

**Pelican Island Audubon Society**

# Peligram

- 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 47th Year Vol. 47 No. 8 November 2011

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

**November 15, 2011 ❖ 6:00 p.m.**

## Arctic Meltdown with Dr. John Trefry

**North Indian River County Library**

1001 Sebastian Blvd. (CR 512), Sebastian

*Please note, this program is on a Tuesday.*

### About the Program

Sea ice is one of the most captivating and beautiful features of the Arctic. Its comings and goings in coastal areas signal the onset of long winters and the pure delight of endless summer days. The geographical extent of sea ice in summer has decreased by about 30% during the past 30 years with notable decreases in multi-year ice. Some scientists predict that by mid-century the Arctic Ocean will be ice free during late summer each year. Such a seasonal meltdown may have far reaching consequences including impacts related to maritime transportation, oil spills, coastal erosion, northern migration of commercial fish species and loss of threatened and endangered species. Dr. Trefry will tell the story of an Arctic Meltdown in the context of his studies of the impacts of human activities, such as offshore oil exploration and production, and climate change in the Arctic.

### About the Speaker

Dr. John Trefry is a chemical oceanographer and professor at Florida Institute of Technology. His research focuses on the global cycling of metals with an interest in metals as a resource and as pollutants. Dr. Trefry was a co-discoverer of deep-sea hydrothermal vents in the Atlantic Ocean in 1985 and has sampled and determined metal concentrations in 400° C (750° F) vent fluid from many locations. He has made extensive studies of muck and metals in the Indian River Lagoon and has been carrying out geochemical studies in the Arctic for the past 12 years. Dr. Trefry was the medalist of the Florida Academy of Sciences in 2002, presently serves on the U.S. Department of the Interior's Outer Continental Shelf Scientific Committee and is an associate editor of the journal *Marine Chemistry*.



**November 21, 2011 ❖ 7:30 p.m.**

## Owls of North America

with Sam Fried

**Vero Beach Community Center**

2266 14th Avenue, Vero Beach

Undoubtedly the most mysterious and little seen family of birds in North America, the owls hold our fascination, as they have for thousands of years. Learn about all 19 species that inhabit our continent and listen to their eerie calls. Sam Fried has over 1000 photographs and 54 feature articles published in field guides, books, newspapers and magazines worldwide. He is the founder of Flights of Fancy Adventures, LLC, a birding, photography, natural history and golf travel company offering small group, low cost, high quality trips to North, Central and South American destinations. Now co-authoring a book on photographing birds in flight and also working on a Florida project to help golf clubs make their properties more bird friendly.

### Field Trips

**For more information or to make reservations, please call 772-567-3520**

**or visit [www.pelicanislandaudubon.org](http://www.pelicanislandaudubon.org)**

**November 17 - Thursday - Begum Point - Guide: Ralph Monticello - Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the west end of Fred R. Tuerk Drive in Indian River Shores**

**December 3 - Saturday - Joe Overstreet Landing - Guides: Susan Boyd & Bob Montanaro - possibility of seeing Whooping Cranes - Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the TA Truck Stop, corner of SR 60 and 90th Avenue, for carpool. Snacks & restrooms available at fish camp at Joe Overstreet Landing. Start back approximately at noon.**

**December 10 - Saturday - Indrio Savannahs - Guides: Susan Boyd & Bob Montanaro - Expect to see Florida Scrub-Jays - Meet at 8:00 a.m. in Indrio Savannahs parking lot at 5275 Tozour Road off of US-1 in northern St. Lucie County. End approximately between 11:00 a.m. and noon.**

**December 14 - Wednesday - Viera Wetlands - Guide: Jack Casselberry - A prime viewing area for numerous bird species - Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the McDonalds at SR512 & I-95 for carpool - Will stop for lunch in Viera before returning.**

Masthead photo: Black-bellied Plover in breeding plumage by Bob Montanaro.

