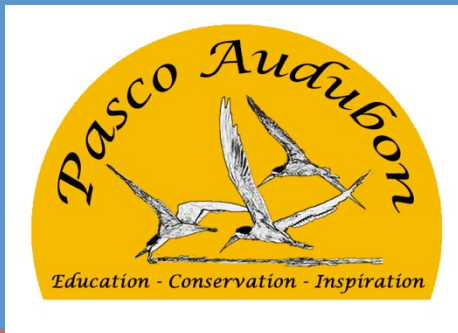


# Pasco Audubon



February 2024

## Upcoming Events

- February 3**  
**8am** Bird Walk in Starkey Park.  
Meet at 8am in the Education Center parking lot
- February 3**  
**11am** Shorebird ID – Vince Capp  
More to your right, meeting starts at 11am in the Starkey Education Center
- February 10** Field Trip to Lake Dan Preserve - see details on page 2.
- February 11**  
**8am** Birding by Bike on The Pinellas Trail – see details on p.2.
- February**  
**17-18** Field Trip to Payne's Prairie/Sweetwater – see details on p.3

## February 3<sup>rd</sup> – Vince Capp Shorebird Identification with a Florida Focus

Local birding expert and photographer Vince Capp will share some great tips on the challenging topic of shorebird ID. He says, "I sometimes think shorebirds scare the intermediate birder even more than sparrows do, but it doesn't have to be that way. Once I learned how to look at them (and there is a right way and a wrong way} and see the most critical things first, it got way easier for me. There are a few tricks that I'd like to share that I hope will make both seeing and understanding these birds easier for not only the beginner/intermediate birder- but for the advanced birder, too. I hope to touch a bit on flight mechanics, behavior and habitat, as well. Paying closer attention to basic and unforgiving fundamentals, good discipline, and focusing on the RIGHT details moved me from being a so-so shore birder 9 years ago (I'm a long-time upland birder first and foremost) to a much stronger, more confident all-around observer today. I hope that I can help you get to the level that you'd like to be."

**Bring your go-to bird guide(s), please- they will be useful.**  
**Meet at the Starkey Environmental Education Center at 11am.**  
**Free, all are welcome,**



Photos by Vince Capp:  
Wilson's Phalarope (top),  
Least Sandpiper (left) and  
Wilson's Plover (right).





Song Sparrow and Savannah Sparrow by Lilian Saul

## February 10<sup>th</sup>: Field Trip to Lake Dan Nature Preserve

When? Saturday, February 10, 7:30 – 11:00 a.m.

Where? 19116 Huckavalle Rd., Odessa, FL 33556

Lake Dan Nature Preserve is home to two lakes, pine flatwoods, wet prairie, and cypress swamps. We hope to see the Song Sparrow that appears to be wintering there. A walk to Lake Dan is approximately 2.5 miles roundtrip on dry ground. We'll meet in the parking lot at 7:30 a.m. There are no bathroom facilities so plan accordingly. Bring water and wear sun protection. Mosquitos are not a problem. This trip will be led by Lilian Saul.

## Birding by Bike: Starkey Park on Sunday, January 21st

Our next Birding by Bike outing is scheduled for Sunday, February 11th. We will meet at the Brooker Creek Preserve parking lot at 8:00 AM and ride north to Keystone Road and the Pinellas Trail. This is a pleasant ride with many opportunities for birding in a variety of habitats. 67 species were recorded on eBird in this area over the last month with 85 identified as likely. Some of my favorite birds reported to eBird over the last week were Wilson's Snipe, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagle nests, Red-Tailed Hawk, Grasshopper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, and Eastern Meadowlark. Hope to see you there - Bob Burkard

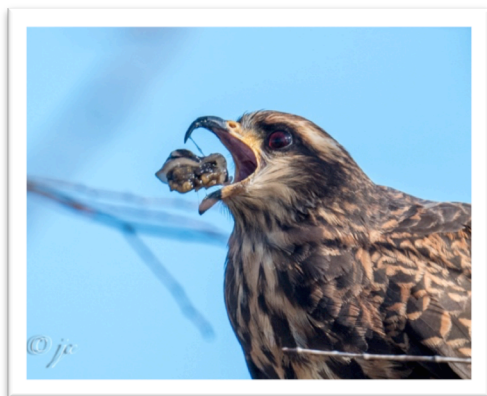
To register and if you have additional questions, Bob's email is [robertburkard9@gmail.com](mailto:robertburkard9@gmail.com).



