

White Bird

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www.PeaceRiverAudubon.org

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(941)

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Mark Your Calendars a New Day and Location for PRAS Monthly Meetings



This coming year our member meetings will be held on the 3rd Thursday of each month at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church 2565 Tamiami Trail, Port Charlotte (just south of Midway Blvd). This is the church where we used to have meetings before Hurricane Charley. We are very thankful to have been invited back. The hall has now been rebuilt and will be a wonderful place to meet. **Our next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 20 at 6:30 PM.**

Myakka State Park Field Trip by Mike Krzyzkowski, PRAS Board Member

Eleven people made the journey to Myakka State Park on May 19th - mostly PRAS members, but also several non-members who picked up on the newspaper notice and who we hope to see at future meetings. Several good birds were seen, the best being a Great White Heron or the white morph of the Great Blue Heron. This bird is usually seen in the more southern part of the state and is distinguished from a great egret by its yellow legs rather than black and is a rather uncommon bird this far north. For myself I had only seen it at Shark Valley several years ago. Passerines were hard to come by this late in the migration. The breeding passerines were heard (Carolina wrens, northern parulas, great crested flycatchers, and white-eyed vireos) better than seen as they stayed in the canopy pretty much. The wind picked up mid morning and there were small whitecaps on the lake by noon which moved many of the shorebirds to the lee side of the lake. Some of the better birds were black necked stilts, and black-bellied plovers in breeding plumage. A family of four limpkins very close to the dam made for a good photo-op event. Lunch was at the concession facility picnic area and Lynn and George Bates were kind enough to provide a table cloth for proper dining. All in all, we saw 38 different species and it was social birding at its best as we got a chance to know each other a little better and exchange opinions. I intend to go back and bike it as the park road goes through some very scenic areas and is shaded for the most part. We never did make it to the canopy walk on this trip.



President's Message by Gregg Klowden, PRAS President

Hello fellow Peace River Auduboners. I hope your summer has been filled with fun, adventures, and if you're really lucky, a lifer or two. Your board has been working overtime setting the goals for the upcoming year and putting together a fun-filled schedule of activities and educational opportunities. We hope you will join us for one or more events. We have great board members for the upcoming year all of whom have volunteered to help continue making PRAS the great organization it has been for just about 30 years. However, we could really use your help. So please take a moment and fill out and send in the volunteer form below. Speaking of 30 years...we are very proud and excited to be celebrating our 30th anniversary on November 1st, and we plan to scream far and loud "We are the Peace River Audubon Society and we're proud". Most of this squawking will be at our anniversary celebration on November 17. Mark your calendars and if you can, please lend a hand in helping us to put this event together. We have a lot to be proud of over the years and our esteemed Treasurer Walt Williams will be highlighting some of our great accomplishments at our September meeting. Looking at our accomplishments is very humbling. A long list of innovative and dedicated volunteers have preceded me and I am thankful that you have entrusted me to be your President for the next year. Please enjoy the rest of your summer. See you in September.

Volunteer Form

Our activities could not happen without the generous help of volunteers. Please circle any of the following activities for which you may be willing to lend a hand. For more info contact Gregg Klowden at president@PeaceRiverAudubon.org or 941-613-6753.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| (a) 30th Anniversary celebration | (k) Lead field trip |
| (b) Fund raising | (l) Website |
| (c) Environmental education | (m) Christmas bird count |
| (d) Conservation Committee | (n) Newsletter |
| (e) Publicity | (o) Mailing |
| (f) Hospitality table | (p) Volunteer coordinator |
| (g) Annual banquet | (q) Archivist |
| (h) Silent auction | (r) Membership roles |
| (i) Birdathon | (s) Other |
| (j) Lead walkabout | |

Name, _____

Email _____

Telephone _____

Return to: PRAS, P.O. Box 510760 / Punta Gorda, FL 33951-0760

Environmental Moments at Alligator Creek Preserve by CHEC educator Monica Dorken

The best part of working close to nature at the Alligator Creek site is when you get to experience what I have come to call an environmental moment. It is at these times that all typing at computers, answering phones, cleaning, sorting, copying and collating ceases out of respect and awe for nature at its finest. A recent example was when we received a call over the intercom from our volunteer reception person in the Caniff Reception Building. She told us that three visitors from Michigan had rushed in to demand that someone ("like a ranger or somebody") come quick - to help the alligator that had a huge snake ("looks like a boa constrictor") wrapped around its body.

The office volunteer and I hurried to the dock overlooking the pond. We were met by a somewhat frantic woman who told me that we were too late. We needed to get a boat and go out on the water to "get that snake off the alligator" since they had submerged, locked in embrace. I questioned the visitors further and it seems that what they had witnessed was actually the alligator seizing one end of the snake in his jaws while the rest of the Indigo (by description) wrapped around the pre-historic reptile in an exercise of futility.

