



Peligrum

December
2024



Crested Caracaras by Ricky Ray.

Great Blue Heron by Bob Montanaro.



RiverKidz is a nature club that meets twice a month for the WHOLE family to enjoy. Our meetups consist of guest speakers, field trips, educational activities, service activities, kayaking, and more! If you ever wanted to be involved in helping your environment or you just want to explore the outdoors more, this is the group to join. For more info, email piaudubonedu@gmail.com

- 12/14 - Manatee presentation & Mobile Touch Tank with Elyse from Manatee Center
- 12/28 - Kayaking at Round Island
- 1/11 - All About Reptiles
- 1/25 - Letter writing workshop (we will be learning how to write letters to local government to express issues with environmental topics)

Our mission: is to speak out, get involved, and raise awareness because we believe KidZ should have a voice in the future of the Indian River Lagoon. A nature club sponsored by Pelican Island Audubon Society and Clean Water Coalition.

FIELD TRIPS

Space is limited. Registration is required.
For more information & to register visit
PelicanIslandAudubon.org

- Dec 8 Kayaking at Turkey Creek Sanctuary with Steve Goff
- Dec 11 Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) with Dick & Lorna Thibeault
- Jan 16 T.M. Goodwin Wildlife Management Area (WMA) & Broadmoor with Becky Loftus and Ann Esmas
- Jan 19 Bicycle tour of T.M. Goodwin WMA & Broadmoor with Steve Goff
- Jan 26 Orlando Wetlands Park with Bill & Becky Loftus
- Jan 30 Capt. Forster Hammock Preserve with Wes & Susan Lovelace
- Feb 6 Indrio Savannahs Preserve with Nick Polge
- Feb 8 Pelican Island NWR with Will Johnson
- Feb 12 Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge with Becky Loftus and Ann Esmas
- March 18 Sebastian Inlet State Park with Steve Palmquist

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.

Executive Director **Donna Halleran**
Environmental Educator **Jennifer Satterly**
Office Manager **Bob Montanaro**

Officers & Directors

Officers
Board Chair **Richard H. Baker, Ph.D.**
1st Vice-Chair **Bill Halliday**

2nd Vice-Chair **Steve Palmquist**
Recording Secretary **Darlene Halliday**
Corresponding Secretary **OPEN**
Treasurer **Steve Goff**
Elected Directors:
Albert Alley, M.D. '26
Graham Cox, Ph.D. '26
Susan Lovelace '25
Bill Loftus, Ph.D. '27
Ricky Ray '25
Bonnie Swanson '27
Appointed Board Members:
Judy Davis
Nancy Irvin
Nick Polge

Attention!!
Beginning Wednesday,
October 2nd, the Audubon
House Native Plant Nursery
will be open on
Monday-Wednesday-Saturday
9AM - 11AM
Audubon House
195 9th Street SE (Oslo Road), Vero Beach

The Nursery will no longer
be open on Sundays.

Family Arts & Crafts Night

Friday, Dec., 20, 2024
6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
FREE EVENT



Pelican Island Audubon Society welcomes you to a night of arts and crafts to make a gift for yourself or a family member. Free Event, but you must register to attend. Limited space available. Kidz of all ages. Children under fifth grade need to be accompanied by an adult. Paint and glue may be used, so dress accordingly.

Register at www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org

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.

Audubon House
195 9th Street SE (Oslo Rd.), Vero Beach
M - F | 9AM - 1PM
Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 1833, Vero Beach, FL 32961
Phone: 772-567-3520
E-Mail: piaudubon@yahoo.com
Website:
www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org

Is Chicken Poop heading to Blue Cypress Lake and the St. Johns River?

My Hoot



Richard H. Baker, Ph.D.

Besides golf courses, pickleball courts, and hotels being proposed for our state parks without any warning, we now find a new Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) chicken farm housing a possible 120,000 chickens being built by Morning Star Farms on the south side of SR 60 in Indian River County (IRC) about 5 miles from our beautiful Blue Cypress Lake without any Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) or Indian River County permits. This farm is between Padgett Branch Creek and Ft. Drum Marsh, both feeding into Blue Cypress Lake. This lake is the headwaters of the St. Johns River, the longest and most significant river for commercial and recreational activities in Florida, flowing 310 miles north through 12 counties to Jacksonville and into the Atlantic Ocean.

