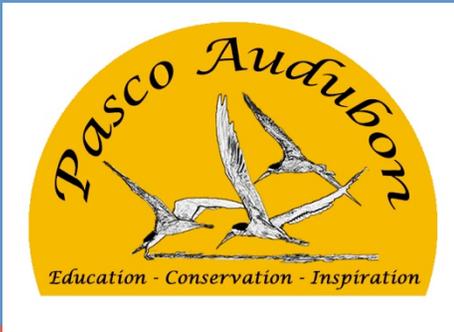


# Pasco Audubon



April 2024

## Upcoming Events

- April 6th 8am** Bird Walk in Starkey Park. Meet at 8am in the Education Center parking lot
- April 6th 11am** Conservation Photography: Using your Images for a Greater Good with Kirsten Hines More to your right, meeting starts at 11am in the Starkey Education Center
- April 14th 8am** Birding by Bike on The Pinellas Trail – see details on p.3
- April 21st 8am** Field Trip to Fort De Soto for Migration – see details on p.3

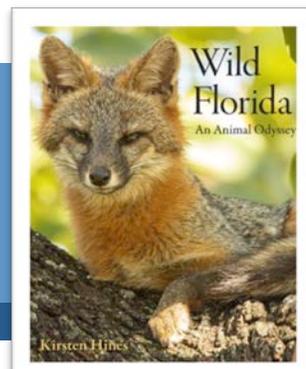
## Season Finale April 6th – Kirsten Hines Conservation Photography: Using your Images for a Greater Good & 2024 Photography Competition Awards

Ever wondered what distinguishes conservation photography from nature photography? Or how your own images might serve a greater purpose? Join award-winning wildlife photographer and author Kirsten Hines for an introduction to conservation photography, including advice as to how participants might maximize the environmental impact of their own images. Kirsten is traveling up from Miami to join us this day, and we are sure that you will find her presentation enlightening and inspiring. Kirsten will be bringing along some of her books and will be signing them at the conclusion of our formal program. Following a Q & A session, we'll present the awards in our annual Nature and Wildlife of Tampa Bay Photography Competition. We really hope you'll be able to join us!

Meet at the Starkey Environmental Education Center at 11am. Free, all are welcome, and light refreshments provided.

### From the Starkey Staff:

PLEASE do not park on the grass/mulch area on the side of the education center with posted signage for employee parking only.





Left: 2023 winner for People's Choice – Don Fraser's Little Metalmark and Right: 2023 Best in Show, Kevin McFadden's Tricolored Heron Fishing the Swamp

## Have Your Say – Photo Competition People's Choice

Our competition judges have concluded their work, and it's now time for you to have your say! This year we received 74 entries in the competition from 27 different photographers. Our 3 independent judges have now reviewed and scored each photograph, so the judged awards have been decided.

Mike Kell, our webmaster, has placed all photographs in a gallery on our website for you to view, and Kimberly Snaric, our competition coordinator, has created a handy voting method, which you will find at the bottom of the gallery. Do check out all of the wonderful photographs that have been submitted, and vote for your favorite at [https://www.westpascoaudubon.com/pascoaudubon/2024\\_contest\\_entries.html](https://www.westpascoaudubon.com/pascoaudubon/2024_contest_entries.html). If you are unable to see the voting link, you may have a firewall that is preventing it from showing. An alternate link is

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe16dSGCAPgTkgrnU7YzeWRKoMeQ0h2DJM08w2PSbKBXOrKrQ/viewform?fbclid=IwAR2ALTEw6kGHLd1KMvwQOC-PCiCAvtA2fDIDARCVZSS49eIE0gtM8n46q90\\_aem\\_AWUou89Lq7LvHgg9-5BT5eKN9XF6Dz9x2CzrCEqXFBdpilC8jOS5IExw35KmGdN7exJvijFtvm-MGM36fDY3Smx7](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe16dSGCAPgTkgrnU7YzeWRKoMeQ0h2DJM08w2PSbKBXOrKrQ/viewform?fbclid=IwAR2ALTEw6kGHLd1KMvwQOC-PCiCAvtA2fDIDARCVZSS49eIE0gtM8n46q90_aem_AWUou89Lq7LvHgg9-5BT5eKN9XF6Dz9x2CzrCEqXFBdpilC8jOS5IExw35KmGdN7exJvijFtvm-MGM36fDY3Smx7)

The deadline for voting in the People's Choice is April 5th at midnight.



