



THE BROWN PELICAN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SARASOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. Box 52132 | Sarasota, FL 34232-0337 | SarasotaAudubon.org

December 2016

MONTHLY MEETING

Monday, December 12th

THE PLIGHT OF URBAN BIRDS

Biologist Jim Davis will discuss the strategies of urban birds coping-some successfully, some not-with human caused environmental changes.



Social Hour: 6:30pm

Business Meeting: 7:00pm

Presentation: 7:30pm

Monthly meetings are held at the **First Congregational Church Fellowship Hall, 1031 South Euclid Ave., Sarasota**

[CLICK: 2016-17 MONTHLY MEETING SCHEDULE](#)

Pre-Meeting Dinner - All Welcome!

Board members and members meet for dinner with the guest speaker prior to the monthly general meeting. All Sarasota Audubon members are welcome. We meet at **5:00pm** at **Libby's Cafe** on South Osprey, which provides a 3 course prix fixe menu. If you want to join us, **email Karen Jensen** karensarasota@yahoo.com the Saturday prior to the meeting.

SAS NATURE CENTER



Open Daily: 9:00am-1:00pm

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**SAS ACTIVITY
SCHEDULE**
2016 - 2017



[CLICK HERE](#)

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS & ACTIVITIES

No reservations necessary for field trips unless noted. Suggested

A Message from Our President

Wishing all our members and friends a wonderful holiday season and a healthy and happy New Year!



Best Regards,

Jeanne Dubi and the Sarasota Audubon Society Board of Directors; Julie Byrne, Naomi Deutsch, Ann Griffin, Mary Heinlen, Lynn Jakubowicz, Sara King, Betty Neupert,

donation: \$2 members, \$4 non-members.

Tuesday, December 6th

MYAKKA RIVER STATE PARK

8:15am. Meet at the first parking lot on the right just inside the park entrance. (Park admission Fee). Park opens at 8:00am. Leaders: Stu Wilson (512-897-8341) and John Ginaven.

Thursdays, December 8, 15, 22, 29

OSCAR SCHERER STATE PARK

8:30am. Meets every Thursday from October 20th through April 20th. Meet inside the park at Lake Osprey/Nature Center. Park opens 8:00am, park entrance fee applies. Alternating leaders Joyce Leary (508-737-8954) and Peter Brown (508-241-5541)

Saturday, December 10th



9:00am - 1:00pm. Interested in volunteering with the Sarasota Audubon Society? Come on down to the Nature Center to see what opportunities are available. All are welcome. Contact: Marcy Packer (packmw@aol.com)

Saturday, December 10th

2nd SATURDAY CELERY FIELDS WALK

8:00am. NEW THIS SEASON! Join some of our best birders on the 2nd Saturday of each month from October through April as we explore the great variety of habitats and birds found in the Celery Fields. Meet at the Nature Center

Tuesday, December 13th

CELERY FIELDS CLEANUP

8:00am. Meet at the Nature Center, 999 Center Road.

Wednesday, December 14th



11:45am. Palm Aire Country Club. \$28 per person. RESERVATIONS REQUIRED. Send check to SAS, 999 Center Rd., Sarasota, FL 34240. Contact: Julie Byrne (941-379-3882).

Monday, December 19th

MYAKKA STATE PARK - CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Contact: kencalvarez@msn.com

Monday, December 26th

4th MONDAY CELERY FIELDS WALK

9:00am. Join Joyce Leary on the 4th Monday of each month, October through March. Meet at the Nature Center. Contact: Joyce Leary (508-737-8954)

Thursday, December 29th

NORTH LIDO BEACH AND WOODS

8:00am. Meet Stu Wilson (512-897-8341) and John Ginaven in the small parking lot at the end of Ringling Blvd. to scout out birds for the Christmas Bird Count.

Saturday, December 31st

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT - SARASOTA

Keen birders are encouraged to join us as we count all the birds within our circle. New volunteers will be assigned to an experienced team (previous volunteers should make contact with their Area Leaders). Expect to spend at least a half-day in the field. Alternately, spend a couple hours monitoring your backyard feeder and report your results. There will be a Countdown Party at the Celery Fields Nature Center at 5pm on count day where all participants are welcome. To participate contact: Stu Wilson

Marcy Packer, Valeri Ponzio, Martha Straub, Rob Wright and Kathryn Young.

