



# THE BROWN PELICAN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SARASOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

**APRIL 2020**

**Hang in there..... be safe!**



## SAS ACTIVITIES

### CLOSING CONTINUED

For the health and well-being of our members, families, and friends, the board of directors continues to suspend all programs and activities, including general meetings, for the duration of the season which ends May 31. Normally, at our April general meeting, we elect officers for the coming year; we will now put off these elections until our October meeting.

**NATURE IS NOT CLOSED!**



*Photograph by Jeanne Dubi*

Though our Nature Center and programs are closed, nature is not. Many people enjoy backyard birding and learning about the birds



**The Sarasota Audubon Society Nature Center**

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### A Message from the Board of Directors

During this most difficult of times, we wish for your health and well-being. Knowing Auduboners as we do, we feel confident that you are all doing your best to maintain distance and taking the utmost care for your safety.

Although birds and wildlife go on as if nothing is amiss and still need our protection just as before, we know that you may have other priorities right now. The Giving Challenge, in which hundreds of non-profits in our area are participating, will still go on as planned on April 28/29, so please consider giving to those most in need. Many people will be unemployed and will have difficulty paying their rent and buying food for their families. When things get back to normal, we can re-align our priorities and think of birds and wildlife as before. In the meantime, follow your heart.

On a brighter topic. A group of us are gathering material for our weekly eBlasts. They will include things to do, things to listen to, things to click on-stuff to lighten the load. Here's a sample. found

in their neighborhoods. Maybe start keeping track of what you see by downloading a Sarasota County Checklist  
[CLICK --> SAS COUNTY CHECKLIST](#)

## SARASOTA AUDUBON IS STILL HERE FOR YOU

### Here's what's coming up:

- Starting April 13, and until May 31, we will be switching to a weekly eblast that will include further updates on our local birds, links to items of interest and other ways to keep you occupied birdwise
- Follow us on Facebook for regular postings about birds and wildlife here and around the country. Visit and like our page [CLICK --> SAS FACEBOOK](#)
- The 24-hour Giving Challenge will be held this year on April 28 and 29. Like other area nonprofits, our suspended programs and closed gift shop will impact us financially. We hope you will join and give as generously as you can.

## BLUEBIRD NEWS.....

The Bluebirds have nested in one of our boxes for the past three years at the Celery Fields. Below is one of the fledglings from last year.



Below is our Bluebird nest at Celery Fields on 3/21/20 - pipping is evident in several of the eggs.



In this next photograph from March 21st four of five have hatched. The egg tooth which the young use to break out of the eggs is visible on the tip of the bill on the top baby - it drops off after a few days. The eggs usually all hatch within 1-2 days of each other.



things to check on. Start to figure out the local here's a sample, found by members Cathy Paris and Beth Ann Segal. Put the sound on, sit back and be delighted:

[CLICK --> BIRD SONG OPERA](#)

With much gratitude to all of you for being who you are-you make us who we are.

*Jeanne Dubi and the SAS Board of Directors*



## CONSERVATION NEWS

### National Bird Conservation Update

The U.S-Mexico border wall construction is affecting sensitive bird habitats. Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument and the San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge are already being affected; and the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge and the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge are on the list for future projects.

Some birds such as the Red-billed Pigeon and Hook-billed Kite breed nowhere else in the U.S. except in the Rio Grande area. Many other birds are local or use these critical habitats for migratory stopovers, including Audubon's Oriole, Rose-throated Becard, Golden-winged Warbler, and Painted Bunting.

These border wall construction projects contribute to the habitat destruction affecting birds worldwide, and specifically in these critical areas that have been identified for their importance to birds and other wildlife.

For more information:

[CLICK --> BORDER WALL AND WILDLIFE](#)

*Kevin Griffioen*



### The Dark Side of the Sparrow







Here is some additional information from [Sialis.org](http://Sialis.org) .....

