



Peligrum

April
2021



Pairing Up! Blue-winged Teal by Richard H. Baker, Ph.D. March 16, 2021, at Green Cay Nature Center & Wetlands

On the cover Exquisite

by Juanita N. Baker, Ph.D.

Look how this male, with his characteristic white facial crescent identifying him as a Blue-winged Teal, stands proud and vigilant with a female. This photo was taken in March when these dabbling ducks begin to pair up. Notice she has a 'ghost' of a crescent... a lighter patch next to her bill. Both have blue upper wings feathers—a very thin sliver peeking out from under each of their secondary covert wing feathers—which are not fully visible until they fly. Her feather pattern is beautiful, each feather interestingly, artistically shaped and outlined in a lighter color, even down on her flanks, unlike his speckled breast.

Pair bonding often occurs on wintering grounds as in this Florida wetland. They forage together amongst the plants, feeding on aquatic insects, snails, crustaceans, and plant material, including seeds in their warm wintering lands. One of our most common wintering ducks, they congregate in large groups but usually pair by pair. By May, they've stored fat energy for their long migration to prairies and wetlands in northern US and southern Canada.

From June to July, the female chooses a nesting site and a day before egg laying, builds the nest by scraping away the grasses, then lining it with those grasses, breast feathers, and down. She lays one egg each morning, averaging for 10 days. After waiting a few days with no further eggs, she begins nocturnally to incubate all the eggs so the ducklings hatch within a day of each other. Prior to hatching, the female gives a maternal call-like calling the down covered hatchlings out at 22 per minute calls, then to 145/min call when calling them to exit the nest. The ducklings are immediately able to follow the mother who readily leads them into the water to swim and find food—insects, snails, small animals, vegetation and seeds.

Blue-winged Teal may be seen through April at TM Goodwin and Broadmoor Conservation areas on Thursdays, but by mid-May most will have left for their breeding grounds, not returning until August-October to winter here.

Submit your photos to the Birds Need Plants Photo Contest
Visit PelicanIslandAudubon.org for all the details.

eBird & Other Birding Apps Meeting

Wednesday, April 21, 2021, 6:00-7:00 pm on Zoom with Holly Ferreira, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Biologist, an avid birder. Birding apps are essential, basic tools to rapidly enhance your knowledge of birds, checklists, and becoming a citizen scientist. Learn why eBird can lead to rapid learning about our wonderful birds. Before class, please sign up in eBird.org for an account. No limit on class size. Sign up at PelicanIslandAudubon.org and you will be sent a link to the Zoom meeting!

Our Mission: To preserve and protect the animals, plants, and natural communities, and the land and water on which they depend in Indian River County through education, advocacy, and public awareness.

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\$5 – 1 gallon/1 quart (or greater)

\$3 – 3-inch pots, anything under 1 quart

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Order online at
PelicanIslandAudubon.org

"Something wrong is going on from the Earth up to the Sky"



The above title is one of my favorite folk songs by Bob Rafkin. It implies that our environment and, indeed, ourselves are at risk. Things are going wrong in Florida where we have a new era of red tide on the west coast, coral reefs are dying, over 432 manatees have perished in Florida from January 1st to March 5th of this year for lack of seagrass to eat, fish are dying in our Lagoon, and our aquifers are getting salty. We have an invasion of exotic plants and animals affecting our farms,

wetlands, and cities. And, since 1970, 3.2 billion birds (30% of our birds) have been lost in North America. What is happening here to cause these problems?

I have been thinking of all the spray trucks, landscapers, grass cutters, businesses, parks, and homeowners spraying chemicals on our yards, ditches, canals, ponds, and lakes. Mosquito Control sprays to keep us safe and free from bites by putting out pesticides by trucks and planes. Some of this spraying prevents many diseases, such as malaria, filariasis, and a number of viruses like West Nile, and Eastern Encephalitis transmitted by a few mosquito species out of the 90 species in Florida and the 3,500 worldwide.

What about all the many personal chemicals we are exposed to every day like shampoo and cosmetics. We may be harmed by the no-stick cooking pans, microwave popcorn, mercury in seafood, and lead in our drinking water. All have been found to cause disease, cancer, retardation and other health issues. For example, azodicarbonamide is a chemical that bread companies use to make softer, more attractive-looking food, but the World Health Organization (WHO) has linked it to increased the risk of respiratory issues or skin irritation <https://bestlifeonline.com/toxic-chemicals/>.

