

Peace River Audubon Society

# White Bird

October 2011

Volume 35, Issue 2

Cathy Olson, Editor



www.PeaceRiverAudubon.org

## 2011-12 OFFICERS & DIRECTORS:

President	Larry Behrens	941-625-5762
Vice President	Don Youso	941-235-1298
Treasurer	Dave Lancaster	586-214-0203
Secretary	Patti Linn	941-637-8160
Additional Directors:	Jim Comfort	941-505-0206
	Mike Krzyzkowski	863-244-2652
	Larry Linn	941-637-8160
	Gil MacAdam	863-494-7434
	Shannon McGinnis	941-629-9116
	George Ruby	941-423-0174
	Starr Zachritz	941-766-7686

### October 20 meeting: Vultures, Nature's Great Recyclers: Diana Stinson

Please join us for Diana Stinson, Park Ranger and Event Coordinator at Oscar Scherer State Park, who will present a program on Florida's vultures, one of our most misunderstood creatures and, yet, one of nature's most important agents in the recycling of dead animals. Don't miss out on this fascinating presentation.

Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. for visiting with fellow PRAS members and guests.



### October 22 Field Trip to Wildflower Preserve By Shannon McGinnis

On Saturday, October 22, the PRAS field trip will be to the new Wildflower Preserve near Amberjack Preserve on Gasparilla Pines Boulevard off of Placida Road. Wildflower Preserve was a golf course which has been transformed into a nature preserve by the volunteers of the Lemon Bay Conservancy (LBC). Those wanting to car pool will meet at the West carpool location at 7 AM.

Once at the preserve we will be met at 8 AM by Philip Dakin, one of the LBC volunteers, who will guide us on a tour of the preserve explaining the restoration work that has been done by the LBC to restore the former golf course into natural communities.

Bring water, insect repellent and sturdy shoes that can get damp.

### November 1 Walkabout: Prairie Pines Preserve: By Phyllis Cady

For our November Walkabout we will be meeting at 8 AM at Prairie Pines Preserve in North Fort Myers. This is a 2,700 acre Conservation 20/20 preserve in Lee County with a boardwalk and observation platform that overlooks a freshwater marsh. The address of the preserve is 18400 Tamiami Trail, North Fort Myers, 33903. To get there you will head south on U.S. 41. It's about 13 miles south of 41 and Burnt Store Road. You will pass the preserve on the left, but will need to make a U-turn at Del Prado Blvd., and head back north for .5 miles and look for the sign. There are 25 miles of trails at Prairie Pines, but we will only be walking 0.5 as a group. As we head towards the marsh, we'll be seeing birds that live in a brushy habitat, like catbirds, wrens, vireos, warblers, jays and cardinals. There are tall pines and snags for osprey, hawks, and numerous red-headed woodpeckers that will pose for your photos. The observation platform is a good place to stop and watch the wading birds fly over, such as wood storks, ibis, herons, and egrets. It's also a great place to find a red-tailed hawk. Please be sure to bring bottled water and hiking shoes. For more information call Phyllis at 941-286-7638.



**President's Message**  
**By: Larry Behrens**

So, we're up and running . . . well, up and walking, to be more specific. Eight birding enthusiasts participated in this season's first walkabout which took place on the Three Lakes Trail at Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center's Alligator Creek site. A summary of this enjoyable walk can be found in this issue of the White Bird. Our second general meeting of our 2011-2012 season will be held on Thursday evening, October 20 at the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church. Diana Stinson, Park Ranger at Oscar Scherer State Park, will present a program on vultures, Florida's feathered scavengers. Our first field trip of the season will take place on Saturday, October 22, at the new Wildflower Preserve, south of Englewood. A complete list of walkabouts, fieldtrips, and general meetings can be found on page 5 of the White Bird and in a brochure that will be available at our October 20 general meeting. This listing includes dates, times, and locations for all of these events. That's it in a nutshell. There will be much more to talk about at our October 20 meeting. We hope to see you there. Be ready for another enjoyable and informative evening.

**Audubon Pennington Park**  
**by Larry Linn**

Peace River Audubon Society volunteers maintain Audubon-Pennington Park in Port Charlotte. This 7.9 acre park is a microcosm of several Florida communities, including pine flatwoods, oak hammocks, and cypress swamps. The park is located on Alton Road between Midway and Peachland. It is only a block off of Peachland, right where Hallstead intersects Alton Road. Volunteers meet every Wednesday morning from 8 to 10 to make sure the trails stay clear and to remove exotic vegetation.