Fortunately, St. Johns Riverkeeper Lisa Rineman, Clean Water Coalition, Indian River Neighborhood Association, Space Coast Audubon, Pelican Island Audubon, and concerned citizens have joined in

requesting some answers about how this could happen (See Rebecca Vecera's article in this issue). What loophole will FDEP come up with for Morning Star Farm to continue the project? Is this what we want to happen? Our political leaders and FDEP must protect us, our animals, and the wetlands, rivers, lagoons, forests, oceans, and air on which we all depend if we are to survive. Politicians and bureaucrats cannot ignore science. The Earth is not flat, and the sun does not circle the Earth.

This reminds me that, in 2018, IRC was the third highest county in Florida, with the most acreage receiving solid human-sewage poop (sometimes called Biosolids) from other counties like Miami/Dade and Broward. Those counties paid ranchers to apply truckloads of biosolids to their fields on four local properties: Corrigan Ranch, Flying L Ranch, Ox Creek Ranch, and Pressley Ranch, adjacent to our beautiful Blue Cypress Lake with lots of fish and one of the largest populations of breeding ospreys in the world. These Biosolid deposits produced huge Blue-green Algae blooms in the lake. This "Alga" is actually a cyanobacteria that produces an airborne microcystic toxin that can cause ALS, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's diseases by inhaling it or by eating fish and crabs engulfed in it.

Fortunately, our County Commission stopped the spreading of this poop on IRC farmlands and has banned biosolids from being deposited in IRC. However, this poop is now going to other counties north of us. IRC deposits waste from our sewage plants in our mountainous landfills. This type of Biosolid disposal also needs to be resolved, as our own landfills and others around the state are filling up. Gary Roderick points out that a better way to dispose of biosolids is to build a facility to burn them, producing electricity and phosphorus-rich ash that can be safely sold outside Florida where needed.

We are concerned about chicken waste and carcasses and how Morning Star was able to construct the 15 chicken houses, each housing up to 8,000 chickens without permits! Totaling 120,000 Chickens!!! CAFOs like this chicken farm must be required to get FDEP permits, and we citizens must ensure that this happens. We are looking into this farm to learn what is being done to prevent runoff and other pollution. And yes, we need full sewage for all.

Let's work together so that this chicken farm will not do similar damage to Blue Cypress Lake as did South Florida's poop deposits. Even after 6 years since human poop was stopped, Cyanobacteria blooms still occur in Blue Cypress Lake.



Biosolids being dumped on Pressley Ranch.



Algae bloom on Blue Cypress Lake.

SAVE THE DATE!

6th Transforming Landscapes for a Sustainable Future Conference

Saturday, January 18, 2025 at the Emerson Center, 1590 27th Avenue, Vero Beach
8:00AM - 4:30AM

- Speakers
- Native Plant Sale
- Includes lunch

More information plus ticket sales coming soon to PelicanIslandAudubon.org

Audubon Advocates November Adventures

by Environmental Educator Jennifer Satterly



It has been a busy month here at the Audubon House with our Audubon Advocates! We have explored bloodsuckers, how to sketch a bird, how to use less plastics, native plants and habitats, scrub jays and all about stormwater and how it affects our Indian River Lagoon. These students have been working hard! Check out what our Advocates are saying about their experience in the program so far.

Just a few of our favorite things!

