



The Pelican Island Audubon Society

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- founded in 1964 to serve Indian River County -

P.O Box 1833, VERO BEACH, FL 32961 772-567-3520 Fax 772-567-3521 www.pelicanislandaudubon.org
Our 41th Year Vol. 41 No. 8 October 2005

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

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

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

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

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

Sat Nov 5 - 8:00am-5:00pm Day trip to the Mennello Museum of American Art in Orlando for guided tour of "John James Audubon, American Artist & Naturalist" exhibit followed by a guided tour of the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey. Cost is \$40 and includes admission and transportation. Call 772-567-3520 for reservations.

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

Mon Nov 21 - 7:30pm General Meeting at Vero Beach Community Center, 2266 14th Ave. Presentation and book signing by local cattleman and author Bud Adams for his new book *Beautiful & Rare Birds of Florida*.

Fri Dec 2 Owl Walk Field Trip at Oxbow Eco-Center, Pt. St. Lucie. Call 772-567-3520 for reservations.

Buy a copy for the Holidays!

You can now purchase your copy of *Reflections of Blue Cypress* on our website using Visa or Mastercard! Visit us at pelicanislandaudubon.org to see how!!

LAKE OKEECHOBEE SUBJECT OF OCTOBER 17TH MEETING

The hurricanes of 2004 set many records for Florida, including records for fastest lake level rises in Lake Okeechobee's recorded history, and records for highest levels of phosphorus pollution and most severe lake turbidity ever. A year later, the lake remains way too deep, has lost 60 square miles of plant communities, and is experiencing disastrous algae blooms. Massive dumps of polluted Okeechobee water to the estuaries on both coasts are creating severe problems there as well, including lesions on marine animals, death of oyster beds and seas grasses, and the same intense algae blooms as in Okeechobee.

The good news is hurricanes don't hit every year. The bad news is the lingering problems are the result of decades of human activities and may not go away soon. How did we get to this? Can we eventually stop the extreme harm? Come hear Dr. Gray at the Vero Beach Community Center, 2266 14th Avenue, on Monday, October 17th at 7:30pm. Refreshments will be served following the program. ---Learn more about Dr. Gray on page 5

BIRDING FIELD TRIP SATURDAY OCTOBER 15TH

Join the Pelican Island Audubon Society on a guided birding trip to the West County Wastewater Facility. These artificial wetlands are a popular spot to see not only many different species of Indian River County birds along with other wildlife but, also, hundreds of species of indigenous plants all easily viewed from the comfort of an elevated boardwalk. The site is listed in the "Great Birding Trails of America" guidebook as a birder's paradise not to be missed for the great variety of birds to be seen. Call 772-567-3520 for reservations.

Pelican Island Audubon Society

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Pelican Island Audubon Society, Inc. is registered with the Florida Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Div. of Consumer Services by calling toll-free within Florida 1-800-435-7352. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the State

A PIAS LIBRARY MYSTERY **BY TINA MARCHESE**

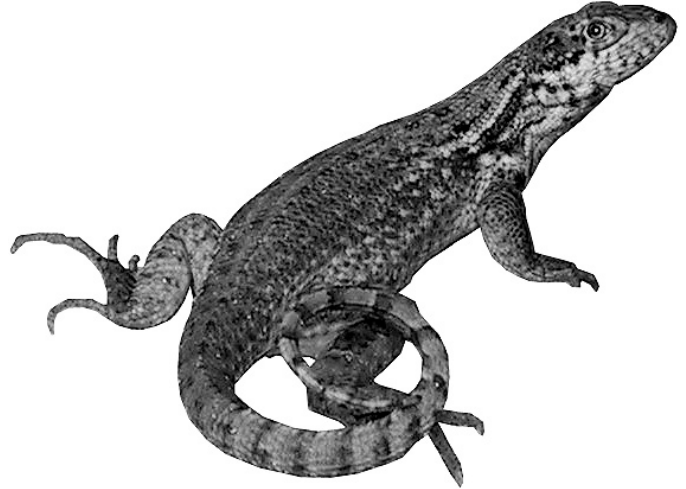
The Library Committee was confronted with 2 mysteries when it met at the PIAS office on Wednesday, Sept. 14th. 1) Who was the kind and caring soul who had placed cellophane card protectors on the last card in each drawer of the card catalog? and 2) Who had freed space on our burgeoning shelves? We need to know where these escaped books are at the moment---stored and boxed somewhere or in use at some other location for a research project? Please, Dr. Watson, call the PIAS office at 772-567-3520 if you have the clue.

