

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

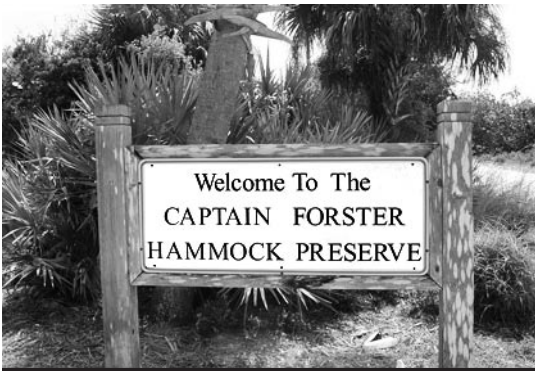
Our 46th Year Vol. 46 No. 4 April 2010

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

Indian River County's Conservation Lands

with IRC Conservation Lands Manager Beth Powell

April 19, 2010 ☆ 7:30 p.m. ☆ Vero Beach Community Center



The April 19, 2010 general meeting of the Pelican Island Audubon Society features Indian River County Conservation Lands Manager Beth Powell presenting a program on our local conservation lands and the programs supporting them. Indian River County's stated purpose and objective of the County Environmental Lands Program is to protect, restore and sustain endangered ecosystems and associated rare and endangered species in Indian River County. Secondary objectives of the program include public passive recreation; preservation of open space; groundwater quality protection; flood protection; protection of historic and cultural resources; and general preservation of "quality of life." *Stay and enjoy light refreshments after the program.*

Pelican Island Audubon Society 2010 Annual Awards



Five Heroes Honored at the March Annual PIAS Meeting



Holly Dill, Executive Director of the Environmental Learning Center received the **Maggy Bowman Conservation Award**. Appropriately, this award goes to Holly Dill, the first and only Executive Director, of the Environmental Learning Center. The ELC was the dream of Maggy Bowman, president and founding member of PIAS. Maggy wanted a place where school kids could learn about nature. PIAS contributed the seed money to

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Bird Photo of the Month

“Sunrise Breakfast” by Douglas Lange



White Pelican taken at Grand Harbor in Vero Beach in March 2009 with a Sony A100 and Sony 18-250mm lens.

This is an amazing photograph, of being in the right place at the right time to take it...highlighting the white pelican's huge pouch aiding in scooping up this enormous fish while swimming on the surface, unlike Brown Pelicans who plunge from 25 feet to capture their fish.

---Juanita Baker, Coordinator for the PIAS Photo of the Month

Read more about this photo, including viewing a large color image, and how to enter your own photographs, at www.pelicanislandaudubon.org

Sustainable Living Expo

April 10
Vero Beach Community Center

The Sustainable Living Expo will be held at the Vero Beach Community Center on April 10, 2010 from 10am until 4pm. The Expo is an educational event offering an opportunity for the public to learn how to save money and resources while building a better community. A variety of on-going presentations will offer techniques for retrofitting your home for energy/water efficiency, interpretation of food labeling terms, instruction about solar and natural gas power, gardening/composting assistance and toxin elimination in the home. Businesses are encouraged to sponsor this event by displaying their green products including high mpg vehicles. The Expo is a community wide effort, sponsored by Sustainable Indian River, Inc, the City of Vero Beach and IRC Solid Waste.

Venice Rookery by Linda Chancellor

Venice. Ahh beautiful Venice. Not Italy but our own West Coast of Florida. My husband and I chose Venice for a three day camping trip last month based on a magazine article from *Birds and Blooms* Feb/Mar 2004 issue about the Bird Rookery at Venice. A rookery is defined as a colony of breeding animals.

The Venice rookery is located on a small island in a small lake in a small public park and I do mean small. The 50 foot island is composed of mangroves and Brazilian pepper trees and is located a mere 40 foot from the shore. The article had shown a picture of the island covered with Great White Egrets, Blue Herons and Anhingas.

When we arrived, around one in the afternoon, there were very few birds but quite a few spectators. Some had binoculars, many had cameras and others just sat in lawn chairs. As our eyes focused on the island we spotted 2 nesting pairs of Blue Herons with adolescent chicks. The 2 foot tall chicks were constantly squawking to be fed. Then we noticed 3 Anhinga pairs with several downy feathered chicks in each nest. These baby birds were visible without the use of binoculars. Several Great Egrets displayed their beautiful breeding plumes of white and flew to and from the island carrying back sticks to build their nests. A few Black Crowned Night Herons flew in and disappeared into the interior of the island. The birds seem to be unaware of all the people gawking and photographing them. They even ignored the 3 foot alligator that swam lazily along in front of the island. Several hundred digital shots later we realized we had spent an hour and half watching all the activities.

