

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 48th Year Vol. 48 No. 1 January 2012

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

2012 ORCA Volunteer Class

Indian River County has purchased more than 9,000 acres of land for conservation and public enjoyment since 1991. These properties are part of a long legacy of land preservation and stewardship that began in 1903 with the creation of our first national wildlife refuge, the Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge.

The Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory, University of Florida, in concert with the Pelican Island Audubon Society, will offer its sixteenth volunteer stewardship course beginning on Saturday, January 28, from 1:30 to 4:30pm. This free, six-week class includes classroom presentations as well as field activities at the adjacent Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area, a 440-acre nature preserve located in southern Indian River County on Oslo Road east of U.S. Highway 1.

Learn about the human and natural history of the Indian River Lagoon, the ecology of our local ecosystems, zoology, ornithology, entomology, and botany from experts from FMEL, Pelican Island Audubon, Florida Atlantic University, and the Indian River Mosquito Control District. You will gain a broad foundation for a better understanding and future study of our local natural resources.

This class offers a unique opportunity to experience natural Florida. The unpaved and mostly unimproved nature trails at ORCA provide convenient access to a representative array of diverse plant communities including oak hammock, scrubby pine flatwoods, sand pine scrub, mangrove forest, submerged seagrass meadows, and freshwater wetlands. The ability to walk comfortably on uneven surfaces, a curiosity about our local natural resources, and a willingness to share what you learn are the class prerequisites.

Classroom teachers, home schoolers, girl and boy scout leaders, and other educators are welcome to participate and share their knowledge in their work. Volunteers at ORCA lead nature walks, perform trail maintenance, or work to control invasive pest plants.

Volunteers gain the opportunity to enjoy special educational workshops and guided field trips to other natural areas led by inspiring guest instructors, land managers, and leading researchers. Past workshops have focused on wading birds, bobcats, snakes, spiders, ferns, lichens, butterflies, and plant propagation.

Class size is limited so pre-registration is requested. Please contact Janice Broda by email at jcbroda@comcast.net to register or for more information.

January 9, 2012 ❖ 6:00 p.m.

Florida's Living Beaches

with Blair & Dawn Witherington

North Indian River County Library

1001 Sebastian Blvd. (CR 512), Sebastian

Get an introduction to the myriad plants, animals, minerals, and manmade objects found on Florida's 700 miles of sandy beaches. Blair Witherington is a research scientist with the FWC Fish and Wildlife Research Institute. He has BA and MA in biology from UCF and a Ph.D. in zoology from UF. Dawn Witherington is a graphic designer and illustrator trained at the Art Institutes of Colorado and Ft. Lauderdale.

January 16, 2012 ❖ 7:30 p.m.

Wading birds in the Everglades

with Dale Gawlik, Ph.D.

Vero Beach Community Center

2266 14th Avenue, Vero Beach

Dr. Dale Gawlik, Director, Environmental Sciences Program and Associate Professor, Biological Sciences at Florida Atlantic University, will present "Wading birds in the Everglades: cream skimmers and crumb pickers". This talk will summarize recent advances in research on wading birds and the link between wading birds and Everglades restoration. *Light refreshments to be served following both program.*

Field Trips

For more information or to make reservations, please call 772-567-3520 or visit www.pelicanislandaudubon.org

January 12 - Thursday - Florida Scrub-Jay Excursion - Guide: Joe Carroll

January 14 - Saturday - Green Cay Nature Center, Boynton Beach - Guide: Susan Boyd

January 18 - Wednesday - Environmental Learning Center - Guide: Heather Stapleton

January 21 - Saturday - Treasure Hammock Ranch - Guides: Sean Sexton & Jens Tripson

January 25 - Wednesday - North Sebastian Conservation Area - Guide: Jane Schnee

February 2 - Thursday - Sebastian Inlet State Park - Guides: Darlene Halliday and Ranger Terese Harber

Masthead photo: Osprey by Bob Montanaro.

Bird of the Month by Juanita Baker

Title: Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*) "Learning to Fly" by Lisa Willnow, Pelican Island Audubon and IR Photoclub member

What character this little guy exhibits balancing precariously on this palm frond, extending and flapping his wings to balance! Well, it could be a little gal, as both have identical plumage in all heron species. This is a Little Blue Heron but for the first year this species is all white. Juveniles are distinguished from other white herons by their bicolored (with black tip) bill and greenish legs. During their first molt, some blue feathers begin to appear on their wings and back. In perfect bilateral symmetry, all white feathers are gradually replaced with the blue ones of the adult bird. This fledgling has lost its down, but the primaries (flight feathers) have not fully erupted and are pink-shafted with nourishing blood. The base of the bill is colorless and will soon turn blue with a very black tip.

