

White Bird



DATE & MEETING 2005-06 CHANGES

The meetings will be held on the **THIRD WEDNESDAY** of the month from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. The December meeting will be held on December 14.

The Palm Room at the Charlotte County Cultural Center located at 2280 Aaron Street, Port Charlotte FL will be the 2005-06 meeting place.

From the President An update on Babcock Ranch.

I'm sure many of our members having heard that Babcock Ranch has been purchased, fear there is nothing else that we can do. This is most definitely incorrect. The ranch has not been purchased until a contract is signed and Kitson and Partners cannot sign the contract until two very important things happen. And you, can make sure at least one of these things does not happen. See below.

The first thing that needs to happen is that the DEP agree to purchase 74,000 acres of the ranch to be preserved. Without that money Kitson and Partners cannot afford to purchase the ranch

The second thing that needs to happen is that both Charlotte County commissioners and Lee County commissioners have to agree to change their comprehensive plans to allow a city twice the size of Punta Gorda to be built in the southwest corner of the ranch.

This entails, changing the current density of one building per 10 acres, to allow a city of 50,000 people to be built up on the remaining 19,000 acres.

At first glance preserving 74,000 acres seems like a pretty good deal, on further examination is an unmitigated disaster.

Firstly, the comprehensive plan was developed to ensure that all development took place within the prearranged areas where roads, schools, hospitals, shops, restaurants and all the other infrastructure that we need was available. There is still enough space left within this planed area to take care of our development needs for the foreseeable future without creating a new city for which there is no infrastructure.

Mr. Kitson claims the new city will have all the infrastructure it requires. But that is in 20 years time when the city is complete. Until then any children that live there will have an hour long bus trip to school in Charlotte County, which is currently struggling to find premises for it's own scholars and if you live there and want a pint of milk, you will have to drive to Fort Myers.

We are currently struggling to maintain and upgrade the infrastructure in the existing comprehensively planned area and having to find the money to provide divided highways and all the infrastructure new city would need can only result in huge tax increases for us the current residents of Charlotte County.

What would happen if a 'Katrina' type hurricane threatened our area. Can you imagine, 50,000 people trying to leave the ranch and turn onto a two lane highway which is already in use as one of the main evacuation routes from Fort Myers, it would be a parking lot real quick.

Secondly creating this new city also creates a precedent. There are several other large ranch owners who would immediately ask that this precedent is used to allow them to create similar developments. Incidentally these Ranch owners, along with the builders who will build these developments, were actually the ones speaking in favor of Mr. Kitson's vision at our County commission meeting.

So while accepting the Kitson plan may preserve some of Babcock Ranch it will probably destroy most of the undeveloped land in Charlotte County east of interstate 75.

On the surface, Kitson and partners appear to be giving 74,000 acres and 10,000,000 gallons of water a day to the people of Charlotte County in return for a small city in the corner of the ranch. In reality they're selling 74,000 acres to the state who will purchase it with our money and the 10,000,000 gallons of water does not belong to Kitson and partners it already belongs to the state.

You may ask, "What can I do to make a difference?" The answer is very simple we need to make sure that at least three of a county Commissioners will vote against changing the comprehensive plan and approving Mr. Kitson's vision. Please send an e-mail to your county commissioners at the addresses below and tell them your opinion. Not only will it save you a lot of money in future taxes it will help save the 'Charlotte County Way of Life'.

Sara Devos = Sara.Devos@Charlottefl.com
Tom D'Aprile = Tom.D'Aprile@charlottefl.com
Adam Cummings = Adam.Cummings@Charlottefl.com
Tom Moore = Tom.Moore@Charlottefl.com
Matthew DeBoer = Matthew.DeBoer@Charlottefl.com

Paul Holmes.

October Events

October Meeting

The October Meeting will be held on Wednesday October 19 at 7:00 PM in the Palm Room of the Charlotte County Cultural Center. John Reynolds will make a presentation on wild plants that were used by local Indians and early settlers for food and medicine. He will also talk about the plants that grow on the preserve where he lives.

October Field Trip **John Reynolds' Preserve**

Saturday October 22, 7:00 AM

Meet at the Winn-Dixie parking lot on Highway 17, east of Punta Gorda to form car pools. Bring a lunch. There will be some walking with John Reynolds, the preserve owner.

