

# The Pelican Flyer



**January 2014**

**[www.firstrefuge.org](http://www.firstrefuge.org)**

## **PIPS General Meeting—January 27**

The presentation at our General Meeting this month is entitled “Living With Urban Wildlife”, and will be given by PIPS Board members Ilka Daniel and Bruce Dangerfield. Ilka is Director of Animal Protective Services for the Indian River County Humane Society, and Bruce is the former Animal Control Officer for the city of Vero Beach.

Ilka and Bruce will be providing tips on how to live harmoniously with native wildlife, whose natural habitat we encroach upon. They will tell about how to deal with, and avoid, emergency situations. "Every spring we see a lot of baby birds, baby squirrels and other animals brought to the shelter by residents," Daniel said. "Sometimes they need to be rescued, but unless they are injured, they are usually best left alone."

Many wildlife species can't survive in close proximity to humans, but others have learned to adapt to man's encroachment on their territory and live among us as secretive, usually unseen neighbors. Some people object to this “intrusion,” forgetting that wildlife plays an important role in our environment, and that it is, after all, we who are the intruders.

Peaceful co-existence with our wild neighbors is most successfully achieved by allowing these animals their niche in the urban environment while taking measures to prevent them from becoming a nuisance.

- excerpts from the SPCA, Los Angeles

Ilka and Bruce will also have several native reptiles at the meeting to show and talk about. The program will be Monday, January 27, 7 PM at the North Indian River County Library, 1001 Sebastian Blvd. in Sebastian, and all are welcome to attend.

## **2014 Pelican Island Wildlife Festival**

Our 22nd Pelican Island Wildlife Festival is fast approaching, and your help is needed! In our last newsletter, we listed several ways to help out, and gave contact information for Suzanne Valencia, our volunteer coordinator for the festival. Suzanne recently resigned her volunteer duties with PIPS, and we are very sorry to see her leave.

Volunteer duties and details for the festival are listed on our website on the “Volunteer” page, under the “Get Involved” menu. There is also a link on the Wildlife Festival page of our website, that will bring you to this information. To volunteer the day of the festival, please

contact **Lorna Thibeault** at 772-999-3811 or email her at [lmtebo-at-msn.com](mailto:lmtebo-at-msn.com). The date of the festival will be held on Saturday, March 15, 2014 from 10 AM to 4 PM, and help will be needed any time from 7 AM until about 6 PM.

Please contact PIPS directly if you would like to help with festival planning, which is ongoing. You will find contact information for us on the back page of this newsletter, and on the "Contact Us" page of our website at [www.firstrefuge.org](http://www.firstrefuge.org). If you don't have access to a computer or would like more information, you may also call PIPS at 772-202-0697 to leave a message, and someone will get in touch with you.

The photography contest will also be back again at this year's festival! Information about the contest is now available via a link to the contest entry web page, from the festival page of our website. There is a fee to enter; full rules and the entry process are available on this linked contest web page. The deadline to enter is March 1, so get outdoors and take your best shots, and be sure to enter on time!

### **Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge Update**

On January 9, 2014 the Pelican Island NWR celebrated the 150th birthday celebration of Paul Kroegel, Pelican Island's first refuge manager, with its inaugural Pioneer Festival. The festival included authentic pioneer activities and tastings, with food such as swamp cabbage, heart of palm salad and smoked fish, all provided free by Kroegel ancestors (the Timinskys) and the Sembler family.

President Teddy Roosevelt (aka Joe Wiegand) was on hand as emcee, and even a couple of dignitaries from Kroegel's hometown of Chemnitz, Germany came to attend the celebration. Many of Kroegel's descendants attended the festivities and reminisced about growing up with their pioneering grandfather.

Some of the attendees at the event were brought together by Sam Koltinsky of Marvo Entertainment ([www.marvoentertainmentgroup.com](http://www.marvoentertainmentgroup.com)), as a result of research for the production of their documentary on the story of Paul Kroegel and Pelican Island. Mr. Koltinsky spoke about the many unique and interesting "finds" they have come across in their research, and showed a brief promotion video of the upcoming documentary. We are hoping that Mr. Koltinsky will return for our April General Meeting to give a similar presentation.

Thanks to Kevin Lowry, Pelican Island NWR Visitor Services Manager, and to the refuge staff for this great event, keeping the memory of Paul Kroegel alive in Sebastian, and educating the public about Pelican Island!

A story about the festival was featured in the Jan/Feb issue of the US Fish & Wildlife Service's "Refuge Update", which you may read online here—  
[www.fws.gov/refuges/RefugeUpdate/JanFeb\\_2014/kroegel.html](http://www.fws.gov/refuges/RefugeUpdate/JanFeb_2014/kroegel.html).

For the first time in 13 years, no endangered southeastern beach mice were trapped at the refuge in mid-November. Refuge bio-tech Maury Eastwick also documented a significant decline in beach mouse activity on the refuge over the past few months. Refuge staff is unsure of the reason for the decline, but it is believed to be a result of increased predation. Monitoring and recovery efforts of beach mice on the refuge are ongoing.

