

White Bird

October 2008 Volume 32, Issue 2
Sandy Artman, Editor
Dan Artman, Dispatcher



www.PeaceRiverAudubon.org

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Next Meeting October 16, 2008 at 6:30 PM Speaker, Missy Christie

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church 2565 Tamiami Trail,
Port Charlotte (just south of Midway)



On October 16, 2008, come see Missy Christie speak about nesting American oystercatchers and other shorebirds in Charlotte County. Missy currently works for the Charlotte County Natural Resources Division where she monitors shorebirds, oversees marine turtle habitat conservation, and ensures compliance of County, State, and Federal permitting conditions associated with a beach nourishment/erosion control project.

A Message from the President by Cathy Olson

With migration upon us it seems a good time to remind everyone to look closer at what you think is a common bird, it could be a real treat. The kingfishers are starting to come back, the early shorebirds have already passed through, and the warblers and other passerines will be coming.

As our snowbird friends start trickling back it seems a good time to update you on what the PRAS Board has been doing. We have been busy planning our upcoming year and are lucky to have a host of exciting presentations and some promising walkabouts and field trips (see the calendar in this issue). Be sure to check out as many as you can. Our field trips and walkabouts are free, but you will need to sign a waiver for the upcoming year. This will protect our chapter from lawsuits. Our member meetings are also free but there is a donation jar should you choose to donate so we can continue to rent the church meeting room.



Last year two board members wrote and were awarded a grant from the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP) for the development of 2 brochures: "Water-wise Gardening in the Charlotte Harbor Region" and Household Water Conservation Tips for the Charlotte Harbor Region". The CHNEP graciously paid for the cost of printing and PRAS members and an artist donated their time to develop, write, and edit the brochures. Be sure to pick up a copy of each at a meeting.

The PRAS Scholarship Committee has been developing the criteria for a college scholarship which we hope to award annually. We hope to encourage local (Charlotte and Desoto Counties and the City of North Port), college students in their junior and senior years to pursue ecology, biology, environmental education or similar degrees. Details will be forthcoming. We need to continue developing the fund, so let a Board member know if you have fund raising ideas.

The Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival will be held on November 22, 2008 at the Charlotte Sports Park. We are hoping to get some new faces at the PRAS booth. We will need people to greet festival goers at our booth and tell them what our chapter is about. Volunteers are needed to set up the booth and run it from 9-3. Please contact a Board member if you are willing to spend some time at the PRAS booth.

October Field Trip—Celery Fields By Don Youso



On **Saturday, October 18** there will be a trip to Celery Fields, one of the premier wetlands in our area. We will meet at McDonalds at 7:00 am. and arrange car pools. Participants should bring lunch and wear walking shoes or boots which may get wet, as we will walk the dikes around the ponds at Celery Fields and probably will be walking through some wet grass. Hope to see a variety of species including Black Bellied Whistling Ducks, Limpkins, a variety of water birds including herons and egrets, and possibly some early migratory waterfowl. If we are fortunate we might see the Fulvous Whistling Duck which has been seen at Celery on several occasions. I have never been disappointed with a trip to Celery Fields. It should be a great trip, In addition to Celery Fields, we may also stop at Carlton Reserve on the way back and look for Red Headed woodpeckers. That will also probably be our lunch stop. Trip leader is Don Youso, 235-1298.

November Walkabout—Ollie's Pond By Don Youso



There will be a walk at Ollie's Pond on **Tuesday, November 4** at 8:00am Participants should meet at the parking lot. This will be an easy walk of about a mile over level ground. We should see a variety of birds, including herons egrets and other water birds. We may also see resident winter warblers and migratory waterfowl. Over the the years, there have been a surprising variety of birds found a Ollie's Pond, including some very unusual species. If you have questions, please call Don Youso who will lead the walk at 235-1298.

Conserve and Save Part III
by Stu Lewis, PRAS Vice President

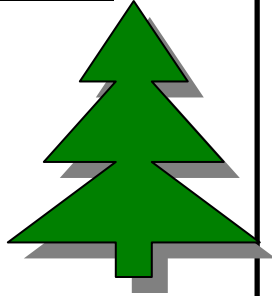
Save A Tree

*Trees keep our air cleaner by removing carbon dioxide.
Plant some trees!

*Use **100% recycled-content paper products** - toilet tissue, towels, etc.