Happy Holidays



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14th

Join us for our annual Holiday Luncheon

Palm Aire Country Club

Speaker: Christine Johnson of the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast will speak about its role in the conservation purchase of the Triangle Ranch, home to 120 species of birds including the Crested Caracara

\$28.00

Reservations Required

Send payment to:

SAS, 999 Center Road, Sarasota, FL 34240

Contact: Julie Byrne (941-379-3882)

DECEMBER IS TIME TO RENEW FOR 2017



[Click Here to Join or Renew Online](#)

**Or mail a check
(\$25.00 per member)**

Payable to: Sarasota Audubon Society

Address: SAS, PO BOX 52132, Sarasota, FL 34232

For questions email: membership@sarasotaudubon.org

Birds of the Month

WORKSHOPS

These 2-hour workshops provide a wealth of information on a variety of topics. No reservations required. Meet at the Nature Center 1:30pm (**Bird Scavenger Hunt starts at 10:00am*). Adults - \$8.00, Children - \$5.00

JAN 11 - EDIBLE/MEDICINAL PLANTS SW FLORIDA-

FEB 10 - SUMMER WITH A SWALLOW-TAILED KITE

MAR 3 - RAISING MONARCHS

APR 5 - BUTTERFLY I.D. BASICS

APR 22 - PURPLE MARTINS

CHILDREN'S WORKSHOPS

MAR 11 - BIRD BEHAVIOR SCAVENGER HUNT (10am)

[CLICK FOR COMPLETE INFORMATION](#)

Questions? Contact Harma Nyhof, birdsqr@gmail.com

CLASSES

These classes target specific families of birds and includes a photography class. All classes meet at the Nature Center except field trips. Check times and locations for field work.

DUCKS AND GREBES - January 21

RAPTORS - January 22

SPRING WARBLERS - April 19, 20

[CLICK FOR COMPLETE INFORMATION](#)

Questions? Contact Kathryn Young, kathwren4@gmail.com

BIRDING SERIES CLASSES

Two separate series of classes; the first is field trip oriented, the other for beginning birders which includes more classroom time.

BIRDING SRQ AREA HOT SPOTS ** FULL **

BASIC BIRDING - 6 sessions

[CLICK FOR COMPLETE INFORMATION](#)

Questions? Contact Kathryn Young, kathwren4@gmail.com

Pied-billed Grebe (*Podilymbus podiceps*)

The Pied-billed Grebe is the most common, widespread and familiar North American grebe. It is a small, stocky, and I have to say, extremely cute-looking bird, with a fluffy rear end and virtually no tail. It has an unusually thick bill which it uses to crush large crustaceans, fish, insects and other invertebrates. The male has a black band that encircles the whitish or silvery bill ("pied"), and a black throat patch in summer. Its feet are not webbed but lobed, allowing for easy paddling. It is found, generally shy and solitary, on ponds, lakes and marshes, preferring still to flowing water. Its feathers are thick and soft, and were formerly used as decorations for hats and earmuffs, and because of this, the bird was hunted in the eastern US in 19th century.



The call of the Pied-billed Grebe is varied, loud and far reaching. Its calls include bizarre whinnying, gobbling and cooing. Its whinnying call is somewhat reminiscent of the call of a Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Audubon, who observed birds more closely than most, and for long periods, noted that *'few birds plunge with more rapidity than this species, which during submersion employs its wings... The curious habit which they have of sinking gradually backwards in the water, at the sight of an enemy, is very pleasing to observe. Not a ripple do they leave on the spot where they have disappeared, and one unacquainted with them can hardly conceive that a bird could have escaped in so dextrous a manner.'*

In fact the Pied-billed Grebe can adjust its buoyancy by the amount of air it traps in its feathers and it often uses this ability to float with just the upper half of the head above the water, only eyes and nostrils showing, like a submarine periscope. It can sink deeply or stay at or below the surface, and it has an uncanny ability, when threatened, to sink quietly out of view without a trace, popping up later far away from the spot where it submerged.

The Pied-billed Grebe's feet are far back in the body, hence the Latin name *podiceps* (podex=rump, rear end, pes=foot). This gives it greater ability to rotate the tibiotarsus (a long bone joining the tibia and some of the tarsal bones) which allows the bird to move its feet above, below and level with the body. Although the positioning of the feet allows the bird to be an excellent swimmer, on land it is virtually helpless. Audubon observed a bird scrambling from a drained pond and noted how awkwardly it ran, tumbling over and scrambling along with the aid of its wings.

This amazing water bird is rarely seen in flight, although it is a strong flier, and it needs a long running/flapping start on the surface of the water to get airborne. It migrates at night. Interestingly these birds sometimes show up in Europe, including the UK, presumably hitching a ride on the back of a cruise or container ship. At least one individual was known to breed with its UK counterpart, the Little Grebe (or Dabchick), producing a clutch of hybrids.

