda

Partridge (or Quail) in the Pea ?

When European settlers saw birds feasting on the seeds of this prolific wildflower, they named it partridge pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*). Their botany was correct: This yellow-flowered plant is a member of the pea or legume (Fabaceae) family. Their ornithology was off, though. They should have called it quail pea for it was native quail not European partridge that they saw.

Songbirds and game birds eat the seeds of this wonderful wildflower that is native to most of the eastern and central U.S. In Florida, this very variable wildflower grows in the dry, sunny areas of coastal uplands, scrubs, and occasionally inundated pinelands.

This annual or short-lived perennial grows to be from one to four feet tall. Though most often as wide as tall, partridge pea sometimes grows prostrate, flat to the ground. Its compound, pinnate (feather-shaped) leaves are delicate. Its bright, prolific yellow flowers are sometimes tinged with red at the center and grow from the leaf axils (angles).

Flowering and fruiting peaks in the summer and fall. Green pods from one to two inches long turn dark brown when ripe and split length-wise to scatter small brown seeds that germinate easily.

Partridge pea is pollinated by bees and is an excellent nectar source for native and European bees. It is a larval food for orange sulphur, cloudless sulphur, ceranus blue & gray hairstreak butterflies.

With its delicate foliage and showy yellow flowers, partridge pea makes a wonderful landscape plant for dry, sunny spots and for bees, butterflies, and birds.



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