

# White Bird

October 2007

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Sandy Artman, Editor

Dan Artman, Dispatcher



www.PeaceRiverAudubon.org

## 2007-08 OFFICERS & DIRECTORS:

(941)

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	Sandy Artman '09	575-0651
	Cathy Olson '09	613-6753

### October Meeting Speaker Adam Kent

Our next meeting will be held on **Thursday, October 18 at 6:30 PM at the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church.** (Sorry we had to move the September meeting, but due to construction delays the church wasn't quite ready.)

**Adam Kent, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Florida Scrub-Jay Conservation**

**Coordinator,** will talk to our chapter about the natural history and conservation of the Florida Scrub-Jay. In addition to being knowledgeable about Florida scrub-jays, Adam has compiled bird checklists for state lands including the Babcock-Webb Wildlife Management Area and has written a children's guide to bird identification (see link below). Come and listen to this dynamic and informative speaker. <[http://floridaconservation.org/educator/JrBirder/jr\\_booklet\\_sig.pdf](http://floridaconservation.org/educator/JrBirder/jr_booklet_sig.pdf)>[http://floridaconservation.org/educator/JrBirder/jr\\_booklet\\_sig.pdf](http://floridaconservation.org/educator/JrBirder/jr_booklet_sig.pdf)



### 30th Anniversary Celebration by Gregg Klowden, PRAS President



The Peace River Audubon Society will celebrate 30 years of fun, conservation, and education on **November 17 at Ponce de Leon Park** in Punta Gorda. The day will start with a wading trip at 9:15 sponsored by the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center. Other activities begin at 10:30 am and will include tours of the Peace River Wildlife Center, an interpretive nature walk, and several short talks on a variety of topics including the Peace River Wildlife Center, native plants in your back yard to benefit wildlife, and more. And of course there will be food too. Stay tuned in the next Whitebird for more information. For more details or to volunteer to help out for an hour or two, contact Gregg Klowden at (941) 613-6753 or [president@PeaceRiverAudubon.org](mailto:president@PeaceRiverAudubon.org). There are several activities for which we could really use your assistance so please contact us ASAP to help make this day a success.

### November Walkabout: Kiwanis Park by Don Youso, PRAS Member

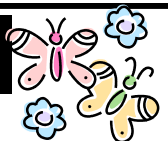
The November walkabout will be at **8:00 AM, Tuesday, November 6th at Kiwanis Park**, 501 Donora Street. Get to the park by turning off Midway at either Darby Drive or Victoria Avenue, then Donora Street. Kiwanis Park has a nature trail about a mile plus long and the trail will include woodlands and water where we could see a variety of birds. We also could see some wintering migrants. The walk should be fairly easy and the time of the walk approximately two hours. We will meet in the parking lot and there will be restroom facilities available. The hike will be led by Don Youso who is a PRAS member. Please call Don at 235-1298 if you have questions.

### October Field Trip: Daniels Preserve by Cathy Olson, PRAS Board Member

Our October field trip to Daniels Preserve at Spanish Creek should be fun! This 243 acre preserve in Lee County consists of quite a few vegetation communities, including a small creek. It has been owned by Lee County since 2005 so only 45 species of birds, eleven herps and nine species of mammals have been identified. Notable birds include snail and swallow-tailed kites, Wilson's snipe, blue-headed vireo, tufted titmouse, northern parula, black and white warbler, and wading birds. Perhaps we can help identify a few more species! Bring your binoculars, water, lunch, and field guides. We will meet at **7 am on Saturday, October 20th** in the Sweet Bay parking lot on US 41 south of Burnt Store Rd. in Punta Gorda. For more information on the preserve and the plants and wildlife which have been observed see [http://www.conservation2020.org/preservedetails.cfm?proj\\_no=277](http://www.conservation2020.org/preservedetails.cfm?proj_no=277)



### PRAS Leads Special Bird Walk at Nature Festival by Cathy Olson, PRAS Board Member



The 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival will be on **Saturday, November 3 from 10-4** at the Charlotte Sports Park. Come see our booth among the many non profit and government environmental groups and artists. Food, educational opportunities and games and activities are available for the kids. Peace River Audubon Society will be leading an early morning bird walk through Tippecanoe Environmental Park at 7:30 am before the festival starts. Meet by 7:30 in the grassy parking area by the large retention pond. Bring binoculars, water, and sturdy shoes. Additional nature walks will be held later in the day when the festival starts.

## Country Dan' Barn Owls by CHEC educator Monica Dorken

Dan Heath (affectionately known as Country Dan) stopped by CHEC's Alligator Creek Preserve office to tell us about squatters in the barn at the Hereford Ranch where he works. He was attempting to close up the building, which has naturalized openings left by weather and age. Every time he approached the roof area under the rafters, he heard a hissing sound. Folks guessed that there were possums in those rafters.

When Dan got a closer look, he found nesting barn owls. Three downy babies were secured in a makeshift nest. Mom and/or dad could simply fly in and out through large openings in the eaves. He certainly didn't want to prevent entry, so all work ceased.



