



# PASCO AUDUBON

Formerly known as West Pasco Audubon

## Upcoming Events

### Saturday, May 4th

Bird walk in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park. 8am.

### Saturday, May 11th

Birding by Bike

### Saturday, May 18th

Birding tour of East Pasco - see p.1.

**Thanks to Laurie Kell - who after providing us all with refreshments at our meetings for many, many years, is stepping down. Laurie - we really appreciate all you have done to make us comfortable for our meetings!**



Pasco Audubon



## Upcoming May Events

Traditionally, May is our 'winding down' month. But we still have several events for those of you who have not taken off for vacation or cooler climates quite yet.

On May 4th, we'll have our monthly bird walk in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park, led by Joanne Chamberlain and Joe Colantonio. Meet Joe and Joanne in the Education Center parking lot at 8am for this walk. There's a good chance of seeing some migrating warblers as we will still be in the spring migration window. Reach out to Joe at [jcolantonio@verizon.net](mailto:jcolantonio@verizon.net) if you have questions.

Saturday, May 11th will see our monthly Birding by Bike adventure - details on p.2.

Saturday, May 18th, we'll take our annual tour of East Pasco. This is a trip through the more rural areas of Pasco, stopping at various points to see birds that prefer these habitats, such as Eastern Meadowlark, Purple Martin, Red-headed Woodpecker, Summer Tanager and Blue Grosbeak. We'll see Swallow-tailed Kites, and if we're very lucky we may also see a Mississippi Kite. We plan to begin in the McDonald's Parking lot at 31038 Cortez Blvd, Brooksville, FL 34602 at 8am. Please give me a heads up at [president@pascoaudubon.com](mailto:president@pascoaudubon.com) if you plan to join us. This trip will probably take about 3 hours.

**Wishing you all a wonderful summer!**



## Birding by Bike Update

by Bob Burkard

For this April's Pasco Audubon Birding by Bike outing, we started at the Brooker Creek Preserve parking lot and rode our bikes across Keystone Road continuing north on the Pinellas trail. We turned around just north of Trinity Blvd. The weather was perfect and even though we did not see any migrants, we observed 47 different species of birds, with some of my favorites being Eastern Meadowlarks, Bald Eagles, Summer Tanagers, many bluebirds, and Swallow-tailed Kites. We hope that you enjoy these photographs from our trip.

Our May 11<sup>th</sup> Birding by Bike outing will be at Jay B Starkey Wilderness Park. We will meet at 8:00 am at the Starkey Education Center and travel back into the park to a spot where I have observed Bachman's sparrows over the last few weeks.





## Report: Field Trip to Fort De Soto - April 21st

Eighteen of us began our field trip out at East Beach. We were greeted at arrival by a lovely Ovenbird, and then saw a male Cape May Warbler, feeding intensely in fairly low shrubs, allowing our whole group to get good looks and photographs. After taking in the terns on the beach and the Great Crested Flycatchers along the coastal path we headed out to East Beach turnaround to see a few shorebirds, including Black-bellied Plover, Wilson’s Plover and Short-billed Dowitchers.

Following East Beach, we made our way to the Bay Pier and headed toward the fountain. In this area we all saw a Wood Thrush in the warden’s yard, and a Kentucky Warbler who was foraging intently near the fountain. Some in our group were fortunate enough to see a Chuck-will’s-Widow and nest, and others saw Rose-breasted Grosbeak. We then moved on to North Beach Oaks where our picnic table was fortuitously situated near an oak tree with American Redstart, Blackpoll Warbler, Cape May Warblers and Northern Parula - a great way to end our trip. Our trip list of 50 birds and lots of photographs can be viewed at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S169682548>.

