



June 2024 Newsletter

PASCO AUDUBON

Formerly known as West Pasco Audubon

Upcoming Events

Saturday, June 1st

Bird walk in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park. 7:30am.

Saturday, June 15th

Birding by Bike

Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park
8am

Wishing all of our members and friends a wonderful summer. Look out for our monthly newsletters, which will be slimmer than usual, but will contain an article about birds each month by Tom Butler. Enjoy!



Upcoming May Events

It feels like summer is well and truly here! We know that many of you are traveling, but for those staying closer to home, we still have a couple of events for you.

On June 1st, we'll have our monthly bird walk in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park. We will leave from the Education Center parking lot at 7:30am for this walk. Please note the earlier start time as we attempt to beat as much of the heat as we can.

Saturday, June 15th will see our monthly Birding by Bike adventure - also in Starkey Park this time around. Meet Bob Burkard in the Education Center parking lot at 8am for an enjoyable trip along the multi-use trail while looking for our summer resident birds. Reach Bob at robertburkard9@gmail.com.



Our Pasco Plovers team won the Birdathon competition for most species seen in a day with 104 species (L-R Lilian Saul, Christine Rowland, Patricia Goldberg and Pamela Graber - team captain).



Red-tailed Hawk by Christine Rowland



Eastern Meadowlark by Anthony Marella

Report: Field Trip to East Pasco

by Christine Rowland

On Saturday, May 18th a group of 7 of us took the tour from Kettering Road, along Power Line Road, Lockhart Road, Myers Road and Clay Hill Road. Power Line and Lockhart roads are the border of Pasco and Hernando Counties, giving us a list in each. We made numerous stops along the way to appreciate the rural landscape and the wildlife that inhabits it.

We saw lots of Eastern Meadowlarks and Eastern Bluebirds, and were fortunate enough to get great views of a pair of Red-tailed Hawks up of Power Line Road, mobbed by crows. We found Red-headed Woodpeckers both on Power Line Road and on Myers. Purple Martins were seen in their traditional spot on Powerline Road and gave us an aerial display, and we were surprised by a lone Northern Rough-winged Swallow at the top of the hill on Power Line Road perched on the fence.

Our trip report can be found at <https://ebird.org/tripreport/241347> .



House Finch by Anthony Marella



Red-headed Woodpecker by Christine Rowland



Report: Birding 102 in May

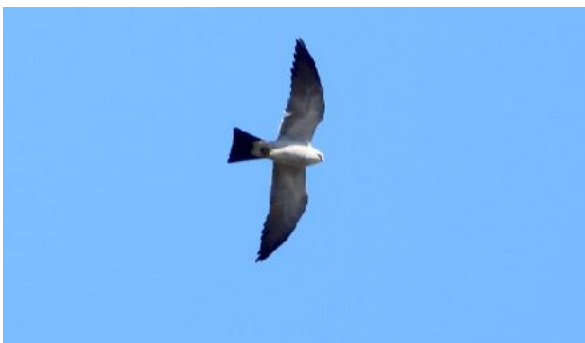
May 1 - We visited the **Holiday Recreation Complex** where we saw a wide range of birds including both Nanday and Monk Parakeets, nesting Ospreys feeding young, and a Yellow-crowned Night Heron. A smaller group of us continued on to **Timber Oaks** in search of Bobolinks, fleeting migrants through our area that had been seen there recently. While we saw Black-necked Stilts and Greater Yellowlegs, and distant views of a male Bobolink. Our lists are at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S171341940> and <https://ebird.org/checklist/S171332016>.

May 8 - We visited **Crews Lake Wilderness Park**, in hopes of seeing an early Mississippi Kite. Sadly - no kite (but spoiler alert - we did see one there on May 22). We did, however, see a range of breeding birds with their young, including Sandhill Cranes with colts, Northern Parulas, White-eyed Vireos, and Northern Cardinals. You can view our list at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S172822609>.

May 14 - This was a special visit to view the breeding Least Bitterns on Lake Blanche (aka Huckleberry Pond) in the **Starkey Ranch Development**. While it took a little patience, the fluffy youngsters put on a bit of a show for us, and we saw several adults as well. We also saw Black Skimmers and Forster's Terns on the lake, along with a host of other species which you can view at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S174481707>.

May 22 - We began our day with a pre-dawn nocturnal visit to **Heartwood Preserve**, where we were able to document Barred Owl, Chuck-wills-widow, Common Nighthawk and a family grouping of Brown-headed Nuthatches. After a coffee break, we continued on to **Crews Lake Wilderness Park**, where we were treated to Swallow-tail and Mississippi Kites, and finally a Short-tailed Hawk. Our complete list can be seen at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S176356027> and at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S176355878>.