*If the egg is incubated, the embryo inside develops. The parent(s) periodically rotates and rearranges eggs in a nest to ensure equal heating. This also prevents the shell membrane from adhering to the shell, which could interfere with hatching.*

- First, circulatory, digestive and respiratory, and nervous systems start to differentiate.
- Then limbs may begin to move.
- An egg tooth is formed to help the bird break out of the shell when it hatches.
- The yolk sac gets smaller. In preparation for hatching, the embryo is in a tucked position. It uses its bill to puncture the innermost shell membrane at the blunt end of the egg (called internal pipping.)
- The embryo begins to breathe the pocket of air between the inner and outer shell membrane.
- After a few more hours, the egg tooth is used to break through the outer shell membrane and the shell (called external pipping - see cracks and holes in photo above.)
- When it penetrates the shell, the hatchling emerges from the egg.
- The parents generally do not help the young get out of the shell, although they may watch intently. They may remove or eat the eggshell after hatching.

We monitor the nests for things we can do to improve outcomes for them. The box is mounted on a metal pole with baffle to keep out snakes, raccoons, opossums and such. We monitor the nests for parasites or infestations - in which case we would change out the nest; we will remove any dead young or unhatched eggs that the parents haven't removed.

**Sue Guarasci**

*Photographs by Sue Guarasci and Kathryn Young*

## VOLUNTEER EXTRAORDINAIRE



**CHASE BONANNO**

facebook

Have you ever wondered who is behind our wonderful SAS Facebook page?

Who is it that keeps us up to date on all the SAS activities and happenings at the Nature Center?



I must admit that sitting outside Panera's (in the days when we could) and watching the House Sparrows sneaking under the tables to mop up the fallen crumbs, used to amuse me no end. Plucky, perky little fellows, seemingly full of energy and opportunism, never a free feed to be missed.

Usually around a dozen birds hang out there and it's always a reliable place to find them on the Christmas bird count. In the spring they build nests tucked under the Panera sign. A few days ago, I went to watch them. Several were perching on the Panera sign with the messy straggling pieces of a nest dangling down behind the sign. I have to say, the only ones I saw looked a bit bemused, and singularly lacking in their

casual cheekiness. Hmmm.... No free hand outs to be had then, as the odd human straggler exited Panera with a take-out bag.



While Covid-19 is probably giving the environment and maybe wildlife in general a break from the negative side of human activity, you wonder how birds like House Sparrows, grackles, crows and gulls will get on without the easy pickings of human leftovers to depend on. I'm sure there's an upside as well as a downside. After all, the odd breadcrumb doesn't sound like the greatest element of a healthy bird diet, so maybe they'll have to look for more natural food instead. Let's hope they find it.

The Panera House Sparrows always seem endearing to me, but I have seen them in darker contexts. In the UK for example they are much more prevalent and considered a nuisance. In fact, I was surprised when I first came to the U.S. and found they weren't considered pests here. In my UK garden they had learned to hang at seed feeders as well as any Blue-tit or Great-tit, and their sheer numbers and aggressive, bullying ways also tended to drive other larger birds away, such as Goldfinches and Greenfinches, so it became a dilemma as to how to feed the other birds while keeping House Sparrows at bay.



who provides us with interesting articles and beautiful photographs?

Well, it is none other than our very own Chase Bonanno!

Thank you, Chase for being such a dedicated volunteer. We all appreciate it and look forward to your Facebook postings!

Check out Chase's handy work:

**[CLICK ---> SAS FACEBOOK](#)**

## Climate Corner

### Planting for birds? Why yes please!

During this time of social distancing, your garden can be the answer to that feeling of isolation. Our native and migratory birds have adapted to eating the berries and bugs that thrive in native plants. The Gardens at the Celery Fields Nature Center were just planted 4 years ago and the male painted bunting is our reward for doing it right. Do yourself a favor, plant your yard for the birds!

What does this have to do with climate change you ask? Well, science tells us that planting a garden, and especially trees and wetlands, takes CO2 out of the air and creates more oxygen. The roots store carbon in the soil, the leaves breathe out fresh oxygen and pure water, which contributes to a healthier environment for us all.

