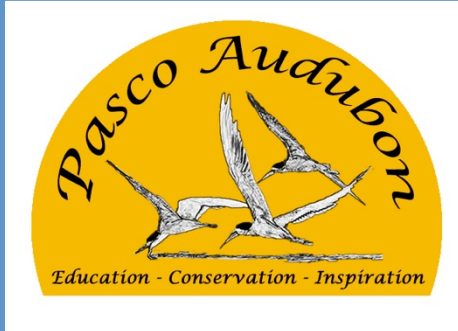


# Pasco Audubon



December 2023

## Upcoming Events

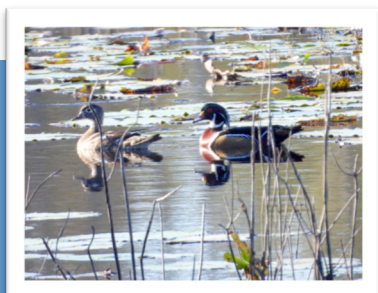
- December 2  
8am**      **Bird Walk in Starkey Park.**  
Meet at 8am in the Education Center parking lot
- December 2  
11am**      **Cornell's Birding Apps – Mic McCarty**  
Read more to your right, the meeting starts at 11am in the Starkey Education
- December 4  
2pm**      **Shorebird Identification with Pat Goldberg at Land O'Lakes Library**
- December 10  
8am**      **Birding by Bike along the Pinellas and Starkey Gap Trail– see details on p.2.**
- December 14  
All Day**      **Christmas Bird Count – see details on p.3**

## December 2nd- Annual Meeting

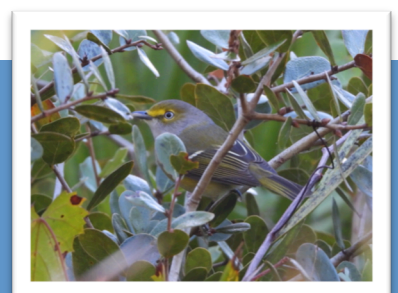
Pot Luck Holiday Brunch, Learn about Cornell Birding Apps with Mic McCarty, & Board Elections

Join us this Saturday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, to learn more about Cornell's birding resources with Mic McCarty, enjoy a potluck brunch together, and for our annual meeting where we will elect a new member to the board. As always, we begin the day with a birding walk starting from the Education Center parking lot at 8am. We will be back at the center by 10:30 to enjoy brunch together. The Board will be providing sandwiches and the usual basics, but the rest is up to us! Please bring along a small something to share.

After announcements, we will welcome our featured speaker, Mic McCarty of Tampa Audubon, who will help us all use digital resources produced by the Cornell Lab for Ornithology to become better and more effective birders. More specifically Mic will help us use the eBird app to locate and record local birds, target birds and to use hotspots effectively. (cont. on p.2)



Front page photos from November 4<sup>th</sup> Starkey Park walk – top, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, bottom of the page Wood Ducks and White-eyed Vireo, all by Christine Rowland



The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

eBird

Cornell Lab  
Merlin

BirdCast

## December 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting – continued from p.1

How can you tell if you're improving? There are quizzes on bird calls and photos if you're using eBird on the website. Mic will also help us tailor alerts – by day or hour, and will help us use Merlin (bird call identification app) effectively, knowing when we can trust results and how to verify them. There will be time for questions and answers.

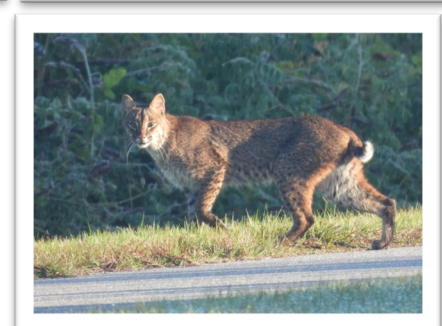
After Mic's presentation, we will take a few minutes to pick up something more from the brunch table and will then reconvene briefly for our annual meeting, and to vote on our Board members. JoAnn Sinatra and Ken Landry are up for re-election. Susan Greenstein is standing down at this time, and thus there is an opening. Lilian Saul has very kindly agreed to be nominated for this spot.

