

Peace River Audubon Society

White Bird

October 30, 2006 Volume 30, Issue 2

Cathy Olson, Editor
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www.PeaceRiverAudubon.org

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(941)

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President's Message

by Paul Holmes, PRAS President

Together we can make a difference.

On November 7th, you and I, the members of Peace River Audubon Society have an historical opportunity to promote a positive future for Charlotte County. If it passes, the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Referendum, known as Conservation Charlotte, would help ensure that some of the most important undeveloped areas of our county remain green. When you look around much of Florida and see the results of uncontrolled urban sprawl, you see the danger that faces Charlotte County in the immediate future. Unless action is taken now, it is almost certain that the Charlotte County way of life will be changed forever.

In my opinion, this referendum is our final chance to guide the future development of our county. As land prices increase it will become harder for the county to purchase and preserve land. It is therefore with a great sense of urgency, that I urge each and every member of Peace River Audubon Society to go to the polls and vote yes for the Conservation Charlotte referendum. In addition, encourage your relatives, friends, and neighbors to also vote yes for the referendum. As a member of Audubon you are in part a custodian of these lands and the protector of the creatures that live there. However, to many of our neighbors, this may be seen as just another tax, another tax they don't have to vote for. It is up to us to explain that even if they have no interest in the beauty and the wildlife of Charlotte County, in the long run voting for the referendum will not only increase the value of their property, help protect and supply clean drinking water, and improve the quality of our air, but it will save them money from reduced infrastructure.

With the expected low turnout at the polls on November 7th, if the 540 members of Peace River Audubon Society all vote in favor of the Conservation Charlotte referendum it would greatly increase its chance of passing.

Remember, because birds can't vote, they need people like us to vote for them. Because birds can't speak, they need people like us, to speak for them. And because they can't protest at the loss of their habitat, they need us to do what we can to protect them.

So once again, I urge you, not just for us, but for future generations, to go out and vote 'YES' to the 'Conservation Charlotte' referendum and to take as many people with you as you possibly can.

November 7 walkabout: Tippecanoe Environmental Park

Please join PRAS members and Charlotte County Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources staff on a walkabout around Tippecanoe Environmental Park. This approximately 350 acre park is owned by Charlotte County. This preserve was acquired with the help of a Florida Communities Trust grant, largely written by Peggy and Elliot Kampert, former PRAS members. It contains scrub, scrubby and mesic flatwoods, creeks and mangrove fringe. Birds that may be seen here include Florida scrub-jays, bald eagles, red-shouldered hawks, Northern harriers, clapper rails, little blue herons, snowy egrets, red-bellied, downy and pileated woodpeckers and a host of other birds. We should be able to find quite a few winter migrants in the flatwoods. Come join us on a tour of this wonderful preserve located within Port Charlotte.

November 18 Field Trip to Fort Myers Beach

Please join PRAS Directors Frank and Jan Walker on a field trip to Fort Myers Beach where we hope to see oodles of shorebirds. Birds commonly seen in the area include western and least sandpipers, ruddy turnstones, plovers, killdeer, dunlin, sanderlings, willet, dowitchers, etc. We will also likely see laughing and ring-billed gulls, royal terns, and osprey as well as palm warblers and other more common birds. This will be a great trip for honing your skills with shorebirds!

November 15 General Meeting Natural History of Manatees

Please join us at our monthly meeting for a Florida manatee presentation by Monica Dorken from the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center. Monica is sure to educate and delight her audience as she speaks about this mammal native to our local waters. The Florida (West Indian) Manatee is the state marine mammal and is beloved animal to many.



Each year, more landowners realize that they can sell their land and make a lot more money than they could by continuing to operate as a ranch or grow citrus. While some of these lands are appropriate for development, there are areas of environmentally sensitive land that should be preserved. Growth can certainly have positive effects on our economy and lifestyle, but the Charlotte County human population is predicted to more than double by the year 2030. With this projected increase, we must reflect on the potential effects on traffic, water quality and quantity, recreational opportunities, and overall quality of life. While many other communities have begun to address these issues, Charlotte County is one of the only coastal counties in south and central Florida without a local land conservation program.

Not only are preserved lands essential to maintaining beautiful green areas for us to picnic, hike, and birdwatch, but they provide a home for birds and other creatures we love, help protect and filter our drinking water and air, buffer us from hurricanes, and will help stop some of the over-

crowding and traffic congestion we experience by directing growth into appropriate areas. Further, land preserved in public ownership is far less expensive to you, the taxpayer, since it does not require the infrastructure (e.g. roads, police, etc.) that would be required if more houses were built.