Charlotte County stopped maintaining the park several years ago, along with 15 other county parks, so all maintenance has been taken over by PRAS volunteers, including emptying garbage cans, and mowing trails and the parking area. Our president, Larry Behrens, and board members Shannon McGinnis and Larry Linn, and PRAS member Edith Wilbur have been working the park year round. Other members have helped a lot when they're here in the winter months. If you'd like to help, come by on Wednesday morning.

**Walkabout Report**  
**By: Larry Behrens**

On Tuesday, October 4, eight hearty souls walked the Three Lakes Trail which winds its way through Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center's pine flatwoods alongside Sherman Lake. Comfortable temperatures, shaded trails, the sounds of a nice variety of birds, and the display of fall wildflowers provided for a most enjoyable morning.

Upon entering CHEC, trail guide Larry Behrens was treated to a flyover by a young bald eagle. As we approached the trail head to Three Lakes Trail, a couple of Sandhill cranes flew overhead. Several red-bellied woodpeckers were seen checking out a couple of tree snags laid bare by Hurricane Charley. A belted kingfisher worked its way overhead in its usual erratic pattern. The ever-present mockingbirds serenaded us along the way, and the mourning doves maintained their usual perches in the tops of some of the pine snags. Although not seen, a Carolina wren made its presence known.

Our list of other bird sightings included blue jays, great egrets, a red-shouldered hawk, catbird, common grackles, and a Northern cardinal. Near and along the boardwalk that skirts Sherman Lake, we observed a large number of black and turkey vultures, snowy egrets, a little blue heron, osprey, and common yellowthroat. From the boardwalk, one of the hikers spotted, with her binoculars, a large bald eagle nest off in the distance near the lake's edge.

We all agreed that this walkabout was time well spent. For some, this was their first visit to Alligator Creek with a promise to return so as to explore other trails that pass through this very special place.

**Photos Wanted**  
**By: Cathy Olson**

Are you a photographer? Would you like me to use your photographs in the White Bird? I would love to include photos of PRAS members in action! Send shots of our members in action or shots of birds you would like me to use. Now that we are electronic, space is not an issue and I can steer away from line drawings.

**Tribute to Bill Havill**  
**By: Tony & Judy Licata**

After we participated in the 1996 Peace River Audubon Christmas Bird Count with Dillys Randall, she mentioned if we wanted to learn more about birds we should take Bill Havill's class in Bird Identification at the Port Charlotte Cultural Center. Well, we signed up for the class in January of 1997. The first class outing was to the Port Charlotte Beach Complex, where Bill mentioned there were no such birds as Seagulls..... they could be Laughing Gulls, Ring-billed Gulls, or Herring Gulls. And if in a group of gulls there were a few who were particularly "vocal," he would point out that no doubt they were the females! This was the beginning of our learning about Florida birds. Over the years Bill taught us everything from immature Little Blue Herons being white and turning blue as they age, to a quick way of identifying perching Red-tailed Hawks by their black belly band.

Through Bill's classes we were able to visit many of southern Florida's birding places and meet many of our birding friends. He would not only identify the birds, but take time to explain their identifying field marks. Bill would have patience with new birders taking the class even if they called the Oystercatcher a Clamdigger. He will be missed as both a friend and teacher.



Editor's note: Bill Havill, a long time PRAS member died July 20, 2011. His family generously donated over 30 books to the chapter. Some will be used for prizes in upcoming raffles (Charlotte Harbor Nature Festival, PRAS door prizes etc.) and others will be seen at the silent auction. Thank you Bill for making PRAS what it is, for your final contribution, and for great memories.

**2011 North American Migration Count**  
**By: Cathy Olson**

Fifteen of us, in eight teams, participated in the fall North American Migration Count on September 17, 2011. Birds in eight areas were identified and counted in Charlotte County including the Webb, Babcock Ranch Preserve, Ollie's and Shirley Ponds, Amberjack, Palm Island, Prairie Creek area, and Wildflower Preserve. We counted 3,499 birds in 91 species. The most numerous individuals of a single species was the Forsters tern (735), thanks solely to Kevin Edwards. Only the mourning dove was counted in all areas. Some of the best neotropical migrants came from Wildflower Preserve and Babcock Ranch Preserve thanks to Tom Duch, Bill Wilcox, Bill Howard and Bob Hargrave. Bob and Bonnie Elliot counted the only white-winged doves (24) and scrub-jays (2), Chuck Steele and Steve Hopper counted the most tree swallows (50) and pied-billed grebes (41), Bob and Joanne Winters counted the only red-tailed hawks and Nigel Morris, Gregg Klowden and I counted the only northern bobwhites (65). It was a fun morning (or day) for us all and we got some good bird watching in! Let me know if you want to participate in the spring.

