

The Pelican Flyer



June 2016

www.firstrefuge.org

Compiled and written by Carol Lynn Peterson and Tim Glover
This newsletter is available on our website at www.firstrefuge.org/about/librarynewsletters

From the President's Desk

I want to thank our outgoing Board members Debbie Avery and Gini Prasch for their service to PIPS. They both plan on staying involved with our festivals—IR Birding and PI Wildlife festivals, this coming season. Save the date for our 2nd Annual Indian River Birding Festival on October 21-23, 2016. You will find more information about that at <https://www.facebook.com/TreasureCoastBirdartshow>. And congratulations to new incoming Board members Eileen Fretz and Sandy Peterson. Have a great summer everyone!

Steve Massey

Migratory Birds

This year marks the centennial of the Migratory Bird Treaty between the United States and Canada, August 16th being the actual anniversary date. The Treaty was the first major U.S. legislation to protect birds migrating across international borders, and was soon followed by similar agreements with countries such as Mexico, Japan, and Russia. Ornithologist Frank Chapman, who also helped with the establishment of Pelican Island as the first National Wildlife Refuge, said the Treaty, and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act passed by the U.S. Congress in 1918, eliminated the destruction of migratory birds for private gain.

Well-known birder and author Kenn Kaufman said, "National wildlife refuges protect some of the most amazing habitats for birds and other wildlife in the USA. These public lands represent a treasure for all Americans."

I couldn't agree more, said Cynthia Martinez, Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System. Pick up any birding magazine or guide, and you're sure to see so many references to wildlife refuges that you will lose count. We all know the story of the brown pelican whose protection launched the National Wildlife Refuge System in 1903 with the establishment in Florida of Pelican Island bird reservation – now known as a national wildlife refuge. More than 200 refuges have been established for migratory birds.



Photo: Cynthia Martinez, USFWS

In our 113-year history, the National Wildlife Refuge System has made huge strides on behalf of migratory bird conservation, said Martinez. Not only do millions of migratory birds find homes among the National Wildlife Refuge System's stunning array of marshes, wetlands, deserts, forests, great rivers and small prairies. But they also find a home in the urban areas served by wildlife refuges.

Marla Hamilton, a biologist with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service office in Vero Beach, will be the guest speaker at the PIPS meeting this month, to give a presentation on migratory birds. She will talk about events surrounding the centennial celebration, and observations from her studies of migratory shorebirds and their comings and goings from the Treasure Coast of Florida.

Migratory birds provide many environmental benefits -- control of insects and rodents, and seed dispersal -- and are an important and easily observable indicator of overall environmental health.

The PIPS meeting is Monday, June 27th, 7pm at the North Indian River County Library, 1001 Sebastian Blvd. in Sebastian and all are welcome to attend. For more information on the Migratory Bird Treaty Centennial, visit the U.S. Fish & Wildlife at <https://www.fws.gov/birds/mbtreaty100>.

Source: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Friends NewsWire, May 3, 2016, Christian Science Monitor, January 16, 2016

Latest Happenings at the Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Director Dan Ashe visited Pelican Island NWR for a sunrise recognition of the Refuge's 113th birthday. This was an intimate gathering of close friends of Director Ashe and the Refuge who shared perspectives of the Refuge and memories of Pelican Island's 100th birthday 13 years ago. Director Ashe, with the help of others, also installed two Centennial boardwalk planks recognizing the newest Refuges to the refuge system -- Wapato Lake and Mountain Bogs National Wildlife Refuges.

Following his visit to the Refuge, Director Ashe continued his trip with some of the Refuge staff and friends to check out the latest additions and improvements at the Everglades Headwaters NWR. His visit to Pelican Island was a low-key event and, therefore, the public was not invited, but we hope you will enjoy the photos.



Photo: Dan Ashe and Bill Miller, PINWR Project Leader
by Vince Lamb

You may also be interested in learning more about the establishment chronology of refuges at <http://training.fws.gov/history/ListsRefugeDates.html>. And for a more specific list on the establishment of the most recent refuges, you can visit <https://www.fws.gov/refuges/land/RecentRefuges.html>.

