



December 2024 Newsletter PASCO AUDUBON

Formerly known as West Pasco Audubon

Upcoming Events

Saturday, December 7th

Bird walk in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park. Meet at 8am in the Ed Center parking lot.

Talk: Intro to Beekeeping with Bob Burkard - 11am in the Starkey Education Center

Saturday, December 14th

Birding by Bike - Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park. Details p.2

Monday, December 2nd

11am Nature Photography Workshop Session 2 - Starkey Education Center - details p.3

Tuesday, December 17th

The 36th annual West Pasco Christmas Bird Count. Details p. 4



December Talk – Introduction to Beekeeping: Honeybee Biology and Behavior with Bob Burkard

Beekeeping is a sweet hobby with many rewards, including the opportunities to produce honey, to learn more about nature, to help the environment, and to better understand how honeybees affect the plants and wildlife in our area.

Join us for a presentation to learn more about this fascinating insect and how their beehives work. We will discuss the three castes of honeybees that make up a beehive and their duties, and how honeybees make a new queen bee. An active demonstration hive will also be present to give you a view of the what the inside of a hive looks like close up.

Bob Burkard is a hobbyist beekeeper who has been keeping honeybees for almost 40 years. He currently leads the Friends of Brooker Creek Beekeepers Club where he teaches beginning beekeepers with classroom and hands on instructions. Questions? Email Bob at robertburkard9@gmail.com

Bob’s presentation will be on December 7th in the Starkey Environmental Education Center at 11am. In addition to Bob’s presentation, there will be a holiday potluck brunch and our annual meeting - details on Page 2.

December 2nd - Annual Meeting with Potluck Brunch

On the front page you read all about our feature presentation on bees and beekeeping. But December is traditionally our celebratory holiday potluck brunch meeting. We will provide coffee, bottled water, the usual snacks and a large platter of catered sandwiches, paper plates, plasticware and cups- the rest is up to you! We hope you'll join in with a dish/beverage of your choice. Remember - not too much please - we'll all be bringing something! As always, this meeting is free and open to all.

Those of you who are officially members of Pasco Audubon will be asked to vote on our Board nominees. As we have 2 nominations and 2 candidates, this should not be too difficult or take too long. Our two candidates are Joanne Chamberlain and Kimberly Snaric. Following our presentation we'll have an opportunity to break bread together and socialize.

A Weekend Birding in South Florida - January 24-26th

Most of you probably know that we are taking a weekend trip to the Miami area to bird with Klenisson Brenner, who is planning to show us many local birds that do not make it up to our area. As this is a weekend trip it does take planning, and Klenisson has asked that you register by December 20th if you plan to attend as we may need to rent a van in order to smoothly negotiate Miami.

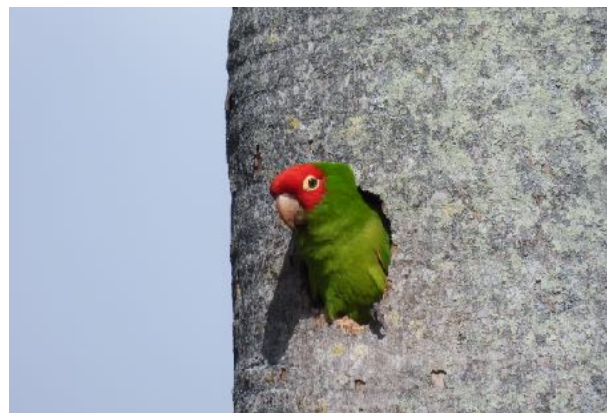
Klenisson says that the following species have recently been seen in addition to those mentioned in last month's article: **Bananaquit, Vermilion Flycatcher, Rufous Hummingbird, Neotropic Cormorant, Tropical Kingbird and Yellow-headed Caracara.**

The trip registration can be found at: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSecJHPCbX5IkD7enbkvovayDEq_hEsMNfGQIFYK8-BR4O9PJw/viewform?usp=pp_url

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Klenisson at klebrenner@gmail.com.