Lead is still coming into our environment especially from paints, lead shot, and old pipes. We just gave an award to Bruce Sabol for letting FDEP know about the lead in old paint flaking off the St. Sebastian River railroad bridge.

We have so many chemicals that are suspect. But what about all the other chemicals we have in our environment?

Plastics pollution from small fragments to large pieces can harm and poison humans, animals and plants. Some plastics take thousands of years to break down so the environmental damage is long-lasting. This pollution comes mainly from household waste, which is poorly recycled, dumped in landfills or abandoned in the landscape. Plastic impacts all organisms from single cell organisms to whales. Reduce plastic use. Please recycle all plastic. <https://bit.ly/3m1UsEJ>

Herbicide/Plant Killer Pollution. Agriculture is making great progress in trying to feed and clothe us humans by using many chemicals. However, a study finds glyphosate, the world's most-used pesticide found in Roundup and other plant killers, is now also found in 55.8% of all sampled Florida manatees. (<https://bit.ly/3ryP8d6>). Some of this is coming from agricultural crops and is appearing in our food. Much of it is now coming from people's yards. The World Health Organization has labeled glyphosate a "probable human carcinogen."

We now know that spraying herbicides, glyphosate included, is not good for humans and all life on earth. According to Dr. Grant Gilmore, Senior Scientist with Estuarine, Coastal and Ocean Science, and our best fish expert: "There is abundant scientific evidence that herbicides not only kill plankton and plants on which our indigenous aquatic animals depend for survival, but also they produce a nutrient load from decaying plant and animal bodies that increases the nutrient (nitrate/phosphate/ammonia) burden in the water column." Dr. Gilmore explains: "We tend to blame septic fields, crop and lawn fertilizer for most of this problem while millions of gallons of herbicides are purchased off the shelf at local stores, and also used by lawn care companies, or spread by municipal, county and regional governmental entities along with regional agricultural interests."

The bloom of the toxic green slime, *Microcystis cyanobacteria*, is promoted by herbicides such as Roundup. Recent studies show that exposure to cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) producing toxins like BMAA can cause amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's – diseases of the nervous systems (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyanobacteria>). Also see the documentary Toxic Puzzle by Bo Landin (www.toxicpuzzle.com@toxicpuzzle).

President Richard Nixon said, in his 1970 State of the Union address, "We can no longer afford to consider air and water common property, free to be abused by anyone without regard to the consequences. Instead, we should begin now to treat them as scarce resources, which we are no freer to contaminate than we are free to throw garbage into our neighbor's yards."

A new study shows protecting nature has bigger economic benefit than exploiting it (<https://bit.ly/31urjc8>).

Shouldn't we know what POISONS are being sprayed in our county and state? Many of these toxic plastics and chemicals need to be banned from our county, state, and world. Let's start at home in Indian River County and stop purchasing and using them. Let's protest the spraying of our canals and parks with these chemicals immediately. Use cultural, biological and mechanical means and employ people, not chemicals. Let's work together to save our lovely county.

Our 2021 Audubon Heroes!



Bonnie Swanson



Steve Goff



George Glenn



Diane Goldberg



Bruce Sabol



Peter Hinck



Mike Winikoff



Beth Powell



Graham Cox



Dee Fairbanks



Barbara Riebe



Our Audubon volunteers and county citizens are essential in helping our community become aware of environmental issues and advocating for preserving and protecting our environment for marine life, animals (including humans) and plants to thrive. Annually we want to thank you and recognize special persons who have taken outstanding steps! With just a few part-time staff, our volunteers make all our events happen, including, classes and workshops, birding field trips, student programs, and grant writing for funding. They welcomed visitors and continued our ongoing projects at Audubon House. At our annual meeting on March 15, 2021, Audubon recognized special outstanding contributions individuals have made to our chapter and our community. These awards highlight folks and inspire us all to work together to improve our quality of life and make Indian River County a sustainable, environmentally, and friendly place to live.

Special Service Award to Bonnie Swanson For Outstanding efforts to give students an outdoors experience and her leadership and vision in making Pelican Island Elementary an Environmental Sciences School.