## Bird of the Month by Juanita Baker

Title: A Rainbow Of Color by George Bollis

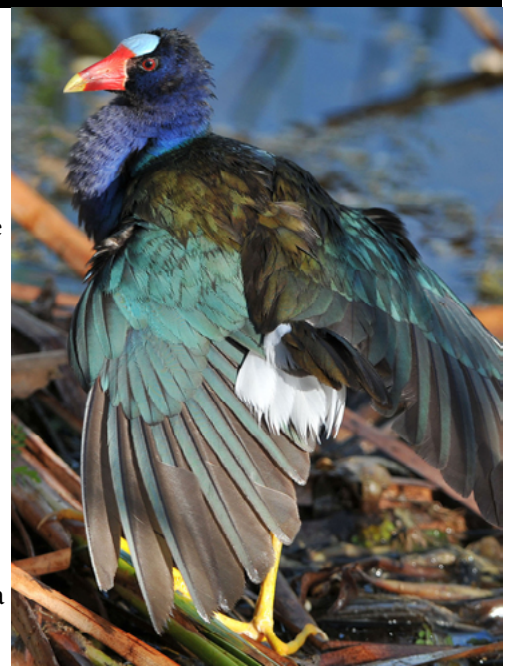
More typically seen from the front or side, a Purple Gallinule lurking in the shadows looks predominantly purple. George Bollis's photograph highlights the wings bathed in sunlight, revealing colorful feathers of green, turquoise and blue. The close-up, taken with a Nikon D300, 400 mm lens at 2.8 illustrates other identification marks. Notice the pastel blue shield above the beak, a feature birdwatchers look for to distinguish an adult of this species from both the Common Gallinule (until this year known as Common Moorhen in America) and the introduced Purple Swamphen, both having red frontal shields. The Purple Gallinule also differs in having a central white area on the tail, whereas the Common has white feathers to each side, a trait evident when viewing the birds from the back.

Bright yellow elongated toes coupled with the birds' naturally low body weight (one half pound) enable the Purple Gallinule to walk gracefully atop lily pads. This member of the worldwide rail family prefers to stand on or clamber about the vegetation, rather than swim, while feeding in freshwater marshes.

Plants, such as buttonbush, water willow, saw grass, smartweed, sedges, rice, pickerel weed, water-lily and now the exotic invasive water-hyacinth and hydrilla dominate their diet. One way they capture prey is to roll back the floating leaf edge with their bill, then holding it down with their toes, pluck clinging aquatic insects.

Parents build floating nests from interlocking plant material and change places every 34 hours incubating and turning a clutch of 6 to 9 eggs. To facilitate the parental exchange, they bend a blade of grass and weave a bridge to maneuver past each other.

Most bird species adapt to and only thrive in particular habitats where they can find their special food. You'll never see a Purple Gallinule in a typical retention pond cleansed of aquatic vegetation by herbicides with the shoreline mowed down to the water's edge. *View a large color image and learn how to enter your own photos at [www.pelicanislandaudubon.org](http://www.pelicanislandaudubon.org)*



## After The Storm by Linda Chancellor

Remember the "Storm," you know the storm with no name that descended over Vero Beach October 8th. The storm that dumped over 11 inches of rain. If you are a beach scavenger, as I am, you look forward to walking the beach after such a storm. Parking our car at the day use area of Sebastian State Park, my husband and I crossed over to the beach and found it deserted. It was a few hours after high tide and the six to eight foot gray-green waves were crashing onto the beach at regular intervals. It was the beginning of sea bean season and the place to look for them was in the wrack (the debris line left from previous tides). Sea beans (drift seeds), seaweed, shells, trash and other treasures can often be found in the wrack.

This time there were also many whole and broken sea turtle eggs. A movement in the sand caught my eye. It was a baby sea turtle, fully developed, slipping backwards into a ghost crab hole. I grabbed one of the broken surf clam shells, left by a fisherman, to scoop him up. The baby turtle was probably five inches long and very active. The markings on his fins were elaborate and almost geometric. He may have just hatched but I knew if he did not get to the water



Sanderling by Bob Montanaro.

he would not have a chance. I released him into the foamy white surf.

Further down the beach I observed a flock of about ten Sanderlings (*Calidris alba*). These small grey birds with white bellies belong to the Sandpiper family. They ran back and forth in front of the incoming waves and would use their sharp bills like a sewing machine needle to probe for tiny invertebrates in the wet sand. To avoid getting their feet wet they sometimes would fly a short distance revealing a black stripe on their white wings. One Sanderling was even probing a broken turtle egg. I looked up and realized we no longer had the beach to ourselves.

Two men were using metal detectors in hopes of maybe finding Spanish treasure and two other men carried surfboards as they approached the ocean. I continued to check the wrack for sea beans and found a number of sea-coconuts (*Manicaria saccifera*), two Tropical Almonds (*Terminalia catappa*), and several coins vine seeds (*Dalbergia sp.*).

The rough waves had brought many natural objects ashore but also had carried discarded man made items. One was a five-gallon bucket, which we filled with trash on our return walk. Our tally for the day included three beer bottles, one olive oil bottle, a rum bottle, several plastic bottles, several odd flip flops, a fishing lure and float, lots of plastic tops that had come from soda/water bottles and many plastic tops from half-gallon/gallon containers. Grab a bucket or a bag, maybe two and take a beach walk. You never know what you will find.

