

Peace River Audubon Society

White Bird

February 2009 Volume 32, Issue 6
Sandy Artman, Editor
Dan Artman, Dispatcher



www.PeaceRiverAudubon.org

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	Starr Zachritz '10	941-766-7686

February meeting: Frogs and Frogwatch of Southwest Florida

Join PRAS and John Cassani, on February 19, 2009 as he teaches us about local frogs and toads and Frogwatch of Southwest Florida. Mr. Cassani began Frogwatch of Southwest Florida in 2003 to work with citizens to assemble frog data as part of the study of global amphibian decline. The results also help track the health of our wetlands, using frog diversity and abundance. These amphibians act as "canaries in the coal mines" for wetland systems and changes in their numbers can alert humans to changes in wetlands.



Annual Banquet and Silent Auction: Whooping Cranes

Don't put off buying your ticket to the annual banquet and silent auction on March 19 at Benedetto's Steakhouse Martini Bar! This year our keynote speaker will be Pat Casselberry, representing the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership. She will talk to us about her experiences with whooping cranes and how the population is doing. Tickets are \$28 per person before February 15 and \$31 thereafter until March 13. You may choose one of the following entrees: stuffed grouper, chicken cordon blue, or prime rib.

Items in our silent auction **so far** include a one night stay at the Wyvern in Punta Gorda, a kayak rental for Grande Tours, passes to the Bailey - Matthew Shell Museum and Kingfisher Fleet, art and much more. Proceeds from the silent auction and photo contest will go to Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership and our environmental education endeavors. Please contact Cathy Olson (613-6753) if you have items that you would like to donate for the silent auction. A photo contest will also be held at the banquet. Start sorting through your photos for your best shots this year. Contest rules and prices will be made available in the next White Bird.



Yucca Pens Walkabout By Eleanor Marr

On Tuesday February 3, PRAS will hold a walkabout at Yucca Pens. Yucca Pens is a separate unit of Babcock Webb Wildlife Management Area. Meet at the Yucca Pens pay station at 8 AM. There is a \$3 per person charge, except for senior Florida residents. Directions from Tamiami Trail (Rt. 41) at Tuckers Grade (exit 158 on I-75): Drive south on Tamiami Trail for 4.7 miles to Zemel Road. Turn right on Zemel Road and drive west about 2 1/2 miles to the entrance station on the right. Note: On Zemel Road you pass the county solid waste facility. There is an overwhelming number of birds to view along this road. You will not, however, want to be in an open convertible! For **xx**additional information call Eleanor Marr, 624-4183.

Photography Group By Eleanor Marr

The next photo safari will be held on Tuesday February 10 at 9 AM. Meet at the Port Charlotte Beach Complex (south end of Harbor Blvd.) in the main parking lot (near the boat launch). This group will meet each month January through April on the 2nd Tuesday. The time will vary to take best advantage of the venue. Announcements of the time and place will be made in the White Bird, at PRAS meetings and through PRAS Updates and CharlotteCountyNatureAlert.



There will be a photography workshop on Tuesday February 24 at 2 PM at Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC) in the Watershed Building (across from the screen room). Bring a CD of your photos, photos, questions or equipment you want to discuss. CHEC is located at 10941 Burnt Store Road in Punta Gorda. This group will meet each month January through April on the 4th Tuesday.

For further information about the photo group, call Bill Marr, 624-4182

Field Trip to Palm Island

Kevin Edwards will lead a field trip to Palm Island on February 21, 2009. Space is limited to the first 20 PRAS members, so please sign up with Cathy Olson by sending her an email to olsonc1@peacriveraudubon.org with your name, phone number and email address.

January Field Trip Report: Harns Marsh By Cathy Olson

Although the weather was downright cold (by Florida standards) 57 people attended the January 17th field trip to Harns Marsh. PRAS members were joined by Lee County Bird Patrol and Caloosa Bird Club members and some friends of friends who were interested in the trip. We walked and drove the 2 mile stretch and were rewarded with oodles of Everglades snail kites.



Before PRAS folks arrived, some were treated by a flock of 22! A lifer for many, the kites provided wonderful views as photographers snapped photos. The marsh was also full of wading birds and blue-winged teal. Although we only saw 57 species (down from last month's surprise trip) we added three new species, merlin, spotted sandpiper and black-bellied whistling-duck, to the Harns Marsh checklist. The list now stands at 99 and is housed on the Bird Patrol website (www.birdpatrol.org). I will be leading a trip to Harns Marsh for the Caloosa Bird Club on February 7. If you would like to join us let me know (olsonc1@peacriveraudubon.org).

Amberjack Walkabout By Chuck Froman

Twenty seven birders met at 8 am for the January walkabout at Amberjack Environmental Park. The weather was perfect. We observed 42 bird species. The wood storks and roseate spoonbills, as well as the white pelicans, were numerous and cooperated by coming very close to our group for pictures and observations.



Many of the other species also provided good views to most of us. Even though the birds we saw were the usual birds of the area it was a very special and unique day of birding.

Welcome new PRAS members: Barbara Brilhart, Joe Dillon, and Grant Powers.



Volunteer of the Month: Charlie Derrick

Peace River Audubon Society selected Charlie Derrick as volunteer of the month. Charlie provided us with the Christmas Bird Count results from the first PRAS count. What a treat to have the early chapter history. Thank you for all your years of being a member and all that you have done!