## 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Great Backyard Bird Count - Feb 16-19

Join us for this annual global event by recording the birds you see in your yard or favorite places. Learn more about the count and how you can participate at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

To participate, you need to spend at least 15 minutes over the 4 day period watching birds and recording what you see. If you are already an eBirder, then you're automatically enrolled and your sightings over those 4 days will count. If you are not, then check the website above to learn how to contribute the birds you see to the global effort.

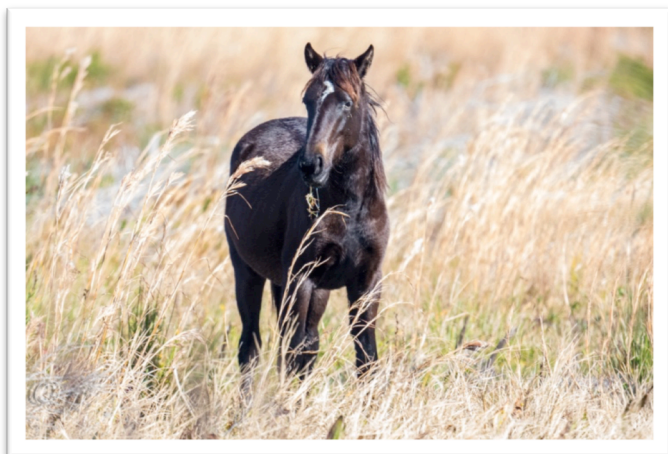


Photos by Joe Colantonio  
Snail Kite (left) and Song  
Sparrow (right). Wild  
horse below also by Joe.



## February 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>: Gainesville Weekend

Saturday: We're planning to begin our weekend at **Payne's Prairie**, a 21,000 acre savannah to the south of Gainesville. The photos you see on this page were taken there by Joe Colantonio a couple of weeks ago. One of the resident avian features is a Whooping Crane, while it is also



home to wild horses and bison, Snail Kites and a wide range of birds, including numerous rarities. There is a 50' observation tower we can climb near a visitor's center that will provide panoramic views over the prairie, and usually allows for distant views of the Whooping Crane. There are a number of excellent trails. Lilian and I will be scouring eBird reports in the couple of weeks prior to our trip to ascertain if there are any special places we should be including while we are there.

We'll also be researching a spot for those who would like to enjoy a meal together in the

evening. Got a recommendation or request? Let us know!

Overnight: We are making this a 2-day experience, so you will either need to find a hotel room or a camping spot for the night. Some may prefer to stay over on Friday night also to avoid a long drive up on Saturday morning. Some of us have made reservations at the Quality Inn on I75 at 3455 at Williston Road, Gainesville FL 32608. We were able to get a rate of \$119 on the Choice Hotels webpage.

On Sunday morning we plan to visit **Sweetwater Wetlands Park**. The wetlands and ponds were created to improve the water quality of Paynes Prairie and the Florida aquifer. We can easily spend 3-4 hours walking the crushed gravel trails and boardwalks. Observations of waders, Soras, Purple Gallinules, and Snail Kites are common. We may even see the Leconte's Sparrow, American Bittern, and Wilson's Warbler! Birders are hearing and seeing King and Virginia Rails. It's a birder's paradise! Have \$5 in CASH for the payment box. There's a bathroom at the entrance. The trails are open so wear sun protection. Afterwards, you have the option of returning home or a few of us may decide to stay in the area and look for rare birds.

**It is very important that you register for this trip**, as we will need to reach you about any changes in plans. Please send a message to [president@pascoaudubon.com](mailto:president@pascoaudubon.com) if you plan to attend.