May 29th - We made an early 'beat the heat' start at **Key Vista Nature Park**, and were rewarded with sightings of two Great Horned Owls, seen at different points in the walk. Also seen were an American Oystercatcher, Ospreys throughout the walk. The list can be viewed at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S177989780>.



Mississippi Kite

Great Horned Owl



The Carolina Wren: An Opera Singer in the Woods

by Tom Butler

Opera singers are known for a beautiful voice and the ability to project their song to an entire audience, even if those seats are in the balcony. The singer in our county meets the requirements and qualifications for performing in the most prestigious opera houses found worldwide. But, relax! You don't need to rush out and reserve tickets. There's no need to have your tuxedo or other formal wear dry-cleaned in preparation for this grand performance. Let me introduce the Carolina Wren. With a giant voice reverberating from a 5.5-inch body, this beauty sings every day for free right here in our backyards. What a set of vocal chords! Opera singers everywhere would be envious of the sound produced by this tiny wren.

First described by John Latham in 1790, this little brown and white bird would have to wait nearly 150 years before gaining some level of recognition. The South Carolina Confederate Women's club fought to have the wren named as the state bird in South Carolina. They lost that battle in 1939 when the Northern Mockingbird was chosen for the honor. However, in 1948 that decision was reversed, and the Carolina Wren emerged as the new state bird. In another 52 years, the image of this spectacular bird was placed on the back of the South Carolina quarter found in a 50 State commemorative set of coins. Congrats!

With a rich brown coloration on the head, shoulders and back, this bird is ready for some contrasting colors and markings to set it apart from others. A white eyebrow, chin and spots on the wings are a good start. Add in a pale brown breast that extends to the tail and what you end up with a stunningly beautiful songbird. Weighing in at a whopping .8 oz., this little guy rarely sits still. When you have a voracious appetite for insects, prey that never stops moving itself, you need to go – go – go. Many people will be happy to discover that the favorite type of creepy crawly for the wren is a big scrumptious – SPIDER. This would seem like a good thing





for those that fear the aforementioned critter. However, because the spider has a higher trophic level, the Carolina Wren can suffer from Mercury poisoning. The trophic level of a living organism has to do with where they fall in the food chain. Small levels of mercury are found in plants and a process called biomagnification increases the level in whatever eats the plant. This event repeats when something eats the critter that ate the plant. Spiders eat those critters that ate plants, and then the Carolina Wren eats the spider. Nearly 94 percent of the Wren's diet consist of various types of invertebrates (mostly spiders). Yikes! Yum? You decide.

These birds build their nests close to the ground, usually within 1--3 meters. Unfortunately, this close proximity to the ground can leave them vulnerable to domestic cats and snakes. Undeterred, they use string, horsehair, dried plant material and maybe even the occasional snakeskin shed to construct nests in just about any location. They will use tree cavities, man-made structures, mailboxes, tin cans, flowerpots or even a golf cart that sits idle through the summer months. Three to six creamy white eggs with brown spots will incubate for 12 – 16 days, hatch, be fed invertebrates, then fledge in an additional 12 – 14 days. Less than a month from an egg to the air. Amazing! So next time you wake to the sound of a beautiful song that penetrates the shrubs, walls, windows, blinds and maybe even your pillow – still be thankful for the Carolina Wren and the beautiful sound of nature.

Tom Butler writes a column regularly for his community newsletter and has generously allowed us to reproduce his articles. Tom has installed bird feeders and viewing stations throughout his community (Traveler's Rest) and leads Tuesday bird walks for residents. Look for another of Tom's articles about birds next month.

Volunteers Needed

Do you have a little time on your hands on the first Saturday of the month from October through April to help out at our meetings during the season? Last month Laurie Kell stepped down from running the refreshments after many years of providing this service for our members. Would anyone be willing to step into her shoes? It means arriving at meetings early - about 45 minutes before they start - to set up coffee and other light refreshments for our birders and guests. JoAnn Sinatra has kindly agreed to help out, but would like someone else to take the lead. It doesn't have to be one person, if you have a friend or two who would share this task with you, that would be wonderful too. Please let me know at president@pascoaudubon.com.

Good News - Least Terns are Nesting in Holiday!

We currently have about 40 Least Terns nesting on a rooftop along Route 19 in Holiday. Audubon partners with FWC to monitor these nests, and back in March Joe Colantonio helped the Audubon and FWC team to install chick-proofing on the roof to help ensure that the young birds do not fall off.

Its exciting to know that these shorebirds that we rarely see in Pasco are having a successful season so far. I have seen one of the adults removing eggshell from the roof - an indication that chicks have hatched. That was a couple of weeks ago. This means we could have youngsters flying in just a week or two!

We do need help with a monitor for this nesting site in late June and July. If you have a little time each week and think you might be able to help, please reach me at president@pascoaudubon.com for further details.

Pasco Audubon Board of Directors

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