Left to right: Broad-billed Motmot pair, Great Green Macaw pair, and the Collared Ancari

## Costa Rica - An Introduction to Neotropical Birding - 4 Spots Left!

While our February 2025 trip to Costa Rica filled as soon as it became public, we still have 4 spots available on the March 2-9 2025 trip. This 8-day program is a great introduction to the neotropical birds of Central America. You'll spend time in the Caribbean lowlands and the mountainous southern highlands, seeking out species typical of the differing elevations and habitats. Holbrook Travel's local birding guides are experts at identification by both sight and sound, and they'll help ensure your group sees as many of the country's 900-plus species as possible. Combine that with its accessibility and friendly people, and Costa Rica is a perfect destination for beginners and more advanced birders alike. Plus, you'll discover wildlife like frogs, monkeys, bats, and sloths. The land portion of this 8-day trip (hotel/eco-lodges, meals, guide and on ground transportation) will cost \$2350. See the full itinerary, photographs and details on our dedicated page on the Holbrook site at <https://holbrook.travel/pasco-cr325>. Just a few spots are left - register today to avoid disappointment!



Photos from last year's trip L to R: Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Louisiana Waterthrush by C. Rowland

## Sunday, April 21, 2024: Field Trip to Fort De Soto for Migration

Our annual pilgrimage to Fort De Soto has been a regular feature of the Pasco Audubon calendar for many years. Fort De Soto, located south of St. Petersburg, is a major landing spot for large numbers of spring migrants. To birders, migration is an exciting time, bringing a far wider range of species than we would normally see, including many migrating warblers, along with tanagers, orioles, grosbeaks and possibly a kingbird or two.

Migration varies from day to day and year to year, so it is very hard to predict exactly what we will experience, but fingers and toes will be crossed that our timing is ideal and that we're rewarded with some lovely sightings. Feel free to check out this list from last year's trip if you are curious <https://ebird.org/checklist/S134627892>.

We will make several stops through our visit to the park, and do recommend bringing along beverages, snacks and/or a picnic lunch. We'll definitely be taking a break at north beach oaks at the picnic tables to refresh ourselves (and yes - many of us will be looking up and around while we eat) so do bring a cooler with you.

Please let me know if you plan to attend this trip at [president@pascoaudubon.com](mailto:president@pascoaudubon.com). We'll be monitoring daily reports to determine which location will be the best to begin with, and will reach out a few days before the trip with final details.

And for those who are wondering - why Sunday, April 21st? It's because our original choice of Saturday, April 20th is the date of a charity event in the park that would see all roads in the park closed until 9am. We are hopeful that the following day will prove to be a lot easier.

## Sunday, April 14<sup>th</sup> – Birding by Bike on The Pinellas Trail By Bob Burkard

A few of us resolute "Birding Bikers" continue to meet monthly for our Birding by Bike outings. I enjoy these adventures where our group travels to more distant locations from our vehicles.

I enjoy it when we go a few miles back into Starkey Park and look for some of the more remote birds. In addition to the more common birds, I especially like to hear Northern Bobwhite and Brown-headed Nuthatches. Because we can cover more territory, we can visit a few wetland habitats in addition to the more upland birds.

In addition to Starkey, we also bike the Pinellas Trail, starting at Brooker Creek Preserve and biking north on the trail. This enables us to see Bald Eagles, Eastern Meadowlarks and Red-tailed Hawks. I recently purchased a new camera and hope to get some better pictures that I can share from our future outings.

