



2005-06 OFFICERS & DIRECTORS:

(941)

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	Eleanor Marr '07	624-4182
	George Ruby '08	571-8046
	Jan Walker '07	639-3879

January 2, 2007 walkabout: Audubon Pennington Park

Join PRAS members and Charlotte County Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources staff on a walkabout at Audubon Pennington Park. This 7.9 acre park is owned by the County but leased by PRAS. Come visit our little "urban sanctuary" located in central Port Charlotte (Alton Road) and see some of the species that inhabit the park including woodpeckers, warblers, hawks, and more. For more about this park see page 3.

January 9, 2007 Photography Group Sarasota Jungle Gardens (941) 355-5305

We are headed north to Sarasota Jungle Gardens where they have quite a few exotic birds including black swans, parrots, a white peacock etc. If you like flamingos we can photograph each other hand feeding them. Wild birds share the ponds with the flamingos. This may be a great chance to get that winning banquet picture without going to a real jungle! Tripods are allowed as long as they don't block the path. Join us on the first photography trip of 2007; there should be great photo opportunities!

Meet at the Peachland McDonalds at 8:45. We will leave at 9:00 am sharp!

Park entrance fee: \$12 for non senior citizens

Mary Ann's cell phone is 941 661-1218



January 17, 2007 General Meeting Christmas Bird Count Results: Tony Licata

Please join us at our monthly meeting to hear how the Christmas Bird Count went. You'll learn the Christmas Bird Count results and hear funny anecdotes from the team members. Following Tony's presentation, our president, Paul Holmes will present his slideshow entitled "Birding in Charlotte County."

Join us at 6:30 pm at the Cultural Center (2280 Aaron Street, Port Charlotte).

President's Message

by Paul Holmes, PRAS President

As we approach the busy part of the season I would like to take this opportunity to welcome back our many members who spend the summer elsewhere. I would also like to send our best wishes to those members who have not made it back to sunny Florida. For those of you who, while not returning to Florida this year are still receiving the White Bird, please let us know how you are getting on. Many of you have become our friends and when you don't return we miss you. We would be very happy to include a message to all your friends in PRAS in our newsletter. So please send an e-mail to Whitebird@PeaceRiverAudubon.org and Cathy will include your message in the next edition.

For the last few years our January meeting has included the colorful 'Christmas Bird Count Report' presentation. This year the tradition continues, with Tony sharing the results of the 2006 Christmas Bird Count. Also at the January meeting, the first public showing of the 'World of Birding in Charlotte County.'

This is an opportunity for you to add your ideas and most importantly catch any typos and mistakes before we show this presentation to other groups. 'World of Birding in Charlotte County,' contains well over a hundred colorful PowerPoint slides and features many photographs taken by our nature photography club members and many photographs of our members as well. So I invite you all to make a special effort to join us for the January 17th meeting.

March is our busiest and most important time, as it is the month when both our major fund-raising activities take place. Our fun 'birdathon', a.k.a. the 'Charlotte Harbor 100', takes place on March 31 and our major social function, An Evening with Audubon, is scheduled for March 21st. If you don't feel like racing around looking for birds in the Birdathon, please make a special effort to sponsor one of the teams. The easiest way to do this is to simply send a check for \$10, (the average sponsor amount), to: PRAS at P.O. Box 510760, Punta Gorda, FL 33951.

Stay tuned for details about these events and please save these dates in your calendar and keep your checkbook handy.

Silent Auction Donations Needed

Each year at our banquet is our major fundraiser: the silent auction. Please donate your unwanted holiday presents or other items, gift certificates, etc. Contact George Ruby at: 941- 571-8046 or banquet@peacriveraudubon.org

107th Christmas Bird Count by Tony Licata, CBC Coordinator

Thanks to those who helped with this year's bird count. We saw 120 species, down from the previous 5 years, (we need more eyes out there: hint, hint). Lesser scaup and tree swallows accounted for over 55% of the total birds seen. Mute swans, a nonnative species, were seen for the first time. Several shorebirds were absent, perhaps due to low tide being at 7AM this year. After seeing only 1 white-winged dove in 2004 and 1 in 2005, this year we saw a record 36 of this nonnative species. For more details, stories, and photos from this year's Christmas Bird Count please join us at our monthly meeting on January 17 at the Cultural Center (2280 Aaron Street, Port Charlotte).

