



THE BROWN PELICAN

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SARASOTA AUDUBON SOCIETY

MAY 2026



Volunteer Luncheon on April 11, 2026

Dear Members,

It is the end of the season and what a good one it was! Here is a fun list of some of the highlights to look back on:

- We have nearly completed the re-wilding of the southeast Quad with the native plant garden, pollinator meadow, pond with littoral shelf, and bird-watching gazebo all complete.
- We launched new educational classes that were attended by nearly 200 people.
- We hosted 60 bird walks throughout Sarasota and Manatee counties.
- We launched the Fly Wild! Festival which spread our mission to the approximately 750 people that attended.
- We continued to win against the DR Horton development on Raymond Rd. as the county commissioners again unanimously rejected a settlement proposal that could have

put 85 homes on the Smith Farm adjoining the Celery Fields to the west. (DR Horton continues to pursue the development, and SAS will continue to oppose it.)

And so much more! All of this was possible because of each of you -- through membership, donations and volunteer hours. Our chapter came together in new and exciting ways to build a better birding community here in Sarasota.

Thank you all so much for an absolutely wonderful season!

Sara Reisinger

Sarasota Audubon President

On behalf of the Board of Directors

MONTHLY MEETING INFORMATION

Hybrid: In Person OR Zoom-in

Monday, May 11, 7 p.m.

Note: Speaker will be on Zoom



An Unflinching Look: Elegy for Wetlands, with Benjamin Dimmitt

An Unflinching Look is an examination of a unique North American ecosystem in decline, investigated through 85 duotone photographs, scientific analysis and critical interpretation.

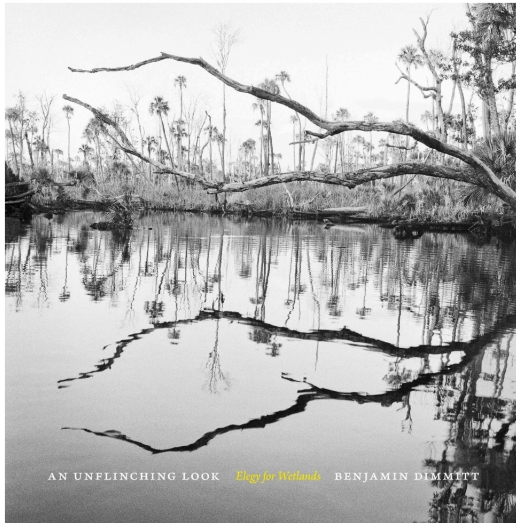
The project's focus is the area of the Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge on Florida's Gulf Coast and the history and fate of its wetlands. Benjamin Dimmitt began photographing in the salt-damaged sawgrass savannas and spring creeks there as a way of examining and reckoning with the ecosystem loss and of understanding what was becoming of his native Florida. To document the progress of the saltwater intrusion, Dimmitt has rephotographed landscapes that he

BENJAMIN DIMMITT

Menu

PHOTOGRAPHY OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

first photographed more than 40 years ago. His pictures reveal the impact of several factors that are causing the loss of an entire ecosystem: tune in to find out what they are.



[Join at Nature Center](#)

[Register for Zoom](#)

Notes from the Nature Center



Here we are in May already, and June 1 marks the start of Hurricane Season. Considering how dry it's been lately, many of us are looking forward to the rain. Hopefully this rainy season will fill up everyone's ponds and give us a nice cool-down when we need it. Because many of our volunteers and visitors prefer not to endure a Florida summer, we close the Nature Center on May 15.

Free Fun: Since the Nature Center will be closing for the season on May 15, most of our classes and other activities are over for now. Don't despair, though, because the Celery Fields grounds are open every day this summer from dawn until dusk for your hiking, biking and birding enjoyment.

Summer Wingspan: Of course we're playing Wingspan over the summer, members only! It's the best time to gather in the air-conditioned Nature Center and enjoy the company of other Wingspan aficionados. Starting in June, every Wednesday at 12:30 p.m. will be set aside. At afternoon gatherings no experience is needed because there are folks at the Wednesday games who are happy to teach newcomers. Please [RSVP by emailing Lynn](#). Evening play will resume in June, but it will be switched to every other Tuesday evening, starting at 6 p.m. As always, experienced players only. For evening Wingspan dates [RSVP to Stacy Perry](#).