This month the group will ride the Pinellas Trail, meeting at Brooker Creek parking lot at 8am. Please let Bob know of your plans to join the ride by sending an email to [Robertburkard9@gmail.com](mailto:Robertburkard9@gmail.com).

## Report – Field Trip to Chinsegut on March 9th

A group of 9 of us took a lovely walk to Chinsegut in Hernando County. Chinsegut is famous for its many Red-headed Woodpeckers, and it certainly did not disappoint on this trip, as we saw them numerous times on our walk. The area near the nature center was also a great place to begin and end, and Mike Ranck was waiting for us with the good news that there had to be at least 30 American Goldfinches in the immediate area. Thanks so much to Hernando Audubon President Bev Hansen for leading us, and to Kimberly Snaric, Doreen Damm and Pat Misajet for sharing their photos of the morning!

Eastern Bluebirds by Pat Misajet, Red-headed Woodpecker by Doreen Damm and American Goldfinch by Kimberly Snaric



## Report – Field Trip to The Celery Fields - March 23, 2024

It was one of those days when you just don't know quite what to expect. Weather forecasts varied from mild to grim. Luckily for us, the mild prevailed. The morning began overcast with an occasional spit of rain, but there was no serious precipitation and we ended up with sunshine. The 9 of us who braved the uncertainty were rewarded right from the start with a Yellow-headed Blackbird at the feeders. A lifer for some and a year bird for the rest of us, it definitely was a great start!

We continued across the street to the Palmer boardwalk and pavilion where we were able to see our first Purple Gallinules and Gray-headed Swamphen for the day, along with Northern Harrier, Wood Ducks, Blue-winged Teal and Glossy Ibis among others. A walk from Palmer around to the Raymond St. boardwalk and pavilion yielded warblers and vireos, as well as our first look at Black-necked Stilts. Anthony got a great spot with a Sora, foraging fairly near to our position, and we all got looks although we had to make quite an effort to get unobstructed views. A final stop at Teal Berm yielded a pair of Long-billed Dowitchers, a great spot by Gail Smith as they were mostly hidden in vegetation.

Overall it was a very productive morning in comfortable temperatures. You can view our list of 58 species and some additional photos at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S165716311>. And thanks to Noriko Buckles for the photographs seen on this page!

Left to right: Northern Harrier, Black-necked Stilt and Gray-headed Swamphen, all by Noriko Buckles



## Local Team to Participate in State-wide Birding Competition Benefiting Conservation Organizations by Pat Goldberg

Next month a quartet of Pasco Audubon members will participate in the inaugural Florida Feathered Frenzy Bird-a-thon hosted by Clearwater Audubon. This event involves teams across the state attempting to identify and log as many species as possible, within the state of Florida, in a single 24-hour period. Goals are really two-fold: to gather data to better understand bird population patterns and trends, especially in the face of emergent challenges related to habitat loss and climate change, and to raise money to support organizations directly involved in avian conservation efforts. The west coast of the state is a critical stop this time of year for millions of migratory birds as they make their way from Central and South America and across the Gulf of Mexico to their summer breeding grounds in the north, an arduous and challenging journey. The decision to hold the event annually, and specifically in April, will allow for these transient species to be included in the gathered data.

This year funds raised through sponsorship of competing teams will be donated to two deserving organizations, Audubon Florida's Coastal Island Sanctuaries and the Florida Avian Conservation group. Audubon Florida's Coastal Islands Sanctuaries was founded in 1934 in an effort to stop the hunting of nesting herons and ibises in Tampa's Hillsborough Bay. Today, colonial nesting rookeries, hosting thousands of birds representing over 20 species, are found on about 30 scattered islands and islets dotting the near-shore waters along the central Gulf Coast and Bay. Staff and volunteers with the Coastal Islands Sanctuaries conduct research, monitor nests, perform outreach and education services to minimize disturbance, and actively manage target habitat to maximize survival chances for the next generation of Tampa Bay's iconic waders and shorebirds.

