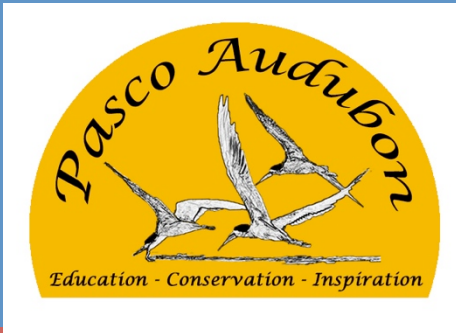


# Pasco Audubon



March 2024

## Upcoming Events

- March 2  
8am** Bird Walk in Starkey Park. Meet at 8am in the Education Center parking lot
- March 2  
11am** Bird Banding & Florida Young Birders Club - Jim McGinity More to your right, meeting starts at 11am in the Starkey Education Center
- March 9** Field Trip to Chinsegut - see details on page 2.
- March 17  
8am** Birding by Bike in Starkey Park – see details on p.2.
- March 23  
8am** Field Trip to Celery Fields (Sarasota) – see details on p.3

## March 2nd – Jim McGinity Bird Banding and Florida Young Birders Club

On Saturday March 2<sup>nd</sup> we'll be joined by Jim McGinity, who'll be sharing two of his most important projects with us – the Florida Young Birders Club, and his work as a master bander. As a teacher, Jim has worked hard to foster a love of birds in young people, and is a founding member of the Florida Young Birders Club. He's going to tell us about its development, and will hopefully have one of them with him.

Last spring a group of us were able to join his banding station in Dunedin park to see him banding birds as they migrated through. We visited the mist nets, and watched him work carefully and quickly with each bird to add a band to its leg. Jim is often joined by young people, who are fascinated by the close-up look at birds.

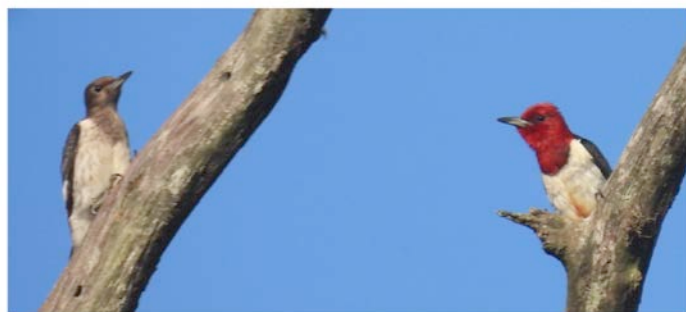
And Jim's planning to finish up with a quiz, so there's a chance to test your bird ID skills too!

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.





## March 9th: Field Trip to Chinsegut with Bev Hansen

We're delighted to announce that Hernando Audubon President Bev Hansen will be leading our trip to Chinsegut. Chinsegut consists of hardwoods, sandhills, and freshwater wetlands and also contains a butterfly and native plant garden along with bird feeders. The tract is known for its Red-headed Woodpeckers, but also has numerous Eastern Towhees and Northern Bobwhite – species that are not so often seen by many of us. We are very fortunate to have Bev lead our walk as she knows this property really well and will give us a wonderful introduction to it.

When? Saturday, March 9th, 8am\* Please note that Chinsegut does not open until 8am

Where? 23212 Lake Lindsey Rd., Brooksville, FL 34601

## Birding by Bike: Starkey Park on Sunday, March 17<sup>th</sup>

This month's Birding by Bike experience will be in Starkey Park on March 17th. Join **Bob Burkhard** in the **Environmental Education parking lot at 8am**. You'll be riding on the multi-use trail through the park, giving you a great opportunity to see and hear some of the birds that we don't see so often up front, such as Northern Bobwhite, Brown-headed Nuthatch and Bachman's Sparrow. This event is free and open to all. If you have additional questions, Bob's email is [robertburkard9@gmail.com](mailto:robertburkard9@gmail.com).

## Winter Shorebird Survey 2024 - Report

Every February, Pasco Audubon members help complete the Winter Shorebird Survey. Our biggest assignment is actually Fred Howard Park, where Pamela Graber, Lilian Saul, Peter Day, Alice Jewell and Christine Rowland conducted this year's survey. Highlights included a Piping Plover, Marbled Godwit, and 155 Black Skimmers (3 with bands). Christine also surveyed SunWest Park (highlights included 45 Dunlin and 36 Willets, Least and Western Sandpipers), Green Key (including 2 Black Skimmers – unusual for the Pasco coast these days) and Hudson Beach, where we had Semipalmated Sandpipers, Dunlin, and Ruddy Turnstone. Dan Larremore surveyed the Pasco portion of Anclote Key finding Snowy Plovers, Red Knot and Marbled Godwits!







