

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 47th Year Vol. 47 No. 6 September 2011

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

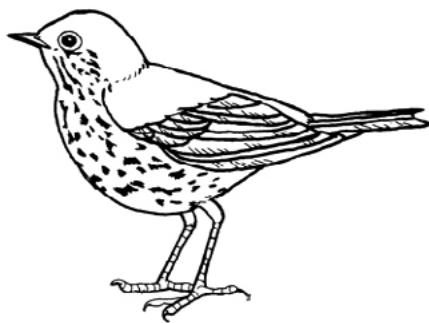
September 19, 2011 ❖ 7:30 p.m.

Song Sparrows with Christin L. Pruett

Vero Beach Community Center

Song Sparrows in western North America exhibit an amazing array of plumage colorations, body sizes, and song dialects. Dr. Pruett, an evolutionary biologist at the Florida Institute of Technology, is interested in how this population-level biodiversity arose and how it is maintained. The talk will focus on populations that occur from the tip of the Aleutian Islands of Alaska to southern California and will include information about birds and birding in the Aleutian Islands. The September 19

general meeting at the Vero Beach Community Center, 2266 14th Avenue, starts at 7:30pm. The public is invited to attend. *Enjoy light refreshments following the program.*



Field Trip

Captain Forster Hammock Preserve

September 24 ❖ Saturday ❖ 7:30 a.m.

Guide Tim Towles will lead a field trip in search of fall migration warblers - Meet at the parking lot entrance to Captain Forster Hammock Preserve at 7:30 a.m. on South Jungle Trail. Participants may want to bring insect repellent for the mosquitoes. For more information please call 772-567-3520 or visit www.pelicanislandaudubon.org

Guided Pontoon Boat Trip on Blue Cypress Lake

As a fundraiser, PIAS is offering guided sunrise (6:45-10:15 am) or sunset (4:00-7:30 pm) pontoon boat rides with refreshments at Blue Cypress Lake to view the many Ospreys nesting, birds, and other wildlife. Space is limited to 7 persons only each day. Put a party of your friends together. Please call 772-567-3520 for reservations and instructions. Richard & Juanita Baker, Tour Leaders.

“VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR” HONORED BY GRAND HARBOR AUDUBON SOCIETY

In recognition of her tireless efforts in watering and caring for the plants in the Nature Gardens, Agneta Ricks has been awarded the “Volunteer of the Year” honor by the Grand Harbor Audubon Society for 2011. The new award will be given annually by the board of the 200-member Audubon chapter.

In citing Mrs. Ricks, a year-round resident of Grand Harbor, the board expressed both its admiration and gratitude for her “peerless dependability” in handling her duties. A group of some 50 members cheered her award. She will be honored by a permanent brass plaque displayed in the Grand Harbor clubhouse.

A team of board members selected Mrs. Ricks from more than 20 other “champion” volunteers who served hundreds of hours in the projects of the nature organization. The team comprised president Deb Fletcher, butterfly garden chair Don Morris, native plants garden chair Joan Klimm, and immediate past president Neil Stalter.



PROGRAMS

2011 - 2012

FIELD TRIPS

Vero Beach Community Center

2266 14th Avenue, Vero Beach
- all meetings start at 7:30 p.m. -
December potluck starts at 6:00 p.m.

2011

September 19 - Monday - Song Sparrows: A Unique Little Brown Bird with Christin L Pruet, Ph.D., Florida Institute of Technology

October 17 - Monday - Nature Deficit Disorder: What Is It And How Do I Cure It? with Kristen & Mike Beck, Florida Outdoor Center

November 21 - Monday - Owls of North America with Sam Fried

December 12 - Monday - Vero Beach Community Center - Holiday Potluck - 6:00 p.m.

2012

January 16 - Monday - Avian Ecology/Water Birds with Dale Gawlik, Ph.D., Florida Atlantic University

February 20 - Monday - Snail Kites with Wiley M. Kitchens, Ph.D., University of Florida

March 19 - Monday - Right Whale Research with Ed Gerstein, Florida Atlantic University

April 16 - Monday - Florida's Paleontological History - Focus on Vero Beach with Fred Mazza, Paleo Discoveries

May 21 - Monday - Bird Art Through the Centuries: Humans Conveying Their Love of Birds with Juanita Baker

North Indian River County Library

1001 Sebastian Boulevard (C.R. 512)
Sebastian
- all meetings start at 6:00 p.m. -

2011

October 10 - Monday - Sea Beans with Ed Perry, co-author with John Dennis of "Sea-Beans From the Tropics: A Collector's Guide to Sea-Beans and Other Tropical Drift on Atlantic Shores"

November 15 - Tuesday - Arctic Meltdown: Climate Change in the Arctic with John Trefry, Ph.D., Florida Institute of Technology

December 12 - Monday - Vero Beach Community Center - Holiday Potluck - 6:00 p.m.