October's meeting and our monthly Audubon adventure feature an extraordinary man and a fascinating place. On October the 19th in our new meeting venue the Charlotte County Cultural Center, you will have the opportunity to meet John Reynolds. John is a native born Floridian, an expert in both history and botany. He has an incredible knowledge of native plants and how they were used both as food and medicine by the indigenous Indian population and the early settlers. John will bring examples of these plants with him and assure you this is one meeting you don't want to miss.

As our Audubon adventure on October the 22nd we will be visiting the 50 acre preserve, near Nocatee, (Which John told me means, 'Where are we,') where John and his wife Forest live. This was the land that John was born on and he knows every square inch. It contains wetlands, Bay Heads, a small lake and various other types of habitat. John and Forest have worked very hard to create some trails so that we can share their piece of paradise. You'll see a lot of birds and other interesting creatures and for those that don't want to venture into the jungle, you're welcome to sit quietly and watch the bird feeders at the side of the lake.

So make sure you join us at our east departure point, Winn-Dixie parking lot on Route 17 at seven o'clock for an interesting adventure. If you want to join us for a picnic by John's lake, then bring a sandwich. And don't forget the bug spray.

National Estuary Program: Charlotte Harbor—A Citizens Update

Wednesday, October 26 from 8:30 to 11:45 AM
Presented by the Peace River Audubon Society, and sponsored by the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program. Directions: Event will be held in rooms "H" & "F" at the Cultural Center of Charlotte County; 2280 Aaron St. in Port Charlotte.

Follow signs for the Cultural Center located east of US 41/ Tamiami Trail. Travel east on Olean and turn north on Aaron. The rooms are near the entrance off of Gertrude Ave. Admission to the meeting is free, but registration is required. You can register by sending an e-mail to : update@peacriveraudubon.org, or by phoning (941)639-3879.

November Events

Walk-About: Ollie's Pond

Tuesday, November 8
8 a.m.— 11 a.m.

A one mile loop around Ollie's Pond. Led by a naturalist from the Charlotte County Parks and Recreation Department. Alligators, birds and numerous reptiles and amphibians can be observed.

Meet at the park entrance.

Location—Port Charlotte

Travel west on 776 from the US41/776 intersection. Turn left on Collingswood (at the Citgo station). Turn left on Bly Street. The park is located at the intersection of Field and Bly Streets.

Phosphate Mines Bus Trip

Saturday, November 12

Cost \$5.00

Meet at the cleared downtown mall in Punta Gorda west of US41 north-bound (across from Dean's). Coffee from 7:15 to 7:30. Bus departs at 7:30 a.m.

Free lunch

Reservations Required: Contact Betty Talburt at (941)766-0354, or by e-mail at talburtb@peacriveraudubon.org

November Meeting

The November Meeting will be held on Wednesday November 16 at 7:00 PM in the Palm Room of the Charlotte County Cultural Center. Bill Byle, Environmental Specialist for Charlotte County will provide an overview of phosphate mining issues.

November Events Continued

Barbeque at Omni Landfill

Saturday, November 19, 7:00 AM

Field trip and barbeque.

Meet in the parking lot of Sweetbay on US 41 south of Burnt Store Road to car pool.

Free, but reservations are required. Contact Carol Mac Dougall at (941)629-9120 or by e-mail at macdougall@peacerveraudubon.org

WHAT YOUR BOARD'S BEEN DOING...

Representatives of Peace River Audubon society have attended and participated in on your behalf meetings of, The Babcock Preservation Partnership, the coast-to-coast wilderness Trail committee, The Environmental Lands Acquisition Advisory Council, the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center board meeting. We have attended meetings of the Charlotte County board of county commissioners and the Lee County board of county commissioners in support of preserving Babcock Ranch.

We have made several presentations of the Charlotte County Way of life. Members of the board are working hard on preparations for a citizens update program on the 26th of October and preparations for the monthly meeting and various field trips.

We're working very hard to make peace River Audubon Society an interesting and rewarding group to belong to. So far this year the participation of our members has been extremely disappointing. So please reward our efforts by attending the events, functions, meetings and field trips that we offer you.

Audubon Education Programs

The Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center and Peace River Audubon Society will be combining efforts to provide opportunities for families to become involved in the joys of "Birding." We will have an introductory "Family Day" at CHEC on January 14, 2006 where people will be provided with an introduction to birding and some active time on the trails.

Participants will be given a brief introduction to birding, examples of tools used in birding, the vocabulary of birding, and some time in the field.