The white juveniles, more readily accepted amongst Snowy Egrets than Little Blue Heron adults, may increase their foraging success and be protected from predators by associating in mixed flocks. Through research, ornithologists determined that white is advantageous by being less visible against a bright sky. White feathers also reflect the sun better than dark ones, beneficial during their initial hot summer. Lisa Willnow took this photograph of one with a Sony DSC-H5 f/8, 1/500 sec, ISO 400, 15mm lens. At 21 days after hatching, the young are able to grasp branches and negotiate a move off the nest, remaining within calling distance for the parents bringing food. One more week and they are still begging for food, but can flap wings and take short glides. By 35 days they are capable of sustained flight but readily circle back to the nest area. Another week and they are making daily trips foraging in nearby wetlands. Not long to learn how to fly!



View a large color image and learn how to enter your own photos at www.pelicanislandaudubon.org

Swan Lake

by Linda Chancellor

Seven swans a swimming, six geese a laying; but wait, that is not the case here. Here in Sumter, South Carolina, at the Swan Lake Iris Gardens, it is eight swans a swimming. Actually eight species of swans swim the waters of this beautiful historic garden nestled in a mature cypress swamp encompassing 150 acres. They include: Bewick's Swan, Black Australian Swan, Black-necked Swan, Coscoroba, Mute Swan, Trumpeter Swan, Whistling Swan, and Whooper Swan. The garden is the result of two historic gardens gifted to the community by Hamilton Carr Bland and the A.T. Heath family.

The Swan Lake Iris Gardens brochure portrays people walking along sun dappled trails viewing hundreds of blooming Japanese Iris. But we weren't there for the flowers. It was the chance to photograph the swans that had brought us to the garden again. We had visited the garden previously in June 2010 but ended our visit early because of a very heavy downpour. Still we got some great pictures of the swans. This time, in early December, as before the skies were very cloudy, but without the threat of rain in the forecast. The cypress trees had lost most of their bronze, feathery leaves. Their magnificent buttressed trunks,



surrounded by dark water, climbed toward the gray sky. Silver Spanish moss hung thickly from their branches. Then as if in a fairy tale two pure white swans swam into view gliding slowly across the dark surface of the water.

Farther behind them were two large midnight black swans with orange/red bills. We were the only ones there that morning and the birds seemed quite content to just ignore us as we took our photos. As I viewed the two white swans in my viewfinder, I noticed they had different colored bills. Several of the species look very similar and it is the marking of their heads and bills that help one to identify the species. The swans continued to glide silently across the dark water creating silvery ripples in their wake. They approached the shallows near the wooden bridge and broke into loud honking. What a racket from such elegant creatures but the honking stopped as quickly as it had begun and the silence of the swamp returned.

We walked along paths of mature Magnolias, hollies and blooming camellias till we arrived at the wooden covered bridge, that spans the highway, that takes one to the other side of the garden. Interpretive signs for each species are located along these waterways. We also saw a Blue Heron, Mallards, Wood Ducks and visiting Canada Geese but it is the beautiful swans that truly are the reason I hope to return to this garden again.

Photo by Linda Chancellor.

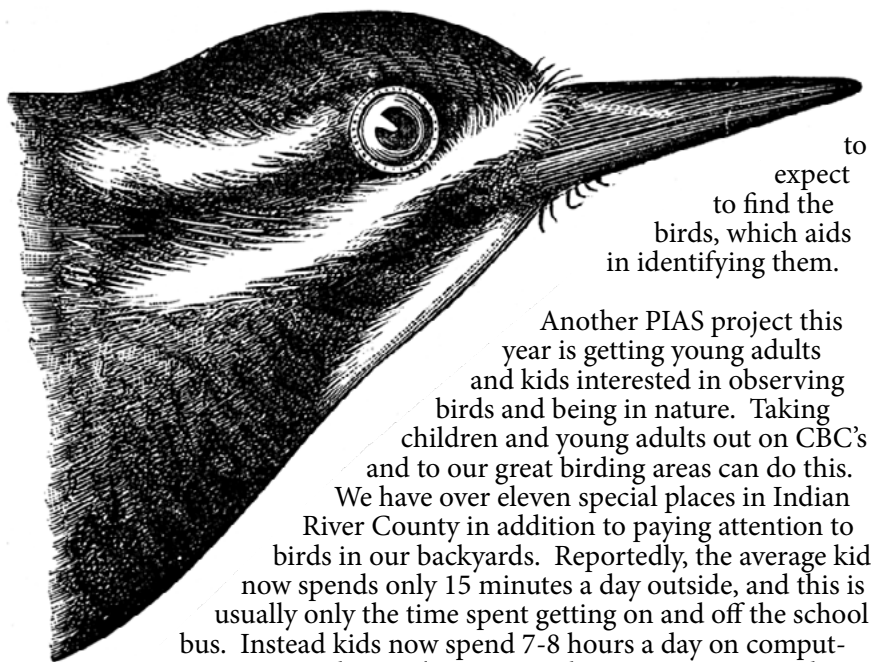
When was the last time you saw a Red-headed Woodpecker?

