

White Bird

September 2007 Volume 31, Issue 1

Sandy Artman, Editor
Dan Artman, Dispatcher



www.PeaceRiverAudubon.org

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(941)

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	George Ruby '08	432-0174
	Sandy Artman '09	575-0651
	Cathy Olson '09	613-6753

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.

September Meeting
Speaker Walt Williams

Our next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 20 at 6:30 PM. Our speaker will be our very own historian, Walt Williams. Walt will discuss our organization over the past 30 years. He is a retired Professor of Reproductive Physiology from the Animal Sciences Dept., Univ. Maryland, College Park. He spent his career teaching, doing research and advising graduate students. Most of his work was with domestic animals and lab animals, but some with wild species. He has served as the Treasurer for two Audubon Chapters over the years including our own Chapter.

October Walkabout: Datsun Trail
by Phyllis Cady, PRAS Board Member

Our first walkabout this season will be at 8:00 AM, Tuesday, October 2nd, at the Old Datsun Trail. This trail is part of Charlotte Harbor Preserve State Park and is located at 12301 Burnt Store Road in Punta Gorda. It is just a mile or so on the right, past Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC). Old Datsun Trail is a 1.75 mile loop trail. There is a small paved parking area, and a kiosk at the trail head. We'll be walking through flatwoods and hammocks, and past 2 isolated wetlands. This hike will be led by Phyllis Cady, who is an Audubon member, and a volunteer trail guide for the Old Datsun Trail. Please call Phyllis at 941-575-4009 to learn the current trail conditions and for directions. Hope to see you there!



President's Message by Gregg Klowden, PRAS President



Welcome PRAS members to our 30th year. Your board has prepared an exciting calendar of events for 2007-08. Our meetings are full of exciting speakers and our field trip and walk-about schedules are sure to delight as we explore some of our old favorite spots and a few new ones. In November we will celebrate our 30th anniversary with a gathering at Ponce de Leon Park with food, talks, a wading trip, birding walk, a tour of the Peace River Wildlife Center, and displays outlining our many contributions to our community over the years. From January to April, our new photography group chair Bill Marr has some exciting trips, instructional sessions, and photo sharing sessions planned. Hopefully you will be able to join us for our expanded Birdathon in March which will include several new ways to participate including a photographic birdathon and more. And of course in March our annual "Evening with Audubon" banquet will include our silent auction and photography contest. I look forward to seeing old and new faces beginning with our first meeting on September 20 at our new meeting location at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 2565 Tamiami Trail, Port Charlotte.

Welcome New Members by Phyllis Cady, Membership Chairperson

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US!

We hope to see you attend the exciting activities that our local chapter offers. Welcome from all of us and hope to see you at our first meeting.

Blake Schmidt
Natalie Conklin
Mrs. Anne Learman
Gail and Stephen Hopper
Mrs. Beverly Burms
Mr. Ronald Bissett
Ms. Tami Keiser
Anne Fraser Baer
Char Robinsen
Terri Vaughn
The Liegl Family
Mrs. Pam Comstock
Ms. Ann Murray
Mr. & Mrs. George Taylor
Nancy & Ed Turner

Mrs. Martha Russell
Rheta Kuech
Louis Windt
Mr. Harold Al Souther Sr.
Mr. Ralph Cirna
Mrs. Thelma Yarbrough
Mrs. Marg Kalmut
Bobbie Haehlen
Mr. John Hummon
Mrs. Matt Dotson
Bob & Clara Mather
Nancy J. Semon-Krauss
Mr. & Mrs. Vic Oesterling
Mr. & Jesse B. Peters
Mrs. Janet Arcilla

Environmental Center Support
by CHEC educator Monica Dorken

The Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC) began as a dream, conceived by citizens in this county to establish an educational nature facility for the good of the public. Back in the 1980's recently-preserved upland areas circled the harbor; yet none were available for outdoor recreation, research and educational opportunities. After arduous planning and campaigning on the part of numerous concerned folks, the founding committee negotiated with the state to lease 20 acres; which accessed 846 more acres of Florida state buffer preserve land (now expanded to over 3000 acres).