The Pied-billed Grebe dives for its food and feeds on a wide variety of fish (including catfish, perch, and sunfish), large crustaceans, amphibians, insects and other invertebrates. Like other grebes it eats large quantities of its own feathers, and for a long time why it did this was a mystery. It is now believed that it is to aid digestion by preventing internal injury from small bones. It also feeds feathers to its young.

Glynnis Thomas

Workshop with Matthew Press

January 28th, 2017

1:30pm

Sarasota Audubon Society Nature Center

eBird is a program developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society that allows users to submit bird sightings. Sightings, videos and photos can be uploaded. You can also search for specific bird species, and the best part: it's worldwide!

Bring your laptop, phone, tablet, or any other electronic device, and you can learn how to use eBird! It's easy, the app is free and a great tool for any birders!

\$5.00 at the door

Questions? Email Matthew Press thezooexpert@yahoo.com



NOTES FROM THE BIRD RECORDER

Here are the November sightings:

- **Western Tanager:** R. Greenspun et al., Pinecraft Park
- **Snail Kite:** Bente Torvund, Myakka River State Park
- **White-faced Ibis:** Bente Torvund, Myakka River State Park
- **Blackpoll Warbler:** K. Young, Pinecraft Park
- **Common Loon:** A. Thayer, Casey Key
- **Blue Grosbeak:** R. Kraft, Curry Creek Preserve
- **Pectoral Sandpiper:** C. Herzog, N. Edmondson, Myakka SP
- **Bronzed Cowbird:** M. Ostrowski, Celery Fields, Palmer Lake
- **Summer Tanager:** J. Fisher, Pinecraft Park
- **Eastern Kingbird:** E. Miller, Alta Vista School
- **Horned Grebe:** R. Greenspun et al., Siesta Beach
- **Brown Noddy:** R. Greenspun, Siesta Beach
- **Cayenne Tern:** K. Young et al., Siesta Beach
- **Yellow-headed Blackbird:** J. Fisher et al., Ackerman Park
- **Grasshopper Sparrow:** R. Greenspun, K. Young, SWFWMD
- **Franklin's Gull:** W. Ward, Siesta: M. Ostrowski, Palmer Lake
- **Elegant Tern:** C. Herzog et al., Siesta Beach
- **Barn Swallow:** K. Doddridge, C. Herzog, Ackerman Park: S. Wilcox, Celery Fields agricultural fields near Raymond Road

Please remember to share any eBird checklists with SASbirds. We're picking up more & more eBirders willing to share their lists: 1692 lists have been shared with a total of 274 unique species.

Call 941-780-0545 or email ceherzog@gmail.com with unusual sightings.

Thank you for making the effort eBirders!

Claire Herzog



December 10th

9:00am - 1:00pm

Interested in volunteering with Audubon?
Come on down to the Nature Center to see what opportunities are available

ALL WELCOME!

SAS VOLUNTEER FACTS:

- SAS has over 100 active volunteers

- In 2016 SAS volunteers have donated more than 1,200 hours of their time

Contact: Marcy Packer, Volunteer Coordinator packmw@aol.com



"How the Alligator Saved Christmas"

[CLICK TO READ - ASK OTUS®](#)

Otus will answer your questions about our amazing wildlife, but only if you Ask Otus®.

Click to send your questions to: [Ask Otus®](#)

Places You Haven't Birded.....Yet



Deer Prairie Creek Preserve

We are blessed to have several large tracts of publicly owned conservation

land here in Sarasota and Manatee Counties. Due to their size and



Helping Youth Become Environmental Leaders

Sean Russell visited the Sarasota Audubon Nature Center recently and updated us on his considerable accomplishments. Sean was a recipient of a Sarasota Audubon scholarship back in 2010 when he was college bound. Since then--wow!



Sean is the founder and director of the Youth Ocean Conservation Summit, an annual event held at Mote Marine in Sarasota which is also modeled in cities across the United States in partnership with conservation organizations. Through this program, Sean works to empower young people with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to address ocean conservation issues in their local communities. The Summit grew out of Sean's ongoing work on marine debris prevention and fishing line recycling through the Stow It-Don't Throw It Project, an initiative he launched as a high school student. This year's Summit and Film Festival is on Dec. 9 & 10 at Mote. Check out www.yocs.org for details.

There's more!

Sean launched and coordinates the SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Youth Advisory Council, assists in the management of the SeaWorld myActions platform, and supports SeaWorld's youth leadership programs. Sean also serves as a Youth Leadership Fellow with EarthEcho International, overseeing the implementation of EarthEcho's inaugural Youth Leadership Council and is a Youth Programs Specialist at Mote Marine Laboratory, where he leads a high school research program in the Florida Keys.