2012

January 9 - Monday - Florida's Living Beaches: A Guide for the Curious Beachcomber with Blair and Dawn Witherington

February 13 - Monday - Indian River County's Water with Deborah Ecker - local water expert - Plus a short review of the Indian River Lagoon Spoil Islands Project with Marc Virgilio, IRL SIP Coordinator

March 12 - Monday - Wildlife Photography with George Bollis, President, Indian River Photo Club

April 9 - Monday - Right Whale Research with Jim Moir

May 14 - Monday - The St. Sebastian River - A Trip Down the River with Kristen & Mike Beck, Florida Outdoor Center

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

2011

September 24 - Sat - Captain Forster Hammock Preserve - Guide: Tim Towles for fall migration warblers - Start time 7:30 a.m.

October 2 - Sun - Sebastian Inlet State Park - Guide: Juanita Baker

October 22 - Sat - West County Wastewater Treatment Facility - Guide: Peter Sutherland

October 29 - Sat - St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park - Guide: Judy Elseroad

November 17 - Thur - Begum Point - Guide: Ralph Monticello

December 3 - Sat - Joe Overstreet Landing - Guides: Susan Boyd & Bob Montanaro

December 10 - Sat - Indrio Savannahs - Guides: Susan Boyd & Bob Montanaro

December 14 - Wed - Viera Wetlands - Guide: Jack Casselberry

2012

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

January 14 - Sat - Green Cay Nature Center, Boynton Beach - Guides: Susan Boyd & Bob Montanaro

January 21 - Sat - Treasure Hammock Ranch - Guide: Sean Sexton and Jens Tripson

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

February 2 - Thurs - Sebastian Inlet State Park - Guides: Darlene Halliday & Ranger Terese Harber

February 4 - Sat - Barrier Island Sanctuary - Guide: Tina Marchese

February 11 - Sat - Quality of Life Indicators: Exploring differing perspectives in Indian River County - Guide: Graham Cox

February 18 - Sat - Tour IRC Water Treatment Facilities - Guide: Deborah Ecker

February 25 - Sat - Fort Drum Conservation Area - Guide: Billi Wagner

March 8 - Thur - Padgett Creek Ranches - Guide: Ralph Monticello

March 22 - Thur - Wakodahatchee Wetlands, Delray Beach - Guide: Bill Loftus

March 24 - Sat - Three Lakes Wildlife Management Area - Guide: Tim Towles

Meetings and Field Trips are open to all members and to the public.

Birding Indian River County's Treasures

Audubon of Florida has a new initiative of identifying each chapter's "Special Places," see (<http://fl.audubon.org/specialplaces.html>). Not being able to choose just one, we have selected 5 to highlight this year with field trips and special information on our website. Over half of the bird species found in North America (969) are found in Florida (562). Nearly half of these have been reported as seen on www.eBird.com in Indian River County (276). One commonly sees many birds i.e. wood storks, great egrets, great blue herons, hawks around the ditches and canals along the roads we take to get groceries, mail a letter, go to work, or walk in our backyard. Truly, one of the best places to bird is "Right here in Indian River County." In addition, we are blessed with at least eleven great birding sites in our county and five others nearby. A general description, driving instructions and maps, for each and many with field trip pictures are found on our website:

http://www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org/birding_home_page.html (In addition, a brochure listing the public Indian River County conservation lands can be found on this same website).