Here are some great resources to start (or expand) your own native garden.

**[Florida Native Plant Society Website](#)** - input the conditions in your yard and what you want to attract and a list of suitable plants is generated.

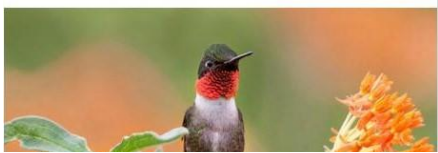


**[CLICK](#)**

**[Audubon Society Website](#)** - asks for your e-mail so they can send you a list of plants and tips for gardening for birds, including local resources.

## Find Your Bird-Friendly Plants

Native plants provide birds with the food they need. Use our database to discover the best plants for birds in your area.



The bullying manner which they can adopt is definitely their darker side, and this was clearly illustrated to me when Jeanne Dubi and I went on a trip to Texas several years ago. On the way from Houston to Brownsville we stopped at a roadside culvert looking for Cave Swallows. What we saw was something I'll never quite forget or forgive. A nesting colony of Cave Swallows were busy frantically building their nests, carrying mud and affixing it to the inside walls of the culvert. As we looked, we saw that several of the completed nests were occupied by House Sparrows - bits of straw sticking out of the nests with a sparrow in residence. Other House Sparrows were sitting around watching the Cave Swallows. The inevitable conclusion was that the sparrows were the masters and the swallows were the slaves, and that as soon as a nest was finished the sparrow took over. And then the Cave Swallow had to start all over again. The darker side of sparrows indeed. In hindsight those House Sparrows seemed distant relatives of the ones outside Panera's.

The lesson though is that we can't or shouldn't interfere with nature, or judge birds by human values of morality. After all, they are all in a fight for survival. And though there's a continuum between plucky, perky ... and a bully and slave-master, we can't overlay our moral values on to birds. At the end of the day a bird has to do what a bird has to do. But still, I like the Panera's House Sparrows a lot more than some I've met in other contexts.

**Glynnis Thomas**

*Photographs by Glynnis Thomas*



## NOTES FROM THE BIRD RECORDER March 2020 Notable Sightings

### Bay Street Park:

- Broad-winged Hawk
- American Redstart
- Black-throated Green Warbler (also Manasota Scrub & Rand Blvd)
- Cape May Warbler
- Magnolia Warbler
- Townsend's Warbler
- Louisiana Waterthrush

### Celery Fields:

- Barn Swallow
- Northern Rough-winged Swallow
- Red-eyed Vireo (also Crowley Nature Center & Bay Street Park)
- Bronzed Cowbird
- Western Kingbird
- Least Flycatcher
- Blue Grosbeak
- Painted Bunting
- White-crowned Sparrow
- Grasshopper Sparrow
- American Redstart
- King Rail
- Barn Owl

### Pinecraft Park:

- Swainson's Thrush
- Hermit Thrush
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak
- Eastern Kingbird
- Summer Tanager
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo
- Black-throated Green Warbler
- Swainson's Warbler (also Glebe Park)



[\*\*CLICK\*\*](#)

And speaking of local resources - we have two awesome native nurseries in our area - and both are open under COVID-19, with special operations like delivering your order outside their gate.

- [Florida Native Plants Nursery](#) (941) 322-1915, Old Myakka Rd. at the end of Fruitville
- [Sweetbay Nursery](#) Erie Rd. in Parrish (941) 776-0501

What are you waiting for - get out there and plant for the birds!

