

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](http://www.pelicanislandaudubon.org)

Our 44rd Year Vol. 44 No. 5 May 2008

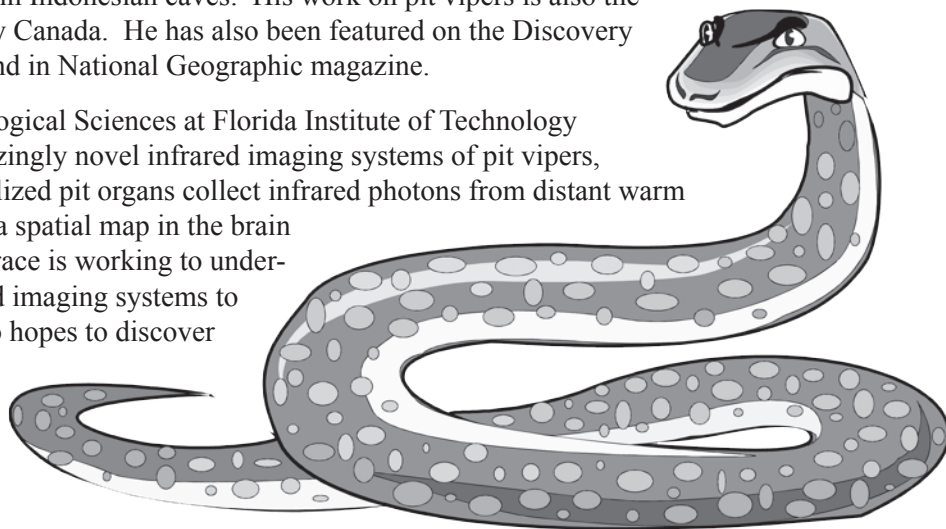
*Our Mission: To preserve and protect the animals, plants, and natural communities in Indian River County through advocacy, education, and public awareness.*

## How Snakes Find and Capture their Prey-- The Evolution of Function and Beauty

by Dr. Michael Grace - May 19, 2008 - Vero Beach Community Center

Biologist Michael Grace will present a program on Snakes starting at 7:30 p.m. for the May 19, 2008 general meeting in the Vero Beach Community Center, 2266 14th Avenue. Dr. Grace was featured in a recent National Geographic Television program entitled "Dangerous Encounters: Snake Bite" with host Brady Barr; they filmed experiments aimed at understanding how pythons survive deep in Indonesian caves. His work on pit vipers is also the subject of a current segment on Discovery Canada. He has also been featured on the Discovery Channel, The Learning Channel, CNN, and in National Geographic magazine.

Dr. Grace, an Associate Professor of Biological Sciences at Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne, has been studying the amazingly novel infrared imaging systems of pit vipers, pythons and boas. In these snakes, specialized pit organs collect infrared photons from distant warm objects and convert this information into a spatial map in the brain (much like the way vision works). Dr. Grace is working to understand how these animals use their infrared imaging systems to capture prey and avoid predators, but also hopes to discover the details about how this system works and apply what is found to the development of better artificial infrared sensors. *Light refreshments will be served following the program.*



## May Field Trips

Call  
772-567-3520  
to make  
reservations

**May 10, 2008—Forster's Preserve in Wabasso.** Meet in Forster's parking lot at 8:00am. Directions: US 1 to CR 510, East to Jungle Trail, South to Forster's Preserve. Leader: Rick Lucas

**May 24, 2008—Kissimmee Prairie Preserve SP.** Carpoolers meet at back of Wendy's on SR 60 east of I-95 at 6:20am. We will leave Wendy's at 6:30am. Directions: I-95 South to CR 68 in Fort Pierce (Orange Ave), West to US441, North to CR724 (1mile). Head west and follow the signs to the preserve (18 miles).

**June 5, 2008—T.M. Goodwin in Fellsmere.** Meet at Stick Marsh parking lot at 8am. Please note that this is a Thursday trip as that is the day the gate is open for the public. Directions: I-95 to CR 512 West to Broadway (in Fellsmere) North (to end) West to Babcock North to C-54 Canal. Take dirt road on north side of canal west several miles to Stick Marsh.