## Meet Lilian Saul – Pasco Audubon’s New Treasurer



Let me introduce myself as your new Treasurer. Many of you know me as a fellow birder on your field trips, and Doug, my husband, and I gave the Ecuador-Galapagos presentation last year. I have lived in the Tampa Bay area since the 80s, but have only been seriously birding since the mid-90s. My focus was Hillsborough and Pinellas counties but we did long-distance drives for rare birds in all of Florida, including Pensacola and Key West. I was board member and treasurer for Tampa Audubon for several years in the late 1990s-2000s. When Doug retired in 2011, we spent the next 10 years getting over 100 species in all 67 counties. What's our next goal? Fifty species in all 50 states! As you

can tell, I'm very goal-oriented. Currently, I am concentrating on the surrounding 4 counties: Pasco, Manatee, Pinellas, and Hillsborough, and if a new bird is seen in Florida, we're almost always driving to see it the next day. Since I'm retired, I have time to devote to being your Treasurer, and look forward to getting to know more of you better.

## Meet Stasi Gerges – 2023-24 Conservation Leadership Initiative Student



Greetings Pasco Audubon! My name is Stasi Gerges and I am a member of Audubon CLI this year. I am a junior at the University of South Florida majoring in Political Science with a minor in Environmental Science and Policy. I am a huge animal lover, and my favorite animals have got to be birds! Birds are special to me because they can be found almost anywhere and are incredibly adaptable and diverse (this makes them very fun to find!). For my CLI project, I will be conducting research pertaining to shorebirds and park management at SunWest Park. With this project, I hope to come up with solutions on how to implement effective wildlife protection policies at SunWest and other county parks. I look forward to meeting with you all at Pasco Audubon in the future!



Left: Osprey

Right: Blue-headed Vireo

Photos by Klenisson Brenner



## Report: January 20<sup>th</sup> Field Trip to Circle B Bar

We had another lovely walk out at Circle B Bar this past Saturday. We set out with rather chilly and gray conditions, but it had warmed and brightened by the end of our walk. There were 15 of us in all, and we were able to see 54 species. Some of the highlights included Purple Gallinule (they've been scarce in Pasco recently due to the drought conditions), Bonaparte's Gull (Bill Pranty estimated 150 over Lake Hancock), American White Pelican and Blue-headed Vireo (great spot by Klenisson).

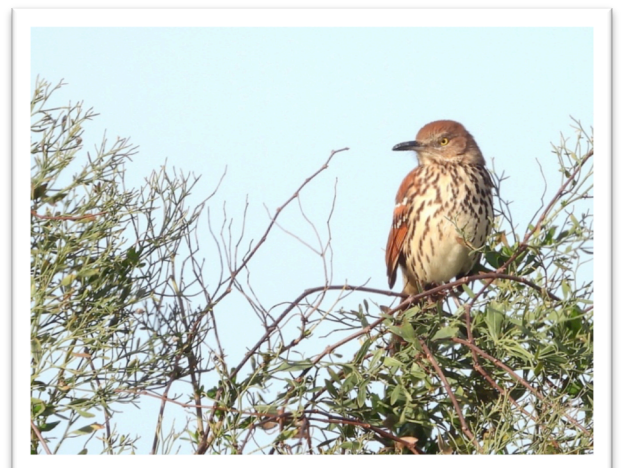
About 8 of us made a second stop at Lake Morton in nearby Lakeland. Known for its swans, it was also hosting a good number of ducks, including Wood Ducks, Ruddy Ducks, Redheads, Ring-necked Ducks and Lesser Scaup. And about 65 American White Pelicans, who were sitting on the shore. Its rare for us to see these huge birds at such close quarters, so well worth the extra stop. Lilian, Doug, Klenisson and John P. also stopped at Lake Parker where they added American Bittern, Gray-headed Swamphen and Snail Kite to their lists.

## Birding 102 Report: Pinellas Trail on January 17<sup>th</sup>

After a holiday break and our planned boat trip postponed due to a small craft advisory, a hardy half dozen of us braved cold temperatures to bird the Pinellas Trail south of SR 54. I believe it was in the 30's when we started and we were well bundled up, but the sun was shining. We were rewarded for our efforts with a sighting of the elusive Ash-throated Flycatcher! All were able to see it (lifer bird for Tom, Kimberly and Anthony) – even if it was a distance away, it was repeatedly returning to a tree with berries. And for an extra bonus we also got good looks at an Orange-crowned Warbler (thank you Lilian!), not to mention some photographic cooperation from Meadowlarks and a Brown Thrasher. We totaled 43 species for the morning.