Top Left: Cape May Warbler by Joe Colantonio  
Below Left: Blackpoll Warbler by Anthony Marella  
Bottom Left: Wood Thrush by Anthony Marella

Top Right: Nanday Parakeets by Pat Misajet  
Below Right: Chuck Will’s Widow by Pat Misajet  
Below Right: Picnic at North Beach Oaks





Best in Show: Cruel Nature by Ron Buening. Ron receiving his award from Competition Coordinator Kimberly Snaric

## April Meeting and Photography Competition

Our final meeting of the season celebrated the winners of this year’s photography competition. We had our largest turnout of the year for the event, needing many extra chairs for our feature presentation on Conservation Photography: Using Your Images for the Greater Good. With many photographers in the audience we were interested in learning more about how the photographs we take could possibly be used to help bring about positive change.

Kimberly Snaric, our competition coordinator, took the floor to present the awards. Before beginning she thanked our sponsors on behalf of Pasco Audubon. This year’s sponsors were Pasco Fine Arts Council, Pasco Camera Exchange (Jim and Annette Smetzer), Wild Birds Unlimited Odessa (Kathy and Lisa Massey-Williams), Truist Wealth (Cere-Walters Group), CPR Tampa (Kimberly and Jay Snaric), Unique Awards, and Mike and Laurie Kell. Thank you sponsors!

We would also be remiss not to mention our hard working judges, who each evaluated all 74 entries in order to come up with our winners. They are professional photographer and instructor John Stalter, John Middleton, and artist Janet Litzel. The Starkey Park Award was selected from among qualifying entries by Rebekah Spencer, and author and conservation photographer Kirsten Hines judged the Conservation Award. Thank you judges! Friends and family voted for ‘The People’s Choice’. We also reminded everyone that each photographer may only win one award - the highest for which they qualify.

Kirsten was on hand to present our first award of the day, the Conservation Award, which went to Anthony Marella for his photograph “Uprooted”. This year’s Starkey Park Award went to Rob Henderson for his “Northern Parula Singing”. The People’s Choice award was won by Dalton Loesch for “Red-shouldered Hawks”.

Winner in the ‘Birds’ Category “Welcome Little One” by Pat Misajet, & receiving her award from Lisa and Kathy Massey-Williams of Wild Birds Unlimited and also with Competition Coordinator Kimberly Snaric





Winner in the 'Nature' category: Roy Lockwood with "Otter Pup's Affection for Mom" and

Winner of the Starkey Park Award: Rob Henderson for "Northern Parula Singing"

In the Nature category, the winner was Roy Lockwood with "Otter Pup's Affection for Mom", second place to Hal Sigurdson for "Rest Dragon", third place to Rachele Katz for "Sunset at Fred" and honorable mentions to Noriko Buckles for "Keeping Watch", Justin Dougherty for "Enchanted Island", and to Don Fraser for "Green Treefrog".

In the Birds category the winner was Pat Misajet with "Welcome Little One", second place went to Doreen Damm for "Smell the Flowers" and third place to Doug Bond for "Ban Rodenticide". Honorable mentions went to Christine Rowland for "A Study in Focus", John Paalvast for "White-eyed Vireo" and to Gail Norwood for "In Flight".

And finally, the Best in Show award went to Ron Buening for "Cruel Nature", a heart-rending shot of a Black Skimmer chick that a Laughing Gull was dropping after it was mobbed by Black Skimmers. Ron explained that the chick had been scooped up and taken to a rescue organization after this traumatic experience.

And all of us at Pasco Audubon send our heartfelt appreciation to Kimberly Snaric, who worked incredibly hard to make this year's event a great success. It was a lot of work, from developing all the outreach materials, receiving entries, coordinating work with the judges, organizing ribbons and certificates, and putting together the award powerpoint. And thanks also to Mike Kell for ensuring that all of the entries were displayed on our website gallery.



The Conservation Award winner was Anthony Marella for "Uprooted". Anthony received his award from Author, Photographer and Conservationist Kirsten Hines.



