

White Bird

November 2009 Volume 33, Issue 3

Sandy Artman, Editor

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www.PeaceRiverAudubon.org

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	George Ruby '10	941-423-0174
	Chuck Steele '11	941-875-9244
	Starr Zachritz '10	941-766-7686

Next Meeting: November 19, 2009 at 6:30 PM
Speaker, Mike Owens

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

Mike Owens will speak to us about the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park. He is a biologist at the Preserve working to slow and eventually eradicate the invasive Apple Snail which is twice as large as the Florida species. Please join us.

Sunday, November 22, 2009 Field Trip
Harns Marsh
By Cathy Olson

Please note: the Harns Marsh field trip has been changed to Sunday November 22 so that PRAS members may enjoy the field trip and the Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival.

Harns Marsh is a created wetland system in Lehigh (Lee County) which supports an abundance of birdlife. To date 120 species have been identified. Snail kites are fairly common, as are wading birds, shorebirds, and waterfowl. We will drive on the berm that borders the marsh and stop along the way at good birding locations. Please arrive by 7 am in the southern meeting location (Sweetbay) with a full tank of gasoline so that we may carpool to the site. There are no restroom facilities at Harns Marsh, so go light on the coffee.



President's Message By Cathy Olson

Please join PRAS members at the Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival. The festival this year is special for several reasons; it is the 10th annual festival and is being held in honor of the late Joy Linn. Joy Linn was a dedicated PRAS member (and former Board Member), Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center volunteer and local steward of the Charlotte Harbor and its watershed. Please come celebrate all Charlotte Harbor has to offer and acknowledge Joy's memory. The festival will be held from 10-3 at the Charlotte Sports Park (2300 El Jobean Road) on Saturday, November 21st.

I hope everyone had a chance or two to get out and do some birding this fall. It seems conditions were just right for us to see quite a few great birds. Hopefully those of you who were traveling or were still "up north" had a good time birding during migration too. Audubon Pennington Park had some gems: a magnolia warbler, chestnut-sided warbler, Tennessee warbler, quite a few white-eyed vireos, and oodles of blue-gray gnatcatchers. I am happy to hear the gray catbirds meowing once again. Welcome back!



The Christmas Bird Count is right around the corner (12/19/09)! Area leaders should let Tony Licata know if you are able to continue with your area so that he may rearrange things if need be. If you would like to join a group please contact Tony Licata so that he can assign you to a team. Tony may be reached via email: alicata@dewis.com.

Tuesday, December 1, 2009 Walkabout
Amberjack Environmental Park
By Chuck & Joan Froman

Amberjack is a 225 acre preserve made up of unique scrub, pine flatwoods, marshes and other beautiful areas. Amberjack is traversed by two significant wetlands. They are havens for several species of wading birds, including glossy ibis, roseate spoonbills and snowy egrets. Two boardwalks lead to observational platforms on Lemon Lake, where people can enjoy the amazing variety of birds who inhabit the lake and the surrounding areas. For questions, call Chuck or Joan at 743-5204.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We are in need of volunteers to help with the following:

- People to participate at the PRAS booth at the Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival
- Help with scanning the PRAS records so we can get the documents up on the website for everyone to see.
- Help at Pennington Park on Wednesday mornings.
- Help with the Annual Banquet.

Please see a board member if you would like to help our organization with any of these activities.

**2009-2010 Program Schedule
3rd Thursday of the Month at 6:30 PM**

November 19, 2009	Mike Owens Fakahatchee State Preserve
December 17, 2009	Christmas Potluck Andy Stevens Florida Scrub-Jay Habitat Conservation Plan
January 21, 2010	Tony Licata Christmas Bird Count
February 18, 2010	Bill Dunson Myakka State Forest
March 18, 2010	Audubon Banquet / Dennis Giardina Florida Panther
April 15, 2010	Gina Zimmerman Swallow-tailed Kites
May 20, 2010	Film on life of James Audubon

**PRAS Spotlight on Starr Zachritz
By Phyllis Cady**

This month the spotlight is on Starr Zachritz who doesn't need a spotlight as she shines on her own. Everyone who attends our general meetings is greeted by her warm smile as she is PRAS's hospitality chair and sets up our refreshments. Starr is also on our Audubon Board of Directors and has volunteered to help with our annual banquet again this spring.



Starr is a 4th generation Florida native, born and raised in Miami. As a child she began learning about birds with her older brother as her mentor. Even though she began her employment in the business world, she continued to be a nature lover.