Board Member of the Year Award to Steve Goff for a Fantastic job as Treasurer keeping our books, preparing budgets for the Board and many grant applications. Steve also leads adventurous field trips.

Maggy Bowman/Conservationist of the Year Award to George Glenn, Jr., our Corresponding Secretary for doing so many things including fully supporting full appropriation for Florida Forever, stopping a bad Sebastian City annexation, strategizing on stopping M-Cores, and leading an excellent field trip to our premier Ft. Drum Marsh Conservation Area.

Environmental Educator Award to Diane Goldberg for demonstrating that if you plant native plants no HOA, city, or county governing body can have them removed. It took her going to court when Port St. Lucie's Neighborhood Services Department cited her yard for having "high grass and weeds over 12 inches" tall, a violation of city codes. The Judge ruled: "Port St. Lucie homeowner's 'high grass and weeds' are Florida-friendly flowers and legal!" Seek approval from your HOA, list what you are planting where, and that it is legal!

Environmental Citizen Award to Bruce Sabol for taking the initiative, investigating the lead in old paint flaking off the St. Sebastian River railroad bridge. Result? He got the FDEP to make Florida East Coast RR finally take this peeling lead paint seriously and realize there is a threat to our health and children's intellectual growth.

Environmental Citizen Award to Peter Hinck for promoting healthy water environments. See his YouTube video *The Tale Of Two Lakes* comparing two Sebastian ponds with and without a herbicide treatment. Pete has posted 39 YouTube videos on local lagoon issues., with a focus on the seagrass losses and their effects on the clams and Manatees in the Lagoon.

Conservation Journalist Award to Mike Winikoff for the important work he has done writing in the Hometown News, informing our citizens of important environmental issues in our county.

Environmental Landscaping Award to Beth Powell, Asst. Director - Parks & Conservation Resources, Indian River County, for upgrading IRC's parks and conservation lands with native plants, removing invasives, and installing new signage. She has made informative videos on different IRC protected habitats.

President's Award to Dr. Graham Cox for writing outstanding grants that help fund our Audubon Advocates after-school and other education projects and also successful bringing in other grants essential to our Tree and Native Plant distribution, developing Community Indicators, and keeping us informed on environmental issues reported in an array of credible web sites.

Volunteer of the Year Award to Barbara Riebe for many years of doing a terrific job supervising and working in our native gardens & plant nursery.

Special Recognition Award to Dee Fairbanks for Leading the South Brevard Christmas Bird Count for 9 years. This is the best local data showing Climate Change is occurring now and is hurting us, our wildlife and natural habitats.



Honey Bee (*Apis sp.*) on Beggar's Tick (*Bidens pilosa*)



Eastern Black Racer (*Coluber constrictor*)

Photos by Sarah Tolve/USFWS.

Pelican Island Refuge Highlight

National Wildlife Refuge | Florida

by Eddie Perri (Refuge Ranger) and Aleksandra Simmons (SCA Intern)

Here at Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge we are welcoming spring with open arms and smiling faces. Not only is our staff reveling in the changing seasons, but more importantly our resident flora and fauna. While many of our visitors have their eyes to the sky with the hopes of spotting a pelican or one of our other many feathered friends, the ground beneath their feet is awakening from a winter's slumber.

The wildflowers along our Centennial Trail and the native plants in our Butterfly Garden have begun to bloom showing off their beautiful colors and strong, vibrant scents. Butterflies of many kinds are emerging, fluttering around our walking trails, while the buzz of bees and other insects is audible as they go about their business in the bushes, shrubs, and flowers that are blooming around the Refuge.

Aside from the plants, wildflowers, and murmuring insects, walks on our trail system this time of year will also offer you a glimpse, if only for a second, at some of the fascinating reptiles that call Pelican Island NWR home. Basking in the morning sun is a common thermoregulatory behavior for many diurnal reptiles. These cold-blooded animals use the morning sun's warmth to raise their body temperature. On a recent walk on our Wildlife Trail we spotted two glass lizards (*Ophisaurus sp.*), three eastern black racers (*Coluber constrictor*), and a small ring-necked snake (*Diadophis punctatus*). Over 60 species of reptiles, 30 of which are snakes, have been documented in Indian River County with the most often seen being the eastern black racer. These reptiles feed on a wide variety of prey including insects, lizards, rodents, amphibians, birds, and other snakes and they in turn are preyed upon by a number of predatory birds, mammals, and reptiles. Eastern black racers flee when approached, and can often be seen climbing small trees and shrubs. On your next visit to Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge be sure to not only stare high in the sky, but also down at the ground as many things beneath your feet will surprise and excite you!

