



THE BROWN PELICAN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SARASOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

APRIL 2021

Message From the SAS Board of Directors

Hello Sarasota Auduboners,

Well, a year has come and gone with no nature center activities. At this point, we will continue to be closed from now until the end of the summer. We fervently hope that we will be able to open in October as usual. In the meantime, we hope you are enjoying our twice-monthly Zoom presentations. We've had some wonderful speakers on topics close to our hearts.

At our 12 April general meeting, our nominating committee will bring you the slate for officer elections. As we did last year, you will be able to cast your vote electronically on 12 April. Before we sign off from the meeting, we will provide you with a link, so don't leave too early!

Rob Pierce, one of our loyal members, has donated a marvelous musical video entitled: **Bird Flight Patterns and Music**, and the password is BFPMC. The New Bedford Symphony orchestra links bird flights and music. The full concert video and online curriculum includes activities, lessons, extra musical performances, composer interviews and educational games. It is a wonderful learning tool.

On 12 April Melissa Abdo, PhD, will update us on Saving the Greater Everglades System, and on 21 April Jonathan Slaght will give a presentation on Blakiston's Fish Owl – A Quest to Find and Save the World's Largest Owl. Don't forget to register at Sarasotaaudubon.org

Best wishes to all. Keep on keeping safe.

Sarasota Audubon Board of Directors

Monthly General Zoom Meetings

APRIL MEETING

**MONDAY
12 APRIL
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.

Saving the Greater Everglades System

Melissa Abdo, PhD, will update us on Saving the Greater Everglades System.



2020-21 MONTHLY MEETING SCHEDULE

BIRDS IN THE NEWS

Wisdom, the World's Oldest Known Wild Bird, Has Another Chick -- From the New York Times

An albatross named Wisdom has astounded researchers by hatching a chick at more than 70 years old, securing her title as the world's oldest known breeding bird.

By Anna Schaverien

March 5, 2021

At more than 70 years young, Wisdom, the world's oldest known banded wild bird, is taking on the challenge of motherhood once again.

An egg laid by Wisdom, a Laysan albatross, late last year on a speck of land in the Pacific Ocean hatched at the beginning of last month, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service announced. Biologists believe that Wisdom, who was first identified and banded on Midway Atoll in 1956, has hatched between 30 and 36 chicks, possibly more.

Even before she became the world's oldest known breeding bird, Wisdom defied expectations. She has logged hundreds of thousands, if not millions of miles



flying around the northern Pacific Ocean and has earned the distinction of living about twice as long as the average Laysan albatross.

"Albatrosses are extremely long-lived but the unusual thing about Wisdom is she's so much older than other birds," said Professor Richard Phillips, a seabird ecologist and head of the higher predators and conservation group at the British Antarctic Survey.

"You wouldn't expect a bird to be quite as much of an outlier as she is," Professor Phillips added, explaining that the next oldest banded albatross he has ever come across is 61 years old, at least nine years younger than Wisdom.

Though albatrosses tend to mate for life, Wisdom's longevity means that she has had multiple mates, Dr. Beth Flint, a biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said in an online post. The father of the chick that hatched on Feb. 1 is Akeakamai, Wisdom's mate since at least 2012.

The parents will share feeding duties for the chick, providing a diet of fish eggs and squid by regurgitating the food that they forage while at sea into their offspring's mouth. By the summer, the chick should be ready to fly for the first time, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said.

The Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge and Battle of Midway National Memorial, found in the far northern end of the Hawaiian Islands, is home to the world's largest colony of albatrosses and millions more sea birds.

Albatrosses like Wisdom and Akeakamai return to the 2.5-square-mile island each winter for nesting and mating. These sea birds typically lay at most one egg a year as the effort of incubating it, feeding it and parenting it after it hatches is so great. Wisdom has surprised researchers in this respect, too, as she has hatched chicks almost every year for the past 15 years.

Ordinarily you expect albatrosses to age in the same way as humans and for their breeding frequency and success to drop off with increasing age, so again Wisdom is unusual in that she still seems to be breeding fairly regularly," Professor Phillips said.

How many more years will Wisdom survive to continue hatching chicks? "No one really knows," said Mike Parr, the president of American Bird Conservancy. "We are in uncharted territory," he said, adding that the bird's survival so far was a ray of hope.

Biologists at the Midway Atoll wildlife refuge have been studying and tracking thousands of albatrosses like Wisdom for 85 years and Wisdom has been returning to the island for decades, even outliving the ornithologist Chandler Robbins, who first banded her. Wisdom's return, Dr. Flint said, "not only inspires bird lovers everywhere, but helps us better understand how we can protect

these graceful seabirds and the habitat they need to survive into the future."

URGENT -- RENEWAL REMINDER



It's Past 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!

NATURE CENTER HAPPENINGS



Spring is in the air, and the Native Gardens at the Celery Fields Nature Center are looking better than ever, thanks to our dedicated volunteer gardeners! Kyle and Don McCrea gave the Muhly grass its spring trim, which is a huge job since we



have large vistas of native clump grasses in the garden. Did you know that we trim the grass to mimic the natural fire regime in Florida? The native grasses typically burn every year or two with early summer lightning strikes. The ash acts as fertilizer, and the fire stimulates new growth. Since grasses bloom on new growth, we cut it to encourage more blooms in the fall.