Which brings up an important reminder about library use. Each book on the circulation shelves contains a card in a book pocket---generally at the front of the book. Borrowers are asked to sign the card (a circulation record card) and provide date borrowed and their phone number. Cards should be placed on top of the card catalog. The Library Committee will file the cards and track the books. When books are returned, the appropriate card is replaced in the book pocket and the book is reshelfed. Books designated as REFERENCE books must be used in the PIAS office. Thanks for your help.



HAVE YOU SEEN THIS LIZARD?

BY SCOTT L. MOORE & JON A. MOORE



This is a northern curly-tailed lizard. It is an invasive species that is spreading along the southeastern Florida coast. It is a moderately large lizard (juveniles are as big as a brown anole and adults can be up to 12 inches long). This species is recognizable by the way they curl the tail in a spiral up over their back when they run. As a science fair project, Scott is surveying and recording the occurrence of this species in St. Lucie and Indian River counties. If you have seen this species around, could you please contact us by phone (561-799-8025) or by e-mail (silverroughy@bellsouth.net). Please let us know the precise location where you have seen this lizard.

TREE CLINIC IN SEBASTIAN **OCTOBER 22ND**

The City of Sebastian's Tree and Landscape Advisory Board is holding a tree clinic on October 22, 2005 starting at 9:00am behind the City Hall at 1225 Main Street, Sebastian.

The program will include a discussion and demonstration by Dale Armstrong, a Forester, on how to measure champion trees. Larry Vickers, a certified arborist, will give a demonstration on proper pruning techniques. Dan Culbert, a Horticultural Agent with the Cooperative Extension Service, will discuss tree selection and tree care. A Florida Master Gardener Booth will be on site with several Master Gardeners available to answer questions and distribute literature on Florida gardening.

As if that were not enough, coffee, cookies, and cake will be served along with many wonderful door prizes to be awarded! For more information, contact Neil Lagin at 772-589-4312 or e-mail doctorneil9@yahoo.com



THE PRESIDENT'S HOOT!

THE ULTIMATE EXOTIC WEED

In my first botany course, I learned that a “**weed**” is a plant out of place. Some plants and animals that have been introduced, either intentionally or accidentally from somewhere else, are called “**exotic**”- not naturally found there. They can also be serious pests or “weeds” that invade our environment. An invasive exotic pest species is one that spreads naturally in natural or semi natural habitats, displacing native species, and to producing a significant change in composition, structure, or natural processes such as fire and water flow. Usually, an invasive species is self-sustaining and expands into populations within communities where they were not previously associated.

In Florida we have numerous exotics, but the most notable are Brazilian pepper, Australian pines, melaleuca and many vines. There are also numerous animals, for example, cattle egrets, Asian clams, Asian tiger mosquito, and many insects.

Our Earth is estimated to be 4.5 billion years old. Only recently, just 1.7 million years ago, one exotic species evolved in Africa, and began to spread into Europe and Asia. It crossed the Bering Strait only 15,000 years ago and within a few thousand years came down into Florida. During the last hundred years, it has become quite a dominant pest affecting the water supply, devastating beach communities, drying up wetlands, polluting lakes, oceans, and soils, daming and canalizing rivers, removing forests, degrading air, causing global warming, and eliminating numerous plant and animal species that have not even been described or named or even put on the endangered lists. It has eliminated all of its predators and is only subjected to a few viral, bacterial and parasitic diseases. It is now found in every continent and nearly every habitat including space and the Moon. There are now over six and half billion individuals with many of them starving and competing with each other even to death but still reproducing and living longer and longer. This species is even thinking of going to Mars to live, probably as a back up in case things really get out of control here.

Some hope and pray that this “exotic” will soon realize that it is a living species together with others on the planet and will learn to play by the natural rules that define how to live in balance with other species. This means this exotic would have to address “**Sustainability.**”

Our region and even the world will someday reach a limit of space and resources available for us. Sustainability from a scientist’s view means the **carrying capacity of our environment**. In ecological terms, the carrying capacity of an ecosystem is the size of the population or community that can be supported or sustained indefinitely upon the available resources and services of that ecosystem. Living within the limits of an ecosystem depends on three factors:

- the amount of resources available in the ecosystem;
- the size of the population or community; and
- the amount of resources each individual within the community consumes.

The concept of carrying capacity is closely related to the idea of “**capital**”, which fortunately many individuals of this species understand. The term “capital” is most commonly used to refer to money and material goods. However, in the context of sustainability, human communities have several different types of capital that need to be considered - **natural, human, social, and built capital**. Together, these types of capital are referred to as community capital. All four types of capital are necessary for communities to function. All four types of capital need to be managed by a community. All four types of capital need to be cared for, nurtured and improved over time. A community that is living off the interest of its community capital is living within the carrying capacity. A community that is degrading or destroying the ecosystem on which it depends is using up its community capital and is living unsustainably.