Purple Martins: Our experienced team of Purple Martin Volunteers lowers and raises the Martin houses twice a week to assess the health of the birds and evict any predators or parasites. Come check out the action on Thursday and Sunday mornings at 10 o'clock, weather permitting. See important update article below.

Hybrid Meeting: On Monday, May 11, at 7 p.m., author Benjamin Dimmitt will be speaking about his book *An Unflinching Look: Elegy for Wetlands*. This monthly meeting will be a hybrid event that can be viewed on Zoom, either from attendees' homes or at the Sarasota Audubon Nature Center. All attendees need to sign up online, whether they plan to attend online or in person. [REGISTER HERE](#).

We hope you have a fun, relaxing and safe summer.
We look forward to seeing you again in the fall!

Kim Sullivan, Building Manager

[Read Full Notes](#)

Window Application Volunteers Needed!



The window dots to prevent bird strikes must be applied in May. If you are able to take this project over please contact Margi by text. She will coordinate with you.

[Text Margi to Apply Dots](#)



Mushroom Log Workshop



This workshop is a hands-on introduction to an easy method of mushroom cultivation. We'll spend the first hour inside covering the basics: how fungi grow, their ecological roles and why they matter for restoration. We will then head outside to inoculate oak logs with pink oyster spawn. Each participant takes home their log and a care booklet.

Pink oysters are well-suited to Florida's climate and grow more quickly than other mushrooms, making them a good first mushroom to grow at home. All materials provided; work gloves are encouraged.

\$50 general / \$40 Audubon members

Proceeds go toward the Sarasota Audubon Society and Metamimicry's collaborative work at the Celery Fields Quads project.

This workshop is provided by [Jade Swor of Metamimicry.org](https://www.metamimicry.org). Space is limited.

[Register for Mushroom Log Class](#)

Purple Martin Nestlings Have a Rough Season in 2026



This year's La Nina Florida winter brought very cold and extreme dry conditions.

What the Purple Martin volunteers found early after hatching was that young nestlings a few days old began to disappear from the nests despite anti-predator designs of our equipment. No snakes! No apparent hawk or owl problems! No European Starlings or House Sparrows! Just nestlings disappearing.

What was happening is related to the weather. When conditions are not good and it is extremely dry and there are fewer insects to feed the very demanding and hungry gapes of young nestlings, adult parents remove very young nestlings from the compartments -- and we find fewer nestlings on our nest-checks.

We keep deeply detailed recordings of each and every nest. In many nests we found "brood reductions." This is what it is called when either the parents remove newly hatched young from the nests or allow larger nestlings to perish. They do this naturally because the adults are unable to find adequate flying foods for all their young in the nest. So, if adults cannot find enough food for all, some must perish so that at least a few young in the nest can survive.

Report April 23: In addition to the many newly hatched nestlings lost in the nests, this past week I counted 11 dead and older developed nestlings in both houses. One compartment had four dead nestlings around 8-10 days of age and only one apparently healthy nestling. In this case the parents felt that they could only find food for one nestling and for themselves. In the cases where all the nestlings were found dead, it is because nature dictates that the birds abandon all their young so that they can come back and breed again next season.

Runts abound this year: Another interesting notable detail this season is the large number of runts in the nests. This is probably due to malnourished females that could not convey proper nutrition to their eggs. This is the result of fewer flying insects available. In extreme cases, where the runt is weak, a volunteer takes the bird home and feeds it for a few days to regain its strength and then returns it to the nest. Or, we take it to a wildlife rescue facility. We find that this helps these little birds survive. As Purple Martin volunteers, it is our guiding mantra "to fledge as many Purple Martins as we can." And, in doing so, we enable the parents in rearing these runts and record that they do survive to fledge.