# GRAND HARBOR AUDUBON RESTORES GLOW TO SANCTUARY – GAINS STRONG MEMBERSHIP

Grand Harbor traces its eco pride back some 20 years. When first planned as a residential golf community, its founders determined that the grounds would be a congenial place for both people and wildlife – including flora and fauna.

Audubon stalwarts Jens Tripson and Janice Broda were among many local authorities who played a role in plotting the ponds, estuaries and coves that now cover a thousand acres along Indian River Boulevard. Today, nearly a thousand homes stand from the roadway to the river.

By the 1990s, the golf community had earned its status as an Audubon Sanctuary, a first in Indian River County. Under a drift of black clouds, this proud designation was allowed to lapse by 2004. To the rescue came a new generation of serious birders, botanists and conservationists, intent on restoring Grand Harbor’s environmental leadership.

First to sound the clarion call was Bobby Wallace, superintendent of golf courses, who let the members know what value had been lost “for no good reason.” Wallace knew that Pat and Neil Stalter had been leading birdwalks for several years on the property in response to demand from residents – and that Deb Fletcher and Vicky Tulloch had actually organized a golf tournament to raise funds for purple martin houses. He also knew of Jim Bercaw’s and Bette Nielsen’s volunteer work in behalf of the plantings along the lakesides and in the wooded areas.

With backing from the developer and club management, Wallace initiated a “working team” of these five members to regain Grand Harbor’s sanctuary status and to give a permanent footing to nature support. Glenn Rose soon joined the team as treasurer and chief head-counter.

Few could have imagined what would happen in the next 24 months.

First, the team succeeded in winning Audubon International’s coveted sanctuary designation – now you see a sign proclaiming sanctuary status as you enter Grand Harbor. They then set out to insure Grand Harbor’s eco-friendly future by forming an Audubon chapter unique to Grand Harbor as an affiliate of Pelican Island Audubon Society – the first area community to make such an arrangement. A dynamic program proved a strong draw, bringing more than 130 active members in the first full year.

That program in 2007-08 season included these monthly highlights:

- October – members reception & organization (70 signed up on night one)
- November – 145 100 golfers played the Audubon Open
- December – Bob Montanaro presented “Life of the Osprey”
- January – “Know Your Snakes” brought a full house
- February – Sue Boyd and Bob Montanaro aided the Stalters on two birdwalks
- March – Janice Broda led a “Plant and Flower Walk”
- April – Deborah Ecker presented “Surrounded by Water”
- May – Deb Fletcher and Billie Wagner counted 16 new birdhouses and platforms

Looking onward, Neil Stalter who heads the organization as its first president, sees nothing but blue skies ahead for the Grand Harbor Audubon Society. He cites several factors, “This is a can’t-miss recipe. We have generous and competent officers who care deeply – and we are blessed with a magnificent campus that is steadily improving under new management. Finally, our membership simply won’t relax its care for wildlife and ecology.”

That in mind, he predicts 2008-09 will be another banner year of cooperation between Pelican Island Audubon Society and its model affiliate at Grand Harbor. A beautiful note card set of nature photographs and the first two in a series of educational panels will debut in 2008.

*Grand Harbor Audubon is erecting nesting platforms for local Ospreys.*

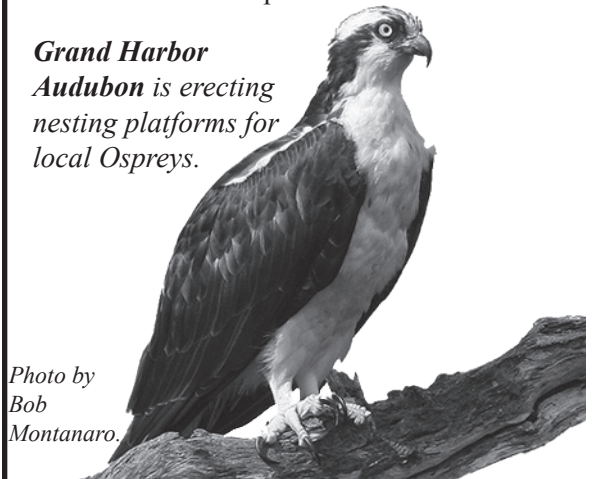


Photo by Bob Montanaro.