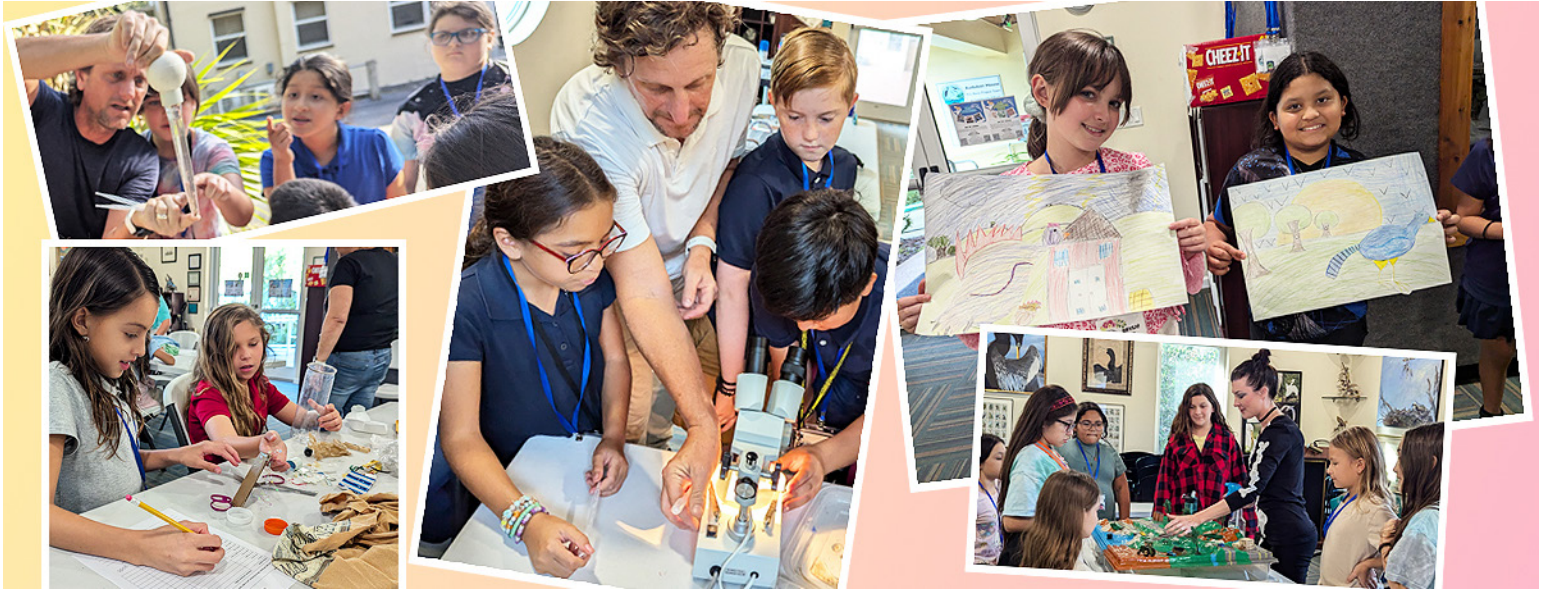
“My favorite thing is the fun and adventures” - Easton

“My favorite thing is how I get to be with my friends and explore and learn about nature.” - Anabelle C.

“My favorite thing is exploring and helping the environment.” - Ariday

“My favorite thing is being in nature and the snacks!” - Lily

“My favorite thing has been photography” - Nicoli



Things we've learned this month!

“About the many types of trash in the Indian River Lagoon.” - Brylie

“Some wildfires are good for the ecosystem” - Lucas

“Honey is bee throw up!” - James

“What a mosquito pupa looks like up close.” - Jasmine

“How important the earth is!” - Desirae



You are invited to the Audubon Advocate Graduation!

Our Audubon Advocates classes will be graduating December 9th through the 12th. If you would like to see what these kids have learned, come join us! Presentations start at 6pm and we will be wrapping up at 7pm.

She Talks To Fish! Event

By Donna Halleran
Executive Director

On Friday afternoon, November 15th, Vero Beach Elementary School art students and Audubon Advocates received a surprise visit from co-authors Brian Hester and Barbara Beam. Beam read a page from their book, *She Talks to Fish!* Then, Hester taught the students to draw a Praying mantis named Langston. It was an exciting visit for the students and adults alike.

Friday Evening: Pelican Island Audubon Society welcomed the public and members to meet avid fly fisherman Brian Hester and co-author Barbara Beam as their newly released book, *She Talks to Fish*, premiered!