**Karen Willey, SAS Climate Change Communicator**  
Questions, comments? [karenwildfl@gmail.com](mailto:karenwildfl@gmail.com)

- American Redstart
- Louisiana Waterthrush
- Northern Waterthrush
- Ovenbird

#### **Myakka River State Park:**

- American Avocet
- Snow Goose
- Lincoln's Sparrow
- American Redstart
- Bachman's Sparrow

#### **Oscar Scherer State Park:**

- Florida Scrub Jay
- Bachman's Sparrow
- Hermit Thrush
- Louisiana Waterthrush

#### **Siesta Beach & North Lido Beach:**

- Great Black-backed Gull
- Common Tern

#### **Casey Key Rd:**

- House Crow

**Claire Herzog**



### *Our Favorite Local Hot Spots*

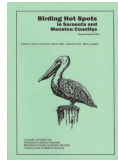
The Sarasota Audubon Society is pleased to include this interactive component to our newly redesigned web site. It is called "Favorite Local Birding Hot Spots." These Hot Spots in Sarasota and Manatee Counties were selected because of the substantial number of bird species counted at the site and because they are located within approximately 30 minutes from downtown Sarasota.

[\*\*CLICK --> SAS WEB SITE\*\*](#)



**Help support our Sarasota Audubon Society  
when you shop at Amazon:**  
[\*CLICK FOR DETAILS\*](#)

#### **Birding Hot Spots Sarasota/Manatee Counties**



Can be purchased for just \$6.00 at the Nature Center, monthly meetings and field trips or \$8.50 by mail. Send a check to: SAS, PO Box 52132, Sarasota, FL 34232-0337. Hot Spots is also available at Environeers, Book Store 1, Selby Gardens, Historic Spanish Point, Oscar Scherer State Park and Myakka River State Park.



#### **Kite Tales**

The monthly newsletter of the  
**Great Florida Birding & Wildlife Trail**  
[\*\*CLICK ---> SUBSCRIBE\*\*](#)



Smithsonian  
Migratory Bird Center

Since 1970, bird populations in the U.S. and Canada have declined by 29%, or almost 3 billion birds, signaling a widespread ecological crisis. The results show tremendous losses across diverse groups of birds and habitats - from iconic songsters such as meadowlarks to long-distance migrants such as swallows and



**RENEW  
YOUR ANNUAL SAS MEMBERSHIP!**

[\*\*Click --> Join or Renew\*\*](#)

**Mail a check payable to: Sarasota Audubon Society**  
**Address: SAS, 999 Center Road, Sarasota, FL 34240**

*Don't Know if You Renewed?*

Contact: [\*\*membership@sarasotaaudubon.org\*\*](mailto:membership@sarasotaaudubon.org)

### **SARASOTA AUDUBON NATURE CENTER COMMEMORATIVE BRICKS**

**Help build a path to the future**  
Purchase a commemorative brick!



Engrave a loved one's name, or a short quote on a brick to commemorate a lasting tribute, or mark a special occasion. Ask us about other naming opportunities. Truly a gift that gives back.

[\*\*CLICK TO ORDER -----> BRICK ORDER FORM\*\*](#)

### **BECOME A SPOONBILL CLUB MEMBER**





backyard birds including sparrows. Learn more about the 3 Billion Birds campaign and Seven Simple Actions to Help Birds.

**[CLICK ---> SMITHSONIAN MIGRATORY BIRD CENTER](#)**

### **Subscribe to SRQ Bird Alerts!**

Need the latest birding info for our area?

To subscribe: [Click here to send an email](#).

Thanks to *Peter Rice* for providing this service.

### **Sarasota County Butterfly Club**



Sarasota County Butterfly Club Programs are open to the public and are held most 4th Thursdays of each month Sept-May.

Visit [www.sarasotabutterfly.com](http://www.sarasotabutterfly.com) to learn more!



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### **NAME BADGES**

Pin Badge - \$5.25, Magnet Badge - \$7.25

Add \$4.50 for shipping. Send name and address to:

**Michael Fox, 2749 Ringling Ave. Sarasota, FL 34237**

Marcy Packer, editor

[editor@sarasotaaudubon.org](mailto:editor@sarasotaaudubon.org)

***If you have named Sarasota Audubon in your will or beneficiary in any way, you are eligible to become a member of our legacy group,***

***The Spoonbill Club***

**[CLICK TO FIND OUT MORE](#)**

*Write An Article!*



**Submissions, comments and questions always welcome**

Send to: [editor@sarasotaaudubon.org](mailto:editor@sarasotaaudubon.org)



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