Audubon volunteers completed another Christmas Bird Count (CBC)! On Jan 2nd, 48 folks participated in the South Brevard Christmas Bird Count, which also includes Sebastian, Fellsmere, and Indian River Estates out to the Ocean shore. This year's leader was Dee Fairbanks, who took over from Roy Book, both of whom did an outstanding job of organizing this and past years' counts. The participants were divided up into twelve teams, each with a leader. The teams together identified 154 bird species, 151 of which were American Birding Association countable. Teams search a specific area within a 15 -mile circular radius in which to conduct their bird counts by riding in cars, riding swamp buggies, boats, and/or walking from predawn to sunset. I was pleased to hear Team 7 found the Red-headed woodpecker off Roseland Rd near Ronald McDonald Campground. Other notable species were: Indigo Bunting, Northern Flicker, American Avocet, and Prothonotary Warbler. It was a fun day followed by dining at Marsh Landing in Fellsmere, where the counts from all 12 teams were totaled.

Celebrating its 112th year, Frank Chapman, an officer in the young Audubon Society started the first CBC in New York in 1900 for a bird count instead of the traditional Christmas hunt for dinner with guns. Previously, folks, mostly women had come together in communities to stop the fashion industry from slaughtering birds for hat feathers. Because of these people and Chapman's influence with President Roosevelt, Pelican Island became the first national wildlife refuge in 1903. Today over 60,000 volunteers participate in one of the largest, longest-running wildlife census in the world from the Arctic Circle to New Orleans to South America.

Two years ago, CBC data confirmed what observers had suspected that 58 percent of bird species are moving their winter ranges farther north at about one mile every year than just 40 years ago, which follows the charted temperature increases we are experiencing from global warming or climate change. Using sophisticated mapping technology, scientists can predict what habitats and species are at greatest risk from climate change impacts. Perhaps with this knowledge we can protect remaining habitats or create alternative habitats when this is the only option. One of the greatest gifts we can give our children and grandchildren is a healthily, sustainable future.

While the South Brevard CBC includes Sebastian and Fellsmere, we would like to reactivate or as Maggy Bowman once stated in the Peligram, "resuscitate" the Vero Beach CBC, which started in 1962, abandoned in 1973 and resurrected in 1996 for 3 years only and then was discontinued. The Vero Beach area includes some great birding areas in our County. You do not have to be a great birder to participate. In fact, going on one of the teams is the best way to learn birding from experts, where you learn the places and habitats where



to expect to find the birds, which aids in identifying them.

Another PIAS project this year is getting young adults and kids interested in observing birds and being in nature. Taking children and young adults out on CBC's and to our great birding areas can do this. We have over eleven special places in Indian River County in addition to paying attention to birds in our backyards. Reportedly, the average kid now spends only 15 minutes a day outside, and this is usually only the time spent getting on and off the school bus. Instead kids now spend 7-8 hours a day on computers, games, and TV. Their parents have not experienced nature either, and so we have two generations of Nature-Deficit Disordered Children. Many children and adults are scared of bugs, snakes, and wildlife, get lower grades and are prone to obesity and depression. Exposure to nature improves wound healing, and reduces blood pressure, tension, depression, and attention deficit hyper-activity disorder.

If you would like to participate in working with young birders and help reactivate the Vero Beach CBC, please give our office a call- 772-567-3520 and let Bob Montanaro or me know of your interest.

Richard Baker, President

Porcelain Birds now online

The over 200 museum quality porcelain bird reproductions by Doughty and Boehm can now be viewed online. These works of art are for sale with all proceeds benefiting Pelican Island Audubon. Prices range from several hundred to several thousand dollars with birds ranging in size from several inches to over three feet in height. View the collection at www.pelicanislandaudubon.org

ELECTRONIC DELIVERY ENCOURAGED!