Anhinga	171	Merlin	3
Bittern, American	1	Mockingbird, Northern	438
Blackbird, Red-winged	496	Moorhen	108
Bluebird, Eastern	11	Night-Heron, Black-crowned	4
Bobwhite, Northern	12	Night-Heron, Yellow-crowned	52
Cardinal, Northern	54	Osprey	54
Catbird, Gray	81	Owl, Burrowing	16
Coot, American	136	Owl, Great Horned	5
Cormorant, Double-crested	1144	Oystercatcher, American	8
Cowbird, Brown-headed	215	Parakeet, Monk	14
Crane, Sandhill	90	Pelican, Brown	158
Crow, American	25	Pelican, White	1
Crow, Fish	50	Phoebe, Eastern	33
Dove, Common Ground	75	Pintail, Northern	1
Dove, Eurasian Collared	286	Plover, Black-bellied	57
Dove, Mourning	2558	Plover, Semipalmated	28
Dove, Rock (Rock Pigeon)	104	Robin, American	868
Dove, White-winged	36	Sandpiper, Least	117
Duck, Mottled	326	Sandpiper, Spotted	35
Duck, Muscovy	60	Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied	2
Duck, Ring-necked	1	Scaup, Lesser	12539
Duck, Whistling-Black Bellied	59	Shrike, Loggerhead	138
Dunlin	57	Skimmer, Black	168
Eagle, Bald	30	Snipe, Wilson's	8
Egret, Cattle	140	Sparrow, Bachman's	2
Egret, Great	149	Sparrow, House	61
Egret, Snowy	70	Sparrow, Swamp	2
Falcon, Peregrine	1	Starling, European	472
Flicker, Northern (Yellow-shafted)	14	Stork, Wood	62
Flycatcher, Great Crested	2	Swallow, Tree	9969
Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray	108	Swan, Mute	3
Goldfinch, American	8	Teal, Blue-winged	133
Grackle, Boat-tailed	852	Tern, Forster's	35
Grackle, Common	2127	Tern, Royal	106
Grebe, Pied-billed	40	Tern, Sandwich	2
Gull, Herring	5	Thrasher, Brown	3
Gull, Laughing	608	Towhee, Eastern	36
Gull, Ring-billed	765	Turnstone, Ruddy	9
Harrier, Northern	5	Vireo, Solitary (Blue-headed)	5
Hawk, Cooper's	13	Vireo, White-eyed	12
Hawk, Red-shouldered	87	Vulture, Black	239
Hawk, Red-tailed	8	Vulture, Turkey	258
Hawk, Sharp-shinned	3	Warbler, Palm	252
Hawk, Broad-winged	2	Warbler, Pine	53
Heron, Great Blue	106	Warbler, Prairie	1
Heron, Green	12	Warbler, Yellow-rumped	1126
Heron, Little Blue	153	Warbler, Yellow-throated	2
Heron, Tricolored	38	Willet	9
Ibis, Glossy	57	Woodpecker, Downy	26
Ibis, White	485	Woodpecker, Hairy	2
Jay, Blue	134	Woodpecker, Pileated	7
Jay, Scrub	68	Woodpecker, Red-bellied	103
Kestrel, American	26	Woodpecker, Red-cockaded	2
Killdeer	169	Woodpecker, Red-headed	8
Kingfisher, Belted	47	Wren, Carolina	13
Loon, Common	12	Wren, House	9
Meadowlark, Eastern	6	Yellowlegs, Greater	1
Merganser, Hooded	211	Yellowlegs, Lesser	15
Merganser, Red-breasted	9	Yellowthroat, Common	13

A Fall Visit to Cedar Key by Sandy Artman, PRAS member

With the first signs of fall in the air, we headed to Cedar Key to meet up with some members of CDAP, a local photography group. Upon arrival, we toured the island stopping along the way to photograph many of the unique buildings and wharfs. Cedar Key is a rustic, old-Florida style community. The accent of the locals is reminiscent of the Louisiana bayou. Crabs, oysters, clams, and fishing dominate the life and economy of the island.



In the chill of the early morning with numerous layers of clothes, we ventured off to the Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge. We spotted only a few birds and butterflies, but found many beautiful scenes to photograph. Late that afternoon when the incoming tide provided enough water, we headed out on two boats with our guides at the helm. We visited Atsena Otie Key, the home of the original Cedar Key settlement. We were greeted by hundreds of terns, cormorants, and pelicans on the wharf. We went ashore and spent about 30 minutes traversing the small island for a visit to the old graveyard. It looked like a scene right out of an old horror movie. The old tombstones, the Spanish moss on the trees, and the overgrown vegetation on the fences were quite eerie even in the bright sunlight. If we hadn't known better we would have thought that it had been decorated for Halloween. Back on the boat we partially circled Seahorse key. The island was named for its shape. We didn't land on the island because we were short on time, but after hearing stories about cottonmouths that live there I didn't much care.

In the evenings, we visited the little wharf area near our hotel that housed numerous shops and restaurants. Most restaurants were informal and the decor was like a step back in time. Nothing fancy, just lots of seafood. The shops and restaurants were all still recovering from the Seafood Festival the previous weekend. It seems that twice a year they hold a festival and attract fifty thousand people to their little island. Luckily, it was almost a ghost town when we visited.

Judging by the number of for sale signs, the charm and uniqueness of Cedar Key may be in jeopardy. Like many other Florida communities, change and growth threaten the life-style so loved by those who call Cedar Key home. I would highly recommend a visit. Don't wait too long or you may miss out on a very unusual place.

