The speaker for the September 20 Pelican Island Audubon Society general meeting is Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex Manager Charles Pelizza. Mr. Pelizza will detail new wildlife refuge conservation initiatives in the central portion of Florida, as well as the most recent information related to oil spill response and recovery based on his experiences helping with the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill both locally and in the Gulf of Mexico.

Charles Pelizza arrived in south Florida from his most recent assignment working on refuges throughout the central Pacific Ocean. A 30-year veteran of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Mr. Pelizza received his MS degree from the University of South Dakota while studying the ecology of trumpeter swans in the Nebraska Sandhills. His professional interest in wetland ecology has led to work in diverse ecosystems ranging from coastal spartina marshes to prairie potholes to tropical wetlands, lagoons, and coral reefs located on remote Pacific atolls. As manager of the Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Mr. Pelizza is responsible for not only Pelican Island NWR, but also Archie Carr NWR and the Lake Wales Ridge NWR. Archie Carr NWR along the Indian River and Brevard County beaches is home to the largest nesting aggregation of loggerhead turtles on the continent and second largest in the world. The Lake Wales Ridge NWR is a refuge in central peninsular Florida home to over 32 species of threatened and endangered plants and animals.

During his short time here, Charlie has also been involved in the development of a comprehensive, landscape-scale initiative within the Greater Everglades Ecosystem. The first component of this initiative is a proposal to establish a new NWR within the headwaters of the Everglades. Located in the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Region, this proposed refuge would protect and manage habitat for species such as Florida panther, Florida grasshopper sparrow, Everglades snail kite, and red-cockaded woodpecker. The initiative provides opportunities to work with partner agencies and organizations, along with the local agricultural and ranching community to provide a rural landscape suitable of sustaining their livelihood as well as protecting some of the last remaining wild lands left for such species as Wood Storks, Florida panthers, and Florida black bears. Enjoy light refreshments following the program.
**April & May**

**Bird Photo of the Month**

by Juanita Baker

![Mottled Duck](image1.jpg)

**“Quack, Quack!” by Sarah Kappel**

Mottled Duck (*Anas fulvigula*)

What a happy looking duck! Yet this duck was loudly warning people and other ducks in the area, that it was going into the water at Viera Wetlands. Sarah Kappel took this photograph with her Canon 7D and a 400 mm lens so that she could be a distance from the birds and not disturb them. Birds at the Wetlands have become acclimated to the frequent human traffic. They have learned that the people traveling the dikes there pose no immediate threat, so the resident birds save their energy and continue feeding, but keep a watchful eye should someone approach too closely. Should that invisible barrier be crossed, these birds will flee just like any other wild bird.

Read more about these photos, including viewing a large color image, and how to enter your own photographs, at [www.pelicanislandaudubon.org](http://www.pelicanislandaudubon.org)

**Rescuing Oiled Birds** by Linda Chancellor

A pelican is flying over the waves as the sun is rising over the Gulf. He has not seen any fishing boats that morning so he continues his search for fish without their help. It is harder to spot fish darting below the surface because of the strange reflection on the water. He dives steeply and his body impacts with the water, his lower beak opens to swallow and he senses an unfamiliar liquid mixed with the salty water. He involuntarily swallows and breaks back to the surface. He struggles and cannot seem to get lift to fly. His head and wing feathers are matted with an oily black goop which seems to drag him under the water.

Ocean waves bring him closer to the shore where his feet touch the sandy bottom. He attempts to waddle ashore but the sand sticking to his black oily feet hinders him. He is cold and weak as he lays there with the waves lapping at his body. Several people approach and he snaps as they try to swaddle him in a cloth.

He is afraid and does not understand that these people are trying to save his life. He is transported to a room where he cannot see sky or ocean. The people are gentle but the stress of having the oil removed from his mouth and eyes causes his heart to race faster. The process is tedious and time consuming for every drop of oil must be removed from his feathers. His heart continues to beat faster, his stress mounts and then his heart can not take it any longer. He dies in the volunteer’s arms.