The Ash-throated Flycatcher and Brown Thrasher by Christine



## Bird collisions with windows – why it happens and what we can do to prevent it by Don Fraser

As we experience unseasonably cold temperatures in central Florida this month, our thoughts naturally turn to the imminent onset of spring and the hundreds of thousands of migrant birds that will pass through Pasco on their way to northern nesting grounds. As if flying across hundreds of miles of open ocean isn't challenging enough, once the birds make landfall here they are faced with many other potential hazards – including the very house you live in!

Recent studies estimate that as many as 1 billion birds collide with windows every year and that of these, several hundred million die. Others may survive the collision but sustain severe injuries such as fractured bones and beaks, concussions, and internal bleeding. While massive nocturnal kills caused by birds hitting tall buildings in large cities have received national media attention – at a single high-rise in Chicago more than 30,000 bird collisions were documented over a 20-year period – this problem is far from limited to large urban centers. And this is not strictly a nighttime phenomenon. Because glass windows reflect the sky or nearby greenery birds are generally unable to perceive glass as a barrier. As a result,



they fly into windows of all sizes at any height, even those of a one- or two-story house and at any time of day. Furthermore, many birds that survive windows are in a stunned condition and fall prey to predators such as cats and raccoons or fall into dense vegetation where they remain lost to sight. Because many homeowners never witness a bird collision firsthand, they simply assume that it doesn't occur on their properties.

Thankfully, there are several simple, practical and inexpensive things a homeowner can do to prevent or reduce window collisions.

### **Apply treatments to your windows**

These can take many different forms:

- Cover windows with screening that affixes to the glass using hooks or suction cups. This both reduces the reflection and prevents injury by cushioning the bird's impact.

- Install parachute cord curtains, an inexpensive option that uses 1/8-inch paracord pieces spaced less than 4 inches apart. These are hung outside from the top of the window.
- Choose bird friendly glass such as acid-etched or frosted glass that reduces reflection or ultraviolet glass with patterns that are visible to birds but invisible to humans.

### **Reduce lights at night**

Because most birds migrate at night, and are attracted to light, they are more vulnerable to illuminated buildings. By turning off unneeded lights by hand or using timers and motion sensors not only can bird attraction to windows be reduced, but lower energy costs may also be achieved! Using blinds, shades, awnings and shutters in windows can also reduce the amount of light that escapes in or out and help birds see the glass as a barrier.



### **Change the locations of feeders or birdbaths**

Birds may collide with windows while flying away from backyard feeders and birdbaths. A simple solution is to situate them 3 to 4 feet away from the glass (or in the case of feeders, directly on the windowsill), since this prevents the birds from getting up enough speed to injure themselves.

**National Audubon's website is an invaluable resource for additional information on bird collisions with windows and what you can do to prevent them. Click on the following link: [Reducing collisions with glass | Audubon](#)**

Pasco Audubon is committed to bringing awareness to this often-overlooked threat to our birds and we would like to get feedback from our members. Have you encountered this problem – either on your own property or elsewhere? Have you implemented any measures to prevent collisions and if so, have they been effective? Please share your experiences with us: [dmfraser31@gmail.com](mailto:dmfraser31@gmail.com)

## Looking further ahead...

- Saturday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>     **Walk in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park (8am)**  
Bird Banding and the Florida Young Birders Club with **Jim McGinity(11am)**
- Saturday, March 9<sup>th</sup>     Field Trip to **Chinsegut -Headquarters Tract (Hernando County)**
- Sunday, March 17<sup>th</sup>     **Birding by Bike at Cypress Creek with Bob Burkard**
- Saturday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>     Field Trip to **Celery Fields (Sarasota)**

## Pasco Audubon (Formerly West Pasco Audubon)

P.O. Box 1456  
Elfers, FL 34680

### Pasco Audubon Board of Directors

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- Don Fraser, VP for Conservation - [dmfraser31@gmail.com](mailto:dmfraser31@gmail.com)
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