When we called wildlife officials and researched the owls, we were told that it was too early for barn owl babies. Dan had to describe the "monkey faced" birds of prey over and over to convince doubting experts of what he had in the barn. Once again, the Florida birds did not read the book or follow their assigned schedule.

Finally, he decided to just wait patiently for a couple of more weeks and enjoy the nature display. This, of course, required extra cleanup from the excretions of the now-frisky, pre-flight fledglings. "They hop all over the rafters and drop a real mess."

Speaking of discharges, I asked Dan if he had seen any pellets scattered around. "What's that?" he asked. Owl pellets consist of remains of their prey. Tiny skeleton parts are tightly wrapped in condensed mammal fur. Due to the low acid content of owls' stomachs, these body parts cannot be digested. So the entire package is regurgitated or coughed up out of the beak. If food is plentiful, a barn Owl can produce, at separate intervals, two pellets per day. They are usually expelled from a favorite roosting perch.

An owl pellet, taken apart carefully, will tell you everything about the type of prey it has been eating. We used them for a hands-on (with gloves) food web lesson during our summer ECO Week camp. Those I had collected from under a downed nest tree.

Dan dropped off a bag full of fresh pellets and pictures of the productive, sibling barn owls the very next day –yeah, free nature education materials for CHEC! They actually sell "affordable pellets" over the internet. A student can even dissect a virtual pellet, step-by-step, using the computer keyboard. The real thing is way better. Yuck, just ask the kids.

Students can then interact with a barn owl online database to see how the contents of their pellets compare with those of other barn owl pellets from all over the United States. After the students have examined their pellets, they can enter the data, one pellet at a time.

Barn owls (*Tyto Alba*) are particularly useful, since they devour tremendous numbers of rats and mice; thereby, keeping agricultural pest populations in check. As this bird makes contact with an unfortunate rodent, while swooping from above, its weight causes outstretched legs to bend forcing the talons to automatically close and pierce the prey. It is the same natural adaptation that allows a sleeping owl to firmly grasp the perch.

If you would like to see our nature displays and experience some fellowship, please visit the blue and white CHEC tent at the free Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival at Charlotte Sports Park from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. on Saturday, November 3. Who knows, we may even bring a pellet or two. Happy trails!

## October 2 Walkabout Report By Phyllis Cady, PRAS Board Member

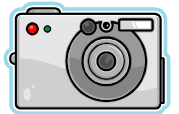
Despite the threatening rain, mud, and mosquitos, 10 people joined together for our hike on the Old Datsun Trail. It wasn't a great day for birds, as it was breezy and overcast, but we managed to see white ibis, boat-tailed grackles, red-bellied woodpeckers, mourning doves, a blue-gray gnatcatcher, cardinal, common grackle, 7 sandhill cranes, and red-shouldered hawks. Ron Mills, a naturalist by vocation, impressed us all by making a 'predator squeak' that caused the hawks to pause. We saw many wildflowers, vines, ferns, epiphytes, fungi, and lichens. We discovered signs of bobcat, raccoons, armadillos, and wild hogs. Our first Audubon Walkabout was a great success.

## PRAS Garage Sale By Cathy Olson, PRAS Board Member



PRAS will be hosting a garage sale in the near future to benefit the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center. Please look around your house for items you no longer want and donate them for our sale. Items may be dropped off at Cathy & Gregg's house (1522 Dewitt St, Port Charlotte) or call us (613-6753) and we can pick up your items.

## Photos Needed By Gregg Klowden, PRAS President



Do you have any photos of past PRAS members? We are trying to assemble a photo history of PRAS. If you have any photos or slides of past board members or other members please contact Gregg Klowden at 613-6753.

## Volunteers Needed

Our activities could not happen without the generous help of volunteers. Please consider serving on the PRAS board or helping with one of our many activities. We are currently in need of help with the following:

### Audubon-Pennington Park needs YOU!



Audubon-Pennington Park is our 8 acre park located in central Port Charlotte on Alton Road, between Midway Blvd. and Peachland Blvd. One of our longtime park caretakers Larry Linn is temporarily unavailable and could use your help. Please contact Gregg Klowden (941-613-6753 or [president@PeaceRiverAudubon.org](mailto:president@PeaceRiverAudubon.org)) if you would be able to monitor our park, restock the trail brochures, and help remove non-native plants.

### Birding Hotspot Brochure

PRAS has assembled quite a bit of information on our website and would like to put together a booklet on birding in Charlotte County. If you would like to help out with this venture then please contact Gregg Klowden (941-613-6753 or [president@PeaceRiverAudubon.org](mailto:president@PeaceRiverAudubon.org))



## Melaleuca Mulch Sale

The Harbour Heights Civic Association is selling Florimulch which is made from Melaleuca, an invasive species. The mulch is \$2.50 per bag (2 cubic ft). Minimum order is 10 bags. Please contact Fran Reimondo at 629-8228 for mulch orders and payments. Orders and payments may be given to Fran at the October 18 Audubon meeting. All orders must be paid by October 29. The mulch is to be picked up at HHCA (2530 Harbour Drive, Harbour Heights) on Nov 10 from 8 to 10 AM.