She decided to give up her corporate career for her three loves; nature, history, and antiques. Presently, Starr works at the Train Depot Antique Mall, is a volunteer for the Punta Gorda Historical Society, and is the owner and director of the History Park Art Gallery and Gift Shop. It is located on Shreve St. in the City of Punta Gorda's History Park. There you can check out her collection of jewelry and nature photos, and items by 5 other local artists. Her shop is also the perfect spot to observe and photograph the bald eagles nesting there. Every 4th Thursday, Starr hosts, "Art in the Park". Starr provides the materials for a specific project; making jewelry, designing T-shirts, painting ceramics or arranging mosaics. Ask Starr what project she is working on next. If you visit Starr in her gift shop, you'll know why she says that her dream has come true.

Nowadays, Starr does most of her birding in her backyard, which is certified as a backyard wildlife habitat and mini-refuge. She lives there with 4 dogs and her mom. She maintains 30 feeders, 6 bird-baths, and a fountain. When she's not busy participating at the Visual Arts Center, showing her photographs and jewelry, she experiments with making suet to attract different species to her yard.

Thank you, Starr, for dedicating your time to our PRAS group despite your busy schedule. If you know a PRAS member who would make a good candidate to be in the PRAS SPOTLIGHT, please send their name to ps_cady@yahoo.com.

**Volunteer of the Month
By Cathy Olson**

The PRAS Board selected Commissioner Bob Starr as our volunteer of the month for his appeal for the Charlotte County Parks and Recreation Department to work out a solution for mowing and trash collection at Audubon Pennington Park. While nothing is concrete at this point, we hope that the Parks and Recreation Department will continue to mow the main path through this County-owned park.

NEW Twist on Photo Contest

We are going to try something new this year. Our Annual Photo Contest will be held at the December Potluck so get your pictures ready now. The pictures will be displayed and the voting will take place at our meeting on Thursday, December 17. We will vote that evening and auction off the photos. The winners will not be announced until our Audubon Banquet in March. We plan to award 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place prizes along with 3 honorable mentions.

Please bring your entries between 5:30– 6:00 PM on Thursday, December 17. Ballots will be available at the sign-in table. The photos will be auctioned off that evening. Winners will be notified so they can be sure to attend the Audubon Banquet to receive their award.



Photo Contest Rules are listed below.

1. 1 entry \$3 or 4 for \$10.
2. Subject material unlimited
3. Each person at the meeting gets one vote.
4. The entry with the most votes wins 1st prize, etc.
5. All photos will be put up for silent auction.
6. The MAX size is 8x10 - does not need to be matted.

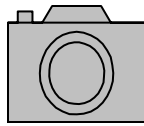
**October Field Trip Report—Celery Fields
By Don Youso**

Despite early morning thunder, lightning, and rain, we had six participants who traveled to Celery Fields. The weather was pleasantly cool and windy. Our species count was a respectable count of 47 for the day. Highlights included good looks at a Sora, the spotting of a Marsh Wren which several people saw, and hearing the call of a King Rail. We saw three sets of baby Black-Bellied Whistling-Ducks (BBWD) ranging from a few days to several weeks of age. Perhaps the best find was a flock of 12-15 baby BBWD with two adults on an open pond and seeing them rapidly swim across the pond and magically disappear in short grasses.

At our Carleton Reserve stop we picked up several additional species. It appeared that we would miss our target species the Red-headed Woodpecker; however, as we were our loading our cars to leave, two noisy Red-headed Woodpeckers landed in a snag a few feet away from our vehicles, apparently to say goodbye. What a pleasant surprise, and what a great way to end a good day of birding.



PRAS Photography Group



The PRAS Photography Group meets twice a month from January through April. Everyone is welcome.

On the 2nd Tuesday of the month there is a photo shoot. The time depends on optimizing lighting for the particular shoot, and may be in the morning or afternoon. Time and place will be announced in the White Bird that precedes the event, as well as at the preceding PRAS meeting, and about a week in advance in the Charlotte Sun, PRAS Updates and CharlotteNatureAlerts. An e-mail list of interested persons is maintained for notification of the occasional extra photo op.

On the 4th Tuesday of the month there is an informal workshop where techniques and equipment are discussed and photos are shared. Special projects are also undertaken, such as working on individual slide shows for our monthly PRAS meetings. Photography group meetings have taken place at 2 PM in the Watershed Building at CHEC, Burnt Store Road, Punta Gorda. A more central location is being sought. Be sure to check up-to-date information for a possible move.