Not all recovered birds are able to be cleaned nor survive because of ingested oil. Affected birds are evaluated as to whether they are candidates for the process. To learn more about the process and the way oil affects birds check out [www.ibrrc.org](http://www.ibrrc.org), visit “How Birds Are Treated”, and from there go to “Education: How oil affects birds.”

We hear encouraging news concerning the capping and cleanup of the BP oil spill but this event is not yet over. We should not forget the damage that has been done to our ecosystems and wildlife.

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**Bird Photo of the Month**

by Mark Mittleman

![Reddish Egret](image2.jpg)

**“What’s Up There?” by Mark Mittleman**

Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*)

The Reddish Egret is a dancer...and looks so graceful even when it is performing a typical grooming behavior like it is doing here. The beautifully curving wing and reflection add to the magic of this photograph taken by Mark Mittleman with a Nikon D300 Camera, Nikon 80-400 Lens at 400 MM (f/11.0 1/250 second ISO 200) at J.N. Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge. By dancing to stir up the shallow waters, fish are startled and more easily seen in the shadow of the out-stretched wing reducing the sun’s glare on the surface of the water. And when flushed and chased, the fish may dart for the shade, seeking what is usually protection. Such fun to watch as it pirouettes, seemingly on its toes, wings gracefully fluttering, turns, then stops and cocks its head to peer into the waters, then chases stabbing for fish right and left.

...by Juanita Baker

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We hear encouraging news concerning the capping and cleanup of the BP oil spill but this event is not yet over. We should not forget the damage that has been done to our ecosystems and wildlife.
The President’s Hoot  Algae Farm--A New Birding Site!

Egret Marsh Stormwater Park--Thanks to Keith McCully.

Our county now has another innovative project by Keith McCully who was one of the main inventors of the stormwater filter screens next to the County’s Administration Complex of 26th St., which removes trash from the Main Canal before it gets to the Indian River Lagoon.

Mid-August, Keith McCully, Indian River County Stormwater Engineer and Allen Stewart, Vice President of HydroMentia, Inc. invited me to see his newly completed Egret Marsh Stormwater Park off of 4th St. and 73rd Ave. in Indian River County. I had seen the site for the proposed project two years ago, but now completed, I was impressed with the presence of so many birds feeding at the facility.

While it is a great site for birds, its major purpose is to improve water quality by expecting to remove 80 to 90 percent of the dissolved nitrogen and phosphorus in the Lateral D canal. The park uses a relatively inexpensive system called the Algal Turf Scrubber that Allen adapted from Dr. Walter Adey, Director of the Marine Lab at the Smithsonian Institute. It is really a large algae farm that grows algae raised on a gently sloped surface over which is placed a plastic membrane covered by an “algal turf” geotextile grid that grows when the nutrient-rich waters from the canal are pumped onto the surface, about 1-1/2 inch deep. The water is pulsed over the mat in waves and is collected in a trough at the bottom of the sloped surface. The algae using the nutrients to grow, remove large amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus, color, and other pollutants from the water. Essentially it’s the excess fertilizers from our lawns’ and agriculture’s runoffs that contribute these polluting nitrogen and phosphorus nutrients. Many wading birds are drawn to the Algal Turf Scrubber surface where they eat small organisms that are found in the algal mass.

The “cleaner” water then moves into a series of three large polishing ponds to remove any algal material escaping the Algal Turf Scrubber and the residual nutrients by allowing the remaining solids to settle. Each pond littoral zones (shore area) are planted with a variety of native plants. The ponds contain populations of fish- including 60 lb tarpon, amphibians, reptiles, insects, and other animals. Sorry, no fishing is allowed. The water then flows back into the canal.

Small tractors scrape the algae off the algal grid in a rotation every two weeks, which is pushed and washed into a collection trough where it is removed by an automatic rake at a centralized harvesting station. Keith says it will be composted and used as a soil supplement. Perhaps with further research it might also be used to generate methane gas.