**Welcome to our new members!**

Come and join in our many field trips and activities.

Patricia F. Miller	Carmela Werner
Charles K. Septer	Ed Lutz
Richard Miranda	Constance Fuller
Joanna Linders	Linda & Herbert Levin
Francis Hudson	Patricia Smith
Lisa Pellerin	Betty J. Saville
Margaret Rand	Dean & Helen Raptakis
Grant Breining	Susan Swanson
Marilyn D. Tanguay	Marley Watko
Peter Soderberg	Cornelias Dever
Virginia Muth	Jill & Jonathan Ludbrook



## Bird of the Month: American bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) by Cathy Olson

The American bittern is a stocky heron that is with us in Florida during the winter. This well camouflaged bird inhabits wetlands with dense cover, especially cattails or other thick vegetation. They are almost always solitary and move slowly while they hunt a variety of prey. Once caught, prey is usually shaken or bitten before being swallowed. When startled they remain completely still and point their beaks skyward. A colloquial name is thunder-pumper, because of its loud unusual call. Locally they can be reliably found at the Cecil B. Webb Wildlife Management Area and Harns Marsh.



American bittern at Merrit Island, FL by Gregg Klowden

## Birding Etiquette

1. Do not approach too closely. Avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger, exercise restraint and caution especially around nests, roosts and important feeding areas.
2. Avoid using pishing or recordings, especially in heavily birded areas, during breeding and migration, or with threatened species.
3. Stay on roads, trails, and paths where they exist; keep habitat disturbance to a minimum.
4. Keep groups small enough so that you are not impacting the environment or scaring the birds.
5. Respect the individuals in the group who may have different abilities. Pass on your knowledge of birds and birding areas
6. Follow all rules where you are birding (i.e. stay on marked trails and have permission if birding on privately owned land).

## Hands Across the Harbor Event to benefit CHEC

The 4<sup>th</sup> annual Hands Across the Harbor Run/Walk/Bike Event being held the morning of January 28, 2012, will now have all proceeds going to Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC) to support environmental programs. CHEC has joined the original organizers, the Charlotte Harbor Community Redevelopment Agency and the Punta Gorda Community Redevelopment Agency, as a non-profit partner. The event consists of an 8K competitive run, a 5K fun walk, and both a 10 and 20 mile fun bike ride. All events start and end in Bayshore Live Oak Park and go across the 41 bridge to Punta Gorda, then return. There will also be live music by Michael Haymans' Hibiscus Band, a business expo, door prizes and a raffle.

We are looking for volunteers to help run the event. We would need 2-3 hours starting at 6:30AM on January 28, 2012, to do registration, food handout, parking, or (race) course monitoring. Please contact Larry Linn to sign up at 941-276-2369 or [LINN59@comcast.net](mailto:LINN59@comcast.net). (The Peace River Audubon Society helped establish CHEC in 1987.)



### PRAS has three email groups:

1. *White Bird only*: 1 monthly email alerting you the current White Bird is ready for viewing
2. *PRAS Updates*: 2 or 3 PRAS email reminders per month of upcoming meetings and field trips.
3. *Nature Alert*: Same as PRAS updates plus notices from other conservation organizations and additional field trips, notices for odd bird sightings.

Sign up on the PRAS website:  
[PeaceRiverAudubon.org](http://PeaceRiverAudubon.org)

## 2011-2012 Speaker Schedule

October 20: Vultures: Diana Stinson  
November 17: Wildflower Preserve: Dr. Bill Dunson  
December 15: PRAS potluck and photo contest  
January 19: Christmas Bird Count Results: Tony Licata  
February 16: Peace River Wildlife Center: Maryann Sakamoto  
March 15: Banquet: Gardening for Wildlife: Dr. Bill Dunson  
April 19: Southeastern Florida kestrels: Dr. Karl Miller  
May 17: Member's night slide show

**Meetings are at 6:30: Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 2565 Tamiami Trail, Port Charlotte.**

### Walkabouts and Field Trips 2011-2012

Saturday, October 22, 2011 \*Note-fourth Saturday\*  
Field Trip: Wildflower Preserve  
Meet: West carpool location \* 7 a.m.  
Coordinator: Shannon McGinnis 941-258-6363

Tuesday, November 1, 2011  
Walkabout: Prairie Pines, North Ft. Myers 8 a.m.  
Coordinator: Phyllis Cady 941-286-7638

Saturday, November 12, 2011 \*Note second Saturday\*  
Field Trip: Harns Marsh  
Coordinator: Cathy Olson 941-613-6753  
Meet: South carpool location\* 7 a.m.