Carrying capacity is much harder to measure for human, social and built capital than for natural capital but the basic concept is the same - are the different types of capital being used up faster than they are being replenished? A community that allows its children and adults to be poorly educated, undernourished, and poorly housed is eroding its human capital. We need opportunities for rewarding work, healthy recreation, creative arts, physical and mental exercise, and entertainment. Gated communities that allow the quality of its social interactions to decline through lack of trust, respect, and tolerance is eroding our social capital. A city or county that allows its buildings, roads, parks, power facilities, water facilities, and waste processing capability to decay is eroding its built capital. In addition, a city or county that allows its agriculture to disappear into high-density subdivisions, losses it ability to independently feed and clothe itself and then must rely on others to satisfy these survival needs.continued on page 5

**THE BIG 'UNS:
THE BIRD THAT CAN KILL A MAN
BY BOB WINDISH**

We Marines fighting under Admiral Chester Nimitz in the South and Central Pacific never came upon any of them on the islands we took from the Japanese but over in the Southwest Pacific area where General MacArthur was in charge a few of our Army buddies ran into them and they gave them a wide berth. The guys there called them "castaways" but from all reports they were a lot tougher than any shipwrecked sailor who had the misfortune to be washed up on some lonely beach out in the middle of the ocean. That's because these birds had the reputation for being able to kill a man with a single blow of one powerful foot.

Cassowaries are what they're really called. They're related to the ostrich and like their cousins they can't fly. Standing over six feet tall and weighing more than 150 pounds, they sport a helmet or casque of hard bone on



top of their heads, the skin of which is red, blue and purple in color. Wattles hang under their chins, the quills of their brownish-black feathers vary in size from knitting needles to tines of a pitch fork and each foot contains three long, pointed toes sharp and strong enough to rip a man's body open from chest to groin with one downward slashing stroke. Fortunately, the Cassowary is a shy bird and avoids humans. Leave it alone, and it won't bother you. Mess around with a Cassowary, however, and you've got a buzz saw on your hands.

Cassowaries are found deep in the jungles of New Guinea and its adjacent islands of Aru, Ceram, Jobi and New Britain but can also be come upon in that dense tropical area on the northeastern fork of Australia's Queensland that borders on the huge Gulf of Carpentaria. It's there and on New Guinea that the American G.I.s learned about the birds.

Able to run as fast as 30 miles an hour, Cassowaries plunge into and through thorny underbrush while leaping over high obstacles, diving into water and swimming rivers to escape capture. Most often, they move in this swift manner, also through large tunnels of jungle growth that are not unlike huge rabbit warrens, in order to avoid their enemies such as man or wild boars. When threatened, however, they show no fear and stand their ground, leaping high in the air and lashing out with dag-

ger-like blows of their powerful legs. It is this tendency to defend themselves against anything that comes close when cornered, that gives the birds the reputation of being killers of men.

Mostly fruit eaters, especially palm seeds, wild plums, figs and berries, Cassowaries will also feed on insects and the leaves of several trees. Females are larger than the males but the latter is responsible for the nesting duties. During the months of June through August, the winters Down Under, the hen lays from three to six greenish colored eggs measuring about five inches long in a nest made on the ground of fallen tree leaves. The male incubates the eggs whose shells then turn the color of the leaves the nest is made of. If a predator arrives, the nesting bird takes off conspicuously, attempting to draw the stranger with him. The eggs, perfectly camouflaged by their new coloration, are usually left alone by the intruder. When the chicks hatch after seven weeks, they are buff in color with vertical stripes running the length of their bodies.

Natives of New Guinea, New Britain, and Australia's York Aboriginal Peninsula Reserve keep the young Cassowaries as pets in their villages. When the birds grow older and become unmanageable, they are placed in cages small enough to limit their movement. There, their plumes are plucked for decorative purposes until they are fully grown. When this occurs, they are then killed and eaten for food.

Regarding the bird's reputation for being a killer, the reports are mostly the tales of natives' encounters with the animal and there are few confirmed instances recorded. Zookeepers contend that the Cassowary is a formidable bird and extremely difficult to handle in captivity. Even Allied troops during World War II, who had run into the bird while engaged in jungle campaigns on New Guinea and New Britain, say Cassowaries never attacked them but usually left their areas hastily. Troops also admit that they, too, heeded warnings about the bird's reputation as a potential killer and never attempted to corner any of them.

There is one definite case of a Cassowary killing a human in the Outback when two Australian herdsmen, brothers, went to the aid of their dog that had flushed the bird which then stood its ground as the canine attacked. One of the men received a kick from the bird's powerful leg, the sharp claws on its foot slashing through his jugular vein. While attempting to run home for aid, the wounded man collapsed after covering some 200 yards, and died.