Currently our lagoon is no longer considered fishable or swimmable by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection- A threat to our health as well as to its marine inhabitants.

by Jean Catchpole

A healthy lagoon is needed to support our boating and fishing industries and our property values. The recreational and aesthetic values of a healthy lagoon are immeasurable. It is no secret that restoring our lagoon will cost money, but what will be the cost if we do nothing?

The City of Vero Beach is considering the formation of a City Stormwater Utility to fund water quality improvement projects that will reduce toxic run off to our lagoon and the ocean. It is important to hold and slow stormwater runoff to allow aquifer recharge and filtration of pollutants. A City stormwater utility would raise dedicated funds through a fee based on the impervious area of a property and assessed on all properties. Those dedicated funds will enable the City to qualify for matching cost share grants from Federal and State agencies such as the St. Johns Water Management District and would leverage City funds to plan and execute needed stormwater projects. Over 170 municipalities in Florida already have operating stormwater utilities, including our neighboring communities. It is estimated that the fee for the average homeowner would be about \$5 per month, less than the cost of a Big Mac meal or a Starbucks Latte. For larger properties there would be an incentive to reduce their fee by retaining more run off on their property.

The new utility will be the subject of a City Council workshop on April 27th at 9:30 am. PIAS, Clean Water Coalition and the Indian River Neighborhood Association ask you to support their campaign for a City Stormwater Utility by either sending a letter of endorsement to the City Council or signing the petition referenced here. (www.bit.ly/COVBSWU)

Volunteers Needed!

Visit

PelicanIslandAudubon.org to view the list of volunteer positions. Fill out the form online and let us know what you are interested in.

Working together we can do great things for the environment!

Volunteer opportunities include:

- #1 - Office help, Newsletter: fold, stuff envelopes,
- #2 - Pullers: Join the potato pullers: (invasive species)
- #3 - Audubon House Maintenance- classroom, bathrooms, breezeway
- #4 - Landscaping, Nursery, Trees for Life Project, repotting plants
- #5 - Field Trip Leader
- #6 - Fundraising, Grant Writing
- #7 - Publicity
- #8 - Trail Maintenance

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Still Learning

by Linda Chancellor

Back in September the Peligram announced it would be presenting its monthly meeting via Zoom. Zoom? Sure, I had heard of it and quite a few friends said they loved using it. I was not excited about learning to use Zoom as I get easily frustrated with my computer. But I didn't want to miss the meetings! It turned out to be a lot easier than I had anticipated. I followed the instructions written in the September Peligram to download Zoom, to my computer, and then went to the Pelican Island Audubon Society website to register for the September meeting. The night of the meeting I clicked on the link in my email to join the meeting. Dr. Baker lead the meeting using the regular business agenda. The program "Biological Controls of Invasive Plants" was excellent. I had really wanted to see the October program "What Do Alligators And Crocodiles Tell Us About the Health of the Everglades" but I missed the date. When I registered for the November's meeting and program "Birds of Cuba" I found that all the monthly meetings had been recorded and I could view them or review them whenever I chose. Although I feel more comfortable now using Zoom I know there is more I need to learn about it. I still am not sure if they can see or hear me and I have not yet typed a question in the Chat box for the speaker to answer. I was beginning to like this new technology! In the months that followed I would have more virtual experiences. My doctor uses a similar program for her appointments. Since our family would not be together this Christmas my daughter set up a Zoom meeting so all of us could gather for several hours of laughter and opening presents. I do miss attending the meetings in person and visiting with friends while enjoying juice and cookies but I am delighted I have learned to use Zoom. Give it a try.

Register for Pelican Island Audubon's upcoming meetings at:

www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org

Field Trip - April 20, 2021 - Tuesday - 7:00AM - Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area - Guide: Ricky Ray - Much of the birding will be from our cars but we plan to hike three miles or so. Birds of interest are Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Bachman's Sparrow, various waterbirds, Snail Kite, and Red-headed Woodpecker. Registration required at PelicanIslandAudubon.org.

