



June 2025 Newsletter

PASCO AUDUBON

Formerly known as West Pasco Audubon

Upcoming Events

Saturday, June 7th

Bird walk in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park. Meet at 7:30am in the Education Center parking lot.

Saturday, June 14th

8am Birding by Bike on the Pinellas Trail - details p. 2



Wood Ducks by Christine Rowland

June Walk in Starkey Park

Summer has arrived, and many of us will be spending some of it traveling. But at other times we'll still be here. So while we are officially on break, we still offer a few informal birding opportunities through the summer.

On Saturday, June 7th, we'll hold our monthly walk in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park. Meet in the Education Center parking lot ready to leave at 7:30am. This month our walk will be led by Pamela Graber and Joanne Chamberlain. We also have a Birding-by-Bike scheduled for June 14th - details on the next page.

With far fewer events in the summer, this seems like a great opportunity to share a lot of conservation updates with you. Whether you just like to know what is happening or may be interested in volunteering in some capacity yourself, this could be an interesting edition for you! Learn more about helping our shorebirds (p.5), our Bluebird Project (p.6), EagleWatch (p.8), Southeastern American Kestrels (p.9) and more.



Gray Kingbird at Brasher Park



Eastern Meadowlark on Powerline Road

WISHING YOU ALL A WONDERFUL SUMMER!

June 14th: Birding-by-Bike on the Pinellas Trail by Bob Burkard

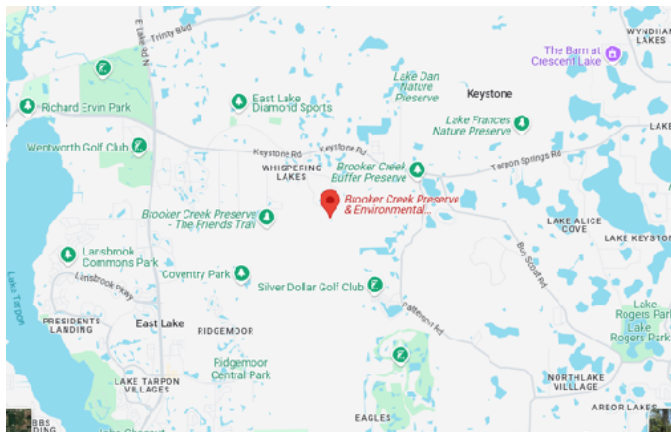


Red-headed Woodpecker from April's Outing

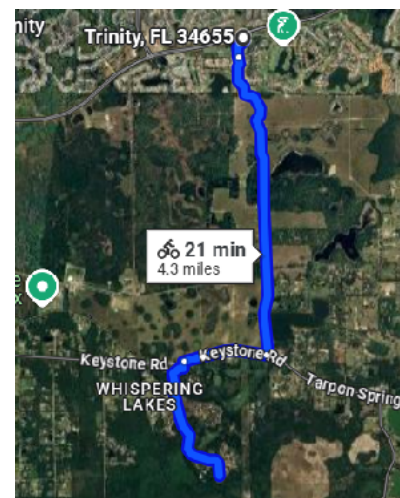
For our February Pasco Audubon Birding-by-Bike outing, we will meet at the Brooker Creek Preserve parking lot and travel across Keystone Road, continuing north on the Pinellas Trail. We usually turn around just north of Trinity Blvd.

I am excited to see if the pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers observed back in April building a nesting cavity is still in the area. Those of you who have previously joined this outing know that the Pinellas Trail is a terrific location for seeing Bald Eagles, American Kestrels, and Eastern Meadowlarks. eBird reports that 67 different species of birds were observed at this location in the last 30 days.

We will meet at 8:00 AM at the parking area at Brooker Creek Preserve and travel north up the Pinellas Trail.



Starting location



Our Route



Summer Tanager



Wild Turkeys displaying and gobbling

Report: May 10th Birding-by-Bike Outing at the Chassahowitzka Wildlife Management Area by Bob Burkard

Our May Birding-by-Bike outing was at the Chassahowitzka Wildlife Management Area. The five of us had an enjoyable outing. Three members of our group were very new to birding, and we took our time to observe and discuss many of the common birds we identified by sight, call, or song. We observed 35 species of birds including Summer Tanagers, a Red-headed Woodpecker, and Northern Bobwhite. We heard Great Crested Flycatchers and Eastern Bluebirds throughout the entire ride.

The weather was cloudy and overcast and I had a challenging time taking photographs, but I did get a few that I could share. The highlight of our ride was when we ran into a group of birders from the Hernando Audubon Society who had a spotting scope and let us see a pair of nesting Swallow-tailed kites. There were two chicks in the nest, and we observed the adults returning with food.

We also heard at least 6 Summer Tanagers, but they seemed very shy and moved away quickly when we were trying to get a photograph. I was able to get one far away photograph.



Bob, Nick, Jim and Allen Burkard with Ken Landry



After ankle replacement a recumbent bike is perfect!