The Event was a fundraiser for the Audubon Advocates, a 14-week afterschool science outdoor nature program for under-represented, Title 1 Indian River County elementary schools. The reception was enjoyed with a hardy baked potato bar, chili, meatballs, appetizers, beer, wine, and other goodies.

The entertainment was Brian creating a live painting that will be auctioned at the Pelican Island Audubon Society's 60th Anniversary "Under the Stars" gala on April 12, 2025. (SAVE THE DATE) Hester completed the painting in one hour! Brian, a professional artist and visual arts teacher for three decades, delighted attendees. The evening closed with Barbara and Brian reading and signing their book.

The book tells the coming-of-age story of a young woman whose obsession with fly fishing in the North Carolina mountains helped her confront bigotry, stereotypes, and even death with remarkable perseverance. Audubon has a few copies left for purchase, and they make great holiday gifts.

Mark your calendars, attend the 60th anniversary gala, and help support the Audubon programs. Since 1964, it has been the voice of conservation in Indian River County.

A Big thank you to the Vero Beach Art Club the easel loan and paint donation.



Tram Tours of Pelican Island NWR

Registration is open for the 2025 wildlife tours at Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge. Free tram tours are offered every Wednesday from 8-10 a.m., beginning January 8 through April 30. Tour guides will share information about the history of Pelican Island - the nation's first wildlife refuge - and the many species of birds and other wildlife found at the refuge. Reservations are required because of limited space. Please call (772) 581-5557, leave your name and phone number and a refuge volunteer will contact you to schedule a tour.



The Great Air Potato Round-Up
Pelican Island Audubon Society and City of Sebastian
Saturday, February 8, 2025
8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.



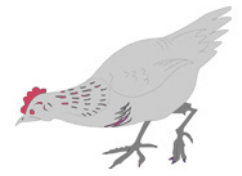
air potato
Dioscorea bulbifera
Photo by Vic Ramey
© 1999 University of Florida

We are looking for members, teams, civic groups, school groups, family groups, individuals, and interested parties to participate in eradicating invasive air potatoes at Stormwater Park, Engler Road, Sebastian. More information to come! Prizes will be given for the smallest, largest, oddest, heaviest, lightest air potatoes! Work for an hour or for the day.

More information to come.

Unpermitted, High-Density Chicken Facility Threatens Our Headwaters

Clean Water Advocates Unite in Indian River County to Protect the Upper Basin of the St. Johns River



By Rebecca Vecera

Communications Director, St. Johns Riverkeeper

Clean water advocates united on Thursday over growing concerns regarding an unpermitted high-density chicken facility under construction in the headwaters of the St. Johns River in West Indian River County.

Lisa Rinaman, the St. Johns Riverkeeper, and Donna Halleran, Executive Director, and Richard Baker, Board Chairman of Pelican Island Audubon Society, convened with concerned citizens, area residents, experts, and allied groups including the Clean Water Coalition of Indian River County, Indian River Neighborhood Association, and Space Coast Audubon Society.

Without the required protections, this unpermitted concentrated agricultural feeding operation (CAFO) will exacerbate high levels of toxic-algae-producing nutrient pollution and fecal bacteria in the headwaters of the St. Johns that are already

exceeding acceptable levels of pollution.

A History of Pollution

For years, South Florida has been dumping their sewage sludge (AKA biosolids) on land in the upper basin of the St. Johns after this harmful practice was outlawed in the Everglades watershed. Water quality was drastically diminished as a result – especially in Blue Cypress Lake in West Indian River County – until the Indian River County Commission passed a moratorium prohibiting the land disposal of sewage sludge within the county.

Now, this high-density chicken facility is under construction just upstream from Blue Cypress Lake without the protective measures that are required by Florida Law.

“Indian River County Commissioners worked hard to pass protective regulations to stop the spread of Biosolids (human poop) due to toxic algae blooms in Blue Cypress Lake” stated Richard Baker.