***Go paperless** as much as possible by eliminating the need for paper bills and monthly statements. Banks, credit card and investment companies, etc., will provide monthly statements via e-mail. Most utility companies will send monthly bills by e-mail or you can use automatic bill-paying with your credit card.

***Get off mailing lists.** Almost half of retailers' catalogs are never opened while nearly 62 million trees are destroyed and 28 billion gallons of water are used to produce catalogs each year. There are several websites that will help you eliminate junk mail and get off mailing lists. Two site examples are: www.dmaconsumers.org www.abacus-us.com



Clean Green

*There are now many **earth-friendly cleaning products** available at supermarkets and specialty stores. The use of phosphate-free and chlorine-free detergents help reduce the risk of harm to our lakes, rivers and oceans.

If every household in the U.S. used just one 25 oz. bottle of a non-petroleum based dishwashing liquid instead of a petroleum based product, we could save 81,000 barrels of oil - enough to heat and cool 4,600 homes for one year!



Protect Land - Support "Conservation Charlotte"

*Eliminates future development

*Provides a buffer to environmentally sensitive areas

*Filters our water resources

*Provides flood control

*Recharges our aquifers

*Cleans our air

*Preserves habit for animals and birds

*Provides areas for residents and visitors to enjoy a "natural Florida".



Largest of Herons remains a Symbol for the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center
By Monica Dorken, CHEC educator

While driving up Burnt Store Road to the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center's Alligator Creek Preserve one full-moon morning, I spotted what appeared to be a large animal seemingly gliding between the traffic ahead. It was actually a great blue heron flying low, traversing the busy, narrow highway from the east-side drainage ditch to the preserve - in hopes of tastier breakfast morsels. It seemed quite large; as well it should, with its four-foot length from head to toe and six-foot wingspan. Yet for all its bulk, the greatest heron weighs only five to seven pounds.

I watched it land gracefully on greenish-yellow stilt legs and begin searching the shallows for fish, frogs, tadpoles or aquatic insects. *Ardea herodias* varies its diet with crayfish, snakes, lizards, mice and even an occasional southeastern marsh rat. Using a walk-and-wait method of hunting the big blue silently stalks its prey, letting the unsuspecting meal deliver itself. By the time the hapless critter realizes that those strange looking sticks in the water are attached to a cunning hunter, it is already too late. Like a snake striking, the great neck uncoils to spear the victim with its dagger-like golden beak.



With its natural camouflage, the blue can swiftly capture an unsuspecting clapper-rail bird from the edge of a marsh and is known to eat several other species of smaller water birds as well. No wonder the skittering shorebirds quickly move when a great blue lands among them. When this heron is rudely disturbed by a larger being, he will vocalize a deep, harsh crank as he indignantly flies away using slow, majestic flapping with head hunched back on its shoulders for support.

There's plenty of prey in the diverse web of life of our bountiful Charlotte Harbor area for these big guys, so please don't feed them. Hot dogs seem to be the preferred bait that folks use to lure the stilted stalkers to their lanais. Yet, this is a wild creature with specific dietary needs and innate aggressive behavior. They can easily break through your screens in search of more handouts. Let's leave them wild and wary.

It seems appropriate that we often spot the great blue heron at the Alligator Creek Preserve. At CHEC's inception in 1987, the Peace River Audubon Society chose this particular bird for the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center's logo. We are especially grateful that the big blue is thriving all over the Peace River watershed and Charlotte Harbor area due to its highly adaptable lifestyle and that they provide such entertaining wildlife watching for folks enjoying nature. Take care and stay strong!



Many thanks to Bonnie and Chuck Steele for their \$60 donation to our newly established college scholarship fund. In the future, we will begin offering scholarships to college students from North Port, Charlotte and Desoto Counties who are majoring in environmental sciences, ecology or a similar degree. The Steele's contribution helps us get closer to our goal.

Fund Raising Committee

PRAS is seeking people to serve on its fundraising committee. No experience necessary. Please consider helping PRAS achieve its conservation and education goals. Please contact Cathy Olson at 941-613-6753.



Donate to PRAS and give a gift to future generations

Your gifts are tax deductible and will help PRAS carry out its mission to protect the air we breathe, water we drink, and wildlife we love.

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City, State, Zip: _____
 Phone: _____

- College Scholarship Fund \$ _____
To encourage exceptional college students interested in a career in the environmental sciences.
- Audubon Adventures \$ _____
Environmental educational materials for area grade schools.
- PRAS Environmental Education Programs \$ _____
Such as Girl and Boy Scout birding programs, Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center, lectures to schools and organizations, etc...
- PRAS General Needs \$ _____
Such as Audubon-Pennington Park, festival displays, literature printing, or based on need any of the funds above.