Surprise Field Trip Report: Harns Marsh By Cathy Olson

Seven PRAS members joined fifteen other birders on a Lee County Bird Patrol field trip to Harns Marsh on Saturday December 17, 2008. In total we saw 61 bird species including snail kites, limpkins, American coots, blue-winged teal, greater and lesser yellowlegs, roseate spoonbills, black-crowned night-heron, Wilson's snipe, savannah sparrow etc. Two birds were new to the Harns Marsh list included the marsh wren and a yellow-bellied sapsucker! Four sharp eyed PRAS members (the Dunsons and Lewises) were the only people who saw American bitterns, and they saw two! People learned about this surprise field trip through PRAS's email groups and it was announced at the general meeting. To sign up for the email alert groups go to PeaceRiverAudubon.org.

Pennington Park Saturday Workday By Cathy Olson

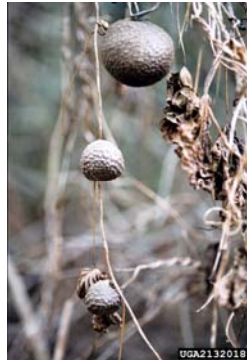
What a great turnout for the workday at Pennington Park! As promised, we began the morning with some birding where we saw 27 species. We had great views of a barred owl and a limpkin sitting on a nest! After birding, we split into three groups: two groups attacked Brazilian pepper and carrotwood and one group gathered and bagged air potatoes. By the end of the day 17 bags of air potatoes had been collected. Thanks and kudos to the 12 people who gave their Saturday morning to help rid Pennington Park of nonindigenous invasive species: Larry Behrem, Rodney Bovee, Ken Ferris, Joan Kufrin, Dave Lancaster, Cathy Olson, Dan and Jean Osbourne, Stu Lewis, Larry Linn, Chuck Steele, and Don Youso. Don't forget, Pennington Park workdays are a regular occurrence on Wednesday mornings at 8 AM.



**President's Message:
Cathy Olson**

I would like to encourage everyone to help get the word out for our Audubon Banquet and silent auction. We have had a presentation from Pat Casselberry in the past and she is quite a good speaker. The topic is one that I think many area birders and non-birders alike will be interested in. It costs quite a bit to raise the whooping cranes and then lead them via ultra light plane from their breeding grounds to their wintering grounds. Our fund raiser will help defray some of that cost. We, as a Florida chapter, are among the lucky to actually have whooping cranes with us seasonally (as well as the non-migratory flock near the Kissimmee Prairie). Please buy your tickets early so that you can take advantage of the \$3 savings. Early ticket sales help us through the planning process.

We will be planning an additional workday at Audubon Pennington Park in the near future. The work day (well hours) flew by and everyone seemed to have fun. Seeing the mound of air potatoes was quite a sight. It is nice to make a dent in the invasive exotic plants on site.



The annual birdathon is planned on Saturday, April 4, 2009. Start planning your approach and getting your team. While the birdathon is a fundraiser the teams genuinely have fun and rivalries have developed. Come be part of the friendly competition! Consider sponsoring a team if that style of birding isn't your cup of tea.

Several people will be termed out of their positions on the Peace River Audubon Society Board. Please consider stepping up and joining the Board. The presidency will be vacant and we will also need a new White Bird editor. Sandy has been doing a wonderful job, but she would like to turn the keyboard over to another person. The newsletter is all done electronically, so a seasonal person (not necessarily a Board member) could certainly do the job. Our chapter needs these positions filled so that chapter business can continue. See a Board member if you would like to volunteer as a Board member or for either of these positions.

Come visit the Peace River Audubon Society table on March 1st from noon to five at the Scrub Jay Jamboree in Harbour Heights. The Jamboree is sponsored by the Lemon Bay Conservancy and will be located at the Harbour Heights Civic Hall (2530 Harbour Drive).

**Walkabouts and Field Trips
2008-2009**

- February 3: *Walkabout* Yucca Pens
Eleanor Marr
February 21: *Field Trip* Palm Island
Kevin Edwards *West
March 3: *Walkabout* Tippy 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 Krzykowski/Jim Bonk

- *NORTH—the parking lot by McDonalds at Peachland Mall near I75 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

**2008-2009
Speaker Schedule**

- February 19: John Cassani - Frogs and Frogwatch of Southwest FL
March 19: 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

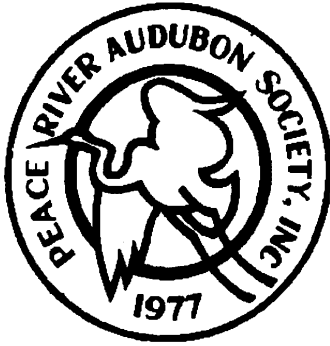
**The Great Backyard Bird Count
February 13-16 2009**

The 12th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, hosted by National Audubon Society and Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is taking place February 13-16 2009. Participation is free and there is no early registration. Visit www.birdcount.org for specific instructions. Count the highest number of birds you see at one time (to avoid double counting) during at least a 15 minute period in one place. Then upload your results on the website. You may recount the same place daily during the count period, go to different locations or just stick with one location on one day. Online lists and tallies are updated throughout the count. You may also upload photographs for the online gallery and participate in the photo contest.



The Peace River Audubon Society
PO Box 510760
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Non-profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
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Permit No. 100



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Check the "Exp" date on your address label!
"1209" means your PRAS and/or National membership expires December 2009. 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

CURRENT RESIDENT OR



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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: Black-bellied Whistling-duck (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) by Cathy Olson

Although a species most commonly found in the Neotropics, the black-bellied whistling duck has recently expanded its range and is fairly common in portions of Florida. In Charlotte County, this gregarious duck is commonly found in Deep Creek, on Shell Creek and even in some of the canals of Port Charlotte. Multiple flocks inhabit The Celery Fields in Sarasota County. As the name implies, they have a high pitched wheezy whistle, often heard in flight. They have long necks, pink legs and feet, red bills, black bellies, rufous chests and backs and white patches on their wings. Unlike most ducks, the males and females look similar. They are omnivorous and will eat mollusks, insects and plants.



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 \$ _____