Chicken CAFOs like this one are known to be harmful to downstream waterways. Chicken waste contains nitrogen, phosphorous, antibiotics, and hormones. That is why Florida Law requires these facilities to be permitted prior to their construction and reasonable assurances must be met.

“It is simply unacceptable to allow such a potentially damaging operation to undermine the health of the St. Johns at its very source,” stated Lisa Rinaman.

Our citizen coalition urgently asks the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to necessitate the protective permits and ensure that reasonable assurances are met as required by law. We also request full transparency and notification of the fulfillment of FDEP’s regulatory activation and oversight.



HURRICANE SEASON IS OVER!

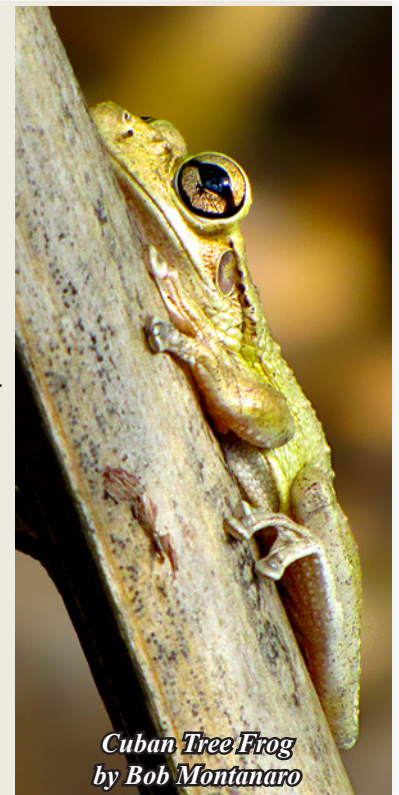
by Linda Chancellor

FINALLY I can remove the last of the hurricane shutters! In June, the shutters go up if we are planning on leaving town or there is threat of an impending storm. We have several different types of shutters to install which takes a fair amount of time. Some of them are harder to put up so we tend to leave those in place most of the summer. All of the shutters are finally removed and stored away November 30th – the official end of Hurricane season. But there comes a time, each summer, when I feel the strong “need” to have more light in the house! I remove some of the more difficult shutters but leave them on

the porch to be reinstalled if necessary. The small aluminum shutters covering the family room windows are the first to come down so I can see into my tropical backyard. When removing these shutters I always have been careful to check for wasp nests and Cuban Tree Frogs. I don’t understand how they can get behind the shutters when the shutters fit tight against the windows. This year I did not find any frogs behind the family room shutters but I discovered several when I removed the shutters from the spare bedroom window. They remind me of Gollum, the creature from Lord of the Rings. They have very large eyes, ghostly pale green skin

and spindly legs. I always use my gloved hand to dislodge them from the window and the back of the shutters. Instead of falling to the ground one jumped and landed on my bare neck. I flinched and yelped as I could feel his sticky toe pads. I quickly swiped, at my neck, to knock him away. I thought to myself only six more months before I have to put these shutters up again!

FYI: Cuban Tree frogs are considered an invasive species in Florida. According to IFAS they prey on five different species of native frogs, native tree frogs, lizards and toads. Their toe pads can stick to any surface to the soft, rubbery cells infused with mucus.



Cuban Tree Frog
by Bob Montanaro

Poison in the Indian River Lagoon:

Immediate treatment is needed or the patient will die

by Michael Walther, M.S., P.E.

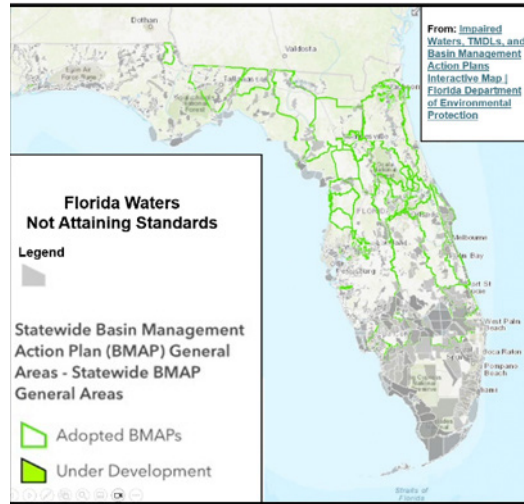


Intense development around the Lagoon has led to its poisoning. Each person in IRC produces about 100 gallons of wastewater on

