



THE BROWN PELICAN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SARASOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

DECEMBER 2020

Message From the SAS Board of Directors

Hello Sarasota Auduboners,

Well, we are still in the midst of COVID-19. At each monthly meeting, the board of directors wrestles with "what to do." At our 19 November meeting, we decided to keep the nature center closed (although the gardens are open), and we will not activate any of our educational programs or bird walks for the time being. At our 17 December meeting we will revisit these issues and let you know what we decide.

However, the board did decide to open up the **Bird Naturalist** program on 1 January for those BNs who feel comfortable doing so. Board member Helen King will be polling the BNs shortly to see who wants to participate in the program on behalf of Sarasota Audubon and to provide guidelines in an effort to keep them safe and healthy.

Another item the board discussed is the upcoming **Christmas Bird Count** on 2 January 2021. This project is managed by Stu Wilson, who has been polling area leaders. Almost all of the 20 or so leaders said that they feel comfortable conducting the CBC. Since the CBC consists entirely of field work, many of the team members work alone or in pairs and small groups. The board decided to go ahead with the CBC, with Stu providing guidance for participants.

On another matter, SAS is developing a number of annotated **Power Point presentations** for its media library. These Power Points will be available free on our website for any organization: HOA's, schools, community associations, etc. to show to their own audiences. In addition, we consider them a way to provide more content to you, our members. We are also going to translate some, or maybe all, into Spanish so that we can make them available to Spanish-speaking groups. Stay tuned as we adjust our capabilities and access!

As always—keep safe and well.

Sarasota Audubon Board of Directors

Monthly General Zoom Meetings

DECEMBER MEETING

**MONDAY
DECEMBER 14th
7:00pm**

PLEASE NOTE: Until further notice our monthly meetings will be conducted online via ZOOM. Specific access details and directions will be provided by email and the SAS web site prior to the first meeting. They will also be repeated for each monthly general meeting.

Each meeting will allow for a 10-15-minute Q&A at the end of the presentation. You will be able to type in your question during the presentation.

Tampa Bay's National Wildlife

Refuges: Protected Places for our Feathered Friends



David Howard and Pat Mundus, Cofounders of Friends Group, explore the history of the National Wildlife Refuge system, and the current status of Egmont Key, one of Florida's largest nesting bird sanctuaries, Passage Key, and the seven islands that make up the Pinellas refuges.

2020-21 MONTHLY MEETING SCHEDULE

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Saturday, 2 January 2021

70th Annual SARASOTA AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Keen birders are encouraged to join us as we count all the birds within our circle. New volunteers will be assigned to an existing team. Previous volunteers should make contact with their Area Leaders. Expect to spend at least a half day in the field. This time we'll be operating in a COVID-safe manner meaning social distancing (no group gatherings), limited carpooling, and masks as appropriate. Alternately, spend a couple hours monitoring your backyard feeder and report your results.

Contact Stu Wilson, compiler, at < stuwilson@comcast.net > or **512-897-8341**.

SAS Membership Renewal



It's Time to Renew!

Our Sarasota Audubon memberships normally run on the calendar year, so it's time to renew for 2021.

Only \$30/year for either individuals or families.
The easiest way to renew is online on our Website:

CLICK TO RENEW

If you have a question about your membership, please email

CLICK - MEMBERSHIP

Thanks for supporting your local Audubon Society!

GIVING CHALLENGE TUESDAY 1 DECEMBER

The Quad parcels were protected forever when they officially became a conservation easement a few weeks ago! Although we are in the planning phase of the restoration of the Quads, we are grateful for the donations that are already coming in.

Thanks to an anonymous donor, we have a \$5,000 Matching Challenge! Starting this #SASGivingTuesday, the first dollars donated for the restoration of this now protected area will be doubled - up to \$5,000!

Restoring these lands adjacent to the Celery Fields - including the protection of drinking water, preservation of wildlife habitat, and providing extraordinary public access to these places - will enhance this special place for all.

Make this Season of Giving last forever with your gift to restore the Quad Parcels today by using this link:

<https://www.sarasotaaudubon.org/product/donate-sas-quad-fund/>

NATURE CENTER HAPPENINGS



The Nature Center remains closed The Nature Center remains closed as pandemic numbers rise. The gardens are open, but we ask that you socially distance and respect others' space. The gardens are looking better than ever before thanks to a dedicated volunteer team, with freshly mulched trails and grasses in bloom. Big thanks to Andy Schneider who comes in regularly to keep things running. We are not filling feeders, but there are plenty of berries for the birds. Enjoy the peace of the gardens.



Volunteers in the gardens are welcome

The current protocol is that you will be trained, and then work on your own. This will allow us to keep a safe distance, since weeding is not a group activity. The summer has been long and hot, and the weeds are taking over. We have several new weeding volunteers, and would welcome more! Contact me at gardens@sarasotaudubon.org if you wish to be trained in plant ID for that purpose.

Karen Willey
SAS Nature Center Manager

SAS Activities



Please visit our website www.sarasotaaudubon.org for the most up-to-date information. Also check the Brown Pelican monthly newsletter and eBlasts to alert you to any scheduled upcoming activities.