The Florida Avian Conservation group plays a crucial role in migratory songbird research through a decade-plus bird-banding program centered near Clearwater. So far, over 1000 birds representing 58 species have been captured, banded with ID tags, and released back on their way. Several have been re-captured in subsequent years, demonstrating the importance of preserving these natural areas, which birds return to and rely upon year after year for rest and refuel during their annual migration. The FAC also works hard to ensure that avian conservation and advocacy continues with future generations through the creation and development of the Florida Young Birders Club. Leaders offer guided field trips, workshops, and volunteer opportunities, including actively working at banding stations, to young people ages 9-17.

Pasco Audubon's team (officially dubbed the "Pasco Plovers"), comprised of Pamela Graber, Christine Rowland, Lilian Saul, and Patricia Goldberg, will focus their one-day marathon effort on finding 100+ species within Pasco County. Restricting the search area to Pasco County will allow for a deeper look at how resident and migrant Florida species use our habitats specifically. If you would like to support Pasco Audubon's team, as well as the work being done by the Coastal Island Sanctuaries and the Florida Avian Conservation group, there are two avenues of sponsorship: you can make a flat donation of any amount OR you can pledge a per species donation (10¢, 25¢, 50¢, or \$1) to be paid at the end of April. Please make checks payable to Clearwater Audubon and note "Bird-a-thon: Pasco Plovers" in the note/memo section. You can hand them to any of the teammates or mail to Pasco Audubon, PO Box 1456, Elfers, FL 34680. For more information contact Team Captain Pamela Graber at [pamela.graber@gmail.com](mailto:pamela.graber@gmail.com). Go Team Pasco!

American Avocet at Green Key, Wilson's Plover at SunWest Park and Semipalmated Plover at Hudson Beach



## Bluebird Project Updates – by Bob Burkard

For those who do not know me, I am Bob Burkard, and I was given the opportunity to help with the Pasco Audubon Bluebird Project. Last year, I took over monitoring the bluebird nesting boxes in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park and W.H. Jack Mitchell Jr. Park. I am happy to build on work previously done by J Mike Kell and others to make our bluebird nestings as successful as possible.

Members from Pasco Audubon had installed 14 bluebird nesting boxes at Starkey Park and 2 bluebird nesting boxes at WH Jack Mitchell Park, and Pasco Audubon members have continued to maintain these bluebird boxes in both locations for more than 11 years. One thing to keep in mind, is that these nesting boxes periodically need to be replaced due to age and vandalism, and/or relocated due to changing conditions (mainly growing trees that can crowd a box and make it uninhabitable for bluebirds.) I wanted to replace and/or relocate our bluebird nesting boxes where necessary, and I also wanted to install predator guards on the nesting boxes to reduce predation from raccoons, squirrels and snakes which are the main predators to our baby birds.

So, with funding from a generous donation from Kimberly and Jay Snaric, I am currently collaborating with other members on this undertaking to make our bluebird nestlings as safe and successful as possible.

First, Anthony Marella and I replaced 4 bird boxes on the Starkey Bike trail. We also added predator guards and relocated them a few yards back away from trees and brush that crowded them and reduced their attractiveness to bluebirds. We completed this on 2/24.



Multi-use Trail boxes before (left) and after (right) relocation.



Our next step was to build new nesting boxes and configure new poles and predator guards. We completed this replacement of 6 existing bluebird nesting boxes and the addition of 1 new bluebird nesting box in Starkey on 3/25. We also added 1 new nesting box at Mitchell.

There are many different designs for bluebird nesting boxes, and I have tried at least ½ dozen of these since I started my “bluebird” hobby over 35 years ago. I have found the most successful nesting when using a side opening NABS Box from the National American Bluebird Society with some modifications. This design provides plenty of room for the growing bluebird babies and is easy to open when monitoring.