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Announcements

◆ Many Thanks: We appreciate the excellent home baked cookies by Tina Marchese, Elsbeth Eibs and Judy Orcutt at our Sebastian and Vero Beach meetings.

◆ Thank you to Tina Marchese, Chair, assisted by Lorraine Sutherland, Sharon Marble, Elsbeth Eibs and Nancy Irvin and others for bringing such great dishes for the potluck.

◆ PIAS is offering guided sunrise or sunset pontoon boat rides with refreshments at Blue Cypress Lake. Please call 772-567-3520 for reservations and instructions. Richard & Juanita Baker, Tour Leaders.

◆ Birder volunteers needed Jan. 25 & 27 from 8:30-11AM at the wastewater treatment facility, 8405 8th St. Help high school students learn birding skills. Call Leah Blythe at 772-240-4684 or blythe.leah@gmail.com.

◆ Take part in The Great Backyard Bird Count, February 17-20, 2012. For more info, visit www.birdcount.org

◆ Thanks & appreciation to the following individuals who helped with 4 days of sand pine cutting on Jane Schnee's property to improve for Scrub-Jay habitat: Richard & Juanita Baker, Bob Bruce, Graham Cox, Peter Sutherland, Tina Marchese, Steve Goff, Bill Loftus, Joe Carroll, Glen Wong and Michele Stabile with help from the USFWS.

Pelican Island Audubon Society Officers & Directors

Officers: President **Richard H. Baker, Ph.D.**, 1st Vice President **Bob Bruce**, 2nd Vice President **Susan Boyd**, Recording Secretary **Darlene Halliday**, Corresponding Secretary **Peter Sutherland**, Treasurer **Steve Goff** — Elected Directors: **Joe Carroll '14**, **Deborah Ecker '14**, **Nancy Irvin '13**, **Bill Loftus, Ph.D. '12**, **John Orcutt, Ph.D. '12**, **Toni Robinson '13** — Appointed Board Members: **Keenan Adams**, **Bill Halliday**, **Tina Marchese**, **Don Morris**, **Jane Schnee** (*Billi Wagner - Ornithological Consultant*)

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Pelican Island Audubon Society

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Pelican Island Audubon**

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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*

NAME: _____

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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

Plant of the Month by Janice Broda

Elderberry

Often-overlooked as a landscape plant is the American elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* subsp *canadensis*), even though this lovely native plant is found throughout much of North America, produces delicious berries, and provides for food and cover for wildlife. Its stunning white flowers are borne in large flat-topped clusters (umbels) that can be up to eight inches across and have been said to resemble queen anne's lace.

A large shrub or small tree, elderberry is fast-growing, most often with multiple graceful arching branches that provide cover for wildfire. In Florida, this beauty often blooms and fruits throughout the entire year and can grow to be twenty feet tall. Elderberry thrives in moist or wet soil and grows fastest in full sun but is tolerant of light shade. Its compound foliage has a delicate texture with opposite, elliptical serrate dark green leaves that are paler on the underside.

Its lovely, fragrant flowers attract butterflies, bees, and other pollinators. Fritters, teas, and intoxicating beverages like champagne can be made from the beautiful flowers.

All kinds of creatures esteem its very juicy, small blue-black berries (drupes) including deer, rabbits, squirrels, turkeys, quail, mourning doves, mockingbirds, many other birds, and humans. Humans, for hundreds of years, have been enjoying the "fruits" of this plants in a variety of ways. Wines, liqueurs, pies, strudels, cobblers, jams and jellies have long been made from the sweet berries that are rich in vitamin C and flavor.

Medicinal uses date back to the time of Hippocrates. Recent research shows that extracts of its fruits have significant antiviral properties and activate the immune system. Elderberry extracts are readily available in health food stores.

Its species name, *nigra*, refers to its black fruits. Its genus, *Sambucus*, is derived from the Greek term, sambuce, an ancient musical instrument, and references the soft pith that can be easily removed from twigs to make flutes and whistles. The leaves, twigs, seeds, and roots of this plant, however, contain cyanide-inducing glycosides.

Elderberry sometimes is thought to have magical properties. In the wizardry of Harry Potter, the most powerful wand is known as the "Elder wand". In your landscape, elderberry can work its magic attracting birds, bees, butterflies, and other wildlife.



Photo: Janice Broda