Egret Marsh is estimated to remove 14,400 pounds per year of total nitrogen and 3,300 pounds per year of total phosphorus before it gets to the Indian River Lagoon. The County and HydroMentia have just begun to monitor the system under an EPA/FDEP grant. The Storm water Division will construct at least two more regional nutrient removal systems similar to the Egret Marsh. One will serve the North Relief Canal and the other, the South Relief Canal.

Indian River County is ahead of other counties who are spending their money on attorney fees to fight Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) regulations. TMDL is a calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant that a water body (e.g. IR Lagoon) can receive and still safely meet water quality standards. Instead of fighting the issue, Indian River County is working to meet the intent of TMDL and with Keith McCully’s leadership, has pro-actively sought a better and healthier solution for us all. (Under section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act, states are required to develop lists of impaired waters. These are waters that are too polluted or otherwise degraded to meet the water quality standards set by states. The law requires that states and thereby counties, establish priority rankings for waters on the lists and develop TMDLs for these waters.)

What’s even better, the polishing ponds will be managed to provide a habitat for birds in a safe, clean, and well-stocked wetland system that will assist in the survival of wetland birds. In my brief visit I saw a dozen black-necked stilts, 20 Florida mottled ducks, 3 pairs of black-bellied whistling ducks, semipalmated plovers, tricolors, great blue and little blue herons, snowy and great egrets, anhinga, osprey, and other wading birds. While for now the Park is still generally closed to the public, but Keith hopes to open it to students, birders, and educators in the near future. We will be leading tours there this year. If you are interested in being a tour guide leader there or at other birding areas, please call our office or visit out website pelicanislandaudubon.org for more information.

Richard Baker, President
Get the Peligram in color delivered monthly via electronic delivery to your computer! Please email piaudubon@bellsouth.net to initiate delivery to your e-mail address. PIAS will not release your e-mail address to any third party.

### Plant of the Month by Janice Broda

Seagrape fruits now are beginning to ripen. You will find sea grapes (Coccoloba uvifera) growing naturally atop our beach dunes where their significant salt tolerance gives them a competitive advantage.

Unlike table grapes whose clustered fruits ripen simultaneously, the fruits of sea grapes – 1/4 to 1/2 inch in diameter – ripen individually from green to red-purple. Their taste is quite variable. Some fruits are sweet and can be eaten and enjoyed straight off the plant. Other plants have tart fruits that are best made into that pioneer favorite, seagrape jelly. To collect fruits for jelly-making, place a bed sheet under the fruit bearing plant and then shake the plant to liberate the ripe fruits.

Other animals also esteem seagrape fruits, including gopher tortoise, squirrels, racoons, and a bevy of birds, including catbirds, mockingbirds, robins, white-crowned pigeons, and woodpeckers. Each fruit contains a single striated seed. Seeds germinate readily and often are found as drift seeds (a.k.a sea beans) on the beach.

Flowering usually begins in March. Seagrape is an important nectar source for butterflies, including the Florida duskywing, julia, southern white, and the endangered Schaus’ swallowtail.

Seagraps need full sun and thrive in dry, sandy soils. Where freezing temperatures are rare, sea grapes grow to be large trees, sometimes up to 60 feet tall. Fast growing and large-leaved, sea grapes make excellent, tall privacy hedges. With its large, roundish leaves, 6 to 12 inches in diameter and fast growth habit, seagrape is a poor choice for a low hedge.

The veins of seagrape leaves are colored red. Cold temperatures and wind will bronze or redden the leaves dramatically. When spring arrives, these leaves quickly are replaced by succulent, almost translucent new growth. Leaf drop is substantial so, properly situated, seagraps are self-mulching.

Seagraps belong to the Buckwheat family, Polygonaceae. Their scientific name, Coccoloba, means lobed berry. Uvifera, the genus name, means egg-shaped.