average every day. Winter visitors add to that total each year. Every time we flush the toilet, we release nutrient-rich water into our environment – whether we have a septic tank or connect to a public wastewater system. To those nutrients we add pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, cleaning agents and any number of other personal and household chemicals that pass directly through the sewage-treatment facilities. Those facilities are not designed to remove the ever-growing burden of chemical inputs from modern society.

Every time we fertilize our yard, we're increasing pollution of the Lagoon, as excessive nutrients flow into groundwater and canals into the Lagoon. A recent Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute study estimates Lagoon nitrogen loading averages about 21 percent from residential fertilizers and 79 percent from septic systems. When we drive our car, the emissions eventually fall back to the earth where they are transported by stormwater runoff and groundwater into the Lagoon. In essence, we all poison our environment through the cumulative

impact of the poisons we collectively contribute to air and water resources. In agriculture, farmers have commonly espoused that more fertilizer produces more yield. Fertilizer overuse sends excess nutrients into Florida's waterways, harming ecosystems and fueling algal blooms.



Increasing inputs of nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) in aquatic systems are primary contributors to water-quality decline across Florida including the Indian River Lagoon. In the Lagoon, a combination of improperly treated sewage, leaking septic systems, fertilizers, and stormwater runoff has led to unhealthy water conditions for all forms of aquatic life and humans too.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) has designated impaired waters in Florida

that do not meet Florida's Surface Water Quality Standards - established to define waters safe for swimming and fishing. As reflected in the Figure, this designation applies to the Lagoon and much of Florida's surface waters. These designations have led to the establishment of numerous Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs) intended as a path to restore water quality via local government actions.

Seagrass, fishes, dolphins, and manatees represent Lagoon organisms that are indicators of the Lagoon's overall health. As a result of Lagoon poisoning, those indicators have declined.

Seagrass is the key ecological indicator of Lagoon health. Excessive nutrients poison the Lagoon and prompt algal blooms that cloud Lagoon waters, and by shading the Lagoon bottom, drive the loss of seagrass beds. In addition, glyphosate-based herbicides, such as Roundup, also affect seagrass beds. These herbicides have been used for 50 years in modern agriculture and food production, lawn care, gardening, and more. However, after its introduction into the hydrologic cycle, glyphosate has been found to exist in the Lagoon and have a detrimental effect on seagrass. ORCA measured glyphosate in water samples collected at 42 sites – in Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River, and Brevard Counties - over five consecutive years (2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023). Almost every sample had a measurable trace of glyphosate.

2024 Audubon Florida Assembly

by Donna Halleran, Executive Director

Dr. Richard Baker, our spouses, and I attended the 2024 Audubon Florida Assembly in Daytona Beach from November 7 to 9, 2024. Paul Gray, PhD, Everglades science coordinator, opened the conference with the history of the plume trade and the senseless slaughter of birds before the advent of the Christmas Bird Count. Dr. Gray traced the origins of Audubon and the conservation movement.

There were three learning sessions: Building Conservation Momentum through Community Building, Addressing Flooding with Local Solutions: An Advocates How-to, and Re-envisioning Coastal Recovery with More Frequent Storms. Florida residents face many environmental challenges, including available freshwater, green space, infrastructure, coastal challenges, habitat loss, and inland flood risks. Local

chapters in Florida face many challenges ahead, but if we all do our part, we can stem the tide.

Paul and I went on a pre-conference outing to Lyonia Preserve. The preserve, named after the scrub plant Rusty Lyonia, is 360-acres of restored Florida scrub habitat in Deltona, Florida. It has white sand trails, hills, and three different trail lengths. The preserve supports numerous families of scrub jays and other rare, scrub-dependent flora and fauna. The Lyonia Environmental Center offers a unique insight into fragile ecosystems. It has impressive displays and a wall of local photos from its members' photography club. After the new year, this will be a destination for van excursions. If you are interested, let me know.