Send this form along with your gift to PRAS at P.O. Box 510760, Punta Gorda, FL 33951 or call Cathy Olson at 941-613-6753

Walkabouts and Field Trips 2008-2009

- October 7: *Walkabout* Picnic at CHEC
Phyllis Cady 941-575-4009
- October 18: *Field Trip* Celery Fields
Don Youso *North
- November 4: *Walkabout* Ollie's Pond
Don Youso
- November 15: *Field Trip* Carlton Reserve
Stu and Louise Lewis *West
- December 2: *Walkabout* Sleeping Turtle
Stu and Louise Lewis
- December 14: Christmas Bird Count
Tony Licata
- January 6: *Walkabout* Amberjack
Chuck and Joan Froman
- January 17: *Field Trip* Harns Marsh
Cathy Olson *South
- February 3: *Walkabout* Yucca Pens
Eleanor Marr
- February 21: *Field Trip* Palm Island
Kevin Edwards *West
- March 3: *Walkabout* Tippe II
Stu and Louise Lewis
- March 21: *Field Trip* Babcock-Webb
Dave Lancaster (meet at entrance station)
- April 7: *Walkabout* Shell Creek Preserve
Eleanor Marr
- April 18: *Field Trip* Fort DeSoto
Eleanor Marr *North
- May 5: *Walkabout* TBA
Phyllis Cady
- May 16: *Field Trip* TBA
Mike Krzyzkowski/Jim Bonk

*NORTH—the parking lot by McDonalds at Peachland Mall near 175 and Kings Hwy in Port Charlotte (24133 Peachland Boulevard)
 *SOUTH—the parking lot of Sweetbay on US 41 south of the Burnt Store Road intersection in Punta Gorda (10175 Tamiami Trail)
 *EAST - the parking lot of Winn-Dixie on State Route 17 east of Punta Gorda (27680 Bermont Road)
 *WEST the parking lot of Charlotte Stadium, Rt. 776

Speaker Schedule

- October 16: Missy Christie - Oystercatchers
- November 20: Julie Morris - Natural History of the Gopher Tortoise
- December 18: Marianne Korosy - Southwest Florida Sparrows
Holiday Potluck
- January 15 : Tony Licata - Christmas Bird Count results
- February 19: John Cassani - Frogs and Frogwatch of Southwest FL
- March ??: Annual Banquet, silent auction and photo contest
- April 16: Gil MacAdam - Southwest FL Butterflies & their habitats
- May 21 : Members night: PRAS members present slides and stories

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

Non-profit Organization
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Punta Gorda, FL
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Check the "Exp" date on your address label!
"1208" means your PRAS and/or National membership expires December 2008. 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: membership1@peacriveraudubon.org

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED



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

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.

Bird of the Month: Belted Kingfisher (Megasceryle Alcyon)
by Cathy Olson, PRAS Board President

The belted kingfisher is the most widespread kingfisher in North America. It is commonly seen along rivers, canals and lakes where it hunts small fish. This medium sized bird is easily distinguished by its blue-gray and white plumage, and large, shaggy crested head. Unlike most birds, the female is more brightly colored than the male with her red chest band and flanks. Belted kingfishers excavate tunnels along river banks and make their nest at the end of it. In the winter, when we most often see kingfishers in southwest Florida, they are solitary and one can often hear their machine gun like call from water bodies.



Peace River Audubon Society Membership Application / Renewal

Join us for some fun and birding. Help protect the air we breathe, the water we drink, & the wildlife we love...help us protect Florida.

New Membership
 Renewal

Chapter Code: **E14-7XCH**

Name: _____
Organization: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Phone: () _____
E-mail: _____

- () \$20 Local Audubon Membership Only
Includes the "White Bird" newsletter with local news articles, local meetings, field trips, bird walks, & special events.
All proceeds stay within local chapter
- () \$20 Local and National Audubon (new members only, renewals \$35)
Includes all of the above plus National Audubon magazine.
- () Additional Gift for PRAS
Please help PRAS continue our educational and conservation programs with a tax deductible contribution.

MAIL CHECK WITH THIS FORM TO:

PRAS, PO box 510760, Punta Gorda, FL 33951-0760

Total Enclosed \$ _____