Tools and components of one nesting box

Right: Modified side-opening NABS box with predator guard.



For those interested in learning more about bluebirds, I recommend these 3 books. I learned a great deal from these authors and enjoy their straightforward approaches with information that includes great photographs.

1. *The Bluebird Book from Donald and Lilian Stokes*
2. *The Bluebird Monitors Guide to Bluebirds and other Small Cavity-Nesters by Cynthia Berger, Keith Kridler, and Jack Griggs.*
3. *The Beloved and Charismatic Bluebird by Dean C. Rust*

There are numerous websites devoted to the conservation and protection of bluebirds and other protected cavity nesting birds. Under the conservation section of our Pasco Audubon website there is information on our Pasco Audubon Bluebird Project, which also provides a link to Cornell's All About Birds website that has an almost overwhelming amount of information on Eastern Bluebirds.

I periodically check the Florida Bluebird Society's website <https://floridabluebirdsociety.org> to keep current on information specific on bluebird conservation in Florida.

Bluebirds in this area of Florida can have multiple broods starting in mid-February through the end of July, so we check on our bluebird nesting boxes every 7 to 10 days during these months. I welcome any of our members to join me on one of these monitoring days as we take a walk around the Starkey Park birding trail to inspect and record the progress of our bluebird nesting. In addition to monitoring and recording the progress of our bluebird nests, this walk offers great opportunities for birding in beautiful Starkey Park. Please contact me at [robertburkard9@gmail.com](mailto:robertburkard9@gmail.com) if you are interested in one of these walks and I will coordinate a bluebird monitoring morning with you.

There are 3 remaining bluebird nesting boxes in Starkey and 2 in Mitchell where we need to add predator guards. We plan to address these in April.



Bob Burkhard pre-assembling the bird boxes before transferring them to Starkey Park, and Anthony assisting.

## Looking further ahead...

- Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup>      **Walk in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park (8am)**  
 Bird Banding and the Florida Young Birders Club with **Jim McGinity** (11am)
- Saturday, May 11<sup>th</sup>      **Birding by Bike in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park with Bob Burkard**
- Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup>      **Field Trip to East Pasco**

## Outdoor Expo - Thank You Volunteers!

A huge shout-out of thanks to our volunteers for representing us at Pasco County's Outdoor Expo on March 9th - a warm, windy and sunny day. Staffing our booth were Joe Colantonio, who was there all day, Pamela Graber, who helped with set-up and the early shift, Tom Crites and Fran Sigurdson, who helped sharing our work with the public in the morning and Ken Landry, who stamped the 'passports' of participants while Susan Greenstein and myself (Christine Rowland) took the afternoon shift on the booth. Additionally Joe put together a wonderful selection of his local bird and wildlife photography to share with the public via laptop, creating a mini-booth to shield it from light so that the photos could be seen and appreciated, and a power source to keep the show running for 4 hours! We spoke with lots of members of the public, familiarizing them with our programs and initiatives, including the birding backpacks available from the library.

## Pasco Audubon (Formerly West Pasco Audubon)

P.O. Box 1456  
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### Pasco Audubon Board of Directors

- Christine Rowland, President - [president@pascoaudubon.com](mailto:president@pascoaudubon.com)  
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 JoAnn Sinatra, At-Large  
 Ken Landry, At-Large  
 Stasi Gerges, Student Advisor

### Other important contacts:

- Fran Sigurdson - Membership Chair - [fsigurds@gmail.com](mailto:fsigurds@gmail.com)  
 Bob Burkard - Birding by Bike and Bluebird Trail - [robertburkard9@gmail.com](mailto:robertburkard9@gmail.com)  
 Kimberly Snaric - Photography Competition Coordinator - [pascoaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:pascoaudubon@gmail.com)