## Best Chapter Award – Some of PIAS 2011 Achievements

PIAS received the “Best Chapter of the Year Award” at the October meeting of Audubon of Florida (AOF) Assembly. It is the second time that PIAS has won this award - 2007 being the first. Key factors in the award application were:

**1. Chapter shows increasing membership:** A model to increase our chapter membership - our affiliate chapter - Grand Harbor Audubon Society (GHAS). Visionary folks led by residents Neil Stalter, Don Morris, Deb Fletcher, Joan Klimm, Jim Bercau, Bette Nielsen, Glenn Rose and Vicky Tulloch at Grand Harbor Golf and Beach Club, were real-life pioneers in the state in establishing our first local affiliated chapter. Their membership, which is added to PIAS's, has expanded from 50 members to around 200. Our own activities also have added members - **increasing from 548 in 2007 to 995 in 2011** (88 are PIAS chapter-only members).

**2. Chapter annual report demonstrates sound financial status:** Besides raising funds for the Audubon Community Center, PIAS continues to raise operating funds to support a half-time office position. We have been creative in finding sources for funds while furthering the mission of the organization: **A.** PIAS cookbook Pelican Bites by Darlene & Bill Halliday; **B.** Fundraising pontoon boat rides at Blue Cypress Lake by Bob Bruce; **C.** Reflection of Blue Cypress book, note cards; **D.** Donation requests, Passing the hat at meetings; **E.** Grant funds; and **F.** Selling the porcelain sculptures. GHAS raises its own operating funds.

**3. Chapter accomplishes innovative conservation and education programs:**

- **Jay Watch Program**, begun by Joe Carroll and led now by Roz James, successfully demonstrates a field and bird watching oriented biology project. Three areas have been monitored continuously. Others sites were followed for shorter periods thanks to field time by many volunteers (David Cox, Brian Barnett, Bill & Darlene Halliday, Peter Sutherland, Jens Tripson, Nancy Irvin, Tim Towles, Gary Hickman, Billi Wagner, Berth Viviano and Jim Shea).

- **Audubon Community Nature Center adjacent to the Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area (ORCA) on Oslo Road.** Since 2007, PIAS has raised \$266,000 for an Audubon Community Nature Center, and an additional estimated \$200,000 in pro bono work for surveying, permitting, engineering, and legal work. Our center will serve as an outreach center for the County's public natural areas including the Great Florida Birding Trails, and will provide an eco-tourist destination focused on bird watching, hiking, canoeing with PIAS's six canoes and a kayak, nature photography, and art. The center will provide offices for PIAS and ORCA and a classroom and meeting space for community, environmental, and educational organizations for nature-based social, educational, and recreational programs.

- **Legally challenged Indian River County's dredge and fill project at the Oslo Road Boat Ramp near the Indian River Aquatic Preserve.** PIAS has opposed the county's project to dredge a three-foot deep channel through a major seagrass flat in the Indian River Lagoon, and filling three acres of mangrove swamp to put up a parking lot for deep-draft boats in a federal shellfish and conservation area adjacent to an aquatic preserve in a major manatee protection zone. This ramp and launching area has been

used by small, shallow-draft boats for over 50 years. The seagrass beds are critical nursery areas for snook, tarpon, spotted seatrout & red drum and feeding areas for manatees. Federal Agencies (EPA, USCOE, USFWS, and USMFS) also oppose the project as currently proposed. A \$5,000 Fund for Wildlife grant and designated donations covered the legal costs.

- **Indian River County Water Initiative.** An AOF \$1,000 grant with the PIAS's matching funds supported a 46 page illustrated booklet authored by PIAS board member, Deborah Ecker, available on our website or in print from our office. It describes in layman's terms where our water comes from, how it is used, and how we manage our county's waste and stormwater. Debby has made many community water educational presentations.

- **Florida Bird Photo of the Month**, published in our Peligram and the Scripps newspapers, encourages bird photography, an interest in birds, involvement in nature, and new chapter members. See bird photos and essays by Juanita Baker on our PIAS website.

- **Speakers, Field Trips, and Scholarships.** To better reach our north county members, monthly meetings are now held Vero Beach and in Sebastian. For the 2011-12 season, all board members are leading or arranging a field trip; increasing our field trips to 19 from September to March. See the brochure or the PIAS website. In addition, we will be doing routine guided trips to our namesake, the Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge. Under Susan Boyd's leadership and a donation, PIAS continues to give two \$1,000 scholarships to local graduating seniors for college expenses.