CHEC was established as a private, non-profit corporation "to develop, operate, and maintain an environmental center for educational, scientific, and recreational activities in Charlotte County, Florida." Four corporate sponsors forged the union that remains today - Charlotte County, the City of Punta Gorda, Charlotte County Public Schools and Peace River Audubon Society. As a fledgling operation, the center had no paid personnel. Al Cheatham was the environmental specialist-at-large, working for the School Board of Charlotte County. He was charged with the awesome tasks of management, overseeing construction and education. It was Al who met the very first, yellow school bus when it pulled up with eager fourth graders aboard. He guided and taught those pioneer youngsters about the natural habitats along newly volunteer-blazed trails. Today, he directs the entire corporation as it continues to grow in regional responsibility and influence across the Peace River watershed.

This year (from July 2006 through June 2007), CHEC on and off-site programs originating from the Alligator Creek Preserve were attended by 17,263 participants. That included pre-school and school-age children (public, private and home-schooled), citizens and visitors to our Charlotte Harbor area. Additionally, approximately 26,000 listeners hear about CHEC programs, research and outreach education monthly, through the Ann Henderson Talk Radio Show. CHEC also operates Cedar Point Environmental Park in Englewood, one of the last remaining tracts of undisturbed land on Lemon Bay.

Founding father Mac McGovern wrote "It is noteworthy that CHEC's state-granted charter has proved sound, as have its by-laws. CHEC has always emphasized, in its decision-making, the obvious point that it is a public service organization dedicated to our area and regional citizenry. Its objective is natural resource preservation and enhancement."

The mission of the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center, since its inception, has been to provide environmental education, recreation, research and preservation management for the citizens and visitors of the Charlotte Harbor area. CHEC provides these public services for free. Our banner reads: Partners in Conservation and Education for a Better Quality of Life. Al Cheatham said, "We believe that education is the key to providing the proper balance between the needs of humans and the natural world of southwest Florida. We will continue to teach, share, experience and learn as long as we are able!"

**Please support your community environmental center.
We're here for you.**

Babcock Ranch Preserve
by Gregg Klowden, PRAS President



In recent years PRAS actively worked to encourage preservation of the entire 94,000 acre Babcock Ranch. Unfortunately this did not occur. Instead, 20,000 acres will be developed into a new city and the remaining 73,236 acres will be known as the Babcock Ranch Preserve. Beyond the fact that the Babcock Ranch Preserve is the largest state land purchase in Florida's history, for several reasons, this is no ordinary state park. As part of

the purchase agreement, certain activities that formerly occurred on the Babcock Ranch are to continue at some level in order to provide revenue for the management of the preserve. Of course there are many ideas regarding how best to balance activities such as cattle ranching, agriculture, logging, and hunting with protection of the land, water, and wildlife for which this preserve was purchased. Over the next year, a management plan is being written that will guide future operational activities for the preserve. PRAS is lucky to have been invited to participate early on in this process by inclusion at the Management Advisory Group meeting on August 8. At this meeting, about 20 county, state, federal, and non-governmental groups, including PRAS, presented their suggestions which each hoped to be included in the final management plan. In addition, PRAS has sent a letter outlining our suggested management priorities to several state agencies and Charlotte and Lee County commissioners. To view a copy of this letter, visit our website at www.PeaceRiverAudubon.org. For more information and to follow the development of the management plan, visit www.babcockcmp.org.

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) Fundraising | (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

PRAS History - Part I

by Walt Williams, PRAS Historian and Treasurer

This fall we are celebrating the 30th Anniversary of our Peace River Audubon Chapter. Our chapter got started when George and Joanne Griffin placed an article in the local paper in early 1977 to explore the interest in establishing a local chapter of the "National Audubon Society". They needed to have 35+ members to file for a new local chapter with "National Audubon". In August 1977 the first "White Bird" newsletter, Volume 1, Number 1, was mailed out to those interested.



The first Board and Officers were elected, a constitution and by-laws put in place, and application to "Florida Audubon" and "National Audubon" for recognition as a local chapter was made. The first officers and board were Dr. Dave Wilson, Pres., Dr. Jerry Gingrich, and Viola Messmer, David Pius, Beverly Spears, Suzanne Schneider, George Griffin, Joanne Griffin, Keith Schneider and Robert Bream. They were notified of official chapter standing as of November 1, 1977.

The issues of concern to members in the early years will have a familiar ring to residents today. Phosphate mining, a tree protection ordinance to help protect native trees, protection of bald eagles, the negative impacts of residential and commercial development and coastal zone management and environmental protection in general. Field trips, bird and nature walks were frequent events along with monthly meetings and programs.