## Birdathon Report - 104 Pasco Species in One Day!

by Pamela Graber

On April 10 the Pasco Plovers (Pamela Graber, Patricia Goldberg, Lillian Saul and Christine Rowland) raised \$500 for conservation from 20 sponsors identifying 104 species of birds within Pasco County in 24 hours of birding.

We participated in the Clearwater Birdathon to raise funds for two conservation charities -- Audubon Florida's Coastal Islands Sanctuaries and Florida Avian Conservation. We had 24 hours in one day to find as many bird species as possible. Quite a challenge!

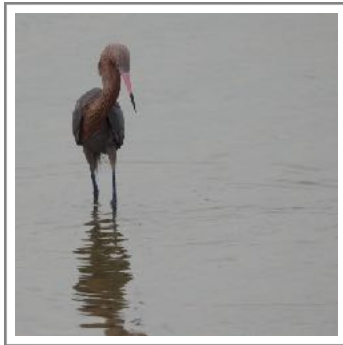
We determined that our team goal would be to find 100 species within Pasco within those 24 hours and, somewhat to our surprise, we succeeded with 104 species by 5:30 p.m., making a total of 19 stops along the way!

To me it was an awesome experience to race around the county like a treasure hunt for our local birds. We had a schedule of stops that required some adjustment as we found some places lacking and other places worthy of more time.

Our first stop was upbeat as we found Chuck-will's-widows performing a mating dance in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park just after 6 a.m. Their eyes glowed like coals in the dark and the growls and whap of their wings sounded right near our feet in the corral area.

At Robert K Rees a Reddish Egret, White-winged Doves and Northern Waterthrush were the most appreciated birds we found. At the Mulberry Patch an Orchard Oriole was a Pasco first for Lillian. At Double Hammock Creek the Painted Bunting, the Summer Tanager, and the golden yellow Prothonotary Warbler were our most rewarding finds.





We had a good count of 31 species at Cool Springs which included sparrows and Eastern Meadowlarks in the weedy field we passed walking from the parking area as well as 2 Bald Eagles. In the ponds we had the happy surprise of two Black-necked Stilts and one Green-winged Teal in addition to the usual finds there.

Hudson Beach had an extremely high tide and no parking plus lots of tourists but a random retention pond up near Timber Oaks had one lone Lesser Scaup.

We struggled at SunWest with just a few shorebirds at a very high tide with lots of tourists zooming around the water ski area and sunbathing. Joe Colantonio's house made up for that with a Baltimore Oriole in his front yard and a Roseate Spoonbill just down the street as well.

The Pasco Plovers ended their day at the Kell's lovely roost with two fabulously plumed black-crowned night-herons making a showing just as we needed to see them. The baby egrets and egret eggs were really sweet to see as well as all the rest of the MANY birds gathering there.

Our total count was 104 species which exceeded our goal of 100 species so we ended our day early at 5:30pm and went home to recuperate. For the 19 stops there are 19 checklists on the trip list. You can review our finds by checking this link <https://ebird.org/tripreport/220411> and then going to each separate list to view any photos and the species found in each location. One thing we proved was the amazing diversity of species in just our local county as a result of our good range of habitat -- beaches, wilderness, ponds and bird roosts.

So our Pasco Plovers managed to bird hard, have fun, and raise funds in aid of two good causes. You can believe we all slept very well after that!

*\*Pamela Graber was our fearless team leader.*





## EagleWatch - the Pasco 2023-24 Review

by Kimberly Rexroat

Another Bald Eagle nesting season is quickly coming to a close in Florida. Pasco County has a lot to celebrate! Pasco County Audubon Eagle Watch monitored 21 nests which produced 23 eaglets and fledged 21! Two nests were failures meaning the eagles incubated eggs but did not produce young. We located 5 new nests of which 3 were relocations. As Pasco County continues to be developed, we expect to find more new nests. The fledgling from St. George Church was electrocuted, hit by a car and passed from its injuries. The fledgling from Strauber Memorial suffered a broken leg but is still out there flying. We hope for the best for this youngster. If you would like to become a volunteer for Audubon Eagle Watch, training sessions will be held in the Fall.