## PRAS History - Part II

by Walt Williams, PRAS Historian and Treasurer

One of the fun things to do here was to go visit our "Audubon Pennington Park". Based on a gift from the Pennington family and contributions from the County, supporters, and much work by PRAS members the park was dedicated March 15, 1989.

PRAS initiated local efforts to start elementary school environmental education programs. This started small, but by 1991 the "Audubon Adventures" was being used in about 60 third and fifth grade classes and was appreciated by the teachers and students. PRAS also set aside funds to send a local student to the National Audubon Youth Environmental camp in Maine. For several years the student selected was the local Science Fair winner. Pushing on with these efforts, a \$1000 scholarship for environmental studies at Charlotte VoTech was established.



In the mid 1990's PRAS helped in the rescue of Gopher tortoises in harms way at construction sites in the county. Audubon Pennington Park became their sanctuary. In 1998 a strong push was made by PRAS and many other groups for the passage of environmental protection proposals for the Florida Constitution that were on the November ballot. All were pleased when the Constitutional proposals passed by very large margins.

PRAS created a new fund, the "Youth Environmental Education Fund" to help bring educational programs to the youth of Charlotte County. A number of activities to get children involved and thus more interested were started such as wading trips for 2nd graders, pontoon boat explorations in Charlotte Harbor and guided nature walks through CHEC for 4th graders. "Audubon Adventures" was continued for various classes.

In 2001 PRAS participated in the first "Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival". The idea was to create a regional nature festival that would provide opportunities for environmental, educational, tourism, and community development interests in the greater Charlotte Harbor area to work together.

PRAS again went on public record as stating that strip mining is not good for plants, animals, land, and water resources in Florida. We must condemn any practice that reduces the flow of the Peace River or threatens the quality of our drinking water. PRAS continues to work on strengthening these objectives.

In the spring of 2002 the first Birdathon was held. This is an annual fund raising event. The proceeds go to support the continuing efforts of our Youth Environmental Education Fund. Moving on to 2004 the "Evening with Audubon" was held along with the silent auction. One hundred twenty guests were present and the auction raised over \$1,000 for scrub jay habitat conservation. A bit later in 2004 the Birdathon raised \$1,335 for educational efforts.

On January 20, 2006 at Ponce de Leon Park in Punta Gorda PRAS had the pleasure of hosting the dedication of a historical marker in honor of Columbus MacLeod who was killed in 1908 when he was one of the original two Florida wardens employed by Audubon to police the bird plume hunters and trade. A number of the Punta Gorda town council and Charlotte County commission were present along with many members of PRAS and others.

In the "White Bird" for October 2006 a major pitch was made for members to vote for the "Environmentally Sensitive Lands Referendum", also known as "Conservation Charlotte" and to work to get others to the polls to vote favorably. This pitch may well have helped, since the referendum passed.

## 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 Landfill & Carlton Reserve  
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 15 : 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  
Punta Gorda, FL  
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October 2007  
*White Bird*



Printed on Recycled Paper  
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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](mailto: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](mailto:whitebird@peacriveraudubon.org)

**Bird of the Month: Little Blue Heron (Egretta Caerulea)**  
by Cathy Olson, PRAS Board member

The little blue heron forages for small fish, amphibians, and aquatic invertebrates in fresh and estuarine wetlands, retention ponds and swales in urban areas. It is listed by Florida as a species of special concern primarily due to habitat loss and is declining throughout its range. Unlike other herons, immature birds are a completely different color than the adults. The young start out white and gradually molt into their adult blue plumage after their first year. They are year-round Florida residents, but we also see wintering birds from farther north.



### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

- |                        |                           |                    |
|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Mr. Don Thomas         | Ms. Linda Moreau          | The Tracy Family   |
| Doug & April Allmond   | Mr. Nelson B. Dawley      | Mr. Frank Wotitzky |
| Ms. Sylvia M. Bell     | Ms. E. Noble              | Ms. Anne E. Swing  |
| Mr. John M. Matulionis | Mr. David A. Nutting      | Marlene Sabin      |
| Barbara E. Lahrman     | Mr. Ray Murphy            | Margie Jackson     |
| Ms. Sis Thomas         | Mrs. Nancy McCormick      | Rick Clay          |
| Mr. Franklin           | J. Lambdin                | Mr. Charles Mendel |
| Mr. Timothy Higgins    | Ms. Jessica Leigh Daniels | Ms. Joanne Welling |
| Ms. Patricia Shea      | Geraldine Fisher          | Ms. Rita Konesny   |
| Mr. P. Rener           | Mary Uhland               | Jessica Agin       |
| Lynn Powell            | Ms. Delores Kearney       | Adam Martin        |
| Fred & Rita Hoppa      | Ms. Monika Tandon         | Catherine Taylor   |

### 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: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Visit our web site:  
[www.PeaceRiverAudubon.org](http://www.PeaceRiverAudubon.org)

**E14-7XCH**

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**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.