The rookery is popular with visitors from around the world but many locals also stop by to watch the birds. I asked one local when was the best viewing time and was told I

should be there around 5:30 pm. We then went to the beach to look for shark's teeth and returned around 4:40 pm. The Blue Heron parents continued to bring back food to their demanding chicks and the Great Egrets continued to display their delicate white plumes to attract a mate. Soon several Little Blue Herons flew into the foliage along the edge of the lake and stood as if waiting for a signal. Their slate blue feathers were easily seen against the green leaves. Then several Snowy Egrets, with their yellow feet, started arriving. Then more Little Blues, this time up to 10 at a time would fly into the interior foliage of the island and then the ones from the edge of the lake joined them. The sky began to fill with more birds. Large groups of 50 or more white ibis, juveniles and adults, flew in and landed on the outer branches of the island. Then as if waiting their turn, the glossy ibis with their brown shiny feathers began to arrive. Their dark bodies and curved bills looked like silhouettes against the darkening sky of sunset. More birds flew in, circled, and then landed. It did not seem possible that they would all find room to roost for the night. The branches began to bend under their weight and still they came. The squawking was loud as they jockeyed for position. Some lost their footing and would scramble to find another place to land. Around 6:45 all became quiet. They were settled for the night.



What an experience. I wish I could have been there at sunrise to see them leave the rookery the next day. I later found someone had documented their sunrise visit to the rookery. Read about it at www.florida-tourism.net/florida-tourism-articles/venice-rookery.htm.

For more information and directions go to www.veniceaudubon.org then Rookery. The rookery can be visited any time of year but the best months are December through March, especially March to see the nesting.

Audubon House at ORCA

Great news! We are thrilled that on Tuesday **April 6** the Indian River Board of County Commissioners (BCC) will consider approval of the lease for construction of our Audubon House at the Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area (ORCA). The meeting starts at 9:00 AM at the County Administration Building, 1800 27th Street, Vero Beach.

Many of you have donated generously to Pelican Island Audubon, and more than \$230,000 has been raised for this project. In addition, PIAS has received more than \$105,000 in-kind assistance from a number engineering and architectural firms.

Having a dedicated center will facilitate collaborative efforts to preserve and protect the animals, plants, and natural communities in Indian River County through advocacy, education, and public awareness. Audubon House will benefit our community by providing space to train volunteers for the conservation lands purchased through the County's land acquisition program. In addition, educational programs, exhibits, demonstration gardens and easy access to the variety of habitats at ORCA for field trips will help PIAS to increase our citizen's awareness of the beauty of native Florida habitats and environmental issues.

Audubon House will be located on an acre of the ORCA Link property that was formerly an abandoned citrus grove and will be leased from the County. The new space will include much-needed public restrooms, a classroom, and an outdoor classroom with picnic tables that will 'double' as picnic area, as well as offices for both PIAS and the ORCA volunteer programs.

A new parking lot will be constructed on the south side of Oslo Road across from the existing ORCA parking lot to accommodate safer access to the conservation lands on the south side of Oslo Road. In addition, a special-needs

accessible boardwalk will meander from the parking lot to the Audubon House entrance. These improvements fulfill our County's major obligations to the Florida Communities Trust, which provided matching funds to the County for the purchase of the lands on the south side of Oslo Road.

We ask you to email or call all of our County Commissioners and let them know your valued support for these efforts. Likewise please try to attend the April 6th Board of County Commission meeting to demonstrate your support for this important private - public partnership.

Emails and/or Phone calls to our County Commissioners.

County Commissioners 'count' emails and phone calls of support. Your email need not be long.

Wesley Davis	wdavis@ircgov.com	(772) 226-1442
Joe Flescher	jflescher@ircgov.com	(772) 226-1919
Peter O'Bryan	pobryan@ircgov.com	(772) 226-1440
Bob Solari	bsolari@ircgov.com	(772) 226-1438
Gary Wheeler	gwheeler@ircgov.com	(772) 226-1433

April 6, 2010 Board of County Commission meeting at 9am.

Consideration of the lease approval will be at the beginning of the BCC meeting, following the pledge, invocation, and any proclamations **so please plan to arrive near 9am.**

Wear Green! We're asking everyone to wear green to show their support of this 'green' project' and, if possible, to sit together in the center area of the BCC chambers.

Please, however you can, express your support! It is important for PIAS.

Thank you,

Richard Baker, President

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get the ELC started, and Holly Dill has more than fulfilled Maggy's dream! As an outstanding leader, Holly developed the ELC from one employee to a campus including exhibits, boardwalks, picnic areas, and visitor center. Since 1992, the ELC has provided environmental learning experiences for 4000 students in the 1st, 3rd and 4th grades. Holly did not let a devastating lightning fire deter her mission as the main exhibit area, classroom, and bathrooms burned to the ground in June 2008. She has raised funds for a new building, now under construction.