#### Officers

President, **Richard H. Baker**  
 1st Vice President, **Jens Tripson**  
 2nd Vice President, **Susan Boyd**  
 Recording Secretary, **Darlene Halliday**  
 Corresponding Secretary, **Jean Catchpole**  
 Treasurer, **Robert Adair**

#### Elected Directors

**Joe Carroll '08**      **Nancy Irvin '10**  
**David Cox '09**      **Vacant**  
**Debby Ecker '08**    **Susan Richardson '10**

#### Appointed Board Members

**Joel Day**              **Melissa Tripson**  
**Tina Marchese**      **Craig Weyandt**  
**Neal Stalter**

#### Advisory Board Members

**Janice Broda**        **Bob Smith**  
**Kevin Doty**         **Paul Tritaik**  
**Lynne Larkin**       **Billi Wagner**

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.



## *The President's Hoot*

# **SAY NO TO LIBERTY PARK, A POOR PRECEDENT FOR DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE OUR URBAN SERVICE AREA**

The proposed Liberty Park development at 66th Avenue and CR 510 is the second time this year when the public discovered that our county's zoning regulations have huge loopholes. Developers "latch on" to these loopholes, but the public only learns about them when the developments are scheduled for final approvals.

In January, homeowners on 82nd Avenue learned that adjacent agriculture land could become the Wild Turkey Sand Mine. Now, for the second time, we learn that a development who has only 12% of the property INSIDE the Urban Service Area Boundary can build 991 homes on 452 acres owned OUTSIDE that boundary line (zoned Agriculture with one house per five acres), while putting the retention ponds and parks INSIDE the boundary. The boundary line, establishes where our county is REQUIRED to provide water and sewage.

Sadly, this agriculture land grew some of our county's finest citrus. The destruction of these lands will result in a loss of local produce, leading to more imports. Future developments should be targeted to lands not suitable for agriculture. Currently, little thought is given to protecting exceptional agricultural lands as we do for environmental lands.

The loophole these developers are taking advantage of is: acquiring land that straddles the Urban Service Area Boundary. The developers include a planning device called "density transfer." This provision, in our county's zoning regulations, allows a developer to build homes in excess in one area when the density is "offset" by setting aside some open space elsewhere in the county, to compensate for the development.

Contrary to the purpose of density transfers, these developers propose moving density from INSIDE the Boundary Area to OUTSIDE the Boundary Area, which is backwards and the opposite of good planning. Elsewhere, where sprawl is contained more successfully (and agriculture is preserved as a valuable part of the community landscape), density is moved from OUTSIDE to INSIDE the Boundary Area. Keeping density, and New Towns, INSIDE the urban service area is the key to containing unbridled sprawl. Better planning would require all these greenspace requirements to be met on that portion of the project that lies OUTSIDE the Boundary Area.

It is hard to see any justification for additional housing, as many approved developments and existing homes lie vacant in the county, thus showing no established public need.

There are other issues this development would impose on taxpayers:

- New sources of drinking water are needed now for houses already approved within the Urban Service Area. All alternatives (reservoirs, desalination of ocean water or drilling deeper into the aquifer) will be a major expense with serious environmental consequences.
- US 1, County Road 510 and 66th Avenue, among others in the immediate area, already require upgrading to handle traffic without an additional 991 homes.

Our County Commissioners have the discretion to approve, not approve, or modify the proposed project. Therefore, they should:

- 1) Direct the planning staff to establish better guidelines for transferring development rights within the Urban Service Area,
- 2) Direct staff to review all zoning regulations for loopholes such as this one,
- 3) Vote NO on the Liberty Park proposal as it sets a dangerous precedent for unwanted and unneeded development outside our Boundary Area that burdens our natural resources and taxpayers.

During elections, county commission candidates professed: "I will never vote to approve a subdivision outside the Urban Service Boundary!" Now we have a test to see if those elected Sandra Bowden, Wesley Davis, Joe Flescher, Peter O'Bryan, and Gary Wheeler will honor their words. Please call 567-8000 ext 1490 or write them ([sbowden@ircgov.com](mailto:sbowden@ircgov.com), [wdavis@ircgov.com](mailto:wdavis@ircgov.com), [jflescher@ircgov.com](mailto:jflescher@ircgov.com), [pobryan@ircgov.com](mailto:pobryan@ircgov.com), and [gwheeler@ircgov.com](mailto:gwheeler@ircgov.com)), and ask them to stick to their commitment by voting NO to Liberty Park.