Last month, the Centennial Trail was closed for a few weeks, as work was conducted to improve the boardwalk and replace the railings. The boardwalk was also running out of room for new planks, as the refuge system continues to expand! In anticipation of future visits by refuge directors and the addition of more planks, the boardwalk needed to be expanded.



Photo: Centennial Trail and PI Overlook
by Lorna Thibeault

The work to replace the wooden handrails and rusty screws in the planks along the length of the boardwalk is now complete. The new aluminum railing is splinter-free and more secure. All the screws in the planks were replaced with stainless steel screws to extend the life of the walkway. The work took a little over a month from start to finish, and the boardwalk reopened in time for Memorial Day weekend.

A wildlife cam was installed at the overlook on the Centennial boardwalk by the Sebastian River Area Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber received funding from Indian River County for the project to purchase the camera and installation. The Chamber also worked with PIPS to fund the monthly maintenance costs associated with the camera and website.

The wildlife camera is fixed and takes an image every several minutes. You can view the images from the camera on its dedicated website at <http://pelicanislandwebcam.com>. There are links to view the archived images over a period of time, and also a brief video.

PIPS continues to work with Refuge staff on future projects for the Refuge. There are plans to build a new, small facility at the Refuge that will include new office space for staff and interns. Construction of this new facility should be underway before the end of the year.

Staff at the Refuge is often lacking due to budget constraints. Therefore, volunteers are very important and helpful to them in day-to-day operations. They currently are in need of volunteers to help with maintenance of trails, kiosks, and mowing. There are also opportunities to help with clerical administrative assistance, and roving interpreters to meet and greet Refuge visitors. Please contact the Refuge at 772-581-5777 for more information on completing the application process.

One of the additions to the Refuge that PIPS is interested in helping with, is a photo blind on the pond adjacent to the Centennial Trail. We have mentioned the project to Refuge staff and need to discuss it with them more, to find out if this is something of interest. The pond attracts many birds, especially in the winter season as migratory birds arrive. The blind would help visitors enjoy viewing the wildlife with less disturbance to them. It could also provide a location for more information about bird species and wildlife visitors to the Refuge.

Summer Fertilizer Ban

The Marine Resources Council is reminding Floridians who live along the Indian River Lagoon of the ordinance passed in 2014 banning fertilizer use on lawns from June 1-Sept. 30. Now that the rainy season is again upon us and the chance for harmful algal blooms is high, we do not want a repeat of the summer of 2013 when a massive fish kill did occur in our local waters as a result of toxic algal blooms. Find out more at www.BeFloridianNow.org and take the pledge for a fertilizer-free summer.

Here are some ways you can keep your lawn green without the use of harmful additives:

- 1) Look for fertilizers at Garden Centers with “0” as the first two numbers on the label, as in (0-0-6). These safe fertilizers do not contain nitrogen or phosphorous. A number of these summer-safe products are made right here in Florida!
- 2) Apply micronutrients such as zinc and manganese as well as some iron, all of which help keep your lawn healthy.
- 3) Enrich your soil with homemade compost or use composted chicken or cow manure.
- 4) Leave lawn clippings on the lawn; blowing clippings into local waterways helps feed algal blooms.
- 5) Choose heat-tolerant Florida plants that require less water and fertilizer year-round.
- 6) Replace your lawn with drought-tolerant ground covers and install attractive stone pathways with gravel or shell pavers. Add a butterfly garden.

Above all, prove that you truly care about your environment by making some simple changes in summer lawn care. The Lagoon will thank you.

For additional information about local fertilizer restrictions, visit www.fssr.org/IRL-be-a-life-saver.htm for the IRL Coalition’s “Be a Life Saver for the Indian River Lagoon” brochure, or <http://goo.gl/qqYfv3> for the Indian River Neighborhood Association’s “Healing the Lagoon” brochure.