During the first ten to fifteen years several major achievements of PRAS began to take shape. The PRAS concept that there should be a nature center in Charlotte County took active form under the leadership of Charlie Caniff with strong member support and involvement. Over the years with major County and State support this has grown into the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC) south of Punta Gorda off Burnt Store Road.

For a number of years the members worked to protect and rehabilitate injured wildlife in a shelter on East Marion Avenue. That activity took off on it's own as the "Peace River Wildlife Center" and is still very active in Punta Gorda. In the early years of the "Kiwanis Park" PRAS collaborated with the Kiwanis in building a walkway and bird watching area. There was also collaboration with the city of Punta Gorda to make the Ponce De Leon Park an environmentally friendly "Bird Sanctuary". Then at one point the Florida Audubon Society gave PRAS their "Most Outstanding Chapter" award and Bill Coombs was awarded their "Most Outstanding President" award.

It is worth recalling two special individuals who have presented programs over the years. The renowned author Marjory Douglas known worldwide for her book "The Everglades, River of Grass" presented a program when she was 96 years old. Dr. Ollie Hewitt retired from Cornell University to live in Port Charlotte. A very active member for years he gave a program on the "Sights and Sounds of Florida Birds". He continued his support for PRAS, ornithology and environmental protection until his death in 1999. "Ollie's Pond Park" was named in his honor by Charlotte County.

Field Trips and Walkabouts 2007-2008

- October 2 Walkabout: Datsun Trail
Phyllis Cady 941-575-4009
- October 20 Field Trip: Daniels Preserve at Spanish Creek
Cathy Olson 941-613-6753
- November 6 Walkabout: Kiwanis Park
Don Youso 941-235-1298
- November 17 30th Anniversary: Ponce de Leon Park
Gregg Klowden 941-613-6753
- December 4 Walkabout: Myakkahatchee Park
Stu & Louise Lewis 941-235-2590
- December 15 Field Trip: Christmas Bird Count
Tony Licata 941-505-4775
- January 8 Walkabout: Cedar Point Environmental Park
Eleanor Marr 941-624-4182
- January 19 Field Trip: Laurel Road Lanfill & Carlton Reserver
Stu & Louise Lewis 941-235-2590
- February 5 Walkabout: Lemon Bay Park
Stu & Louise Lewis 941-235-2590
- February 16 Field Trip: Station # 5 Stormwater Treatment Area
Eleanor Marr 941-624-4182
- March 4 Walkabout: Hathaway Park
Eleanor Marr 941-624-4182
- March 15 Field Trip: Babcock Ranch Preserve
Paul Holmes 941-833-3337
- April 1 Walkabout: Audubon-Pennington Park
Dave Lancaster 941-625-0979
- April 19 Field Trip: Corkscrew Swamp
Eleanor Marr 941-624-4182
- May 6 Walkabout: Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center
Phyllis Cady 941-575-4009
- May 17 Field Trip: Fish-Eating Creek
Mike Krzyzkowski 941-812-0764

Speaker Schedule

by Cathy Olson, PRAS Board Member

- September 20: Walt Williams - PRAS history
- October 18: Adam Kent - Florida scrub-jays
- November 15: Andy Stevens - Conservation Charlotte
- December 13: Potluck with Gil MacAdam - gardening for wildlife
- January 17 : Tony Licata - Christmas Bird Count results
- February 21: Pascha Donaldson - Burrowing owls
- March 20: Banquet
- April 17: Missy Christie - sea turtles & shorebirds
- May : Members night: PRAS members

Photography Schedule

by Bill Marr, Photography Group Coordinator

Bill Marr has agreed to take the lead for the upcoming year for the photography group. He is planning to meet 3 times each month from January through April.

- 2nd Tuesday—Local Photography field trip. Actual locations to be determined.
- 3rd Tuesday—Meet for show & tell of photos. CHEC currently under consideration as a meeting location.
- 3rd Saturday—Attend the PRAS monthly field trip as a group.

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

Non-profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
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Check the "Exp" date on your address label!
"1207" means your PRAS and/or National membership expires
December 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:
Black Skimmer (*Rynchops niger*)
by Cathy Olson, PRAS Board member

This waterbird is mostly black above and white below with a striking black and red bill. The lower part of the bill is larger than the upper and is used to catch fish as it flies just above the surface of the water. Black skimmers are with us year round and breed locally on the coastal beaches. The Port Charlotte Beach complex is one of the most reliable places to view black skimmers, here in Charlotte County.



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

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.