Mother Nature *giveth* and she *taketh* away! While this has not been the best season for the Sarasota Audubon Purple Martins, we will still fledge a good number of young this season. With a new season next year, we remain hopeful that it will be a softer, more gentle Mother Nature that visits us.

[Read Full Report - Including History](#)

**Beach Nesting Bird Season
Volunteers Needed!**



Black Skimmer with chick in foreground

My name is Abby O'Donnell, and I am the Sarasota Shorebird Stewardship Coordinator for the 2026 season with Audubon Florida. **We are in need of stewarding volunteers** to help protect our nesting shorebirds in Sarasota County. If anyone is interested in this opportunity, we will provide training and all of the supplies you will need to become a shorebird steward.

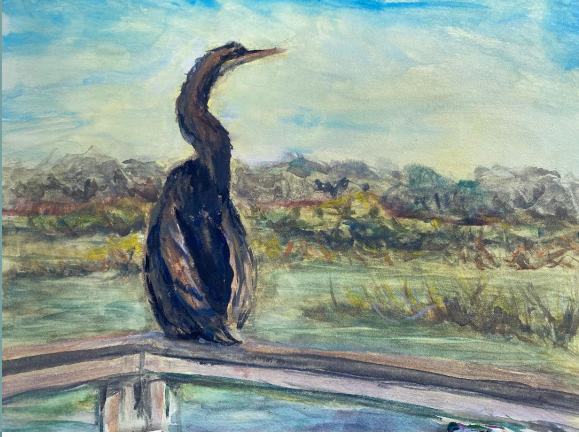
Reach out to me and I will get you on our volunteer list and started with the training program. Once the short training is complete, you will receive the schedule to begin signing up for shifts. Please let me know if you have any questions!

[Email Abby](#)

[Phone or Text](#)

Art Update: Light Chasers, Plein Air Painters Group





The “Light Chasers” plein air artists group spent Thursday morning, April 23, set up near the front doors of our Nature Center painting and drawing their views using watercolors, oil and acrylic paints and pastel sticks. Each artist has their own unique style, and all their creations were beautiful to behold.



Volunteer Opportunities
Join us during this busy time!

Class Registrar Needed

We need someone with the following skills to assist with class registrations.

Class Registrar Skills

- ✓ Tech savvy
- ✓ Track registration
- ✓ Proficient in Excel
- ✓ Maintain lists in Member Planet
- ✓ Send lists to instructors
- ✓ Respond to questions



If you can help over the summer remotely with class registration and setup, please

[Contact Karen](#)

Youth Outreach Booth Volunteers Needed



Festivals and Fun!

We need folks who love to do hands-on activities with kids for outreach at various fairs and festivals throughout the year.

To help, please [click here](#) and type "Youth Outreach."

Social Media Masters Needed

We need a Team!

Facebook and Instagram need constant updates. We need folks to feed us images from our tours and classes. And also folks to do daily uploads.



To help, please [click here](#) and type "Social Media" and let us know your preferred role.

Purple Martin Volunteers Needed



It's Purple Martin Time! Perched upon their stately birdhouses outside the entrance to the Nature Center for seven months of the year and greeting the hundreds of visitors yearly, the Purple Martins have become the ambassadors of The Sarasota Audubon Society.

To help, please contact us.

Click a name to email:

[Terry Anne Suchma](#) or [Sue Guarasci](#)

Bluebird Monitors Needed

Bluebird monitors are needed now more than ever! This is a great way to learn about the breeding and nesting habits of these birds.

You can work with the Bluebird Team once a week (or every other week -- they are flexible!) to collect data. The weekly task takes about half an hour. You could also assist with cleaning nest boxes at the end of season.

Big thanks to Christian Dillon, who is taking the Bluebird lead. [Click Here to email Christian](#) to volunteer for the team.



All Volunteer Opportunities

Join Us for Wingspan, The Game



We've got plenty of games, plenty of players who are eager to teach newcomers and plenty of candy to help keep you going.