Mississippi Kite by Noriko Buckles



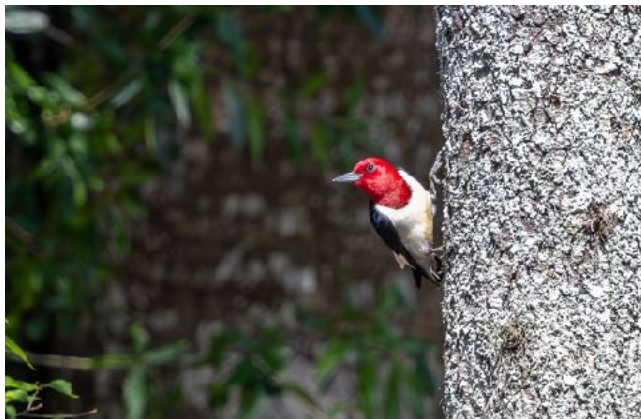
Swallow-tailed Kite by Phil Duncan

Report: Field Trip to East Pasco and Hernando on May 24th

Ten of us between 5 vehicles took on our annual trip through a rural stretch of East Pasco and Hernando counties on Saturday, May 24th. We set out at 7:30 to try to beat at least a little of the heat. Our first stops, along Kettering Road, made for a good beginning in spite of some recent development with a distant pair of Southeastern American Kestrels, Great Crested Flycatchers, Loggerhead Shrikes, Meadowlarks, and a Blue Grosbeak heard by all and seen by a few.

Our next area was Powerline Road - traditionally the focal point of this trip. While we were disappointed to not find Purple Martins, we heard Northern Bobwhite, and saw a pair of Red-tailed Hawks perched, a distant Red-headed Woodpecker, great looks at Eastern Meadowlarks, heard Eastern Towhees and had our first glimpses of Swallow-tailed Kites for the morning.

But it was on Myers Road that we hit our most exciting stop (unplanned) of the day, when we came across a large foraging flock of Swallow-tailed Kites and 3 Mississippi Kites giving all of us great opportunities to appreciate their grace and beauty as they picked up dragonflies across the fields, and several birds of both species were seen snacking on the wing. We also got a look at some Red-headed Woodpeckers and friends at slightly closer quarters at our intended stop on Myers Road. You can take a look at our trip report at <https://ebird.org/tripreport/376157> (a combination of the 6 separate lists we filed). You will need to click on the photo icons to see the photographs. Thanks to all for a great trip!



Red-headed Woodpecker by Phil Duncan



Eastern Meadowlark by Noriko Buckles



Nesting Royal Terns with Chicks on Three Rooker Island

Volunteer as a Bird Steward and Help Protect Florida's Shorebirds by Dave and Sharon Hicks

Looking for a meaningful way to spend your weekend outdoors? Join us in volunteering as Bird Stewards, where you'll help protect some of Florida's most vulnerable shorebirds while enjoying the natural beauty of our coast.

My wife and I have been spending our weekends volunteering on Three Rooker Island, a beautiful but fragile stretch of land off the coast. Once a single island, storms have since split it into two — both popular boating destinations, especially on the weekends. But they're also critical nesting grounds for several bird species, including large colonies of **Royal and Sandwich Terns**, and more importantly, threatened species like the **Least Tern, American Oystercatcher**, and **Black Skimmer**. Although **Snowy Plovers** are known to nest in the area, we haven't seen any yet this season.

Each spring and summer, these shorebirds select parts of the islands as nesting sites. Park rangers and Audubon staff mark off these areas to restrict access and protect the birds from disturbance. As Bird Stewards, our job is to sit near these designated areas and engage with boaters and beachgoers who approach. We share information about the birds and the importance of keeping a respectful distance.

Our interactions with the public have been overwhelmingly positive — people are curious, appreciative, and often surprised to learn just how vulnerable these birds are. Many leave with a new respect for the wildlife and a desire to help protect it, which makes the experience incredibly rewarding.

If this sounds like something you'd enjoy, Bird Stewardship opportunities run from May through August, and you can sign up here (https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1uttnZg8NgD-ESnNGNTfzb3dRH-FbUJRogA5kCS_X7-M/edit?usp=sharing). A short but informative training session is required and the link to the training and FAQ can be found via the Google doc link above. Volunteers meet at 9 a.m. at the Caladesi Ferry boat docks in Honeymoon Island State Park and return around 2 p.m. It's a fantastic way to make a difference, connect with nature, and spend quality time outdoors.

We've found this experience to be one of the most fulfilling ways to give back — and we hope to see you out there.



Dave and Sharon in action!

Bluebird Project Update

by Bob Burkard



2nd brood of white EBB eggs at Jack Mitchell Jr. Park



Eastern Blue Birds in Trinity College Box #1

The 2025 Eastern Bluebird nesting season is well under way and our Pasco Audubon Bluebird boxes are doing great. We currently have 22 active nests, and 40 Eastern Bluebirds have already fledged. Nine Carolina Chickadees and 5 Tufted Titmice have also fledged in our boxes so far this year. Our project currently monitors 38 bluebird nesting boxes at 12 locations.