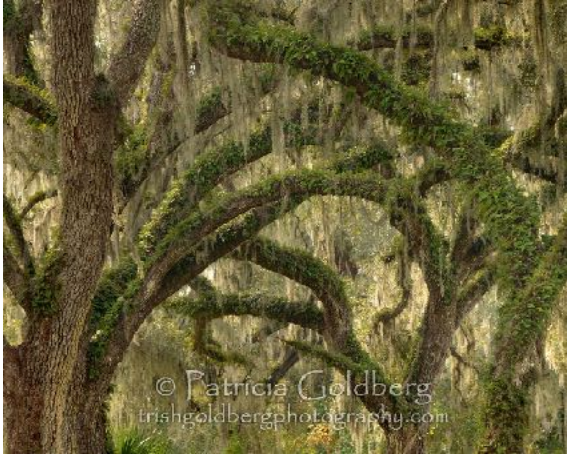
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher by Klenisson Brenner



Red-masked Parakeet by Klenisson Brenner

Photography Workshop Session 2 - Monday, December 2nd

Looking to improve your photography skills? Just a reminder that Patricia Goldberg's second Photography Workshop will be held in the Starkey Environmental Education Center on Monday, December 2nd from 11am -1pm. The focus of this session will be on getting exposure right, even in tricky situations, and incorporating more art in composition. Questions? Reach out to Pat at projects@westpascoaudubon.com.



December 14th: Birding by Bike

in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park

Bob Burkard will lead our Birding by Bike ride through Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park. Meet in the Education Center parking lot at 8am. This ride provides opportunities to see birds in the park that are not often seen up front on our regular monthly walks. Birds such as Northern Bobwhite, Eastern Towhee, Brown-headed Nuthatch at many others can be anticipated. Do let Bob know if you plan to attend or if you have a question at Robertburkard9@gmail.com.

The photos below were taken by Bob on last month's ride along the Pinellas Trail



Eastern Phoebe



Vesper Sparrow

The 36th West Pasco Christmas Bird Count – December 17, 2024

This year will be the 125th annual Christmas Bird Count. For our West Pasco circle, centered in the former Magnolia Valley golf course, this will be the 36th annual count. While the count window spans from December 14th till January 6th, each count circle takes a specific day within that time frame – and this year we are taking Tuesday, December 17th. 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. Its 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. Its always interesting!

So far 34 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. Most years the West Pasco circle has located over 150 species of birds. Last year it was 154 in spite of 17mph sustained winds, which meant we could not use boats, and the previous two years we found 158 and 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@pascoaudunon.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 below.

Join us on the Magic Dolphin

One way you may wish to participate in our Christmas bird Count is to take a boat ride out on the Gulf of Mexico. This is on our count day, Tuesday December 17th from 1:45pm to 4:45 pm. We leave the dock promptly at 1:45 pm.

We are chartering the Magic Dolphin for our survey in order to count ducks and shorebirds that we may not have been able to find on land. The boat is docked behind Catches Restaurant on Bayview St. Port Richey 33668. We are asking participants to chip in \$25 each and to pay as you board as 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 and wildlife. Table seating is available, BOYB and snacks. There are two restrooms on board and non-alcoholic beverages are complimentary. To reserve your spot, please email Mike Kell at jmike65@gmail.com.



Northern Harrier by Kimberly Snaric

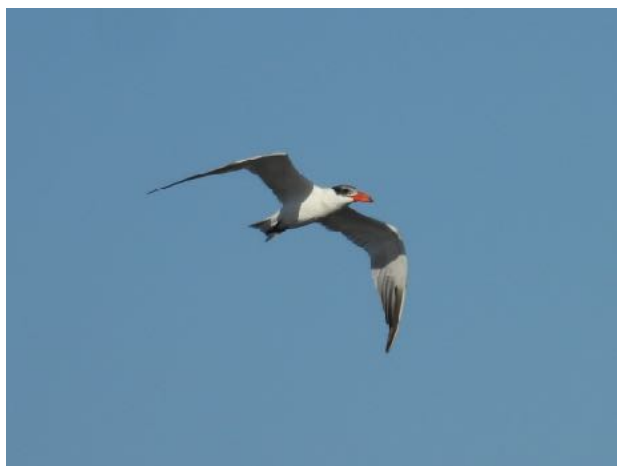


White Pelicans by Christine Rowland

Report: Field Trip to Bahia Beach Preserve - November 16th

This was our first ever field trip to this Hillsborough location, and was led by Lilian Saul - her final trip with us before leaving to live in Maryland. Twelve of us set out on the walk, and were treated to excellent views of a couple of hundred American White Pelicans both on the water and in the air - they made quite an impression on all of us, and were excellent subjects for our photographers.

We found 54 species across the morning, including Bald Eagles, Northern Harrier, Northern Flicker, Gadwall and Lesser Scaup. And we had a great introduction to one of Lilian's favorite places to bird - always a treat. We hope you enjoy the photographs! Our trip report can be viewed at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S202666253>.