PIAS's Five Special Places as part of the Audubon of Florida Program:

1. **Oslo Riverfront Conservation Area (ORCA)** one of the Great Florida Birding Trails (GFBT), provides 440 acres along the Indian River Lagoon in south county comprised of scrubby pinewoods, coastal hammock, freshwater and saltmarsh/mangrove wetlands, and a springtime bonus, a bird rookery, on an adjacent spoil island. Birds easily seen include wading and shore birds, osprey, owls, and eagles. Canoes are available for PIAS members to explore the nearby lagoon. Through the adjacent Florida Medical Entomology Laboratory, University of Florida, and PIAS, a Volunteer Stewardship Core Class starts on January 28th to train volunteers on all aspects of the environment for our county conservation lands. It meets Sunday afternoons 1:30 to 4:30 pm from January 28-March 3, 2012. Contact Class Coordinator, Janice Broda with any questions: jcbroda@comcast.net, 772-778-7200 x173. More information at <http://www.ourorca.org/index.htm>

2. **St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park** including the St. Sebastian River is one of the largest of Florida's state parks, but one of the least used. Also on the GFBT, this is a great place to see red-cockaded woodpeckers, Bachman's sparrows, and scrub-jays. This park is a top birding locations during migration to catch a view of swallow-tailed kites, various songbirds, hawks, hummingbirds, robins, sandhill cranes, wood storks, eagles, American kestrels, and meadowlarks. There are a number of horseback riding and hiking trails, and a canoe dock near a primitive camping site on the St. Sebastian River.

3. **Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge** is the nation's first wildlife refuge being so proclaimed by President T. Roosevelt in 1903 (and namesake of our chapter). PINWR is continuing to function as a major rookery for the brown pelican, roseate spoonbill, and many egrets and herons. The refuge has been expanded around the island itself offering various hiking trails, observation towers overlooking Pelican Island and wetlands. The park is under new management and PIAS will be assisting in leading scheduled tours in the near future. Bob Montanaro, our office administrator, has produced an excellent documentary program and website featuring two years watching osprey mating, nesting, and raising their young (<http://www.ospreywatch.org>). For more information or to schedule a presentation, please e-mail contact@lunarcabin.com

4. **Blue Cypress Lake** is one of Indian River County's biggest secrets, one of its jewels. The only way to see the great wildlife and scenery there is via a boat (launching from the landing at the county park on the west side of the lake adjacent to Middleton Fish Camp). Although many bird species are found there, it is best known for its large population of nesting ospreys. During one January, over 150 nests were documented. It is a county park and primitive tent and RV camping sites are available free with adjacent toilets and showers. Additional information http://www.ircgov.com/Departments/General_Services/Parks/Blue_Cypress_Park.htm and in a book published by PIAS, *Reflections of Blue Cypress* available in the Vero Beach Book Center or our office (less than 100 copies left)

5. **Sebastian Inlet State Park** is a GFBT with over 180 species recorded including waders and shorebirds with views of the ocean to see gannets, jaegers, shearwaters, and petrels, and mangrove migratory songbirds. PIAS has a short video for beginning birders taken from this site by Bob Barbour and Juanita Baker to help identify storks, herons, egrets, osprey, laughing gulls and terns. Visit our website or YouTube http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SqR6S03-cp4&feature=player_embedded to see it.

PIAS has greatly expanded the number of field trips for the 2011-12 season to about 1 every week from September through May. Listed in this issue and on our website, see: http://www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org/programs_&_field_trips.htm including our expanded speaker series at the North County Library so our north county members won't have to travel so far. These trips are not just for birders but also for photographers, butterfly, insect, plant, nature lovers, curious adventurers, and outdoor exercisers. Come join us on at least one of them! Don't miss our special places!

Richard Baker, President

Bird of the Month

by Juanita Baker

Black-necked Stilt in Flight by J.R. Williams (May 2011)

Photo taken 5-26-11 @ Broadmoor Marsh

Camera: Canon 50D w/ EF 100-400mm. 1/2000 sec., f/5.6, ISO 160



This elegant black and white patterned bird, sleek and streamlined, rises from its nesting habitat. J.R. Williams expertly photographed it in May at the T. M. Goodwin Waterfowl Management Area of Brevard County. Black-necked Stilts (*Himantopus mexicanus*) also frequent freshwater, muddy habitat in our county, such as sod farms and Egret Marsh Stormwater treatment system where they can be seen daintily walking on long slender pink legs, foraging for invertebrates. Stilts mate, nest, and raise their young in full collaboration after migrating here at the end of February from their overwintering areas—perhaps central Mexico, Cuba or Puerto Rico.