Sean rocks!

[CLICK TO VIEW THE EVENT FLYER](#)



HAPPENINGS

SIESTA KEY - November 5th

Fourteen birders joined leaders Claire Herzog and Mary Heinlen on Siesta Key. Many of the participants had been students at Claire's shorebird class, and were eager to try out their new identification skills. Highlights of the day included Lesser Black-backed Gull, Peregrine Falcon, Dunlin, Greater Yellowlegs, Forster's and Common Terns, and 14 Snowy Plovers. Claire's students did a great job identifying the birds!

Mary Heinlen

STAR GAZING AT THE CF - November 5th

The Deep Sky Observers did some star gazing at their Sidewalk Astronomy event (their first one at the Celery Fields). It was an ENORMOUS success--despite a few clouds early on. An estimated 400 people turned out to enjoy the celestial views through some 20 telescopes.

remoteness these large preserves tend to be under visited by birders, but with a little planning a visit can be extremely rewarding. One such preserve in south Sarasota County is Deer Prairie Creek Preserve. Encompassing over 6,000 acres of natural habitat and six miles of Myakka River frontage, the preserve is home to a wide variety of bird species. There are two public entrances providing access to over 70 miles of trails that travel through pine flatwoods, along oak hammocks, and sun drenched scrub.

A morning stroll from the south parking area can include reliable sightings of Red-headed Woodpeckers, Northern Bobwhite and Eastern Towhee; while a walk to the river from the north entrance can yield wild turkey, barred owls, and a wide variety of colorful warblers during migration. Seasonally there are nesting Swallow-tailed Kites and a host of winter residents such as House Wrens and Blue-headed Vireos.

For those willing to walk or bike a little further into the center of the property, there are several family groups of Brown-headed Nuthatches. It can require up to a 6-mile round trip walk or bike ride to reach them, but they are regularly heard or spotted between trail markers L and H along the main shell road. While the distance may seem discouraging, the going is easy and the miles pass quickly when you are distracted by the scenery and wildlife.

Deer Prairie Creek is jointly owned and managed by Sarasota County and the Southwest Florida Water Management District. Maps and additional information about the preserve can be found at both Sarasota County's and the Southwest Florida Water Management District's websites:

<https://www.scgov.net/NaturalLands/Pages/DeerPrairieCreek.aspx>
<http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/recreation/areas/myakka-deerprairie.html>

The entrance addresses are as follows:

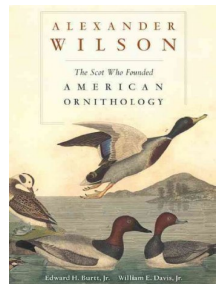
North Entrance - 7001 Forbes Trail, Venice

South Entrance - 10201 South Tamiami Trail, Venice

Stephanie Green

Book Review

Alexander Wilson, The Scot Who Founded American Ornithology
by Edward H. Burtt and William E. Davies



Following last month's review of John James Audubon, the 'Making of an American' by Richard Rhodes I was inevitably drawn to this title. I must admit that on reading the title, the inevitable question arose - hang on, wasn't Audubon the father of American ornithology? I was surprised to find out that it was in fact Wilson, a

naturalized American, not Audubon, who was the first to fully describe and illustrate the birds of North America. In fact he was well on the way to publishing his nine volumes of 'American Ornithology' before Audubon even embarked on his great publishing feat.

Wilson traveled 12,000 miles on foot, on horseback, in a row boat, and by stage and ship, establishing a network of observers along the way - the first 'citizen science' project to take place. He wrote hundreds of accounts of indigenous birds, discovered 27 new species, and sketched the behavior and ecology of each species encountered. Unlike Audubon many of his sketches were from life and he drew birds in poses meant to facilitate field observation, much as modern guides, rather than works of art. In this sense, from an artistic point of view, they can be less dramatic and stunning than the flamboyant works of almost pure art produced by Audubon.

This particular book is part biography and part a celebration of many of Wilson's early sketches. These I found exquisite. For example he had an

people turned out to enjoy the celestial views through some 20 telescopes that were set up in the parking area! Missed this one? There will be more Star Gazing at the CF on February 4th beginning at 6:15pm and on May 6th at 8:00pm.

CRITTER SURVEY- November 19th

On a lovely Saturday morning we performed a 'bio-blitz' to survey the gardens around the Nature Center for all non-plant living things. We came up with 42 species! Some of the best finds were a Florida Black Snake hiding underneath an upturned flower pot and a Wolf Spider with young on its back.