January 20, 2007 Field Trip: Prairie Pines Preserve

January's trip to Lee County's Prairie Pines Preserve is full. Fifteen PRAS members will visit this 2700 acre preserve, in Lee County, dominated by hydric and mesic flatwoods, isolated wetlands and fallow agricultural fields. We hope to see sandhill cranes, snail kites, wading birds, blue winged teal, and other winter birds characteristic of these communities.

Helpful Reminder

Subscribe to 'PRAS Update' to receive 2 or 3 email reminders per month of upcoming meetings and field trips. For more info see

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PeaceRiverAudubonUpdate/>

PRAS Walkabouts

- **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 1** (Tues): Charlotte Flatwoods Environmental Park
Meet at the park entrance at 8 AM

PRAS Field Trips

- **January 20** (Sat): Prairie Pines Preserve * South
(limit 15 People, TRIP IS NOW FULL)
- **February 17** (Sat) Stormwater Treatment area *East
Hendry County
- **March 17** (Sat): Babcock-Webb Wildlife Management Area.
Meet by pay station (Tuckers Grade: I-75 Exit 158,
head 1/4 mile east).
- **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 Enviro Center *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

- **January 17** (Wed): Christmas Bird Count results
- **February 21** (Wed): Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Brooke George
- **March 21** (Wed): Annual Banquet "An Evening with Audubon"
- **April 18** (Wed): Babcock Ranch, Mark Renz
- **May 16** (Wed): Annual members meeting where we all share our 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).

Pennington Park, by Larry Linn and Jan Walker

Audubon-Pennington Nature Park is a small, neighborhood park that PRAS leases from Charlotte County. The park features cypress swamp, oak hammock, and pine flatwoods, contains an interesting variety of plants and animals, and is recovering nicely from the ravages of Hurricane Charlie in August of 2004. A grant from the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program has provided several new trees in the entrance area.

Maintenance is provided by PRAS volunteers and the County. PRAS volunteers work from 8-10 AM every Wednesday morning and we're always looking for more help. We make sure the trails are clear and try to control exotic species, primarily Brazilian pepper, Caesar weed, and air potato. We have just installed signs along the trail to help people navigate the park thanks to funding by the Collaborative Funding Program of Audubon.

Location: Port Charlotte, on Alton Rd., between Midway Blvd. and Peachland; approximately 1.5 miles west of Kings Hwy.

Amenities: Trails, signs, and a few scattered benches.

Contact Larry Linn (276-2369) for more information about the park or visit www.PeaceRiverAudubon.org.

Volunteer of the Month: November 2006

by Phyllis Cady

All those who attend our monthly meetings know Evelyn Booker. She greets you as you come in the door, and asks you to sign in. Evelyn has been doing this job for many years now, in fact, she's been a PRAS member since the 1980's. She has held many volunteer positions, helping out this organization over the years. Remember to say thank you to Evelyn for her years of volunteering for Audubon when you attend the next meeting.



Seen something unusual? Been somewhere fun? Do you have an announcement or story that you would like to share? Please contact the editor at 941 613-6753 or whitebird@peacriveraudubon.org

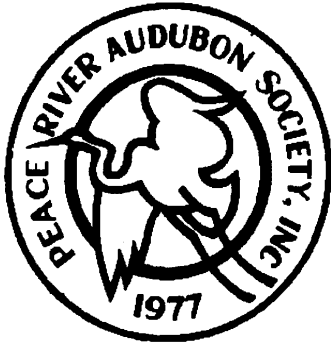
December Walkabout at Ollie's Pond by Paul Holmes

Our December Walkabout around Ollie's pond, was a pleasant morning and one of the best walkabouts to date. PRAS Member Dave Matthewson represented the Charlotte Parks Department and his inexhaustible depth of knowledge, kept everyone informed with regard to the birds, and plants we encountered during our walk. I am pleased that we had several new members and some visitors among the 29 people taking part.

We saw most of the normal Charlotte birds and finished with a good view of a bald eagle, having lunch. Once again the partnership between the Charlotte County Parks Department and Peace River Audubon Society produced a great walkabout.

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

Non-profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
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January 2007
White Bird



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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: Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*) by Cathy Olson

I thought it only fitting that the bird of the month be the tree swallow since many of us counted so many during the Christmas Bird Count. It is always a good thing when we start seeing this bird in the fall; we know that winter is coming. It is an absolutely amazing thing to see hundreds or thousands of these birds in a flock overhead and even more so to see a flock descend upon a wax myrtle so that it is literally dripping with birds. Then in response to a cue only apparent to them, the birds shoot off and the wax myrtle springs back to a normal shape. Although primarily insectivorous, a tree swallow is able to utilize vegetative matter (wax myrtle berries) too when insects are not abundant. When not in Florida in their wintering grounds, the tree swallow is not gregarious, rather they tend to be in pairs. This species is a cavity nester and will readily use nest boxes throughout North America, even in Alaska.



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

E14-7XCH

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.