



THE BROWN PELICAN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SARASOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 2023



Hello Sarasota Auduboners,

Well, we are almost at the end of a strange weather summer. Months of drought due to El Nino and then Hurricane Idalia dumped 3 or 4 inches of rain in the Sarasota/Manatee area just last week. Luckily we escaped serious damage -- mostly waterlogged ground for a day or two. An interesting thing about the storm: it blew in many birds not normally seen on our Gulf Coast: Brown Noddy, Sooty Tern, and American Flamingo! Great excitement for our birders.

Sad News...

On the other hand - this has been a sad August. We lost three stellar members and volunteers. Stu Hills, Ellen McKeefe, and Wade Matthews. All three will be sorely missed, and we think of them with gratitude for all they did for SAS. **Scroll down to read more about each of these wonderful members in articles near the end of this newsletter.**

While you were away....

The area around the Celery Fields is undergoing major changes. The map below shows what's going on: apartments/condos to the north and a possible housing development on Raymond Road. A Publix, too, opposite the library! You can see that the 400+ acre Celery Fields is more important than ever for birds and wildlife. And when we finally re-wild the 27-acre Quad, the addition to the CF becomes more and more important. The map also shows that there is a large area between Center and East roads that has

been put under conservation easement, thanks to the Conservation Foundation. Added to that great news is that the Mangrove School "No Child Left Inside" is developing an outdoor classroom between Center Rd. and Big Cat Habitat. Another coup for the environment! We hope to be working with the school on joint projects. Educating the young to respect the great outdoors is a win-win.

At the Nature Center....

This summer, we had a major overhaul of the air conditioning system. After 7+ years of service, it is back again in tip-top condition. A huge thank you to Roger Landry, an energy engineer, who donates his time to reviewing our energy system, and has done so since we opened in 2015.

Kim and Andy have been going to the NC all summer, just to make sure everything is ok. The fountains have undergone their quarterly maintenance and cleaning so they look spiffy, and we have a new storage shed. And Kim (Sullivan) has taken over the role of gift shop manager. Penney Rist, who has managed it since the beginning, is handing over the reins. A huge thanks to Penney for her tireless efforts over the years, and a big thank you to Kim for taking over that important role. Don't forget to check out the gift shop when you visit.

Activity Schedule

The New Activity Schedule for 2023/2024 is available...

Once again, our crack team of board members and volunteers has come up with a fab list of activities, field trips, lectures, and more. It's going to be another record-breaking year for SAS. Click the button above to print or find it on our website on Activities tab. "Save some paper, save some trees".

We are looking forward to the Nature Center opening on October 1st and seeing you all again.

Jeanne Dubi, President
and the SAS Board of Directors

What's Happening Around the Celery Fields? !!!



MONTHLY MEETING INFORMATION



**General Meeting
Monday, October 9th
7:00 pm on ZOOM**

**Sarasota Bay
Update with Dr.
Dave Tomasko**

Discover how the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program works with community partners to improve the science of bay management, restore wildlife habitats, and increase community engagement in bay

restoration efforts.



Register

Notes from the Nature Center



Above: Jeanne Dubi speaking to Mote Marine Master Naturalist class

It sure has been a hot summer! If you stuck around Sarasota, congratulations on not melting! If you're just coming back from a summer up north, congratulations on not melting up there, either! Regardless, we're glad to have you here. Even though the Nature Center has been closed since May 31, we've still been busy. Every Wednesday afternoon, we host a Wingspan game for our members.

Participants in the Florida Master Naturalist Program through the Mote Marine Laboratory met at our Nature Center in July. Our own SAS President Jeanne Dubi was on hand to explain the importance of the Celery Fields property to regional storm water management and to share her birding skills on the boardwalk.

The Gift Shop is being re-stocked with favorite items, including Celery Fields t-shirts in new colors, bird-themed jewelry, birding

guides, and a lot more. Check out what we've got!

We're gathering a flock of volunteers to the Nature Center on Saturday, September 23, to help clean, straighten, and organize in preparation for the start of our 2023-24 season. We need people both in the building and out in the gardens to help make the Celery Fields look its best for our visitors. Please join us starting at 9 a.m. on September 23. Questions? Email the [Volunteer Coordinator here](#).