They seek salt marshes, shallow lagoons, ponds and wetlands with muddy shores for nesting. Choosing an area at the water's edge, they make a shallow "scrape" and then toss lining materials over their back into this depression. If the water rises, both

birds insert twigs beneath the nest to keep it high and dry. In the nest cup, four camouflaged tawny olive eggs with brown speckled markings fit snugly, narrow ends toward the center. Incubation begins only after the last egg is laid, so that all hatch at the same time. Parents take turns regulating the eggs' temperature by either making contact with their 'brood' patch (featherless area on the breast) to warm them or wetting their breast feathers to cool them. To regulate their own body temperature, they pant and fluff feathers. No eggs are left uncovered more than a minute. Surprisingly, 1-2 days before hatching, from inside the shell come "Peep, Clicking, and Whine Calls" through a hole pecked with an 'egg' tooth that disappears soon after the baby stilt hatches! All the youngsters are immediately capable of walking and feeding in shallow water. As soon as all hatch, the entire brood is led into vegetation for protection.

Catbird in the Park by Crystal Samuel (June 2011)

Taken with a Nikon D3000 at White City Park in White City, St. Lucie County

Wildlife photography takes patience, an understanding of natural light, and readiness to shoot the moment the scene, the bird's posture and surrounding elements, form a pleasing, artistic composition. This image by Crystal Samuel shows how backlighting can contribute to a photograph...the color of subjects changes depending upon the time of day and the reflection of surrounding colors. In full sunlight, the gray catbird lives up to its name, but this particular early morning, the catbird glows a lovely deep bluish color.



Catbird fossils have been found in Bell Cave, AL dated from the late Pleistocene (400,000 years ago) and Raddatz Rockshelter, WI from the Holocene (10,000 years ago). The catbird breeding range begins in northern Florida and goes up into Canada. This one on spring migration is in typical habitat, close thickets where it gleans insects and fruit from leaves and branches.

Named after its mewing call this unfortunately calls to mind one factor contributing to the decline of this and other small bird species: feral and free-roaming domestic cats. Understandably 94 million US pet cats amounts to millions of birds lost yearly. A recent Smithsonian study determined cats to be the main cause of mortality of baby gray catbirds. Knowledgeable cat owners keep their cats indoors to protect native birds as well as their pets. Indoor cats live twice as long, not being harmed by dogs, cars, diseases, fights with raccoons, and other trauma.

Title: Roseate Spoonbill Preening by Linda L. Leonard (July 2011)
member Pelican Island Audubon and Indian River Photo Club.

The glow from early morning sunrays highlights the Roseate Spoonbill's (*Platalea ajaja*) gorgeous shades of crimson. Carotenoid pigments in the spoonbill's food are credited with tinting the feathers. Linda Leonard photographed (Nikon 300S camera, 300 mm lens) this adult at the Indian River County Water Reclamation Plant on 8th street, wetlands open to the public.

From a distance and in flight, silhouette and pink plumage recall flamingoes, but the spoonbill is smaller with longer, straight bill and no black on spread wings. Like all birds, spoonbills maintain feather quality with a daily regimen, starting by stretching their head and bill up to reach the highest position possible on their lower neck. Contrary to popular

belief, birds do not oil their feathers; they simply spread around something akin to conditioner. This substance keeps the feathers pliable, not waterproof. Waterproofing (and insulation) involves aligning the feathers so the barbs and barbules on each one interlace, forming an intact plumage shield over the skin. When this shield is compromised, say from a wound or petroleum/oil contamination, they are vulnerable to hypothermia, lack buoyancy, and become too sodden for flight, leading to death.

Laws enacted in 1900 (Lacey Act) and 1918 (Migratory Bird Treaty Act) ended the plume trade that nearly wiped out this and other species. Threats from draining wetlands continue. The needs of birds are not considered by water managers, their mandates are to provide water for humans and prevent floods, with results that tend to contradict the natural wet and dry seasons on which birds depend. The spoonbills' nesting attempt in the Everglades failed this year. There had been no reports of Spoonbills nesting on Pelican Island since 1858, until this year. They also established a new rookery on an island (safety from terrestrial predators) near TM Goodwin WMA.

Read more about these photographs, including viewing large color images of each along with how to enter your own photographs at

www.pelicanislandaudubon.org



Paddle the Hummingbird by Linda Chancellor

I decided to name him Paddle. If I give him a name maybe he will survive.

It was a beautiful morning and the water looked like glass. Grabbing our gear, Sam and I launched our kayaks and paddled into the deeper water of Cod Creek. There was something small floating on the smooth water surface. As we got closer I realized it was a hummingbird. Sam used his paddle to lift the bedraggled fellow from the water. He gently deposited the hummingbird into my hands and I realized the he was still alive.