*Richard Baker, President*



*Black-crowned Night Heron photo by Bob Montanaro.*

# Audubon Academy 2008 scrapbook

April 4 - 6, 2008 in Vero Beach



Heather Stapleton and Richard Baker confer on alternatives as the windy conditions in the Indian River Lagoon cancel the boat tour to Pelican Island. A walking tour of the Refuge was arranged instead.



Audubon of Florida Executive Director David Anderson welcomes participants to the Vero Beach Community Center on Saturday morning, April 5.



Charles Lee of Audubon of Florida, Pelican Island Audubon's Susan Boyd, and Indian River County Commissioner Gary Wheeler lead the **Is Anyone Listening?** workshop detailing effective communication techniques to get the message across to the public, the government, and the media.



Susan Boyd, Nancy Irvin, and Academy coordinator Joyce King plan for the next event.



Audubon of Florida chapter coordinator Jacqui Sulek, at right, arranges the table welcoming guests to the Saturday night lecture and concert.



Indian River County Planning Director Stan Boling, Pelican Island Audubon board members Jens Tripson, Debby Ecker and Dr. David Cox of David Cox Consulting led the **Power to the People** workshop on how chapters can help write and make laws that promote conservation concepts.



Above, a Crested Caracara perched in a pine tree was a highlight of the Sunday morning field trip.



Jens Tripson, at left, led two very successful early morning birding trips out to the wastewater treatment plant.



Florida folk musician Frank Thomas, right, and his wife performed on Saturday night along with Jeanie Fitchen.

At right, a female Red-winged Blackbird seen during the Sunday field trip carries material to the nest she is building in the reeds



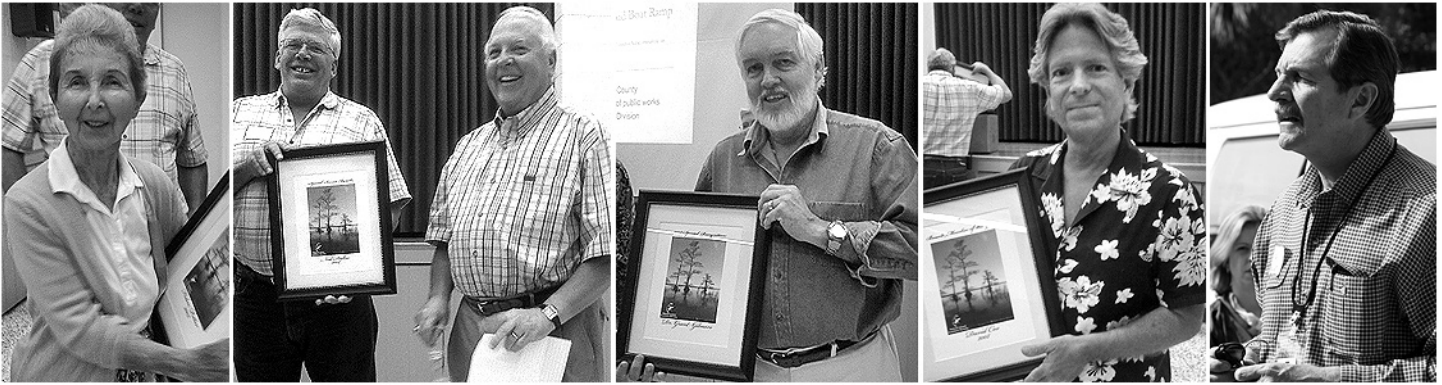
Boat-tailed Grackle on Sunday birding trip.



Great Egret lands in a flurry of feathers.

**Pelican Island Audubon** thanks Susan Boyd, Jens & Melissa Tripson, Darlene Halliday, David Cox, Debby Ecker, Bob Montanaro, Billi Wagner, Nancy Irvin, Lee Day, Richard & Nita Baker, and Joe Carroll for their help during the Academy weekend!

Photos by Bob Montanaro.



*Helen Potter*

*Jens Tripson & Neil Stalter*

*Dr. Grant Gilmore*

*Dr. David Cox*

*Bob Adair*

## Annual Awards Night, part two

Richard Baker and Jens Tripson presented awards during the April 21, 2008 meeting to those not able to make the March meeting.

Helen Potter received the Helen Stockburger Award recognizing all she has done for PIAS over the years.