Kim Sullivan, Building Manager

There's more: [Read Full Text of Kim's NOTES](#)



Volunteer Spotlight: All Call!



Volunteers Needed!

Have you ever thought about volunteering at the Nature Center? This is the perfect time to fill out an application so you can get trained in time for our opening on October 1! We have opportunities for:

- Spruce-up Crew Sept. 23 (see above)
- Docents in the Nature Center
- Docents in the Native Plant Gardens
- Gardeners in our Native Plant Gardens
- Naturalists on our Boardwalks (see below)
- NEW! Feeder Team for the Gardens Gazebo Feeders

Volunteers receive a volunteer t-shirt along with the satisfaction of being an integral part of our Celery Fields team.

--> If you're a brand new volunteer, please start by filling out our

application on the [Volunteer Portal](#) page of our website. If you have questions, email our Volunteer Coordinator at the button below.

--> If you're already volunteer, email the [Volunteer Coordinator](#)

[Volunteer
Portal](#)

[Volunteer
Coordinator](#)

Celery Fields **Bird Naturalists** Expand Offerings

Bird Naturalist Volunteers will now be available starting October 1, 2023, coinciding with the Sarasota Audubon Nature Center opening. We are not only looking for Palmer Blvd. and Raymond Rd. Naturalists, but also in the Gardens and Gazebo. Now is the time to volunteer for the season, which will run from October through May.

If you are interested in being a Celery Fields Bird Naturalist at any of these locations, please register through our volunteer portal.



The GARDEN Gate

— SARASOTA —
AUDUBON SOCIETY

Feeder Team Volunteers Needed!

Help us attract more birds!

DUTIES:

- Fill bird feeders at the Gardens gazebo
- Clean the feeders weekly
- Coordinate with other Feeder Team volunteers
- Perform minor repairs to feeders as needed



Sign up now at: Volunteer@SarasotaAudubon.org

Calling All Wingspan Players!



The monthly Wingspan play-dates have attracted dozens of SAS members to the Nature Center since they started more than a year ago. They're continuing through the summer as a way to help our members stay connected, hone their game-playing skills, and learn more about birds of the world.

If you want to play, please [email Lynn](#) to let her know your preferred schedule.

Current Schedule Every Wednesday in September:

- Wednesday, September 6
- Wednesday, September 13
- Wednesday, September 20
- Wednesday, September 27

All games start at 12:30 in the Sarasota Audubon Nature Center at the Celery Fields: 999 Center Road, Sarasota, FL 34240.

If you'd like to join the fun, please [email Lynn](#) so we know how many tables to set up!

Fledgling Florida Young Birders Club!



Florida Young Birders Club



The Florida Young Birders Club is welcoming people aged 9 - 17 in Florida who have an interest in birds or birding. We have chapters in the Tampa Bay Area, Orlando, and St. Augustine, with our newest chapter opening in Sarasota.

Our club offers:

- Unique field outings
- Monthly virtual guest speaker events
- A chance to communicate with other young birders in a secure space
- Member discount on Vortex optics



Scan here
to join!



Upcoming Birding Events

Florida Birding & Nature Festival

October 12-15, 2023
6650 Dickman Rd,
Apollo Beach, FL



Four days of field and boat trips, expert seminars, keynote speakers, and a great free nature expo!



**Audubon Assembly:
Conservation in a
Changing Landscape**

October 26–28, 2023
Sheraton Tampa–
Brandon, FL

Learning sessions, a keynote presentation, awards, and field trips to some of the birdiest hotspots in the region

**Nonprofits Pair up to Preserve
Celery Fields: *YourObserver.com***



Jeanne Dubi and Christine Johnson are longtime friends and allies, and their organizations have regularly partnered over the years. This project is their most consequential undertaking.

August 17, 2023, Eric Snider, Your Observer

The Sarasota Audubon Society and the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast have collaborated to re-wild the Quad Parcels at the Celery Fields, creating new bird habitats and wildlife viewing.

In the coming months, 33 acres of Sarasota County’s surplus land — land it didn’t want and didn’t know what to do with — will start to undergo a dramatic transformation. The tracts, known as the Quad Parcels, provide a vital buffer zone between the 440-acre Celery Fields and light industrial property to the west.