October Walkabout Report By Phyllis Cady

Thanks go to all 24 participants who showed up for the first walkabout of the season, despite the fact that the weather prediction was for another very hot and humid day. We were lucky to have Stephanie Green join us for the walk. She is the land management specialist for Prairie Shell Creek Conservation Land, a SWFWMD property, as well as several other properties. After we had walked just a short distance, the Florida Scrub Jays greeted us. Stephanie talked about the jay populations on the property, and how they are tagged and counted. During the summer a survey was held on this property and the results showed about 33 jays, in about 7 families.



We headed to an area of taller oaks, then down to a man-made pond. We saw about 21 species of birds on our walk. A red shouldered hawk greeted us at the entrance-way. We had a quick glimpse of a brown thrasher. A green heron sat above the pond with his neck stretched out, and a common yellowthroat hopped around in a wax myrtle bush. This property has potential for a great birding spot later in the fall or during the winter. I hope all of those folks who were there today, will return when the weather is optimal for birding.

November Walkabout Report By Don Youso



On a beautiful, sunny fall morning we had 20 participants for the walk-about at Ollie's Pond. After telling the participants that we would not likely see many Common Moorhens, because their numbers seemed to be down, we proceeded to spot close to 30 Moorhens. So much for predictions! We did see four warbler species (Palm, Pine, Prairie, Yellow-rumped), and three woodpecker species (Downy, Pileated, Red-bellied). We spotted several Blue-winged Teal, some American Coots, and one Juvenile Ring-necked Duck. The total species count was 34. Several participants saw life birds, and we were fortunate to have one individual with us who shared his expertise on plants and flowers with the group. Overall a very good trip.

Walkabout & Field Trip Schedule 2009-2010

Please check the Whitebird close to the trip date for additional information, including directions to Walkabout sites, and for POSSIBLE CHANGES. Announcements will also be made about a week in advance in the Charlotte Sun, PRAS Updates and CharlotteCounty-NatureAlert.

- October 6: *Walkabout* Prairie Shell Creek Conservation Lands
Phyllis Cady 941-286-7638
- October 17: *Field Trip* Celery Fields
Don Youso *North
- November 3: *Walkabout* Ollie's Pond
Don Youso
- November 21: *Field Trip* Harns Marsh
Cathy Olson *South
- December 1: *Walkabout* Amberjack Environmental Park
Chuck and Joan Froman
- December 19: Christmas Bird Count
Tony Licata
- January 5: *Walkabout* Desoto County Env Learning Center
Stu and Louise Lewis
- January 16: *Field Trip* San Carlos Bay-Bunche Beach
Eleanor Marr *South
- February 2: *Walkabout* Tippecanoe Environmental Park
Dave Lancaster
- February 20: *Field Trip* Myakka State Forest
Stu and Louise Lewis *West
- March 2: *Walkabout* Sleeping Turtle Preserve South
Stu and Louise Lewis
- March 20: *Field Trip* Babcock-Webb Wildlife Mgmt Area
Dave Lancaster (meet at entrance station)
- April 6: *Walkabout* Yucca Pens
Eleanor Marr
- April 17: *Field Trip* Fort DeSoto Park
Eleanor Marr *North
- May 4: *Walkabout* TBA
Phyllis Cady
- May 15: *Field Trip* TBA
Mike Krzyzkowski/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

Welcome to New Members

WELCOME

Larry & Joanna Mraz
Marilyn Tarnowski
Ms. Yvonne Ermirio
Mary S. Vincent
Judy Houle



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

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Punta Gorda, FL
Permit No. 100



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Check the "Exp" date on your address label!
"1210" means your PRAS and/or National membership expires December 2010. 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



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: Golden-Winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) by Cathy Olson, PRAS President

Here in southwest Florida we only get a brief chance to see the golden-winged warbler during spring and fall migration. Weather conditions were just right this fall so quite a few birders here in southwest Florida were able to see them. This overall gray warbler has a dark mask and throat that contrasts with its white face, a golden crown and true to its name it has a bright yellow patch on the wing. This is a ground nesting warbler that specializes in early successional communities which are decreasing in the northern U.S. The golden-winged warbler also hybridizes with the more common blue-winged warbler. As a result of habitat loss and hybridization this species is in decline.



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: **C9ZE140Z**

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: () _____

E-mail: _____

() \$20 Local Audubon Membership (PRAS)

Includes the "White Bird" newsletter with local news articles, local meetings, field trips, bird walks, & special events.

All proceeds stay within local chapter

****Checks payable to PRAS

() \$20 Local and National Audubon Membership

(\$20 New Members Only, \$35 Renewals)

Includes all of the above plus National Audubon magazine.

**** Checks payable to National Audubon Society

() 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 \$ _____