With the hummingbird resting on the floor of my kayak I paddled quickly back to our dock. Using a soft cloth I tried to dry his feathers and keep him warm. He needed food to survive. Hummingbirds need a constant source of energy, approximately every 15 minutes, to sustain their rapid heart rate. We had a source on hand as we use 'instant nectar' to feed the hummers until nectar flowers start to bloom. While holding him with one hand I guided his beak into the tube of the feeder. Immediately his small white tongue* darted out and into the nectar. His tongue was no thicker than a piece of thread. He darted his tongue several more times into the energy source.

As the sun began to dry his feathers their chartreuse iridescent colors began to glimmer on his back and head. Because of his small size and downy grey and white feathers on his breast, I determined he was a juvenile Ruby Throated Hummingbird. Sitting on a towel his tail feathers fanned out to resembled a miniature turkey tail. He sat there almost as in a stupor, with his eyes closed, his whole body heaving

with each heartbeat. His heartbeats were so quick I could not even count them. Every couple of moments I would rub my finger lightly down his back and repeated the name I had given him, Paddle. As I coaxed his beak into the feeder, he would frantically use his tongue to extract the energy sweet nectar. As he grew stronger he would open his eyes at any noise such as my voice saying Paddle.

Sam brought a small electric light out to warm him. He kept improving and finally was able to stand on his feet. How tiny he was, his legs and feet were the thickness of a very small wire. His bill was only 1 inch long. His feathers were like glowing emeralds. I now had been nursing Paddle for an hour and half. He looked stronger. It had been 13 minutes since his last feeding. Sam tried to coax him to stand on a small branch and instead he took flight.. He flew from the table to the ground, then to the pine tree. As quick as Paddle had entered our lives he now left us. But what an experience he left with me.

**Scientists at the University of Connecticut have recently observed, through high-speed video, the way hummingbirds drink nectar. Their forked tipped tongue unfurls a fringe of hair-like structures that rolls back trapping the nectar as it withdraws from the nectar source. Smithsonian Magazine July/August 2011*

Photo: Linda Chancellor



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

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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**, **Jane Schnee**, **Neil Stalter** (*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	
2011 Membership	
National Audubon*	\$20 _____
Pelican Island Audubon**	
Individual	\$20 _____
Family	\$30 _____
Supporting	\$50 _____
Contribution	\$ _____
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

Plant of the Month by Janice Broda

The Real, Native Marsh-Mallow

The mallow, or Malvaceae family, includes more than 200 genera and more than 2,000 species. Many mallows are familiar and important to us including okra, cocoa, and the commonly-planted ornamental hibiscus of Chinese origin, *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* – the Flower of the City of Vero Beach.

Saltmarsh mallow, *Kosteletzykia pentacarpos*, or for that matter, upland cotton *Gossypium hirsutum*, would be much more authentic Florida icons. These plants are among the 44 mallows native to Florida in 14 genera.

Saltmarsh mallow blooms from late spring through fall with pale pink flowers about 3 inches across with yellow, columnar stamens. By its common name, you can guess that the lovely, native plant

grows in the brackish marshes

that once covered much of what is now Vero Beach.

Its leaves are an attractive grey-green and triangular in shape and often hairy.

This perennial shrub

grows to be from 3

to 5 feet tall and

is short-lived but

likely to repro-

duce itself readily

in hospitable habitats.

Not surprisingly, its gener-

ic name, *Kosteletzykia* com-

memorates a Czechoslovakian

botanist, Vincent Franz Kosteltzky

(10801 - 1887). Its current species

name, *pentacarpos*, refers to the 5 (penta)-lobed dry

capsule of seeds from which it reproduces. Its 'old'

species name, *virginica*, gives us a hint of its extensive

geographical range. The range of this sturdy, saltmarsh

plant includes the coastal states with saltmarsh from

Texas to New Jersey.

A wide variety of insect pollinators have co-evolved

with this nectar-rich plant. Historically, its leaves have

been eaten raw or cooked, tea has been made from

its flowers, and the tuberous root has been used as a

vegetable or dried, ground into a powder, made into a

paste, and roasted to make the sweet confection, marsh-

mallow.

Researchers are investigating the use of this carbon-

storing taproot as a source of biofuel and as a buffer

between upland and wetland areas as the sea level rises

in the future. In your yard right now in a sunny, moist

place, perhaps near a down spout, you can grow this

real Florida hibiscus with or without brackish water.