This gator was at least seven feet long and they thought that the snake was the predator! I guess that just shows how many people view snakes as the ultimate evil. The alligator popped back up after a few more minutes with a very contented grin and no sign of the snake. What a great way to learn who is predator, who is prey and who is master of the pond.



Another environmental moment with a snake occurred one warm afternoon when Judy Schnabel, our volunteer director, called me over to the boardwalk by the gopher tortoise burrow. She and her daughter were watching a five-foot eastern diamond-

back rattlesnake move slowly across the top of the burrow. We all watched in awe. It was truly a beautiful snake. The colors were much more brilliant than the stuffed version in our Animal Clubhouse display. It paid us no mind, never rattled or hissed; just moved around slowly and then finally headed off toward the screen room.

The diamondback is the largest rattlesnake in the world. It, along with other upland species, is declining over most of its range. A rattlesnake can live for up to 20 years - eating mostly rabbits and cotton rats. The threat to public safety from a rattler is really very low. More people are killed every year by lightening strikes and bee stings. So, "don't worry, be happy" and keep enjoying those environmental moments!

Welcome New Members

by Phyllis Cady, Membership Chairperson

All of us who are now members of the Peace River Audubon Society are most pleased to welcome you to our crowd. We hope you will enjoy joining in and being part of all of our events large and small. Please let the present members know what you like, and what you don't like. Help us all make a better place out of our Organization, our Towns, our Counties, our State, Nation and the World around us.

Save Our Cypress Forests by Sandy Artman, PRAS Board Member



Cypress forests are a unique Florida treasure with an important ecological role. Thousands of acres of cypress are logged every year simply to produce mulch. Most often these cypress forests along with their wetlands and wildlife are lost forever. **You can help save our cypress forests by using environmentally friendly mulch for your home or business landscaping and asking your friends to do the same.** The old idea that cypress mulch is superior to other

mulches simply is not true anymore. It was only cypress trees over 600 years old (they can live for 1500 years) that have the rot-resistant and termite-resistant properties that developed its reputation. These trees were all harvested before the 1950s.

A great alternative to cypress mulch is mulch from the Melaleuca tree. This invasive, non-native tree has taken over 500,000 acres of the Florida Everglades. Turning this tree into mulch helps rid the state of this terrible pest. One brand is Florimulch. You can find it at Forestry Resources in Ft Myers or Florida Native Plants in Sarasota. It is long-lasting and termite-resistant. Other alternative mulches include Recycled Yard Waste, Eucalyptus mulch, Pine Bark, Pine Straw, and Promulch.

Boy Scout Outing at Pennington Park

by Jan Walker, Education Chairperson

On the evening of May 29th, 15 Boy Scouts and their leaders met at Audubon Pennington Park for an outing. For all of the Boys and most of the leaders it was their first time to explore the trails of this park, which is in their neighborhood, and they were excited to be there. The focus of the trip was to find evidence of animal life along the trails. They found ample examples of raccoon tracks, ant hills, woodpecker holes, turtle nests, and the always present variety of scat. In addition, they were introduced to the cypress swamp, oak hammock, and pinewood flats. They brought along their cameras and took pictures of several varieties of asters, lantana, poison ivy and smilax to include in a scrapbook of plants common to the area. The boys and their leaders went home enthusiastic about potential future trips and projects involving the Audubon Pennington Park and a little better understanding of the Audubon Society's involvement in preserving our environment.



THANK YOU FOR JOINING US!

Susanne Low - Boca Grande
Gil & Kathy MacAdam - Arcadia
Dawn Carriere - Punta Gorda
Robert & Virginia Shainline - Cape Haze
Joanne Smith - St. James City



Babcock Ranch Update by Paul Holmes, past PRAS President

Are you wondering what is going on out on the Babcock Ranch Preserve? Is information in the newspaper leaving you confused and totally frustrated? Hopefully, I will be able to clear things up a bit.

The Babcock Ranch preserve is currently being managed by Babcock Ranch Management LLC. This is the organization headed by Kitson partners. This group receives advice from an advisory board made up of representatives from several organizations with a role to play in the future of the preserve. Audubon currently has two seats on this board.

The state-appointed Babcock Ranch Inc. board will begin taking over in 2012 and be fully in control by 2016. Charlotte County is represented on this board by Bill Wilcox professor in environmental studies at Edison College.

As you may have read in the newspapers, the Ranch/Preserve expects to lose approximately \$300,000 this year. This has to do with the fact that hunting and some timber felling is temporarily suspended, resulting in a loss of revenue. The Ranch is also changing the cattle side of the operation, intending to breed its own calves. This makes it necessary to invest in good breeding stock, which has also resulted in a temporary reduction in profits in the cattle division. When the Management plan is finished, both these problems should go away and the preserve should be self sustaining as promised.