Tuesday, December 6, 2011  
Walkabout: Ollie's Pond 8 a.m.  
Coordinator: Don Youso 941-235-1298

Saturday, December 17, 2011  
Field Trip: Christmas Bird Count  
Coordinator: Tony Licata 941-505-4775  
Contact Tony Licata to sign up

Tuesday, January 3, 2012 8 a.m.  
Walkabout: DeSoto County Environmental Learning Center  
Coordinator: Gil MacAdam 863-494-7434

Saturday, January 21, 2012  
Field Trip: Celery Fields, Sarasota  
Coordinator: Eleanor Marr 941-624-4182  
Meet: North carpool location 7 AM

Tuesday, February 7, 2012  
Walkabout: Tippecanoe 1 8 a.m.  
Coordinator: Don Youso 941-235-1298

Saturday, February 18, 2012  
Field Trip: Venice Landfill  
Coordinator: Stu and Louise Lewis  
Meet: North carpool location\* 7 a.m.

Tuesday, March 6, 2012  
Walkabout: Shell Creek Preserve 8 a.m.  
Coordinator: Dave Lancaster 941-625-0979 or 586-214-0203

Saturday, March 17, 2012  
Field Trip: Babcock-Webb Wildlife Mgmt Area  
Coordinator: Dave Lancaster 941-625-0979 or 586-214-0203  
Meet: Babcock-Webb Entrance Station 7 a.m.

Tuesday, April 3, 2012 8 a.m.  
Walkabout: Footprints Trail- Babcock Ranch Preserve  
Bermont Road  
Coordinator: Phyllis Cady 941-286-7638

Saturday, April 21, 2012  
Field Trip: Fort DeSoto Park  
Coordinator: Eleanor Marr 941-624-4182  
Meet: North carpool location \* 7 a.m.

Tuesday, May 1, 2012  
Walkabout: Audubon Pennington Park 8 a.m.  
Coordinator: Larry Behrens 941-286-9094

Saturday, May 19, 2012  
Field Trip: Caspersen Beach and Venice Rookery  
Coordinator: Shannon McGinnis 941-258-6363  
Meet: North Carpool location\* 7 a.m.

**For Walkabouts: meet at the park entrance at 8 AM**

**\*For Field Trips meet at designated place  
(\*see below)  
at 7 AM unless otherwise noted**

#### **Carpool locations:**

\*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

**Tribute to Missy L. Christie by Cathy Olson**

Missy L. Christie, 52, died September 20, 2011, after her long ordeal with cancer. She was active with Florida Audubon Society and Venice Audubon Society (she was their president until she had to stop because of her illness), and Florida Native Plant Society. Missy was a dedicated public servant who worked primarily with sea turtles and shorebirds. She monitored coastal wildlife populations, educated the public and enforced the County's regulations. She did this with enthusiasm, grace and energy. After Hurricane Charley she used her counseling skills (from a past career) and helped people get through the hard times. Missy was colleague, co-worker, acquaintance and friend to many, wife to one, and mom to three. She was the type of person who you instantly became comfortable with, as is evident by the number of people with whom she was friends. When she saw a person she didn't know it became an opportunity for a new friend; no one was ever a stranger.

To many she was a friend, to me she was a best girlfriend. We spent hours on the phone, sometimes during our commutes (a lot when she was attending FGCU), almost always after work and on the weekends when we weren't off on a bird watching adventure. There was nothing we didn't tell each other and there were no fears others would hear the tales. We laughed, we cried, we consoled each other and most of all we had fun. We spent nearly every weekend birding and hiking with our hounds, Lily and Lola, when Gregg was in Missouri and Bob was at work. Many times our adventures were short and nearby (the dogs love to tromp at Audubon Pennington Park), or the Webb, and best were our longer adventures to places like STA-5, Merritt Island, Fort De Soto, Joe Overstreet, or camping at Fish Eating Creek, Bahia Honda or the Dry Tortugas. Strangely, the ever talkative and moving Missy had the best bittern search image imaginable. The rest of us would scan the wetland intently and see nothing and then she would do her bittern dance and say "bittern, bittern, bittern" and lo and behold, there was a bittern everyone else had overlooked.

Missy was just honored posthumously with the Guy Bradley Conservation Award from the Florida Audubon Society.

A raffle to help the family with medical expenses will be held 10/21 at Cedar Point.  
 Many will miss her! Love ya, Miss; HAPPY FEET!



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.



**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: **COZE140Z**

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

( ) Additional Gift for PRAS  
 Please help PRAS continue our educational and conservation programs with a tax deductible contribution.  
 Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIL CHECK WITH THIS FORM TO:**  
 PRAS, PO box 510760, Punta Gorda, FL 33951-0760