*\*Kimberly is the Pasco/Hernando EagleWatch Coordinator*



Top Left: The eaglet being fed by adult is by Jean Kwaniewski  
To right and to the immediate left are photos by Kimberly Rexroat.





## The Bluebird Project - Update

By Bob Burkard

The Eastern Bluebird breeding season is in full swing and we are doing our best to help our Bluebirds nest successfully and raise healthy babies.

In W.H. Jack Mitchell Jr. Park we have 3 Bluebird boxes set up. One has already fledged 5 Eastern Bluebird babies, and another has an active nest with 2 hatched babies.

Our Jay B Starkey Wilderness Park Pasco Audubon Bluebird Project has 14 nest boxes set up. We currently have 7 active nests, 6 Eastern Bluebird and 1 Carolina Chickadee, with 14 Eastern Bluebird babies or eggs. Not sure how many Carolina Chickadee eggs were (the mother was sitting on the eggs when I checked on the nest).

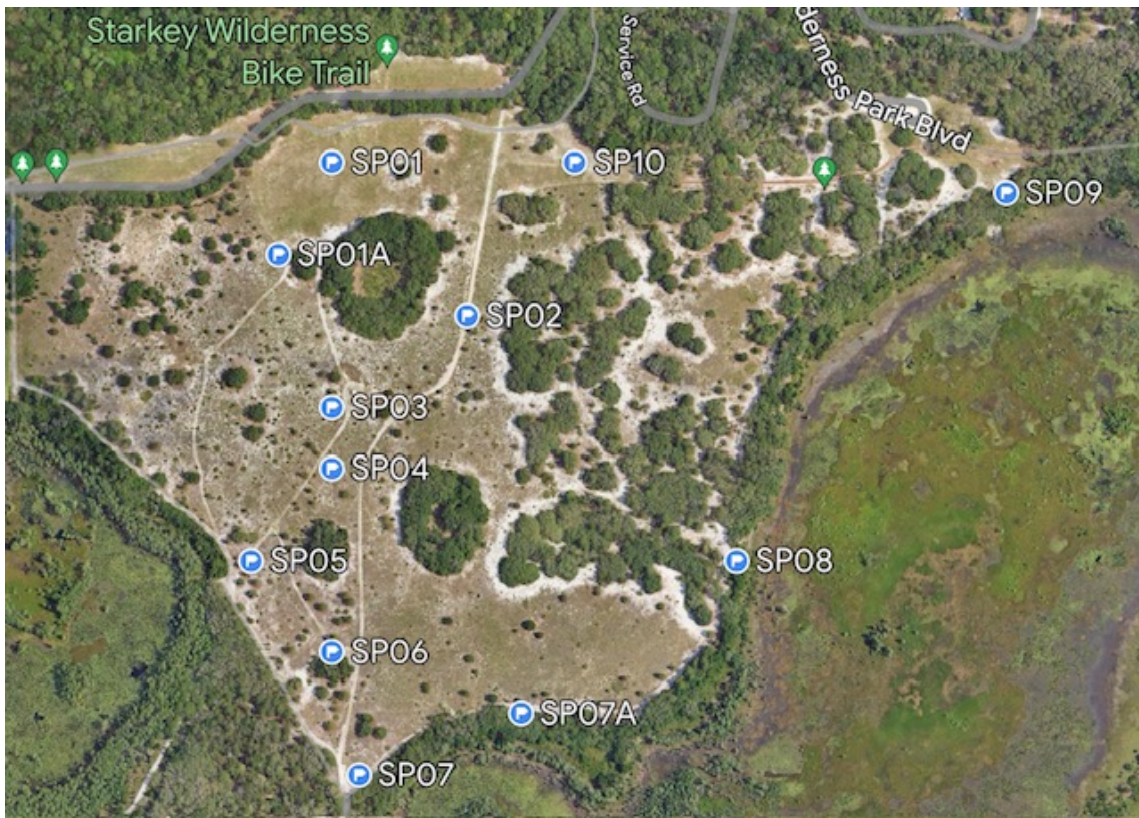
We are also monitoring 2 Bluebird boxes in Timber Greens on the edge of Starkey Park. One has fledged 5 Eastern Bluebird babies, and after I cleaned out the old nest, the parents started building a new one in the bird box.