It could have turned out differently. The county had put the land up for sale, paving the way for potential commercial development. But quick and decisive action by a few environmental groups persuaded the Sarasota County Commission to protect it from development — in perpetuity. If all goes as planned, a “rewilding” project will begin in the fall.

[Read Full Article](#)

[Donate to Quads](#)

CONSERVATION: Follow-up N. Lido Bald Eaglet Necropsy Released

by Kylie Wilson



Perhaps you recall that back in April, one of the eaglets from the North Lido nest died and was recovered from the nest. The carcass was sent to be necropsied by USFWS. I was finally able to get in touch with the staff who conducted the necropsy and got the report; I have attached it here. The cause of death is listed as undetermined since the carcass

was too decomposed at the time of necropsy. Avian Influenza was tested for and ruled out, but there were trace amounts of the anticoagulant rodenticide, Bromadiolone.

I hope that this knowledge can be useful for organizing community outreach efforts to stop rodenticide use, especially in the area of this nest. Eagles will be returning for their nesting season in the next couple months. Hopefully this coming season will be more successful for the North Lido pair.

Also attached is a photo of the newly installed signage to help educate the public about the protected status of Eagles and the challenges they face, namely second-hand poisoning from rodenticides.

[Full Necropsy Report](#)

CONSERVATION: Purple Martin Hatch/Fledge Results for Period Ending July 2023

The PM team was busy this year tending nests and counting eggs and birds. Here are the results thanks to Glynnis Thomas, PM tabulator:

Total Eggs Laid = 380
Total Eggs Hatched = 293
Total Birds Fledged = 280
First Egg Laid = February 26
First Eggs Hatched = March 21
First Birds Fledged = April 16



Bird Blog: Flamingos!



Above: Stephanie Olson

Flamingos migrating from Mexico were blown off-course and are showing up on Florida's Gulf Coast. These photos were taken at Treasure Island near St. Pete Beach by two photographers.

Below: Jennifer Huber, Solo Travel Girl Blog



*Jennifer A. Huber
SoloTravelGirl.com*



*Jennifer A. Huber
SoloTravelGirl.com*

Pink flamingos: Hurricane Idalia's Surprise Gift to Tampa Bay

By, Stephanie Hayes, [Tampa Bay Times](#)

Over the past week, folks around Florida have photographed

groups of flamingos — a “flamboyance,” for your next trivia night — and posted photos online. The theory is that **Hurricane Idalia** swept up the pink birds, a literal wind beneath their wings, and pushed them farther north than they intended to go. They were spotted on the **Sanibel Causeway**, then at **Fred Howard Park** in Tarpon Springs, later on **Treasure Island Beach**.

Florida is soaked with images of flamingos; you cannot shake a pink stick without seeing them all over gift shop ephemera. On this afternoon alone, I drove past flamingo mailboxes, plastic yard flamingos, a flamingo mural and the Flamingo Motel, all within a 15-mile span. Tampa International Airport has a floor-to-ceiling art installation of a flamingo inside the main terminal. Her **name is Phoebe**, and no one gets through the airport without a fla-selfie.

Jerry Lorenz, research director for Audubon Florida, said with climate change, more and more tropical birds are moving north; for instance, one solitary flamingo has lived **in the Panhandle** for years. Lorenz had never heard of flamingos in Tampa Bay until now, though. He speculates the ones spotted this week could have been flying from the Yucatán to Cuba.

[Read Entire Flamingo Article Here](#)

CLIMATE CORNER

What Wildfire Smoke Means for Birds

New York Times



Wildfire and smoke at Maui Bird Conservation Center *San Diego Zoo*

The Maui wildfires are an ongoing human tragedy. At least [111 people have died](#), more than 1,000 people are unaccounted for, and many have been displaced from their homes.

But such fires also put animals at risk. [Wildlife, livestock](#) and [pets](#) often perish in fires. Flames can [destroy critical habitats](#) for endangered species and [set back conservation efforts](#). (The Hawaii fires [threatened the Maui Bird Conservation Center](#), which is home to some of the world's most endangered birds.) And all creatures that breathe air [are susceptible to smoke](#).