Fun fact: Historically, in Old English “tit” was a synonym for “small” and “mouse” (or “mase”) was used to describe any small bird or tiny rodent. Today, of course, mouse only applies to one tiny rodent. So taken together “titmouse” simply means a small bird. So, what is the correct word when referring to more than one titmouse? A purist would say *titmouses* is correct. On the other hand, a couple of major dictionaries and bird field guides give *titmice* as the plural. So, you can use either!

Our bluebird nesting box monitoring activities will continue through the summer until the end of the Eastern Bluebird nesting season. In our area of Florida, Eastern Bluebird nesting typically begins as early as February and can continue through August. The bluebirds may scout for nesting sites as early as January. The male Eastern Bluebird establishes a territory and then attracts a female. The female Eastern Bluebird then builds a nest of dry grasses and pine needles. Eastern Bluebirds nest in cavities, including natural ones, those created by woodpeckers, and artificial birdhouses.

Anyone who would like to join me on one of my monitoring “adventures” can contact me by email at robertburkard9@gmail.com.



Bluebird babies in Starkey Park box 1 - the one with brighter feathers is a male.

Southeastern American Kestrels: Can you help?

by Barbara Walker



Southeastern American Kestrel (female)



Southeastern American Kestrel (male)

American Kestrels are North America's smallest falcon. In Florida, the Southeastern American Kestrel, is a threatened subspecies. Kestrels nest from March through June, and it is common to receive calls about kestrels whose lives are on the line during this timeframe. Rescue calls about kestrels come from many different types of properties. We visit schools, horse farms, individual homes, and even shopping plazas and malls, removing the non-flighted young from situations which they would not survive. Recently an Eagle Scout, Kenneth Ugaz, built a dozen kestrel boxes. Our hope is to place kestrel nesting boxes in suitable habitat within about a quarter mile of natal sites. An increase in nesting cavities will likely increase kestrel numbers at first and then level out as time goes on. Previous studies have indicated that trend.

If you are interested in monitoring nesting territories in Pasco County, we would like to hear from you! We are also looking for people who would like to help monitor nesting boxes along with students from St. Petersburg College, Eckerd College, USF, and Pasco-Hernando College. Many students have a data collection or field requirements for externships or internships, so we are also able to serve their community needs while focusing on raptor conservation. Contact us by sending an email to me at walkerba@outlook.com or call or text to 727-798-2385.

If you see a kestrel on the ground, it does not mean it always has to be rescued but it does not hurt for a rehabber to evaluate the situation. If you find a kestrel on the ground, please feel free to contact Tampa Bay Raptor Rescue at 727-798-2385. We are a state and federally permitted organization, celebrating our 10th anniversary. Besides rescue, rehab, and release, we also operate the bird of prey education programs at Moccasin Lake Nature Park in Clearwater. Moccasin Lake Nature Park is located at 2750 Park Trail Lane, Clearwater, FL 33759. We have 6 resident kestrels which will be along for many of our field trips. We are open to the public, free admission, Tuesdays – Sundays from 10am – 5pm. Birds are perched in the bird garden on most days.



Bald Eagle on the Starkey Gap Trail

Eagle Watch Roundup for the 2024-25 Season by Kimberly Rexroat

It's been a productive year for our Bald Eagles!

By the numbers:

- Pasco County Eagle Watch Volunteers monitored 24 nests.
- Of the 24 nests monitored, 17 produced young and 2 failed.
- We had a total of 33 eaglets hatched, 3 perished, 29 fledged and 1 I have no updated information on.
- We located 2 new nests and 2 relocations.
- We had our first documented 3 eaglet nest, of which 2 survived to fledge.

The most devastating news of the season is that we lost our matriarch, the Duchess of Anclote at PS014. She was rescued on March 31st but did not survive her injuries. This is the nest on Baillies Bluff in Anclote. Duke & Duchess first appeared at PS014 in the Fall of 2013 at the age of 5 years old. We know they were only 5 as they both still had some dark feathers on their head. In the 11 years Duke & Duchess nested in Anclote, they became one of the most photographed eagle pairs in the Tampa Bay Area. People came from all over the country to photograph this pair. We hope Duke will find a new mate and continue to nest in the area but with the trees dying in the area due to saltwater intrusion from the hurricanes we don't know if their nest tree will survive.

To volunteer with Audubon Eagle Watch, please visit <https://www.audubon.org/florida/projects/eaglewatch>. Training will take place in the fall.

Editor's Note: We'd like to extend a big 'thank you' to Kim Rexroat, our Eagle Watch coordinator, and to all of the volunteers who monitored our Bald Eagles and their nests to help keep them safe this season!

Additional Ongoing Conservation Projects

Over the past year Pasco Audubon has been developing a relationship with Werner-Boyce Salt Springs State Park staff with a view to strengthening the understanding and monitoring of certain species in the park. We have had a particular focus on the Black Rail population, and have embarked on a long term multi-year study involving a team of our own members and State park staff. We hope to update you on this with more specific details in the near future.

We also began rooftop nest monitoring for Least Terns, on a roof that was a successful host to them last year, but sadly it looks as if they may have been washed out by the first major storm of the season - always a risk. We will continue to monitor 'just in case'. In the meantime, if you notice Least Terns visiting any rooftops in our area, please notify me at president@pascoaudubon.com.



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