Just before Christmas, refuge staff confirmed the return of the white-cheeked pintail duck on the refuge. This is the second year in a row that this rare bird has been seen at Centennial Lake at the refuge. Last year, word of its presence attracted birdwatchers from far and wide! For more information about the sighting, visit the PINWR facebook page at [www.facebook.com/PelicanIslandNWR](http://www.facebook.com/PelicanIslandNWR).



Photo: Kevin Lowry, Pelican Island NWR

Pelican Island NWR Complex Manager, Charlie Pelizza, was the speaker at the PIPS October 2013 General Meeting. Charlie gave an overview of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and an update on Pelican Island, and the other three refuges making up the refuge complex—Archie Carr, Everglades Headwaters, and Lake Wales Ridge.

A couple of the major changes to the National Wildlife Refuge System in the past year were budget cuts as a result of the federal budget cuts and “sequestration”, and the appointment of Sally Jewel as the new Secretary of the Dept. of the Interior. The effect of the sequestration provision in the federal budget is an overall reduction in the budget of the refuge system of 8.2%. Charlie said that they expect similar shortfalls to the refuge system budget for the foreseeable future.

The NWRS has also been dealing with issues resulting from climate change. Pelican Island, being a coastal refuge, will likely experience significant issues with projected changes in sea level. Therefore, focus on the development of any susceptible, new infrastructure, is directed at facilities being located on the mainland.

One of the priorities of the Pelican Island refuge is development of the formal visitors' center. Interest in a visitors' center peaked with the centennial celebration of Pelican Island in 2003, and the desire was to acquire the Paul Kroegel homestead at the time. Descendants of Paul Kroegel still live on the property, and their preference is to continue to do so. Therefore, refuge staff have looked at alternative locations available within the city of Sebastian, and their preferred location would be adjacent to Fisherman's Landing. The location will afford great visibility to feature and promote a significant part of Sebastian's heritage, and will also contribute to the “Working Waterfront” project already underway with the city.

Federal budget restrictions, though, make funding for such a new refuge facility hard to imagine. But the opportunity is achievable with public support and the assistance of PIPS. This would be a significant undertaking for our small, volunteer organization. We would need to rely on the help of our members and the community. Therefore, if you have an interest in being involved with this effort, or know of someone who has expertise in fund-raising or marketing such a project, please let us know! There likely are many opportunities for creating community interest and pride in promoting Pelican Island as part of Sebastian's heritage and, in fact, the founding of the country's National Wildlife Refuge System. We need to inspire those who are able to make the project a reality, and to kick-off the campaign to raise the significant funding required for a proper facility that features Sebastian's history in the establishment of the premier wildlife conservation system in the U.S.

**Pelican Island Preservation Society**  
**P.O. Box 781903**  
**Sebastian, Florida 32978-1903**  
772-202-0697  
info@firstrefuge.org

PIPS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization  
Printer on 100% post-consumer recycled paper

### Observations at Pelican Island NWR

By Nancy Soucy

The rattlebox moth is a beautiful insect to spot. On the small side, it is usually noticed when one sees a flash of bright pink for a second. Unless you happen to look closely at one of the rattlebox plant species, this happy little moth may never be seen by a casual observer. Some other names for this ornate moth are bella moth or calico moth.

The bella moth, *Utetheisa ornatrix* (Linnaeus), is diurnal so we are able to see this moth when we go out in the daylight hours on our nature walks. The yellow colors with white stripes are striking with the hindwing being bright pink and only seen well when the moth spreads its wing to take flight. It uses a plant called rattlebox (*Crotalaria* species) as its host plant. It really likes this plant, although there may be other plants that serve as a substitute if necessary. If one finds a rattlebox plant, you will probably find the moth.

When I was visiting PINWR in late October, there were many to be found on the tall flower stalks. I found them just west of the Centennial Trail parking lot and along the beginning of the trail to Joe's Overlook. Most of the *Crotalaria* plants in Florida are invasive, but two are native. While we have several species at the refuge, I have seen mostly smooth rattlebox (*C. pallida*), which is not native. Showy Rattlebox (*C. spectabilis*) is a spectacular specimen when in full bloom, and also not native. The two native species are Avon Park rattlebox and rabbitbells.

Since we really do not want invasive plant species around, the rattlebox moth is a great insect to have on the refuge. The larvae eat the seeds of the rattlebox plant and somewhat limit its production. But, mostly, it is a fun moth to observe. And it drove this photographer crazy, making me run from plant to plant for photo opportunities; it is on the shy side and flies off quickly when approached.



So, next time you visit PINWR, be sure to look for that flash of pink on the plants along the trail. There is always something to notice at the refuge, so come on out and enjoy our wild and wonderful world.

The date above your name is the month/year  
that your membership renewal is/was due.  
Thanks you!

### Pelican Island Preservation Society Membership Application

Please check one:

- ☐ Student (under 18) - \$5/year
- ☐ Individual - \$10/year
- ☐ Family (joint) - \$15/year
- ☐ Contributing - \$50/year
- ☐ Corporate/Business - \$100/year
- ☐ Supporting - \$250/year
- ☐ Life - \$500

Names(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Company \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

*Send completed application and dues to:*

**PIPS Membership**  
**P.O. Box 781903, Sebastian, FL 32978-1903**

Or use your credit/debit card to make a  
donation via our website.