Susan DeBlois received the Environmental Educator Award for her outstanding promotion of environmental awareness among her students. Amongst the projects worked on by the 10th, to 12th grade students in the Environmental Technology Program at VBHS are alternative energy sources, natural resources, meteorology, aquaculture, hydroponics, and basic science being taught to elementary schools by high school students.

Karen Deigl received the Environmental Citizen Award in her role as CEO of the Senior Resource Association that

operates the county's free mass transit system, which includes both the GoLine and the Community Coach. Her efforts have built a user friendly bus system that has increased ridership by 46%. The system removes vehicles from the road, which lowers CO2 emissions from our atmosphere.

Katherine Schenk was given the Eleanor Kleckner Award for being one of our most dependable and committed volunteers of PIAS. She has been generous with both her time and support given to the organization to promote the ideals of PIAS. Katharine has been a past board member most noted for her public relations work, writing press releases, handling the phone and our newsletter, the Peligrum. We will miss her as she plans to move to New Hampshire this summer.

Dr. David Cox received the President's Award. Dr. Cox has received many PIAS awards. As leader of PIAS' Rural Lands, Water, and Conservation Task Force, David has continually promoted the need for wildlife corridors, saving small wetlands, and preserving seagrasses and mangroves in our community. More recently he has been a major proponent for saving the greenways and blueways along the St. Sebastian River and the Indian River Lagoon.

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Darlene Halliday
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 Joe Carroll '11
 David Cox, Ph.D. '12
 Deborah Ecker '11
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 Susan Richardson '10
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 Pat Casselberry
 Joel Day
 Bill Halliday
 Tina Marchese
 John Orcutt
 Neil Stalter
Advisory Board Members
 Janice Broda
 Lynne Larkin
 Melissa Tripson
 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.



Red-shouldered Hawk at Captain Forster Hammock Preserve during ORCA volunteer walk on 3/24/10 by Bob Montanaro.



Spring is here, and our oak trees have begun to replace their old leaves and to flower simultaneously. Oak flowers are tiny and inconspicuous, but the hanging golden clusters of flowers called catkins impart a bronze or golden color to the entire oak.

Florida is home to approximately 26 species of oak trees, some of which grow only in the Panhandle. Eight oak species grow in Indian River County, and live oaks (*Quercus virginiana*) and laurel oaks (*Quercus laurifolia*) are the species most commonly used in landscaping. Oak trees are vital to birds and other wildlife for food and cover.

Acorns are relatively high in carbohydrates and are abundant on the ground in autumn and winter when other plant food sources are not available. Birds that feed on acorns include endangered scrub jays, blue jays, wild turkey, bobwhite quail, wood ducks, mallards ducks, woodpeckers, and crows. Mammals including white-tailed deer, gray squirrels, fox squirrels, flying squirrels, mice, voles, rabbits, raccoons, opossums, gray foxes, red foxes, bears, and wild hogs also feast upon acorns.

Oak leaves also are a food source for mammals and for insects. Deer and rabbits browse on the leaves, twigs, and young shoots of oaks. Many species of insects feed on oak leaves, and several species of moth larvae feed only upon oak leaves. During this time of year, migratory birds rest in oak canopies and search the branches, leaves, catkins, and hanging spanish moss for insects.

Many birds and mammals conceal their nests from predators in the dense foliage of oak trees and even use oak foliage in nest construction. Fallen oak leaves shelter the many small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians that live in the leaf litter that accumulates beneath oaks. Raking and removing oak leaves diminishes this habitat and breaks up the circle of life in which decomposed leaves fortify the soil and re-nourish the oak..

Self-mulching during the spring when new leaves replace old, oak trees can be an excellent addition to your landscape, if you have sufficient space. Not all oaks are of equal value to wildlife. Wildlife prefers white oaks like live oaks to red oaks like laurel oaks. The acorns of white oaks ripen in one year and are relatively sweeter, while the acorns of red oak require two years to mature and are more bitter.

Live oaks grow slowly when they must compete for light and nutrients, but, with care, grow quickly in a human landscape. Live oaks grow to be large trees so take care not to plant them too close to your home or under electric power lines where they are found in so many professionally designed landscapes approved by Indian River County planning professionals.

Thank you to Jens & Melissa Tripson for the refreshments at the April meeting. TOP FRONT COVER: Swallow-tailed Kites seen during the Padgett Ranch field trip by Bob Montanaro. See photos from the field trip at

www.pelicanislandaudubon.org

**Pelican Island Audubon Society
 2010 Membership**

National Audubon*	\$20	_____
Pelican Island Audubon**		_____
Individual	\$20	_____
Family	\$30	_____
Supporting Contribution	\$50	_____
Student***	\$5	_____
Total	\$	_____

***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: _____

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**

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