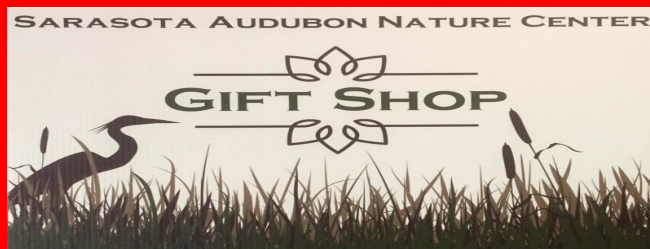
Banded Water Snake - photograph by B. Kolar

[CLICK HERE FOR A FULL LIST OF CRITTERS AND PHOTOGRAPHS](#)



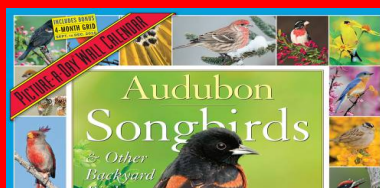
Tai Chi Classes at the Nature Center

Learn Yang style Tai Chi during 6 - one hour sessions at the Nature Center, Tuesdays 10:00am -11:00am. February 7, 2017 (through March 14). Cost: \$3.00 per session or \$15.00 for all 6. For more information contact: Marcy Packer, packmw@aol.com



Visit the SAS Gift Shop at the Nature Center for your holiday shopping

We have a large variety of items including new holiday ornaments, books, jewelry, quilts, puzzles, ball caps and great nature-related items for the kids



Wilson's early sketches. These I found exquisite. For example he had an uncanny knack of capturing accurately and stunningly the piercing eye of a bird, or a claw, or the lie of the bird's feathers in such a way as to make the bird seem alive. These original drawings from which the engravings and colored plates were eventually made are in many ways far superior to the final product, good as those are. To me they definitely lost something in the process from sketchbook to published volume.

Tragically Wilson died before the last and 9th volume of his work was published, and this task was taken up by his friend George Ord. Also tragically Wilson's work, name and reputation were totally eclipsed by Audubon's monumental 'Birds of America'. It's almost a sense of the injustice done to Wilson's memory that compels me to recommend this book, so that this great man is acknowledged and honored for his immense contribution to ornithology in North America.

Glynnis Thomas

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 HERE TO ORDER ONLINE - BRICK ORDER FORM](#)

BECOME A SPOONBILL CLUB MEMBER



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](#)

Photograph by Rick Greenspun

Birding Hot Spots in Sarasota and Manatee Counties

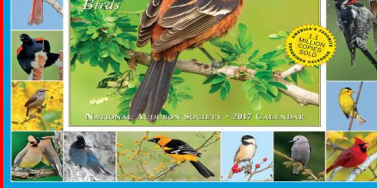
Can be purchased for just \$6.00 at the Nature Center, monthly meetings and field trips or \$7.75 by mail. Send a check to: SAS, PO Box 52132, Sarasota, FL 34232-0337. Hot Spots is also available at Environers, Book Store 1, Selby Gardens, Historic Spanish Point, Oscar Scherer State Park and Myakka River State Park.



Sarasota County Butterfly Club



Sarasota County Butterfly Club Programs, 1131 Blvd of The Arts, are open to the public (\$5.00 fee for non-members) are held most 4th Thursdays of each month Sept-May with topics appealing to all ages and levels of



2017 Audubon Calendars (only \$12)



New t-shirts



SAS mugs

All proceeds support our Nature Center



Save SAS some GREEN \$\$\$

We mail **600+** paper copies to some of our members. The cost of printing and postage could be put toward our new nature center and other Sarasota Audubon projects.

Plus our e-Brown Pelican Newsletter (which can be emailed right to your in-box) has direct links to other sites, videos and color photos. If you currently receive a paper copy in the mail please strongly consider a switch to the e-Brown Pelican. **Contact:** editor@sarasotaaudubon.org



Help support our Sarasota Audubon Society when you shop at Amazon:

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[Click](#)

each month Sept-May with topics appealing to all ages and levels of knowledge. Visit www.sarasotabutterfly.com to learn more!

SAS Name Badges

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

Add \$2.50 for shipping. Send name and address to:

Michael Fox, 2749 Ringling Ave. Sarasota, FL 34237

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OUR ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER

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941-312-6533**



**Submissions, comments and questions
always welcome**

Send to: editor@sarasotaaudubon.org

Marcy Packer, editor

editor@sarasotaaudubon.org