During the roundtable gathering, the 44-chapter presidents and leaders were able to brag about our chapters' work and their plans for the upcoming year. We have several new colleagues with

different and creative ideas to encourage members to get involved, learn more about the issues, and take action.

Executive Director Julie Wraithmell discussed the controversial proposal to build golf courses and the attempted takeover of Jonathan Dickinson State Park. Senator Gayle Harrell received the Teddy Roosevelt Award for her work in helping to derail these attempts. During the Friday night banquet, Julie also emceed a retrospective of Audubon's accomplishments in Florida.

There are several other reasons to attend the yearly assembly, and possibly next year you may be interested in attending next year. We encourage all members to take part.



Adopt an Advocate! Please help support our 14-week outdoor science, after-school Audubon Advocates program, which focuses each year on 5th graders from four underserved elementary schools.

Goal: Improve science vocabulary, mental health, and opportunities for under-represented minorities and girls to be comfortable outdoors and become Environmental Advocates for Indian River County.

Focus: Introduce students to outdoor, hands-on Lagoon science, help them understand the interconnectedness of life and the value of all native species, and help them be good stewards of the environment.

The environmental educator takes students outdoors into nature to kayak, photograph, sketch, meet a variety of scientists in the field, familiarize themselves with scientific methods, collect specimens, document their

experiences, and educate others at school and their parents, family, and friends. While learning “leave no trace & earth manners.”

Results: Educated, healthier, empowered students; new aspirations and possibilities for underrepresented students; and, over time, a healthier Lagoon.

It will be transformative for the students, their parents, our community, and our environment—and for you as a sponsor!

Please Adopt an Advocate: Do Something Extraordinary! \$500 Supports One 5th Grader per term, or consider giving what you can.

Help fund one or more students to attend our 14-week after-school program at Audubon House. Thank you!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

My check is enclosed. Make check payable to Pelican Island Audubon Society, or donate online at PelicanIslandAudubon.org

1 Student \$500 any amount

(Please check) if you would like an update on your sponsored student.

Pelican Island Audubon Society is looking for volunteers to help in the following areas:

- **Native Gardens – Help watering plants and/or selling plants**
- **Bird Walks – Lead walks - Kayak Tours – Lead tours**
- **Outreach – Help with events such as Festivals, Christmas Party, Landscape Conference, help with movie nights, greeting people at monthly meetings**
- **Teaching a course of interest**

If you have any questions or the time to help with any of the above, please contact Lorna Thibeault at piasvolunteer@gmail.com or (203) 687-7156.

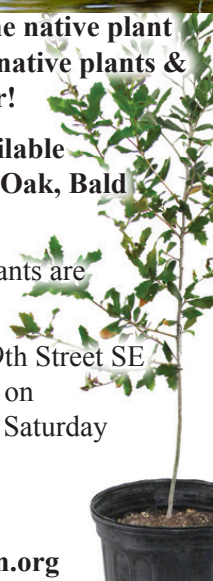
Stop by and browse the native plant nursery - over 20,600 native plants & trees distributed so far!

Free Native Trees Available in 1 gallon pots - Live Oak, Bald Cypress, Mahogany

A selection of native plants are available at low prices.

Audubon House - 195 9th Street SE (Oslo Rd), Vero Beach, on Monday - Wednesday - Saturday from 9AM to 11AM

More at PelicanIslandAudubon.org



Pelican Island Audubon Society Membership Form

Enclosed is my:

NAME _____ \$ _____ \$30 for annual membership

ADDRESS _____ \$ _____ \$35 for family membership

CITY, STATE ZIP _____ \$ _____ \$100 Scrub-Jay sustaining membership

E-MAIL _____ \$ _____ \$200 Osprey sustaining membership

_____ \$ _____ contribution

_____ \$ _____ TOTAL

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