Neil Stalter received the Special Service Award recognizing his work organizing the Pelican Island Audubon affiliate at Grand Harbor.

A Special Recognition Award went to Dr. Grant Gilmore for his many years working with ORCA and the Indian River Lagoon.

Dr. David Cox received the Pelican Island Audubon Board Member of the Year for his work with Spoonbill Marsh, the St. Johns/Corrigan land swap and the Oslo boat ramp.

Bob Adair received the Maggy Bowman Conservationist of the Year Award for his work on water and agricultural issues in Indian River County.

Pelican Island Audubon thanks the recipients of this year's awards for all their hard work on behalf of the environment for 2007 in Indian River County.

*Photos by Juanita Baker and Bob Montanaro.*

*Brown Pelican photo by Bob Montanaro.*



## Refuge Manager Paul Tritaik leaving Pelican Island

Paul Tritaik has been selected to become the 8th Manager of the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island in Southwest Florida. For the past 15 years, Paul has been managing Pelican Island and Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) located in Indian River and Brevard Counties, Florida. Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge, located in the Indian River Lagoon, became America's 1st National Wildlife Refuge in 1903. He was instrumental in working with others to expand land conservation, habitat restoration and public facility enhancements at Pelican Island NWR. He successfully worked with partners to restore Pelican Island's rapidly eroding shoreline and to build the Centennial Trail visitor complex.



At Archie Carr NWR, Paul helped lead a multi-agency partnership that successfully acquired over 250 parcels of valuable coastal habitat, including vital nesting

beaches for sea turtles. Archie Carr NWR is located along 20 miles of Atlantic coast, between Melbourne Beach and Wabasso Beach, and is home to the largest population of loggerheads in the Western Hemisphere, the largest population of green turtles in the United States, and one of the largest populations of leatherbacks in Florida.

Despite a very small staff, Paul has been successful in developing partnerships to accomplish some large conservation projects for the benefit of wildlife. He helped form two new friends groups (Pelican Island Preservation Society and Friends of the Carr Refuge) and facilitated their growth to become effective community-based organizations supporting Refuge projects and events. Elizabeth Souheaver, Refuge Supervisor for the Southeast Region stated: "He is a tremendous leader of public use programming and development of partnerships for the benefit of refuges."

Paul served on the Board of Pelican Island Audubon for many years where he was instrumental in helping with many conservation projects throughout Indian River County. Pelican Island Audubon is sad to see Paul and his family leaving us but wish him the best of luck in his new position.

Pelican Island Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 1833  
Vero Beach, FL 32961-1833

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# Who is this?



Answer: Carolina Wren

Found throughout the Southeast, this 5-6 inch rust-colored songbird is common in urban areas where it will nest in birdhouses---or even a hanging plant. The male and female mate for life and spend their time foraging together through their territory when not nesting. The male is slightly larger but, otherwise, both sexes look alike. The male, also, has a very loud call, which is a trait of this particular species. Diet consists mainly of insects. *Bird info from the Cornell Lab Bird Guide. Photo by Bob Montanaro.*

## Amending PIAS' Bylaws

On the Agenda for the May 19th General Meeting  
To be voted on by all attending members  
by Deborah Ecker

Our bylaws date back to 1983, with a single amendment in 1985. Considering our many successful accomplishments during the intervening 25 years, they serve us well. Still, in 2008 the fact is that we operate differently from what they prescribe, in many ways.

By the time the amendments will be presented before the membership at the General Meeting on May 19th, the Board of Directors will have reviewed and discussed them at their April 28th meeting and will report their recommendations to you.

## OUTREACH CENTER DONORS

We continue to recognize the generous donations made toward building the new Audubon Outreach Center to be located at the Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area. April donors include:

Bill & Sue Drouin  
William Barrows

Thank you to all who contributed so far! If you have not done so, please consider giving to this wonderful cause to enhance environmental education in Indian River County.



## BECOME A MEMBER OF THE PELICAN ISLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

Membership benefits include subscriptions to Audubon magazine, Florida Naturalist, and the PIAS newsletter The Peligram. Additionally, members have full borrowing privileges to the PIAS nature library and much more!

- \$20 one-year membership
- Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- \$20 Friend (receive The Peligram only)
- Check box if a MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL.

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**