Current Schedule for Wednesdays:

- **Wednesday, May 6**
- **Wednesday, May 20**

All games start at 12:30 p.m. in the Sarasota Audubon Nature Center at the Celery Fields: 999 Center Road, Sarasota. If you'd like to join the fun,

please [email Lynn](#) so we know how many tables to set up!

Wingspan Evening Sessions -- Oceana Edition: For you night owls or holders of day jobs, Stacy Perry will be hosting Wingspan games on alternate Tuesday evenings at 6 p.m. starting June 9. Experienced players only at these sessions, please.

Evening Schedule (experienced players):

- **Taking a break in May**

All games start at 6 p.m. in the Sarasota Audubon Nature Center at the Celery Fields: 999 Center Road, Sarasota.

If you'd like to participate, please [email Stacy](#) before the next evening game to let us know you're going to be there.

Conservation: Vote in November to Continue Environmentally Sensitive Lands Programs



**SARASOTA
COUNTY
FOREVER**

✓ VOTE YES AND YES

Sarasota County's Land Acquisition and Management Program stands as a proven success in community-driven conservation.

Funded through a voter-approved tax, this program has protected more than 42,000 acres of environmentally sensitive land. These efforts have played a critical role in preserving wildlife habitat, safeguarding water resources and expanding public access to natural areas. In addition, the program has supported the acquisition of 31 properties that have created or enhanced parks while improving connections to trails, waterways and beaches.

The November ballot will include two related measures: one to extend the program and a second to continue authorizing the use of bonds. Bonding enables the county to act more quickly in securing priority lands as they become available.

[Learn More About the Referendum](#)

Membership Reminder



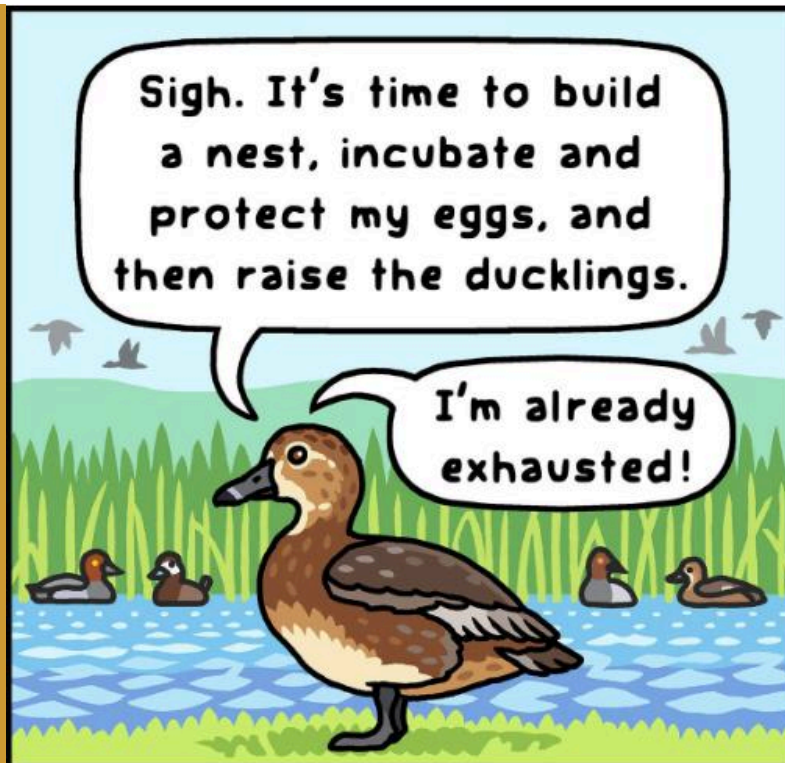
If you have received a notice from Member Planet and already renewed, thank you!

To check if you have renewed, click the button below.

[Renew or Join Sarasota Audubon](#)

The Last Word Is Graphic Cornell BirdWord by Rosemary Mosco Brood Parasite

Brood parasite: noun. A bird that lays eggs in the nests of the same or a different species, leaving the resulting young to be raised entirely by the host(s).





SARASOTA
AUDUBON SOCIETY

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