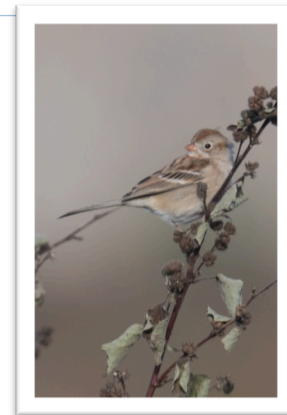
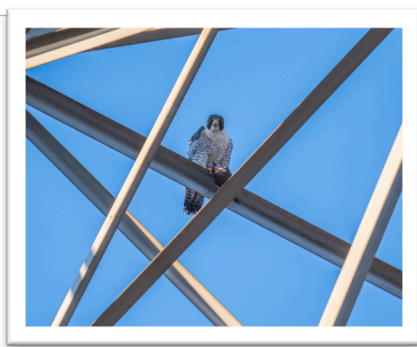
### Birding by Bike: Brooker Creek Preserve & the Keystone Pinellas Trail, December 10 By Bob Burkard

Join me (Bob Burkard) for an outing that combines leisurely bike ride with birding in an area with quite a diverse population of birds. We will meet at the Brooker Creek Parking lot at 8:00 AM and bike along the preserve exit road, then continue north along the Keystone Pinellas Trail. I love this area where we can see overwintering warblers in Brooker Creek Preserve and sparrows along the Keystone Pinellas Trail. It's an adventure where you never know what we will see. My email is [robertburkard9@gmail.com](mailto:robertburkard9@gmail.com). This event is free and open to all. Please let me know if you will be joining us.



Photos taken on The Pinellas Trail by Anthony Marella on our Wednesday 102 walk this week: Bald Eagle, Blue Jay and Sherman's Fox Squirrel, and a Bobcat photographed on the Starkey Gap Trail by Christine Rowland on November 20<sup>th</sup>.





Joe Colantonio's photos from last year's count: Peregrine Falcon, Orange-crowned Warbler and Field Sparrow

## The 35<sup>th</sup> West Pasco Christmas Bird Count – December 14, 2023

By Christine Rowland

This year will be the 124<sup>th</sup> annual Christmas Bird Count. For our West Pasco circle, centered in the former Magnolia Valley golf course, this will be the 35<sup>th</sup> annual count. While the count window spans from December 14<sup>th</sup> till January 6<sup>th</sup>, each count circle takes a specific day within that time frame – and this year we are taking the first day. We will take 24 hours to find every bird we can within our circle. This is a major citizen science project in which we are always enthusiastic to participate. It's not just about the species we see, but also those we don't see – which birds are less common or no longer found here? Which birds may be new to our area? By participating annually we are able to contribute to an understanding of how birds are responding to changes in our area – whether the cause be development or climate or some other factor. It's always interesting!

So far 43 birders have signed up to help us bird our circle in teams during the morning (and for some the start will be before dawn for nocturnal birds).

Each team or individual takes a specific assigned area and surveys all the birds in that area – all the species they can find and a careful count of the birds. At lunch time many of us gather together with our compiler, Bill Pranty, to chart out our morning's findings on a large master board prepared by Peter Day. While the results come in, our tired birders get a well-earned break, with pizza and soda. After lunch those who are able to continue either go out on the Magic Dolphin (open to others too – see below) or go out to look for species no one saw in the morning.

Every year brings variation to the count, with weather a bit of a wild card. This year we have had a long dry spell that has left our typical wet areas dry, and we will be challenged to find the number and variety of ducks we normally find on a count. Most years the West Pasco circle has located over 150 species of birds. Last year it was 158, and the year before that 162 species. Look out for a very preliminary report on the count in next month's newsletter.

If you'd like to participate in the count, contact me ([president@pascoaudubon.com](mailto:president@pascoaudubon.com)) to join a team. But possibly the easiest and most fun way is to join the Magic Dolphin boat trip in the afternoon – details on the next page.

