



# February 2025 Newsletter

## PASCO AUDUBON

Formerly known as West Pasco Audubon

### Upcoming Events

**Saturday, February 1st**

**Bird walk** in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park. Meet at 8am in the Education Center parking lot. p.1

**Cat Tale: The Wild, Weird Battle to Save the Florida Panther** - 11am in the Starkey Education Center p.1

**Saturday, February 8th**

**8am** Field Trip to Weekiwachee Preserve - Hernando County p. 2

**11am** Nature Photography Workshop Session 4 - Starkey Education Center

**Friday, February 14th**

11am Nature Photography Session 5 - Starkey Education Center

**Saturday, February 15th**

Birding by Bike - Chassahowitzka WMD - Details p.2

**February 16-23rd**

Introduction to Neotropical Birding - Costa Rica

### Cat Tale: The Wild, Weird Battle to Save the Florida Panther with Craig Pittman



We're excited to share that we will be hosting author Craig Pittman at our February 1st meeting. On this occasion he'll be telling us all about the captivating tale of the Florida panther, its survival and rescue from extinction. Join us to learn about the extraordinary story of the people who brought the panther back from the brink of extinction, the ones who nearly pushed the species over the edge, and the cats that were caught in the middle. This story shows what it takes to bring one species back and what unexpected costs such a decision brings.

*Funding for this Florida Talks program was provided through a grant from Florida Humanities with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this program do not necessarily represent those of Florida Humanities or the National Endowment for the Humanities.*

And do feel free to join us for our monthly walk at 8am - meet in the education center parking lot.

## Field Trip to Weekiwachee Preserve led by Don Fraser February 8th

This will be our first trip to Weekiwachee Preserve, and it will be led by Don Fraser. Join Don to explore this southernmost coastal hardwood hammock in western Florida. Our neighboring chapter, Hernando Audubon, has been active in trying to keep these conservation lands free from development. We will walk through several grassy areas hoping to flush overwintering sparrows - with a chance for Grasshopper Sparrows and - if we're really lucky - a Henslow's or a LeConte's. We will also see waterbirds in the various ponds remaining after phosphate mining. This will be a 2-3 mile round trip.

Meet Don at 8am in the parking lot at 2345 Osowaw Boulevard, Spring Hill, FL 34607.



**Grasshopper Sparrow**

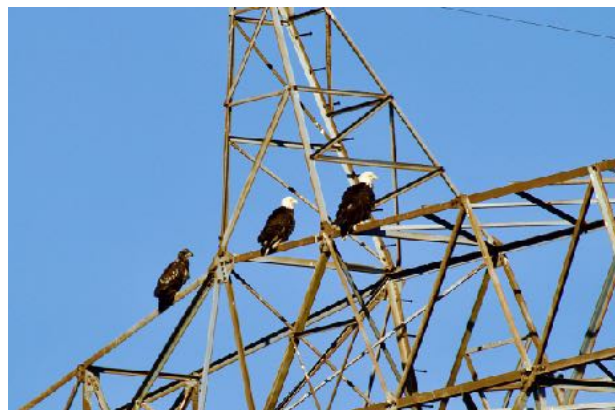
## February 15th Birding by Bike Outing – Pinellas Trail with Bob Burkard (note new date)

For our February Pasco Audubon Birding by Bike outing, we will meet at the Brooker Creek Preserve parking lot and travel across Keystone Road continuing north on the Pinellas trail. We usually turn around just north of Trinity Blvd.

I have ridden this trail many times and I never get bored with the search for the species of birds that I observe in this area. Song Sparrows, Lincoln's Sparrows, Savannah Sparrows, and Swamp Sparrows were recorded by local birders on eBird over the last few weeks. This is also a terrific location for seeing Bald Eagles, American Kestrels, and Eastern Meadowlarks. eBird reports that there are 83 different species were observed in the last 30 days.



**Eastern Meadowlark by Bob Burkard**



**Adult and Immature Bald Eagles by Bob Burkard**

## Report: Field Trip to Circle B Bar Preserve and Lake Morton - January 11 by Christine Rowland



**American Bittern by Pat Misajet**



**Roseate Spoonbills by Anthony Marella**

With cool temperatures, an overcast day with a chance of showers and Alligator Alley temporarily out of commission, many of our regular birders decided to skip this trip this year, and there were just 7 of us on the day. But those of us who made the trip to Polk County were well rewarded for our efforts.