Left: Least Bittern, Right: Black-necked Stilts with Tricolored Heron & Yellowlegs by Anthony Marella on last year's Celery Fields trip

## March 23rd: Field Trip to Celery Fields

Celery Fields is a beautiful Audubon property that is well worth the drive. Audubon bird naturalists are stationed in gazebos over the wetland to help you identify the birds you are seeing. Want to see a Least Bittern? They'll help you with that. If you'd like to get a sense of what you might see, our list from last year's visit is at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S130685451> with lots of photos to give you a taste of what you might experience. Last year our list of birds included an American Bittern, Black-necked Stilts and Gray-headed Swamphen. In addition to the wetland, there is a gazebo with a feeder station beyond the welcome center on Palmer Blvd. There are also very active Purple Martin houses on either side of the parking lot.

We will meet at the boardwalk/gazebo off Raymond Rd. at 8am. Pull onto the verge for parking. Meeting in this location will allow early arrivals a great chance to see plenty while waiting for the rest of the group to arrive. If you confirm your plan to attend with me for this event I will send you a trail map of the property ([president@pascoaudubon.com](mailto:president@pascoaudubon.com)).

## Report: Field Trip to Cross Bar Ranch, January 27th

Eighteen of us joined Dave Adams of Pinellas and Alex Reed of Quest Ecology to enjoy our annual visit to Cross Bar. With a little help from Alex we were able to spot a pair of Burrowing Owls peeking out of a newly excavated burrow. Another highlight came near the end of the trip when we stopped at a pond and were delighted to see a pair of Northern Pintail take off! With a total of 50 species for the morning our eBird list for the trip can be located at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S159945597>.



## Report: Field Trip to Lake Dan Preserve on Feb 10<sup>th</sup>

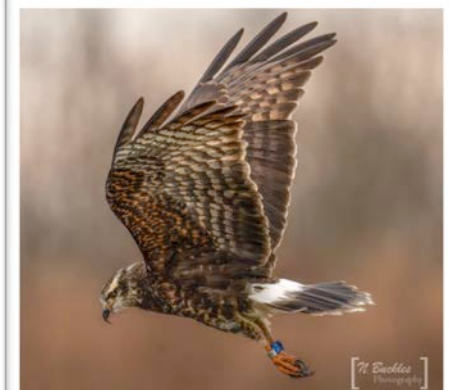
Lilian Saul led a group of 13 of us on a trip through Lake Dan Preserve. We found 63 species of birds (list is at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S161127908>). Some of the highlights included Roseate Spoonbills, Bald Eagles, Sedge Wren, Coopers Hawk and Orange-crowned Warbler. A non-birding highlight came on our way back, when we came across an orange tree with plenty of ripe fruit. It was a warm day, and the sweet oranges were delicious and much appreciated!



## Field Trip to Gainesville – February 16-17

In the days before our trip began, it became evident that we were in for a wet weekend. Scrambling to salvage some birding from a difficult situation, 9 of us headed up to Gainesville a day early and were able to take advantage of some good weather to visit both Payne's Prairie's LaChua Trail and Sweetwater. We were able to get really great looks at Snail Kites on the LaChua Trail, had some local help to find Rusty Blackbirds at Sweetwater, then on Saturday we got distant views of the Whooping Crane from the Payne's Prairie observation tower (along with wild horses and bison), and finally we found a King Rail at Sweetwater to cap off our trip. You can check a trip report at <https://ebird.org/tripreport/206404>. Some people were able to see additional species. My apologies to anyone who was inconvenienced by the changes we needed to make.

From left to right: Belted Kingfisher, Orange-crowned Warbler and Snail Kite by Noriko Buckles



## Birding 102 – February Trips

Our Wednesday morning birding group had some great trips this month too – a highlight being our trip to Traveler's Rest RV Park in East Pasco where we were able to see a rare Clay-colored Sparrow, Baltimore Orioles, Ovenbird and Indigo Buntings. Thanks to Tom Butler for hosting us!



## Introducing Fran Sigurdson, Membership Chair

Greetings! My name is Fran Sigurdsson, and I'm the new Membership Chair of Pasco Audubon. I am a "fledgling" birder, and enjoy learning about Florida's native and migratory species. For example, it was a revelation to see common loons – the symbol of the Adirondacks where my photographer husband, Hal, and I lived until moving to Holiday in 2017 – appear on the Gulf in winter. The great thing about our club is that it welcomes beginning birders like myself as well as advanced ones. I pick up tips from experienced birders on outings, as well as from the speakers and slide shows at monthly club meetings. I am also an avid gardener, and participate in the Junior Gardening program at the Boys & Girls Club in Tarpon Springs. I look forward to meeting more Pasco Audubon club members, and to informing prospective and new members about the benefits of club membership and all the programs offered.



## Introducing Kimberly Snaric – Photography Competition Coordinator

Hello Pasco Audubon! Some of you may know me from the Wednesday morning local birding and field trips. My husband Jay and I moved to Florida about 9 years ago and we run a CPR training business. My love for birding began last year after receiving a bird feeder from Jay. I have always had a deep affection for animals but somehow never noticed how special birds really are. Once the feeder was set up in the middle of our backyard, something special happened. I became enamored with their songs, colors, playfulness, and intelligence. This ignited something inside me, and I had to learn more. A little research led me to Pasco Audubon. After attending my first field trip to Fort DeSoto last spring, I became fully hooked on birding not just as a hobby but a lifestyle. Birding has become part of me. Pasco Audubon has provided a delightful environment to learn and share the magic of birding with others. I could not ask for a more friendly and welcoming community of fellow bird lovers, thank you! Cheers to many more shared experiences with all of you.