"Birds are especially vulnerable, because they have an incredibly efficient respiratory system, which is designed to deliver enough oxygen to power flight," said Olivia Sanderfoot, an ecologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, who studies [how smoke affects birds and other wildlife](#). The avian respiratory system is especially adept at drawing oxygen out of the air, but if there are pollutants wafting around, [birds take those up readily](#), too.

Precisely how smoke affects birds is still a nascent field of research, with many unanswered questions.

[Read Full
ARTICLE](#)

Sad News: Three Big Losses Stu Hills, Ellen McKeefe, Wade Matthews

Stuart Lee Hills a devoted father, grandfather, husband, friend, civil rights activist, and acclaimed professor of Sociology at St. Lawrence University, passed away peacefully in Sarasota, FL, on August 2, 2023, at the age of 90.

After enduring the cold winters of the North Country for over two decades, Stuart and Wilma moved to Sarasota to enjoy the sun and warmth on the Gulf Coast. Stuart was active with the Sarasota Sailing Squadron; he continued to enjoy his carving hobbies while also volunteering at the Pelican Man's Bird Sanctuary and the Sarasota Audubon



Nature Center, where he served as a docent and authored “Birding Hotspots of Sarasota” to share his love of birding with the greater Sarasota community.

Stuart is greatly missed by his family, his former students and faculty colleagues, and the many friends that he made during his remarkably well-lived and impactful life. In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be directed to the Sarasota Audubon Celery Fields Nature Center at:

<https://www.sarasotaudubon.org/donate/>.

Stu Hills Obituary



Ellen McKeefe, an Emmy-nominated television news producer who was one of the early women behind the scenes during a long career at NBC News, died August 7, 2023, in Sarasota, Florida, of cancer. She was 78.

After retirement from NBC News, Ellen lived in Sarasota and continued freelance television news and sports production for NBC, ABC, CBS, PBS, Fox, ESPN, National Geographic and others. She viewed one of her most significant professional accomplishments as covering the

aftermath of the worst terrorist attack on US soil, September 11, 2001, where she organized and managed the field production for ABC News at Huffman Aviation in Venice, Florida, a training site of the terrorists.

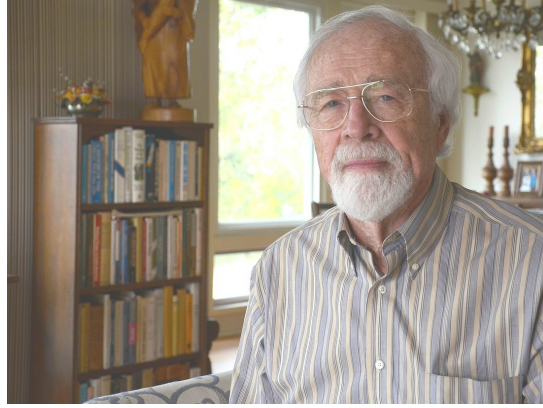
Ellen was a gifted painter. Watercolor painting in Sarasota and Italy became a passion, along with sailing, and birding in Florida and Scotland.

For many years Ellen was a volunteer Audubon's Society birding guide at Sarasota's Celery Fields Nature Center. Memorial contributions may be made in her name on line at: <https://www.sarasotaudubon.org/donate/>

Ellen McKeefe Obituary

Wade Matthews passed away on August 29, 2023.

We are deeply saddened by the loss of Wade Matthews, who just celebrated his 90th birthday. He was SAS' Conservation Chair for 20 years, keeping us up to date on all things environmental at the local, state, and national levels. Wade was a true gentleman and scholar, always ready to share his wisdom and advice. We will miss him deeply.



A Celebration of Life will be held at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota, 3975 Fruitville Road, Sarasota, FL 34232 on **Wednesday, September 6, 2023, at 2:00 pm.**

Memorials may be sent to **Sarasota Audubon Society**, 999 Center Road, Sarasota, FL, 34240 or the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast, 400 Palmetto Ave., Osprey, FL 34229

Wade Matthews Obituary

**The Last Word Is Graphic:
The Four Stages of Watching Warblers**

The Four Stages of Watching Warblers



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