If this referendum passes, the cost to an owner of a home valued at \$200,000 minus the homestead exemption would be \$35 per year. *A dime a day is certainly a very modest amount for all of the benefits we would receive.*

However, the fate of this referendum is now in your hands. If these lands are not purchased soon, many of the county's most precious natural lands will disappear and others will become too expensive to purchase in the future. It is also a good use of our money since collected funds can be matched by State and Federal grants allowing us to double or triple our impact.

So get out to the polls and bring your friends and family and VOTE YES!

Education Committee
by Jan Walker, Education Chair

We are looking forward to an active year. We will have at least two programs in partnership with the Girl Scouts of Charlotte County where we will introduce girls between the ages of 8 and 12 to birding. We will take the scouts to one of our local birding areas and give them an opportunity to try using binoculars and field guides.

Two "Family Days" are planned at the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC) where experienced birders will be available to take families on the trails and share their birding skills.

We also hope to provide Audubon Adventures to six schools with the assistance of a grant from the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program.

Would you like to help with the Girl Scouts or Family Days at CHEC?

Please Email Jan Walker: education@peacriveraudubon.org

Volunteer of the Month: October 2006

The PRAS Board selected **Sandy Artman** as the Volunteer of the Month for October 2006. Last year Sandy helped with refreshments at every meeting. Not only did she donate coffee and cookies with set up and been actively helping with the silent auction and has taught the Girl organization could help of great volunteers like Sandy!



for October 2006. helped with refresh-general member did she donate coffee she also helped clean up. She has ing with the silent volunteered to help Scouts. Our or-not exist without the

October Walkabout at CHEC
by Phyllis Cady

We started our first walkabout of the year with a great turnout; 26 participants. We were fortunate to have two naturalists from CHEC guide us (Chris Salmonsens and Chet Lewis). Phyllis Cady, who volunteers at CHEC and who is a PRAS Board member, brought up the rear with the birders. We saw osprey, red-shouldered hawks, anhinga, wood storks, belted kingfishers, northern flicker, and a great-crested flycatcher among others. Camera enthusiasts snapped photos, so it seemed there was something to suit everyone's interests. After our walk we had a picnic in the screen room.

We also made plans for a spontaneous boat trip on the Peace River and an estuary wading adventure at Ponce De Leon Park. Twelve people signed up and we met at the Punta Gorda Marina where boarded CHEC's pontoon boat, "Miss Charlotte." The trip was led by Chris Salmonsens and Captain Bill. We were shown how to use a secchi disk to measure water clarity and a refractor to measure salinity. We all enjoyed the relaxing ride as we meandered through the mangroves and rushes east of the bridges. We saw mottled ducks, yellow-crowned night herons, belted kingfisher, spotted sandpiper, white ibis, gray catbirds and osprey.

Next, we went wading with nets and buckets to see what critters live in the estuary. We found blue and horseshoe crabs, king's crown conchs, shrimp, flounder, and others. Chris conveyed facts about each of the animals and we looked through several microscopes.

We ended our adventure with a nice picnic. Thank you CHEC for taking us on the adventure.

PRAS Walkabouts

- **November 7** (Tues): Tippecanoe Environmental Park
- **December 5** (Tues): Ollie's Pond
- **January 2** (Tues): Audubon-Pennington Park
- **February 6** (Tues): Oyster Creek Environmental Park
- **March 6** (Tues): Hathaway Park
- **April 3** (Tues): Amberjack Environmental Park
- **May 3** (Tues): Charlotte Flatwoods Environmental Park

***Meet at the entrance at 8 AM ***

PRAS Field Trips

- **November 18** (Sat): Fort Myers Beach * South
- **December 16** (Sat): Christmas Bird Count
- **January 20** (Sat): Prairie Pines Preserve * South
(limit 15 People)
- **February 17** (Sat) Babcock-Webb Wildlife Management Area. Meet by pay station (Tuckers Grade: I-75 Exit 158, head 1/4 mile east).
- **March 10** (Sat): Stormwater Treatment area *East
Hendry County
- **April 21** (Sat): Fort Desoto Park *North
- **May 19** (Sat): Myakka River State Park *North

***Meet at designated place (*see below) at 7 AM unless otherwise noted**

PRAS Nature Photography Trips

- January 9** (Tues): Sarasota Jungle Gardens *North
- March 13** (Tues): Koreshan State Park *South
- April 10** (Tues) Charlotte Harbor Environmental Park *South

Meet at designated place (*see below) at 7 AM

PRAS Field Trip / Photography Meeting Sites

North: Parking lot behind McDonalds at Peachland Mall near I-75 & Kings Highway in Port Charlotte (24133 Peachland Blvd).

South: Sweetbay parking lot on US 41 south of the Burnt Store Road Intersection in Punta Gorda (10175 Tamiami Trail).

East: Winn-Dixie parking lot on US 17 east of Punta Gorda (27680 Bermont Road).