Bird of the Month -- Snail Kite



Photo credit: Pam Koepf

This unique, snail-eating raptor species was first observed in Oscar Scherer State Park on 10 October. The Oscar Scherer SP bird, a female, has continued to be seen by Big Lake, hunting for snails or sitting on her favorite bush.

On 13 November at Celery Fields, another Snail Kite – this time a male - was seen foraging in the South Cell. He too, continues to be seen there. They look quite different, with the male being entirely dark gray with red eyes and orange feet while the females are streaky brown with a white eyebrow and yellow legs. They both have sharply hooked bills, long broad wings, and a short dark tail with a white base above and below.

The Snail Kite found in Florida is one of three subspecies and was formerly called the Everglade Kite or Snail Hawk. In fact, Florida is the only place in the U.S where they are found - mainly in the Everglades or inland Florida. At one point in the mid-1960's it was estimated that fewer than 20 Snail Kites remained here. The Snail Kite has been considered an endangered species since 1967. Fortunately, the population began to bounce back thanks to wetlands restoration.

The Snail Kite's limited diet consists of Apple Snails, originally the native Florida variety. However, severe droughts and the introduction of the invasive exotic Apple Snail--which both occurred in the 2000's--had a devastating impact on the native Apple Snail population. The reduction in food supply of the native Apple Snail, plus the inability of the Kites to handle the larger sized exotic Apple Snails (up to five times larger than the natives)

are suspected to be the probable causes for a severe decline in the Snail Kite population. In 2008, the population was estimated to be only 700 individuals. Fortunately, the population has been increasing recently. Several studies cite a possibility that the Kite's beak size is naturally evolving in order to be able to better handle (and eat) the larger and more readily available exotic Apple Snail species. The estimated Snail Kite population in Florida as of 2018 was 2585 individuals.

The Snail Kites are not typically seen in Sarasota County, so if you get a chance to get out to Celery Fields or Oscar Scherer State Park, it is well worth the time to try to find these beautiful and rare birds.

CONSERVATION



If you go to the Celery Fields, check out the base of the hill—west side. An urban forest has been planted. This project is the work of a group of organizations: Florida Veterans for Common Sense, Rotary Club of Sarasota, Solutions to Avoid Red Tide (START), and supported by the Native Plant Society. In their words, "This is a demonstration forest to



improve our community's water quality, wildlife friendliness, and climate adaptation." What could be better!



WORKSHOP MANAGER(S) NEEDED

We need Workshop Manager(s). This flexible volunteer position allows you to create a schedule of 3 -5 workshops per year. Workshops are designed to give a hands on experience about nature or our environment and are presented at the Sarasota Audubon Nature Center. Ideas for workshops come from our members, the county and other sources.

NOTE: There will be no workshops at the Nature Center until SAS officially opens.

Email Kathryn Young for more details — kathwren4@gmail.com

Additions to the SAS Website

It is now easier to make memorial or honorary donations on the SAS website. If you want to donate to Sarasota Audubon either in memory of or in honor of someone, follow any of the Donate links on the Home Page

(www.sarasotaaudubon.org), look for this logo, and fill out the form. You may choose to donate to any one of the following funds: the Endowment Fund, SAS Quad Fund, Celery Fields Nature Center, or Celery Fields Explorers Program.



You may also give a year of SAS Membership as a gift. Look for the Gift Membership button at the bottom of the Membership page (www.sarasotaaudubon.org/membership).

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

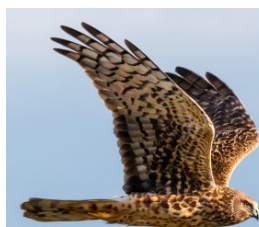
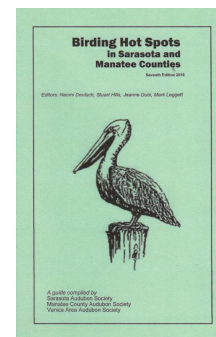


Engrave a loved one's name, or a short quote on a brick to commemorate a lasting tribute, or mark a special occasion. Ask us about other naming opportunities. Truly a gift that gives back.

DOWNLOAD MAIL-IN FORM

BIRDING HOT SPOTS OF SARASOTA AND MANATEE COUNTIES

Can be purchased for
\$8.50 by mail.
Send a check to:
SAS, 999 Center Road
Sarasota, FL 34240



*Our Favorite
Local Hot Spots*

It's Here!

Sarasota Audubon Society's *Online Guide: Our Favorite Local Birding Hotspots*, has been updated for 2020-2021, and is now live on the SAS website!

This revised edition, in addition to enhancing last year's sites with new information and web links for use on your computer, tablet or cell phone, adds seven new Favorites, for a total of 25 nearby, exceptional birding locations! Use it at home or in the field!

To view the updated Online Guide, go to the SAS website, click on the *Birding* drop-down menu and select the *Online Guide*, or click the link below and add it to your Favorites:

CLICK TO VIEW



Like us on
facebook®

FOLLOW US ON

twitter



SARASOTA
AUDUBON SOCIETY

999 Center Road
Sarasota, FL 34240
941-312-6533

Contact the Editor