KUDOS TO JANICE BRODA & BOB MONTANARO

Indian River County has been awarded a \$97,500 grant from the Florida Division of Forestry (DOF) for tree planting & invasive exotic removal on the Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area (ORCA) link property. Thanks to PIAS Board Members Janice Broda and Richard Baker who identified this grant funding source and wrote the body of the grant application for the Indian River County. PIAS Office Manager Bob Montanaro also supplied photos for the grant application.

Once a contract between the DOF & the County has been executed, the Indian River Mosquito Control District will use mechanical equipment to clear the tangled monoculture of Brazilian pepper from the 5-acre ORCA link property. Part of the grant will also underwrite educational workshops about tree selection & proper pruning. Check out the new ORCA website recently developed by Bob Montanaro at <http://www.ourorca.org/>

MORE ABOUT DR. PAUL GRAY

Paul Gray did his doctoral research on waterfowl in Okeechobee, worked for the Florida Game and Fish Commission in the region, managed the 7000 acre Kissimmee Prairie Sanctuary for Audubon, and now is the Coordinator of Audubon of Florida's, "Lake Okeechobee Watershed Program." He works behind the scenes with the scientists and engineers trying to design and implement the various restoration projects in south Florida including the Everglades Restoration, Lake Okeechobee Protection Plan, Kissimmee River Restoration project and others. Winner of a Conservation Colleague award from The Nature Conservancy, and the John Kabler "Grassroots" award from the Everglades Coalition, Paul will give attendees an on-the-ground perspective of the state of south Florida's ecosystems and restoration efforts.

THE ULTIMATE EXOTIC WEED from page 3

As human beings, we need to control our population size, as our resources are finite even though our appetite is not. Otherwise, there is not room for fulfilling a new vision of striving for human greatness, the creativity and outstanding achievements that our culture could nurture. We will be so caught up with trying to handle all the problems that overpopulation will have that we will not be able to do better than we are. We will be lucky to just hold our own. Our environmental quality is in danger of being not only eroded but becoming toxic to all living beings.

Hopefully, we will not be the ultimate exotic weed.

Richard Baker, President



COASTAL CLEANUP A SUCCESS

Hundreds of enthusiastic volunteers, like Elsbeth Eibs and Marge Konopaska pictured at left, turned up on Saturday, September 17th to take part in the Florida Coastal Cleanup sponsored by The Ocean Conservancy and organized in Indian River County by the Pelican Island Audubon Society in partnership with Keep Indian River Beautiful. The organizing committee composed from Audubon of Nancy Irvin and Jens Tripson along with Sherry Hamlin from Keep Indian River Beautiful took on the task of cleaning four beaches.

Thanks go out to the site coordinators who organized the volunteers at each beach. At Round Island Patrick Pitts, Peter O'Brien and Jens Tripson; at South Beach Lynne Larkin, Nancy Irvin, Sue Richardson, and Jon Moore; at Jaycee Beach Elsbeth Eibs and Marge Robinson; and at Wabasso Beach Richard Baker. Special thanks, also, go out to the following who generously donated money or supplies for the Cleanup: Publix, Ocean Spray, Wal-Mart, Perkins Pharmacy, Osceola Pharmacy, and the Indian River Mosquito Control District.

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

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NEWS FROM THE NEST

Welcome to new members: Charles Beir, Lois Bowne, Linda C. Brooks, Mrs. Carton Conway, Mary Fredell, William F. Hildenbrand, Sybilla M. Hunt, Linda Koppelman, Ms. Connie Owen, Ronald Rose, Betty Taylor, Jim & Yvonne Tso, Dr. Edwin B. Waltman, Ms. Susan E. Wright, George Breen, Miss Stacie Randolph, Michael Silverman, and Donald T. Towles.

Please note we have a new e-mail address:
piaudubon@bellsouth.net

VISIT PIAS ONLINE!

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

CALIFORNIA TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE

“The glaring lack of federal action to slow global warming has led many states to assume a leadership role.” Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed an executive order that will reduce California’s heat-trapping emissions 11% by 2010, and 80% by 2050-an 84% reduction from today’s levels (Union of Concerned Scientists, Fall 2005).

ORCA VERSUS THE AIR POTATO



A war is being waged at the Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area to battle the fast spreading *Dioscorea bulbifera*--the air potato. Alice Rowe, Peter Sutherland & Janice Broda recently volunteered to help rid ORCA of this invasive plant. Please consider coming out to help. Even 30

minutes of your time would be of great benefit. Call 772-567-3520 for information on volunteering at ORCA or visit the ORCA website at www.ourorca.org

JOIN THE PELICAN ISLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

Rates are:

- \$20 one-year introductory membership
- \$30 two-year introductory membership
- \$15 students
- \$15 seniors (62+)
- \$15 Friend (*The Peligram* only)

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