More Trees for Life/Plants for Birds Available thanks to our fantastic volunteers!

We have amazing volunteers who come out Sundays, Wednesday, or Fridays from 9 am-noon to enjoy the fun of gardening, watering and potting plants: Barbara Riebe, Ed McCool, Steve Palmquist, Ricky Ray, Hadi Shalhoub, Rondalyn Reeser, Vin Gemmiti, Kathy Cunningham, Sandy Perri, and others. They help prepare plants we have given away or sold, now over 6,568 native plants and trees. You can come these times to pick up a free tree (Southern Live Oak, Mahogany, Bald Cypress) and for \$5 a pot of Buttonbush, Dahoon Holly, Gallberry/Inkberry, Long-leaf Pine, Myrtle Oak, Saltbush, Sand Live Oak, Sand Pine, Slash Pine, Walter's Viburnum, Wax Myrtle, and 26 other native vines, flowers, ground covers, palms, shrubs. These will all help restore our natural environment and wildlife, essential for our enjoyment and survival. View what is available at www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org



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April 19, 2021 7:00 PM General Meeting on Zoom: It's Purple Martin Time! with Dr. Anna Forsman

The April 19, 2021 Pelican Island Audubon Society general meeting starting at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom features Dr. Anna Forsman presenting a program about Purple Martins. As a Floridian, it is likely that you have had the chance to enjoy the friendly chattering of purple martins. Perhaps you may even be, or know someone who is, a purple martin landlord, providing safe and dependable housing for these swallows. Purple martins breed across much of the United States, including Florida, and then migrate southward to winter in South America.



with humans in North America and how scientists and citizens continue to interact with these birds to promote their conservation and greater understanding of their biology and ecology. Dr. Forsman will also talk about how her lab is using genomic techniques (and bird poop) to figure out what types of insects the martins are eating and to characterize the microbial communities living in the guts of these swallows. Join us for Purple Martin Time!

Dr. Anna Forsman is a research scientist in the Department of Biology and the Genomics & Bioinformatics Cluster at UCF. Prior to joining UCF in 2016, Dr. Forsman completed her Ph.D. work in the Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology and the Lab of Ornithology at Cornell University. Dr. Forsman is broadly interested in the relationships between wild birds and the microorganisms that live in, on, and around them (ex. the gut microbiome). She is particularly interested in how bacterial communities in the environment interact with the avian immune system and how these interactions influence immune system development and function and overall bird health. At UCF, Dr. Forsman teaches courses in ornithology and genomics.

As of spring 2020, the University of Central Florida (UCF) has become a hotspot for seeing nesting purple martins in action! With the help of enthusiastic UCF students, Dr. Anna Forsman of UCF Biology, has established the UCF Purple Martin Project, which supplies over 140 nesting gourds for these fascinating birds. During this seminar, Dr. Forsman will talk about the history of the special relationship that purple martins have developed

Register for the meeting at PelicanIslandAudubon.org

Wills and Living Trusts

Many people like to leave a gift to charity in their will or revocable trust, because it is a way to plan for a significant contribution, even if you feel that the time is not right for one today. A charitable gift through your will or trust can factor in your current lifestyle and commitments, and at the same time, ensure future support for Pelican Island Audubon and the birds you value.

Including a Bequest in Your Will or Trust

The language below provides a template for including a gift to Pelican Island Audubon in your will. Please contact Pelican Island Audubon for more information. You may also wish to consult with your attorney.

How to Say It

I bequeath _____
(*dollar amount or percent of estate*) to the Pelican Island Audubon Society, Inc., a not-for-profit organization, with its principal offices located at 195 9th Street SE (Oslo Road), Vero Beach, FL 32961, for its ongoing environmental conservation and education purposes.
Tax ID# 59-6197617.

Go Green!

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Pelican Island Audubon Society Membership Form

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CITY, STATE ZIP	\$_____ contribution
_____	\$_____ TOTAL
E-MAIL	Please mail this completed form with a check made out to: Pelican Island Audubon Society P.O. Box 1833 Vero Beach, FL 32961

Or join online using a credit card at www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org