### COOKBOOK ARRIVAL NEAR.

The much anticipated arrival of the PIAS cookbooks are near. We expect delivery mid to late September. The cost of the book is $14.95 plus $1.05 tax. We are very pleased with the way the cookbook turned out. We received a nice variety of recipes and the photos that Bob Montanaro provided for the book are outstanding. It will surely make a wonderful addition to your cookbook collection or make a special gift. So reserve your copies today! Call 772-567-3520 for info.

**Pelican Island Audubon Society 2010 Membership**

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*National Audubon membership

This includes subscriptions to Audubon Magazine and The Florida Naturalist.

**Pelican Island Audubon membership

Dues which PIAS will use for environmental education and advocacy and subscription to the Peligram

***Student Membership receive electronic copy of Peligram only - requires e-mail address

NAME: __________________________

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Please send your name and address along with a check payable to the "Pelican Island Audubon Society" to:

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

Credit card payments call (772) 567-3520 M - F 9AM-1PM

Please email us if there is a local environmental issue which concerns you at piaudubon@bellsouth.net

**Speaker Schedule 2010-2011**

General meetings are at the Vero Beach Community Center, 2266 14th Avenue, starting at 7:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

Sept. 20, 2010 – see page one for details

Oct. 18, 2010 – Agro-Ecology with Hilary Swain, Director, Archbold Biological Station

Nov. 15, 2010 – A talk by Eric Draper, Executive Director of Florida Audubon Society

Dec. 13, 2010 – Annual Holiday Potluck - 6:00 p.m.

Jan. 17, 2011 –The Ivory-billed Woodpecker with Dr. Jerome Jackson

Feb. 21, 2011 – Birding in Alaska with Andy Bankert

March 21, 2011 – Landscaping for Birds & Wildlife with Janice Broda

April 18, 2011 – A talk by Dr. John Fitzpatrick, Director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

May 16, 2011 – Coyotes in Florida with Dr. Martin Main

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**Seagrape**

Coccoloba uvifera

Seagrape fruits now are beginning to ripen. You will find sea grapes (Coccoloba uvifera) growing naturally atop our beach dunes where their significant salt tolerance gives them a competitive advantage.

Unlike table grapes whose clustered fruits ripen simultaneously, the fruits of sea grapes – 1/4 to 1/2 inch in diameter – ripen individually from green to red-purple. Their taste is quite variable. Some fruits are sweet and can be eaten and enjoyed straight off the plant. Other plants have tart fruits that are best made into that pioneer favorite, seagrape jelly. To collect fruits for jelly-making, place a bed sheet under the fruit bearing plant and then shake the plant to liberate the ripe fruits.

Other animals also esteem seagrape fruits, including gopher tortoise, squirrels, racoons, and a bevy of birds, including catbirds, mockingbirds, robins, white-crowned pigeons, and woodpeckers. Each fruit contains a single striated seed. Seeds germinate readily and often are found as drift seeds (a.k.a sea beans) on the beach.

Flowering usually begins in March. Seagrape is an important nectar source for butterflies, including the Florida duskywing, julia, southern white, and the endangered Schaus’ swallowtail.

Seagraps need full sun and thrive in dry, sandy soils. Where freezing temperatures are rare, sea grapes grow to be large trees, sometimes up to 60 feet tall. Fast growing and large-leaved, sea grapes make excellent, tall privacy hedges. With its large, roundish leaves, 6 to 12 inches in diameter and fast growth habit, seagrape is a poor choice for a low hedge.

The veins of seagrape leaves are colored red. Cold temperatures and wind will bronze or redden the leaves dramatically. When spring arrives, these leaves quickly are replaced by succulent, almost translucent new growth. Leaf drop is substantial so, properly situated, seagraps are self-mulching.

Seagraps belong to the Buckwheat family, Polygonaceae. Their scientific name, Coccoloba, means lobed berry. Uvifera, the genus name, means egg-shaped.

**Audubon Magazine**

The Plant of the Month by Janice Broda

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