*\*Above photo taken by photographer Noriko Buckles. It took 1st place in the Birds Category in 2023.*

## Photography Competition

### Nature and Wildlife of Tampa Bay 2024 Photography Competition



Calling all nature photographers! Join the **Pasco Audubon's Photography Competition** and share your best wildlife and nature shots from around Tampa Bay. The competition is open to all photographers. **Entries and registration are due by March 15<sup>th</sup>.**

**On April 6<sup>th</sup> @ 11am** we will host an awards ceremony to announce the winners, award cash prizes, and celebrate everyone's photos at the **Starkey Park Environmental Education Center**. Special guest speaker **Kirsten Hines**, a Florida-based author, wildlife photographer, and conservationist with a master's degree in biology will be joining us. Her topic will be **Conservation Photography: Using your Images for a Greater Good.**

**Thank you to our Sponsors!!!**



**Register Today and help our community celebrate nature and support conservation efforts!**

**Competition entry fees support Pasco Audubon conservation initiatives!**

**Visit**

**[www.pascoaudubon.com](http://www.pascoaudubon.com)**

**for instructions on how to enter the competition and for event details.**

**Questions, Email Us!**

**[PascoAudubon@gmail.com](mailto:PascoAudubon@gmail.com)**

**Want to learn more about birding and enjoy nature with others?**

**Join Pasco Audubon!**

**Visit us online:**

**[www.pascoaudubon.com](http://www.pascoaudubon.com)**

**View our schedule of events and activities.**



## What is Conservation Photography?

You may have noticed that there's a new category in our competition this year, and you may well have wondered what conservation photography is about. To make a long story short, it's combining photographic and artistic skill with a focus on telling a conservation story. There's an article about it on the Audubon website that will go into far more depth than I'm able to here, <https://www.audubon.org/news/use-your-photography-support-and-advance-conservation>. And if you really want to learn more, we have an expert joining us at our April meeting – Kirsten Hines. Kirsten is both a conservation photographer and author, and she will be coming up from her home in the Miami area to talk to us about this powerful topic. We hope you'll be able to join us on April 6<sup>th</sup> when Kirsten will present **Conservation Photography: Using your Images for a Greater Good**, and help with the presentation of this year's photography awards.

## Homeschool Students Learn about Birds in Starkey Park

Have you sometimes wondered how our grant-funded initiatives work in practice?

On February 15<sup>th</sup> a group of homeschool families from THINK Coop – 6 students and 3 moms – came to Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park for an experience with birds. They prepared by borrowing our Audubon backpacks with binoculars for adults and children from the public library, and met me in the corral. We saw some Eastern Bluebirds and box #9 in the corral, then walked out to the bird blind (which we were able to fund with a lot of help from Duke Energy, and generous donations from our members).

From the bird blind we were able to see how little water was left as a result of prolonged drought (really only puddles are left). Still – we saw a Little Blue Heron, a Wilson's Snipe, a Blue-winged Teal (identified by an observant student using the illustrations on the sign inside the blind), Sandhill Cranes and many others. And the binoculars came in really handy! We noted that two of the threatened species listed on the signage were actually present at the time they were looking.

So thank you to all of you who have made this possible – the backpacks, the Bluebird boxes, the blind and the signage! Hopefully we have helped inspire some future birders. Photos shared with permission from the families.



It's time to put out your hummingbird feeders! Hummingbirds will start arriving this month, and will have lost half their body weight crossing the Gulf of Mexico. The nectar you provide will help them thrive!

## Looking further ahead...

- Saturday, April 6<sup>th</sup>      **Walk in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park (8am)**  
 Bird Banding and the Florida Young Birders Club with **Jim McGinity (11am)**
- Saturday, April 6<sup>th</sup>      **Season Finale: Conservation Photography: Using your Images for a Greater Good with Kirsten Hines and presentation of our annual photography competition awards.**
- Sunday, April 14<sup>th</sup>      **Birding by Bike on Pinellas Trail with Bob Burkard**
- Saturday, April 20<sup>th</sup>      **Field Trip to Fort De Soto (Pinellas) for migration**

## Costa Rica 2025

Our February 2025 trip to Costa Rica filled up within an hour of opening for registration. But there's still a chance to take our "Introduction to Neotropical Birding" trip with Holbrook Travel. They've arranged for an identical trip to be offered to us in March 2025. If you missed the registration but are still interested, email me at [president@pascoaudubon.com](mailto:president@pascoaudubon.com) for a link to trip details and registration information.

## Pasco Audubon (Formerly West Pasco Audubon)

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 Ken Landry, At-Large  
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### Other important contacts:

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