- **Quality of Life Indicator Project.** This project attempts to measure progress towards a sustainable future. Under Dr. Graham Cox's leadership and with the help of 23 advisors from the county, including two chambers of commerce, United Way, church, industry, agriculture, and minority-community leaders, Indian River State College, and the school district PIAS initiated an innovative, inclusive community-based process to survey and measure 'QOL' indicators to guide the county towards an environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable future.

Many people work together on a variety of initiatives to make PIAS an outstanding Audubon chapter!

*Richard Baker, President*



Accepting the award for Chapter of the Year on Saturday October 15 are, from left, Pelican Island Audubon's Graham Cox, Peter Sutherland, Lorraine Sutherland, Richard Baker, John Orcutt, Juanita Baker, and Bob Bruce along with Audubon of Florida chapter coordinator Jacqui Sulek and Executive Director Eric Draper.

## Announcements

- PIAS board member John Orcutt has joined the Audubon of Florida board. Jens Tripson has stepped down from the position after dedicated service.
- Many Thanks: We appreciate the excellent home baked cookies by Bea Tomlinson, Juanita Baker, Lorraine Sutherland, Judy Orcutt, and Elise Carter at our Sebastian and Vero Beach meetings.
- Museum quality porcelain bird reproductions for sale with all proceeds benefiting Pelican Island Audubon. View the collection at [www.pelicanislandaudubon.org](http://www.pelicanislandaudubon.org)
- 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.
- To receive the Peligram electronically, please e-mail [piaudubon@bellsouth.net](mailto:piaudubon@bellsouth.net) to initiate delivery. PIAS will not release your e-mail address to any third party.
- The ANNUAL HOLIDAY POTLUCK is Monday, December 12, 2011 starting at 6pm at the Vero Beach Community Center, 2266 14th Avenue. Bring your favorite dish to serve 8 people. Please bring plates & utensils. Drinks will be provided.

### 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*)

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.

Pelican Island Audubon Society	
National Audubon*	\$20 _____
Pelican Island Audubon**	
Individual	\$20 _____
Family	\$30 _____
Supporting	\$50 _____
Contribution	\$ _____
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*

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](mailto:piaudubon@bellsouth.net)

## Plant of the Month by Janice Broda

### A Real Florida Christmas Tree

Sand pines (*Pinus clausa*) were the Christmas trees of Florida pioneers. PIAS Board Member Jane Schnee, who grew up in Florida, recently purchased a 10- acres of scrub for conservation and for the benefit of the 4 endangered scrub jays that reside on the property.

Jane remembers having sand pines as Christmas trees and is offering everyone the opportunity to enjoy a native sand pine as their 'Charlie Brown' Christmas tree. Tall pines provide perches for raptors to hunt scrub jays, so as many pines as possible need to be removed from Jane's scrub.

Sand pines are slender, with short (2-3"), soft needles and small oval cones. In optimal conditions, they can grow to be 60 feet tall with a diameter of 12 to 18 inches. Almost always, mature sand pines lean gracefully and distinctively in the direction of the prevailing winds. Many young sand pines are lush, symmetrical, and straight, but older trees tend to be to be uneven in shape and even twisted – in short, 'Charlie Brown' Christmas trees with distinctive character and the need for loving, creative decoration.

Your tree may come partially pre-decorated, as sand pines can begin producing their 1-3" long cones at 5 years of age and can form two or three whorls of cones per year. Their species name, *clausa*, means closed and refers to their pine cones.

As the common names suggests, sand pine prefer well-drained, sandy soils. Acidic, infertile sites along ridges and hillsides and in upland, open wooded areas are where they thrive. Sand pines are farmed for fuel and pulpwood.

Their natural range is limited to Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and North Carolina. The sand pines in peninsular Florida are said to be of the Ocala-type. On these trees, the pine cones open, for the most part, in response to fire (are serotinus) and can remain for many years, closed and holding their seeds, upon the trees. However, about 20% of the cones on these trees do open without fire to release their seeds for birds and small mammals to eat. The heavily-branched sand pine canopy creates habitat for numerous woodpeckers, songbirds, and birds of prey, as well as grey and flying squirrels.

Volunteers from PIAS and from the US Fish and Wildlife Service will be available at Jane's scrub on Friday, November 25, on Saturday, November 26, on Saturday, December 3, and on Saturday, December 10, from 8:30am to 3:30pm to cut the sand pine of your choice for you for free, though a donation to PIAS would be appreciated. Donations will be used to restore and maintain Jane's scrub for scrub jay habitat. Jane's scrub is located about ½ mile west of US Highway 1 on Barber Street in Sebastian, across from the Park Place subdivision.

*Photo: Janice Broda*