Lots of birds just seemed willing to almost pose for us, including (in order of appearance) Swamp Sparrow, Painted Bunting, American Bittern, Purple Gallinule, Green Heron and Black-crowned Night Heron. As everyone in the group had a camera, it was great to have such cooperative subjects - which can be very rare on field trips. Only the Blue-headed Vireo proved more of a tricky customer. In all, we found 55 species of birds on our walk, and this was without being able to access the Lake Hancock area.

After a long morning's birding we ate our packed lunches and 6 of us decided to try for a bonus side trip to Lake Morton in Lakeland. Pat Misajet had really wanted to see the American White Pelicans that we had missed at Circle B Bar due to the lack of lake access. There was a solo bird at Lake Morton when we arrived, but several others flew in while we were there, giving a great chance to photograph them as they came in for landing. There were both Mute and Black Swans, and a number of ducks including a couple of Redheads up close and a couple of Ruddy Ducks (although they were further out).

Thanks to Doreen Damm, Anthony Marella and Pat Misajet for their photos.



**American White Pelicans by Doreen Damm**



**Painted Bunting by Anthony Marella**



## Report: January 12th Birding by Bike at Chassahowitzka WMA by Bob Burkard

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**Eastern Bluebirds by Bob Burkard**



**Red-headed Woodpecker by Bob Burkard**

Our January 12<sup>th</sup> Birding by Bike outing was in the Chassahowitzka Wildlife Management Area. Ken Landry, Barbara Hoffman and I checked out this “New to Me” location.

The path we followed for our Birding by Bike outing is a 7 ½ mile loop on a well-maintained and easy to ride hard-packed surface that passes through a variety of habitats. The scenery is great with a stop at Buford Springs, a large natural spring that is easily accessible via a boardwalk.

Barbara Hoffman, a friend who is extremely knowledgeable on native plants, joined us on this outing. Her observations on wildflowers and trees helped to make this outing even more enjoyable. I will definitely be following her recommendation to visit this location in the fall to see the wildflowers that are blooming in the Flatwoods sections during September and October.

The day started out sunny and cold, which contributed to an almost magical bike ride through the area with birds actively feeding throughout our entire ride. We were greeted in the parking lot by numerous Eastern Bluebirds, Palm Warblers, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and Carolina Chickadees.

Within a few hundred yards of leaving the park lot, a Red-headed Woodpecker flew across the trail and landed in a tree close to us which allowed for close observation and photos.

As we continued down the trail, the numbers of Eastern Bluebirds, Palm Warblers, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Pine Warblers, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers seen and heard by our team was astounding. There seemed to be dozens of them everywhere we looked. This went on through the entire outing.

We recorded thirty-four species of birds during our outing with the most noteworthy being the Red-headed Woodpecker, a Red-tailed Hawk, a Bald Eagle, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, an Orange-crowned Warbler, several Black-and-white Warblers, Common Yellowthroats, and Swamp Sparrows.

I will schedule a future Birding by Bike outing at this location later in the year and encourage others to join me.

## The Nature and Wildlife of Tampa Bay Photography Competition 2025 - Coming Soon!

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We're very pleased to announce that Halldor Sigurdsson has stepped into the role of competition coordinator for this year's event. Thank you Hal! We will include many more details in next month's newsletter and they will also be posted on our website when ready. The format and rules will essentially be the same as in previous years, the deadline for submissions will be March 12th, and the announcement of winners and awards ceremony will take place on April 5th. For competition related questions and information, Hal can be reached at [PascoAudubonPhotos@gmail.com](mailto:PascoAudubonPhotos@gmail.com).

### Gallery of Photographs from our January 4th Presentation - Kestrel Kindergarten

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With thanks to Barbara Walker and her team for bringing the American Kestrels and Crested Caracara. Audience members had a chance to hold the kestrels! Thanks to Don Fraser and Pamela Graber for their photos.

## Looking Ahead - March 2025 Events

March 1 - 8am Bird Walk in Starkey Park

11am "What's to Sea in the Gulf?" with John Goskopf  
(a presentation on identifying and finding pelagic birds)

March 2-8 Costa Rica - Introduction to Neotropical Birding - Group 2

March 15 8 am Field Trip to Celery Fields, Sarasota

March 29 Field Trip to Ocala National Forest (Florida Scrub Jays) - details TBD

Birding 102 meets every Wednesday morning at 8am to bird a local hotspot. Contact [president@pascoaudubon.com](mailto:president@pascoaudubon.com) to be added to the contact list for weekly specifics.

## Pasco Audubon Board of Directors

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

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