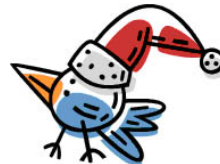
PRAS General Meetings

- **November 15** (Wed): Manatees, Monica Dorken
- **December 13** (Wed): Lions, Tigers and Bears, Lynn Wittmeier
- **January 17** (Wed): Christmas Bird Count results
- **February 21** (Wed): Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Brooke George
- **March 21** (Wed): Annual Banquet
- **April 18** (Wed): Babcock Ranch, Mark Renz
- **May 16** (Wed): Annual meeting where members share photographs

General member meetings are held from 6:30– 9:00 pm in the Palm Room of Charlotte County Cultural Center (2280 Aaron Street, Port Charlotte, FL).

Christmas Bird Count

The 2006 PRAS Christmas Bird Count is set for Saturday, December 16. We will be counting the number of birds and bird species within an area defined by a 15-mile diameter circle the center of which is located at US 41 and Henry Street in Punta Gorda. To facilitate the count the circle has been divided into twelve areas. A team will be assigned to each area. We are now in the process of appointing team captains and assigning team members to each of the ten teams. If you participated in the count last year, your name will already be on the list. Your team captain will be contacting you in late November or early December with details on when and where to meet. You will only need to call in if you want to change your area or cannot participate this year. If you did not participate last year and would like to be a part of our count this year, please contact Tony Licata at (941) 505-4775 or xmas@peacriveraudubon.org



Obviously, we will need to begin early if we are going to see lots of birds and most teams will begin counting by 7:00 AM. Hopefully, the weather will be good and we will have a delightful day in the field counting and watching our local wild birds. As before, team captains will collect a \$5.00 fee from each participant which will be forwarded to National Audubon to fund the compilation of the results on a national basis and make the results available in published form.

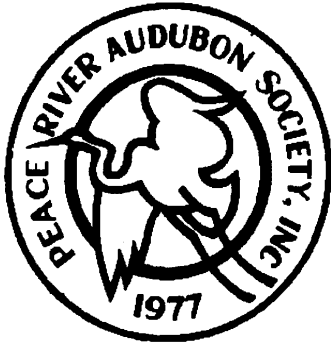
Celery Fields Field Trip Report

by Don Youso

On Saturday, October 21st ten hardy souls departed the Port Charlotte McDonalds at 7:00 am for Celery Fields. Upon arrival, we started scanning the ponds at the Gazebo and had nice sunny weather. However, shortly after we began to walk the dikes of Celery Fields, heavy fog rolled in, which greatly limited visibility. Despite the fog which took some ninety plus minutes to burn off, we had a successful and enjoyable trip, with 30+ species recorded. The group did see several migrants including Blue Winged Teal, American Coot, Mallards, and Palm Warblers. Perhaps the highlight of the trip for many was the spotting of a number of Black Bellied Whistling Ducks, which was a life bird for two of our participants. A pair of the Whistling Ducks proudly displayed their eight ducklings as they swam in graceful formation across one of the ponds. We also were pleasantly surprised to see a large number of Limpkins (10-12) including seeing a group of six that were in one of the canals near the road leading to the gazebo.

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

Non-profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Punta Gorda, FL
Permit No. 100



October 2006
White Bird



Printed on Recycled Paper
C & R Graphics (folding donated)

Check the "Exp" date on your address label!
"0407" means your PRAS and/or National membership expires April 2007. To save the cost of sending reminders, please use the application below to renew your membership. If you have questions please call Phyllis Cady at 575-4009 or send an email to: membership@peacriveraudubon.org

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.

Electronic White Bird: If you would like to receive the White Bird via e-mail, please send a request to : whitebird@peacriveraudubon.org

Bird of the Month

by Gregg Klowden

The brilliantly colored Northern Cardinal has the record for popularity as a state bird, holding the title in 7 states.

Population density and range has increased over the last 200 years, largely as a response to habitat changes made by people. The cardinal benefits from park-like urban habitats and the presence of bird feeders.



Brighter red males hold territories with denser vegetation, feed at higher rates, and have greater reproductive success than duller males.

Birding Etiquette

Part 1

1. Do not approach too closely. Avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger, exercise restraint and caution especially around nests, roosts and important feeding areas.
2. Avoid using pishing or recordings, especially in heavily birded areas, during breeding and migration, or with threatened species.
3. Stay on roads, trails, and paths where they exist; keep habitat disturbance to a minimum.

Peace River Audubon Family Membership Application / Renewal

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

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: () _____ E-mail: _____

Visit our web site:
www.PeaceRiverAudubon.org

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

To join National Audubon: send the form above and a \$20 check to National Audubon Society, Membership Data Center, P.O. Box 51003, Boulder, CO 80323-1003. You will receive the White Bird and 6 bi-monthly issues of "Audubon" magazine and discounted admission to Audubon Centers across the USA.