Volunteering at Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge

The following is a first-person account by Doug Sutherland, Refuge Volunteer and PIPS member, our featured PINWR volunteer in this month’s Newsletter:

In the summer of 2012, within weeks of moving to the Sebastian area, I found myself on what I now know as the “Centennial Trail” parking lot at the PINWR, completing paperwork to volunteer at the Refuge. Little did I know what would follow...



Photo: Doug with students at Joe’s Overlook
by Sandee Dawdy

I began by helping out in the butterfly garden, then moved to mowing and trimming of the hiking trails and upkeep of the kiosks. In the fall of 2012, I began training as a tour guide for the winter (Nov.-Mar.) Wildlife Tours at the Refuge. I transitioned to a Tour Guide for the 2013-14 season and have been doing so ever since.

As I spent more and more time at the Refuge, I was exposed to interesting biological opportunities--bird surveys, fisheries surveys, and sea grass surveys--all of which I have participated in. I have also been trained by the USFWS in how to use and maintain ATV’S and UTV’S as well as boat operation. I have learned to maintain string trimmers, blowers, and generators, besides. I have enjoyed working with people by serving as a nature guide on pontoon boat tours at the PIPS annual Wildlife Festival and assisting ‘Alternative Spring Break’ college students with performing designated tasks on the Refuge.

Most importantly, I have learned that there is more to this country’s first designated Refuge than just Pelican Island. Impoundments and ponds, trails, hammocks, and ‘old fields’ are all vital and integral habitats on the Refuge. And the majority of the 5000+ acres of the Refuge are mainly under water--all part of the Indian River Lagoon!

Because PINWR is just one of 4 Refuges that comprise the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge Complex, I have also been afforded the opportunity to assist at some of these other Refuges. I’ve done Jaywatch at Lake Wales Ridge NWR and bird surveys and turtle talks on the beaches of Archie Carr NWR.

So, the many hours I have spent on the PINWR have quickly turned into four years. My time there has never been dull--challenging, sometimes surprising, but always fulfilling.



Photo: Centennial Trail, by Sandee Dawdy

Pelican Island Preservation Society
P.O. Box 781903
Sebastian, Florida 32978-1903

Summer Guided Sea Turtle Walks

Sebastian Inlet State Park began taking sea turtle walk reservations on May 15th for June's turtle walk programs. On June 15th, between 10:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., reservations for July's turtle walks may be made. The tours have limited space available. Those with reservations meet on their scheduled night at the Sebastian Inlet Fishing Museum, 1425 North Highway A1A, Vero Beach, FL 32963. The program starts promptly at 9 p.m. See <https://www.floridastateparks.org/park-events/Sebastian-Inlet> for further information and participation instructions. You may call the State Park at 772-388-2750.

Archie Carr NWR also offers guided sea turtle walks. The Sea Turtle Conservancy offers walks during June and July on Monday-Friday nights between June 1st and July 28th. Space is limited to 22 people per night. Cost is \$15 per person, paid in advance, to reserve your space. The minimum age is 7 years old. You must provide your own transportation to the Barrier Island Center. Additional information is available once you have made a reservation. Book your reservations online at www.seaturtlewalks.org.

Even though sea turtles prefer to lay their eggs by privacy of nightfall, it does happen occasionally that a female loggerhead will nest by daylight. On a recent morning in front of Mulligan's on the beach in Vero Beach, a female began laying her nest at 8:00 a.m. Go onto Nathaniel Harrington's blog entitled Nesting Season for June 4, 2016 to see photos he recorded of this spectacular natural occurrence--
<http://portfolio-verobeach.com/home/nestingseaturtle>.

The PIPS newsletter is published in the months of January, April, June and October. Subscription is included with membership and delivered by e-mail only, unless requested otherwise, or no usable e-mail. Please contact us to notify of change of address or e-mail.

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

Thank you!

Pelican Island Preservation Society
Membership Application

Please check one:

- ☐ Student (under 18) - \$5/year
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