## December 14<sup>th</sup> – Christmas Bird Count -Join us on the Magic Dolphin

By Mike Kell

**What?** Christmas Bird Count afternoon boat trip on the Gulf of Mexico.

**When?** Dec 14th 2pm to 5pm. We will leave the dock promptly at 2 pm.

**Why?** We are chartering the Magic Dolphin for our CBC afternoon counting ducks and shorebirds.

**Where?** The boat is docked at Whiskey Joe's 7835 Bayview St., Port Richey 33668. Please park in the lot across the street

**Cost?** \$20 per person and pay as you board. This is dependent on good weather and could be cancelled. Pray for a warm sunny day!

If you have not been on the boat before or counted birds, not to worry as there will be experienced birders present to conduct the count. Just sit back and enjoy the ride while seeing and learning about birds. We may also see dolphins. Bring something warm to wear as it can be cool on the water.

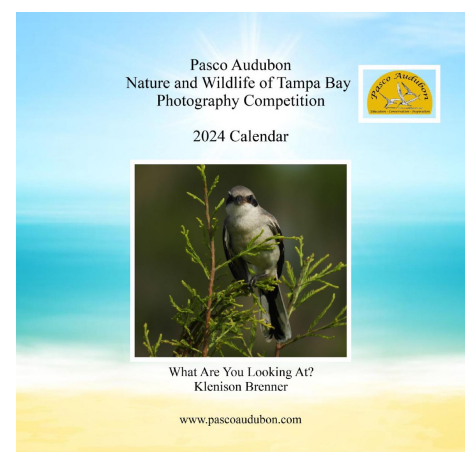
Tables seating is available, BOYB and snacks. There are two restrooms on board and non-alcoholic beverages are complimentary.

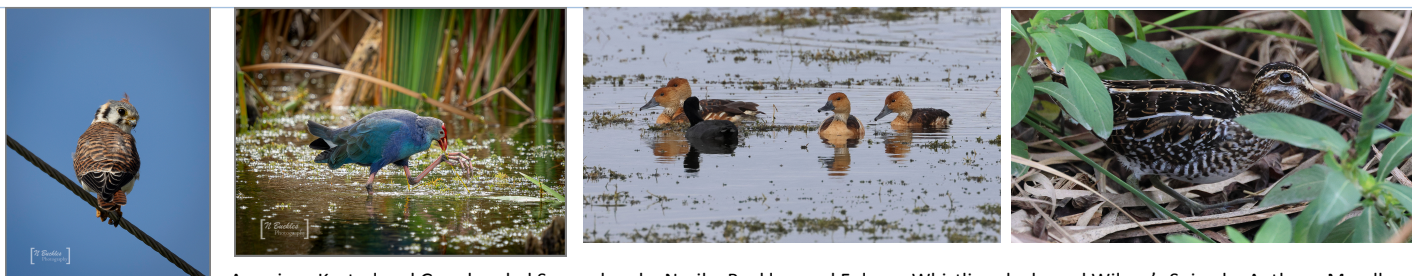


## Pasco Audubon Calendar, 2024

Featuring winners of the Nature and Wildlife of Tampa Bay Photography Competition, 2023

If you enjoyed the photography competition images, you might enjoy our new 2024 Pasco Audubon Calendar. Pat Goldberg has pulled together images from our winners and compiled them into a lovely calendar. All calendars can be viewed and purchased at <https://www.createphotocalendars.com/Store/2024+PA+Calendar-8741203863>. They are \$29 each (that's a \$19 cost plus \$10 donation). We will have a sample available at our December meeting if you'd like to take a look at the quality of the product. Thanks to all of our photographers for permission to use their work, to Don Fraser for the idea and to Pat Goldberg for making it happen!





American Kestrel and Gray-headed Swamphen by Noriko Buckles, and Fulvous Whistling-ducks and Wilson's Snipe by Anthony Marella

## Field Trip Report: Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive

On November 18<sup>th</sup> nine of us got together and birded Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive, seeing a total of 56 species of birds.