I will repeat my mantra: The Nature Center is closed, but Nature is open! Come on out and enjoy the gardens

Karen Willey
SAS Nature Center Manager

Upcoming Events

SAS Activities



Please visit our website www.sarasotaudubon.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 -- Eastern Towhee

By Pamela Koepf Photo credits:
Pamela Koepf

The Eastern Towhee is a large, boldly colored member of the New World Sparrow family. While some northern populations migrate, the Florida population is here year-round. In fact, peninsular Florida has its own subspecies



referred to as the White-eyed Eastern Towhee. If you look closely though, the eyes are actually a pale straw yellow. In the rest of the U.S., this bird will have red eyes. The male Eastern Towhee is unmistakable with its striking black, white and rufous plumage. The female looks similar to the male, except that the black areas are instead a dead-leaf brown color. It also has an easily identifiable song which some say sounds like "drink your tea" and it may also sound like its name- "Tow-hee". That song is helpful in finding this bird because it is most often heard before being seen!

Their Florida habitats are brushy scrub and pineland areas. These solitary birds are ground foragers so you won't generally see them more than about three feet off the ground. Their nests are almost always on the ground which can lead to predation by raccoons or snakes. Also, Eastern Towhees are common victims of the parasitic Brown-headed Cowbird.

If you are looking for Eastern Towhees in the Sarasota area, they can be seen in both Myakka River State Park and Oscar Scherer State Park. You can also just look and listen for them in the appropriate scrubby habitat.

Sources:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/birds/facts/eastern-towhee>

<http://birdaz.com/blog/eastern-towhee-pipilo-erythrophthalmus/>

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org>

NATURE REMAINS OPEN!!

Sherry Rhodes, your newsletter
editor

(Photo credits: Sherry Rhodes)

This past month my friends and I (aka The Intrepid Birders) took off on an overnight trip to Merritt Island on Florida's east coast. On the way, we stopped at Mosaic Peace River Park in Polk County and walked the boardwalk there. We were treated to the lovely sight of several swallow-tailed kites gliding overhead and above the treetops. Later we visited Fox Lake Park near Titusville and strolled along a forest trail just as the armadillos were venturing out on their early evening foraging efforts. The next morning we did the Black Point Wildlife Drive at the Merritt Island National Refuge. Among the highlights of the drive were Northern Shovelers and Reddish Egrets. We then ventured along the beach down to Beach Access 13, where those in the know will not be surprised that the most intrepid of the birders caught a fleeting glimpse of a rare species that was lacking any plumage whatsoever. We stopped at the Visitor Center and got great views of a Painted Bunting on a feeder. On the way out of the reserve we spotted several resident Florida Scrub Jays, which flew down to give us a clear view after our skilled



driver pulled over for a better vantage point. What better way to cap off our birding outing than a visit to the Playalinda Brewing Company to sample their Scrub Jay Lemon Wheat Beer with just a touch of lavender? We highly recommend it!



Get Ready for Migration!

It's getting to be that time of year when northward migration is in full swing. This presentation compiled by Jeanne Dubi shows all of the 48 warblers of North America. How many will you be able to spot over the next two months or so?



https://drive.google.com/file/d/1he77Gu1e_swoCX7KIISGcvTwAD-E5Wsb/view?usp=sharing



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

One Day Trip Leader:

SAS is looking for a volunteer One Day Trip Coordinator for our 2021-2022 season. There are four trips in total that take place February-April, on the Carefree Learner boat tour of Robert's Bay Rookery and there is an Eagle Nest bus tour.

Training will be provided. This is a great opportunity to learn more about Sarasota and meet new people. All coordination can be done remotely but in-person attendance is required on trip days. After all, you wouldn't want to miss out on the fun. Current SAS volunteers can apply using their existing volunteer accounts. Simply log in and follow instructions on the "home tab". New volunteers can apply here.

<https://www.sarasotaudubon.org/volunteer/> For additional assistance, email volunteer@sarasotaudubon.org

Bird Box Monitor:

Manage and monitor the nesting boxes for Bluebirds, Barn Owls, and Chimney Swifts. Boxes are monitored for wasps and ants and cleaned at the end of the season. The Chimney Swifts are called

into the tower one night at the end of March using a prerecorded tape.

Flexible schedule requiring 2-8 hours a month part of the year.

Those interested can use the application instructions cited above.

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!



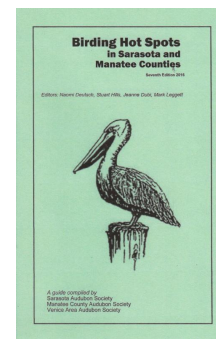
Engrave a loved one's name, or a short quote on a brick to commemorate a lasting tribute, or mark a special occasion. Ask us about other naming opportunities. Truly a gift that gives back.

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



Using Your Phone to Access Birding Hotspots

How a Hamburger Can Help You Locate Great Birding Spots Around Sarasota (and better access other websites on your smart phone) Learning to use your phone to access information on the Internet brings a wealth of information to you regardless of your location. Please **CLICK HERE** to read the article:

https://www.sarasotaaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Utilizing-the-SAS-Website-on-a-Smart-Phone_v2.pdf



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