Caspian Tern by Kimberly Snaric



Lilian (3rd from right) with Anthony, Kimberly, Cecilia, Pat and Jeff L-R

Seeking a Volunteer to Run The 2025 Photography Contest

Our annual photography contest is always a great way to share some of our favorite photos for the year while we raise funds to help our chapter programs. However, the competition does not run itself, and we are once again in need of someone who could take on the logistics of sending out information, coordinating with judges, ordering certificates and ribbons, putting together the final presentation etc. etc. This is a project that basically lasts about 2 months, and would suit someone who would like to help with a short term project. It requires organizational and communication skills. Last year's organizer, Kimberly Snaric, has uploaded all of the materials (letters, flyers etc.) to a Google drive and the organizer would have access to it - needing only to update information with this year's dates and updates. Please email me at president@pascoaudubon.com if you have any questions about this or are able to help.



Welcome Little One by Pat Misajet

Photographers - Your Input is Requested

by Andrés León

As a Ph.D. D Candidate at the University of Florida, I am conducting a research study titled “**Bird Photography's Rise on Social Media: Motivations and Factors Shaping the Birders' Community.**” This study is part of my PhD dissertation, and it aims to explore the factors influencing the growing trend of displaying and sharing bird photographs on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and other online channels.

The survey is brief, taking only 10-15 minutes to complete, and can be done at a time convenient for each participant. Participation is entirely voluntary, and there are no known or anticipated risks involved. All responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and used strictly for academic purposes. The names of the respondents and any personal information will not appear in the research or publication.

Once the data has been analyzed, I would be happy to share a copy of the executive summary with you. The full research can also be provided upon request.

Your support would be invaluable to the success of this research, and I thank you in advance for your time and assistance. You can access the survey at https://ufl.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eFlrPQGOGA6c9pQ.

Scouting America is Looking for Bird Study Merit Badge Counselors

Our local Scouting America troop is looking for counselors to meet with young people to explore birding and verify that they have met the requirements for the merit badge, likely providing some instruction in the process.

They would potentially like to schedule an event at a local park where our members could share their passion and knowledge about birding and helping youngsters fulfill a few of the merit badge requirements.

Interested in what these young people are expected to know? The requirements are too extensive to print here, but can be found at <https://www.scouting.org/merit-badges/bird-study/>. Please RSVP at president@pascoaudubon.com if you think you could help.

Haldor Sigurdson's Photography Exhibit at Starkey Library



Congratulations to Hal Sigurdson, whose photography is currently on exhibit at the Starkey Library at 12118 Lake Blanche Drive. Hal has been a regular winning photographer in our Nature and Wildlife of Tampa Bay Photography Competition each year, and its great to see him have his work displayed locally. Do stop by if you are in the area.

Warning: Phishing Emails

Please be aware that a couple of our members have received some fairly sophisticated phishing emails, asking for financial help in bill payment from me or another Board member. It's fairly easy to spot these emails in that they DO NOT originate from my email addresses or those of other Board members. But still, rest assured neither I nor any other member of our Board of Directors will ever ask for your help in making payments. Email or call me directly if you ever receive an unusual email and have a question. Please never engage in responses or reveal any personal information to them.

Looking Ahead - January 2025 Events

January 4	8am	Bird Walk in Starkey Park
	11am	- Kestrel Kindergarten with Barbara Walker (with live Kestrels)
January 6	11am	Nature Photography Workshop III in Starkey Environmental Ed Center
January 11	8am	Field Trip: Circle B. Bar Preserve in Polk County
January 12	8am	Birding by Bike at Chasahowitzka Wildlife Area
January 20	11am	Nature Photography Workshop IV in Starkey Environmental Ed Center
January 24-26		Weekend Birding in Miami area with Klenisson Brenner

Pasco Audubon Board of Directors

Christine Rowland, President - president@pascoaudubon.com

Mike Kell, VP for Education - jmike65@gmail.com

Don Fraser, VP for Conservation - dmfraser31@gmail.com

Joanne Chamberlain, Interim Treasurer - rijoraja@aol.com

Peter Day, Secretary - pird@mac.com

Patricia Goldberg, Special Projects projects@westpascoaudubon.com

JoAnn Sinatra, At-Large

Ken Landry, At-Large

Stasi Gerges, Student Advisor

Other Important Contacts:

Fran Sigurdson, Membership Chair fsigurds@gmail.com

Bob Burkard, Birding by Bike and the Bluebird Project robertburkard9@gmail.com