Top left: Eggs in multi-use trail nest box #2

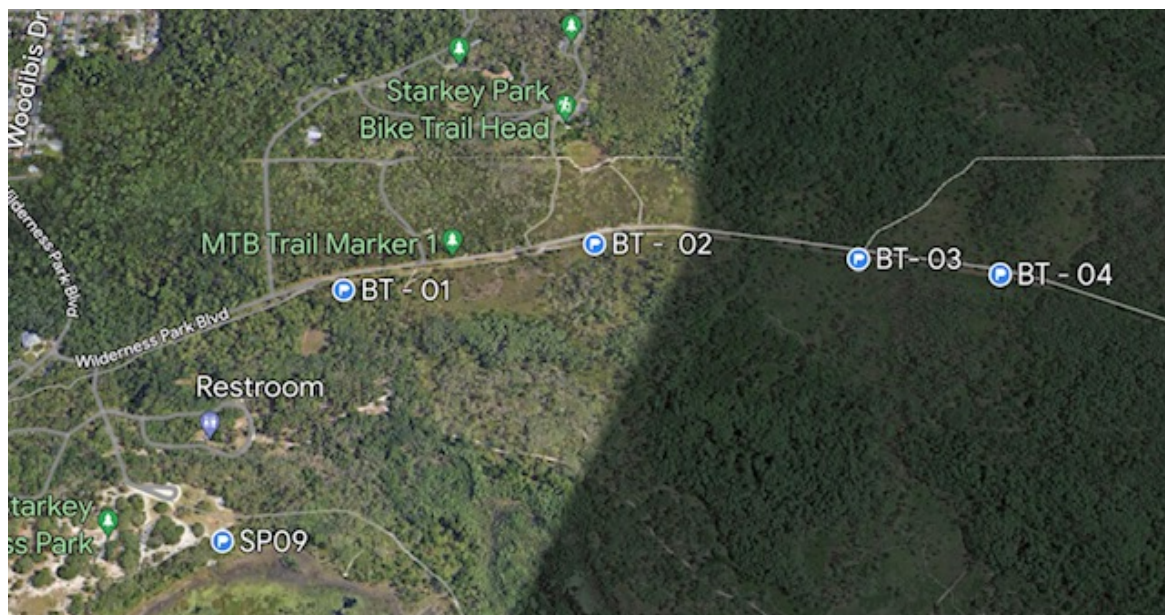
Top right: Eastern Bluebirds hatching in Starkey Trail nest #1

Left: This baby bluebird should fledge within the week.



Above: Bluebird box locations on the Starkey Bluebird Trail

Below: Bluebird box locations along the multi-use trail in Starkey Park



## NEW on Facebook: Pasco Audubon Bird Board

One of our members, Klenisson Brenner, has come up with a great idea for those of us on Facebook. While we have our chapter Facebook page which is used for sharing our chapter events, **Pasco Audubon Bird Board** is a forum for local and visiting birders to share bird sightings with our birding community. In addition to reports of rare, unusual or interesting birds or other wildlife seen in our area, you can post requests for bird identification, post birding trip reports, and more. Klenisson will be the primary moderator for this page. We hope that you check it out and join. Just type in the page name. For a short period it will be open to join, but after this Klenisson will require a request from anyone who wants to join - it will be a closed group.

## Both Costa Rica “Introduction to Neotropical Birding” trips are now full.

### Pasco Audubon Board of Directors

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