It was a cool gray morning and we had driven a long way to get there, but we were immediately rewarded with a Northern Flicker, seen not far in front of the gate. As we made our way along the first section of the drive we were also able to get our first of several looks at both Fulvous Whistling-Ducks and Gray-headed Swamphen. Both species were easier to see this year than they have been in many trips past. In fact, we saw 23 swamphen across the drive, and mostly close enough to us to be able to take good photographs. In the past we tried hard for a distant glimpse, they're definitely a species on the rise here.

Water levels were very high throughout the property, we saw fewer shorebirds than we do normally, but there were huge numbers of ducks – particularly Ring-necked Ducks, which were there by the thousands, and American Coot, also present in massive numbers. We were very fortunate to get good views of a Wilson's Snipe, right in the ditch next to the road! And in between all those Ring-necked Ducks, we found a few different ones, such as American Wigeon and Gadwall. Please enjoy the photos here, and thanks to Noriko Buckles and Anthony Marella for sharing them with us!

## Birding 102 – November Report

### November 1<sup>st</sup> – Starkey Gap/Pinellas Trail south of SR 54

It was a cool breezy morning, and this walk provided an opportunity to appreciate Eastern Meadowlarks and Loggerhead Shrike, American Kestrels and even a Sharp-shinned Hawk. After a coffee break, a 5 of us headed over to Cool Springs, where we were able to find an American Avocet, a Northern Shoveler and Long-billed Dowitchers, but were most excited to find a rare Cinnamon Teal, picked out from among the Blue and Green-winged Teal by Lilian Saul. We saw 34 species on the trail, and 31 species at Cool Springs.

### November 8<sup>th</sup> – SunWest Park

This was a lovely morning with ducks arriving and even a dolphin in the channel! While Ring-necked Ducks and Lesser Scaup were in the majority, we did have a couple of Redheads on the lake, and flyover Blue-winged Teal and Northern Shoveler – a sure sign that fall has arrived! We also saw shorebirds and a pair of American Avocets. We followed up with a brief visit to Arthur Engle Park, where we were able to see a Red-headed Woodpecker right off the parking lot – not a common sight in west Pasco. We saw 44 species at SunWest and 13 in our brief stop at Arthur Engle Park.

### November 22<sup>nd</sup> – Starkey Gap/Pinellas Trail south of Trinity Blvd

Birding highlights included a Wilson's Snipe and a pair of Bald Eagles, although we were also captivated by two Sherman's Fox Squirrels! Over the walk we saw 45 species of birds!

## Looking Ahead to January...

### Saturday, January 6<sup>th</sup>

- **8am Walk in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park.** Meet in the Education Center parking lot.
- **11am Bugs in Your Bloomers with John Lampkin** – Starkey Wilderness Park Environmental Education Center - explore the fascinating relationship between insects and plants with expert John Lampkin

**Saturday, January 20<sup>th</sup> – Field Trip to Circle B. Bar Preserve** – Polk County. Meet in the preserve parking lot at 8am. More details next month.

**Saturday, January 27<sup>th</sup> – Cross Bar Ranch** (Burrowing Owls, Florida Scrub Jays and Sparrows) . Private property – 10 vehicle (all or 4 wheel drive) limit. Registration required – contact [president@pascoaudubon.com](mailto:president@pascoaudubon.com) to reserve your spot.

## Pasco Audubon (Formerly West Pasco Audubon)

P.O. Box 1456  
Elfers, FL 34680

### Pasco Audubon Board of Directors for 2023

Christine Rowland, President - [president@pascoaudubon.com](mailto:president@pascoaudubon.com)

Mike Kell, VP for Education - [jmike65@gmail.com](mailto:jmike65@gmail.com)

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

Susan Greenstein, Treasurer - [treasurer@westpascoaudubon.com](mailto:treasurer@westpascoaudubon.com)

Peter Day, Secretary - [p1rd@mac.com](mailto:p1rd@mac.com)

Patricia Goldberg, Special Projects – [Projects@westpascoaudubon.com](mailto:Projects@westpascoaudubon.com)

JoAnn Sinatra, At-Large

Ken Landry, At-Large

Kamarri Davis, Student Advisor