The first trail is cut and leads from the Babcock Wilderness Adventure Tours parking lot to a wetland/pond in an area regularly frequented by large numbers of birds. Unfortunately, there appears to be difficulty funding a boardwalk into the wetlands, and the Babcock Preservation Partnership has offered a total of \$70,000 from its funds to pay for a boardwalk/observation platform and the trail signage for this first trail which will be open to the public in the fall.

I have been fortunate enough to go on two extensive familiarization tours of the ranch and I have to admit that I am very impressed by both the way Arnie Sarlo has managed the Ranch and the way Brad Neider and his advisory group are trying their best to manage the new State Preserve. I am also working with them on the idea of a two-day workshop for those intending to join the ranks of volunteers, who will help make Babcock State preserve a success. Day one would be an introduction to the Preserve and the volunteer jobs that will be available and day two would include a tour of the ranch. It will be fun, don't miss it. Look for an announcement soon.

Stormwater Treatment Area 5 Tour by Paul Holmes, past PRAS President

Hendry-Glades Audubon will lead a second public escorted birding tour at Stormwater Treatment Area 5 (STA-5) located 20 miles south of Clewiston on Saturday, August 25 from 8:30 a.m.-noon.

Tours are subject to cancellation in case of inclement weather. Meet at the STA5 gate at 8:30 a.m. To carpool around the levee. Information is posted on Hendry-Glades Audubon website:

www.orgsites.com/fl/hgaudubon To register send an e-mail to Margaret England, at sta5birding@embarqmail.com include your name and an emergency cell number and the number in your party or leave a message at (863) 674-0695 or (863) 517-0202.

A Taste of Things to Come by MaryAnn Hughes, PRAS Secretary

The PRAS board has been meeting over the summer to plan activities for next year. Several of these more ambitious activities could use the tender loving care of a fresh, new volunteer to help make them happen. If you only want to get your feet wet, volunteer to help with the activity. If you really want to jump right in, volunteer to chair or co-chair a committee to make these proposed activities actually happen.



Field Trips: 3rd Saturday of the month and some unannounced field trips that will be advertised in Nature Alerts.

Field trips are undertaken farther afield than walkabouts.

Walkabouts: 1st Tuesday of the month. Walkabouts are shorter and closer to home than field trips.

Charlotte Nature Festival: November 3, 2007. We will need people to man the Audubon booth and possibly help with short birding tours that will start at the Audubon booth. More of the day's activities are yet to be decided.

Fisherman's Village Wildlife Expo: We do not know the date for next year. This year's was in June. We expect to have an Audubon booth, possibly with interactive activities with Expo attendees.

Peace River Audubon Society's 30th Anniversary: November 17, we will celebrate our anniversary. We expect to hold our party in Ponce de Leon Park in Punta Gorda. We will celebrate with wading adventures, short field trips, tours of the Peace River Wildlife Center, short presentations about the McLeod monument and our own history. More activities may be added.

Holiday Party: We'll hold it on December 13, 2007 with a potluck dinner and an interesting speaker.

Symphony of Trees: Sometime in November, we will begin decorating a tree for competition in the Charlotte County Historical Society's Symphony of Trees.

Dry Tortugas Trip: We are looking into the feasibility of running a trip for members to the Dry Tortugas.

Canoe/kayak trip: No date yet decided upon. We are looking into locations and are thinking of possibly making it a poker run.

Education: We will continue our educational activities with CHEC and with the Girl Scouts.

Hot Spot Request by Cathy Olson, PRAS Board Member



How can

you help PRAS during the summer when it is too hot or rainy to go birding or you are away up north? Help the PRAS Board improve the "hot spot" portion of our website and create a new portion which will allow vacationers to know where they have the best chance to see species in our area. Please email, call or write Cathy if you would like to write one of the hotspot sections or if you have a favorite spot to view birds in this part of Florida (for example limpkin, roseate spoonbill, least tern, clapper rail, etc.). Hot spot information is still needed for CHEC/Alligator Creek, Englewood Beach, Myakka State Forest, Oyster Creek Environmental Park, Rotonda Community Park, Tippecanoe Scrub Environmental Park, Yucca Pens, and Zemel Road Wetlands. Contact me at olsonc@peacriveraudubon.org or 941 613-6753.

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

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Check the "Exp" date on your address label!
"0907" means your PRAS and/or National membership expires September 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:
Chimney Swift (*Chaetura Pelagica*)
by Cathy Olson, PRAS Board member

The chimney swift, or "cigar bird" is commonly seen during the summer hunting insects on the wing. This bird winters in western South America but breeds here in Florida and much of the eastern U.S. Although they roost colonially they nest individually. Swifts do not perch like most birds, instead they use their long claws to cling to vertical surfaces.



Helpful

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/>

Seen something unusual? Been somewhere fun? Do you have an announcement or story that you would like to share? Please contact the editor at 941 575-0651 or whitebird@peacriveraudubon.org

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

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