If you are interested in becoming a part of this and have some free time on an occasional Saturday morning please sign up for the education committee. You don't have to be an expert birder to be a part of this event. The teacher's guide provides the information you will need. We will need people to present information, support the presenters by being available to help students and presenters (expert birders not into public speaking?), help distribute materials and supplies, and accompany participants on the trails.

The people I know who are the naturals at bird identifica-

tion and love birding usually tell me they got their start as children. This is an opportunity for us to give the children of the Charlotte County area their start in what can be a life time of enjoyment.

To volunteer for this project, call Jan Walker at (941)639-3879, or Email me at walkerj@peacerveraudubon.org.

Past Events

Picnic at Chec

Saturday, October 1st, a small but enthusiastic group gathered at Chec for our annual picnic. We braved the warm October weather and were rewarded with a hearty welcome by the resident eagles who have just returned. We were happy to observe that nature is recovering from the ravages of our friend "Charley". The trails have started to come back, the Caniff Building is usable again, and the new water resource building is operating. After a walk we all enjoyed a picnic and social time in the screen house.

Laurel Road Landfill

On Tuesday, October 4, the group headed north, and our first stop was at the Laurel Road Landfill. We all enjoyed seeing Lynn Bates, driving in right behind us, as she joined us from Arcadia. Although it threatened to rain, we had good birding weather. The landfill produced bald eagles, bluebirds, a red shouldered hawk, dancing sandhill cranes and others. The cranes were throwing tufts of grass at each other, and leaping into the air, which Lynn informed us is part of their mating ritual. Next we continued north to the Celery Fields. There we saw several limpkins, blue-winged teal, glossy ibis, and many wading birds. We had the usual discussion about how to tell if we were seeing a greater or lesser yellowlegs. Unfortunately, another yellowlegs never showed up to help us solve the problem. All of us would agree that the fulvous whistling ducks were our favorites. One mother had 14 precious black and yellow striped ducklings. We enjoyed a picnic lunch at the gazebo at the celery fields. Oh yes, we settled the question of the yellowlegs by marking down the great, on advice from master birder, Bill Havill, who had his scope! Come and join us on our next trip! Enjoy the outdoors and learn about birds with other birders.

Phyllis Doggett

Future Events

Walk-About Tippecanoe Park Tuesday Dec. 6

Monthly Meeting Wednesday Dec. 14

Christmas Bird Count Saturday Dec. 17

Buggy Ride at Corkscrew Saturday, February 18

Cost \$20.00 Limit 19 people Reservations required

Check the web site at peacerveraudubon.org for more information.

The Peace River Audubon Society
PO Box 510760
Punta Gorda, FL 33951-0760

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View the White Bird on:
www.peaceriveraudubon.org



*November 2005
White Bird*



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2005-06 OFFICERS & DIRECTORS:

(941)

President	Paul Holmes '05	833-3337
Vice President	Carol MacDougall '07	629-9120
Secretary	Mary Ann Hughes '06	637-7855
Treasurer	Walt Williams '07	235-3352
Additional Directors:	Phyllis Doggett '06	575-4009
	Betty Talburt '06	766-0354
	Frank Walker '07	639-3879
	Jan Walker '07	639-3879

Please:

Check the "Exp" date on your address label!

"0405" means your PRAS and/or National membership expires in Apr '05 (both organizations stop mailings after 2-3 months). To save the cost of sending reminder post cards, if your expiration date has or will expire, **please** use the application below to renew your membership.

MEMBERSHIP

Please direct all membership changes, etc. to Chairman Betty Talburt at 766-0354.

The Peace River Audubon Society is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. Our Federal tax ID number is 59-2190872. We do not engage a professional solicitor and 100% of the funds generated by this request will be used to support our Chapter programs. Our registration number with the FDA Division of Consumer Services is SC-040701.

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL

Join us to protect the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the wildlife we love...help us protect Florida. Members receive the "White Bird" newsletter with local news articles, local meetings, field trips, bird walks, and special events.

Visit our web site: www.peaceriveraudubon.org

Name: _____
Organization: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____ - _____
Phone: () _____ E-mail: _____

MAIL \$10 CHECK WITH THIS FORM DIRECTLY To:
PRAS, PO box 510760, Punta Gorda, FL 33951-0760

To join National Audubon: Visit their web site: www.audubon.org