



PELICAN FLYER

January 2010

From the President's Desk

By Steve Massey

On December 5th, honored guest Ken Salazar, Secretary of the Interior, visited the Pelican Island Refuge. During his visit, Salazar dedicated a new section of the Centennial Trail and toured the remainder, ending at the overlook for Pelican Island. He mentioned that one of his goals after becoming Secretary of the Interior was to visit Pelican Island, the nation's first designated National Wildlife Refuge.

During his remarks, Salazar discussed the growing threat of climate change to the entire National Wildlife Refuge System. He mentioned that birds from the north are returning to the south about two weeks earlier than they previously had. In contrast to his cautionary comments, he stated that he was especially impressed with how rangers and volunteers help conserve Pelican Island local wildlife.

Shortly after his visit to Pelican Island and Florida, he attended the Copenhagen Climate Summit.

I was pleased to meet Secretary Salazar and was impressed with how personable he is. He met with PINWR staff and PIPS group representatives, and listened to our individual comments about job roles, as well as our responsibilities and interests with the wildlife refuge system. Before leaving, he stated that Pelican Island was certainly noted for its historical significance. I believe he will be returning at some point for another memorable visit.

His visit highlighted the importance of the wonderful memorial boardwalk that leads to the observation deck overlooking Pelican Island itself. So, please plan to visit the refuge with your friends and families if you have not already done so! Or plan to come again and see the new planks that Secretary Salazar and the other representatives of the Department of the Interior dedicated during their visit to Pelican Island.

We are also looking forward to seeing you at the Pelican Island Wildlife Festival on March 13th. – Steve Massey, President

P. S. Secretary Salazar announced late last year "... the launch of an extensive public service radio campaign urging Americans to connect with nature and visit a National Wildlife Refuge. Americans can take pride in the tremendous beauty and diversity of refuge lands dedicated to the protection of wildlife habitat." Salazar added. "By visiting these places and encouraging their children to forge a connection with nature, they can help ensure vital wildlife conservation efforts will continue for generations to come" (US Fish & Wildlife Service, *Friends NewsWire*, November 2009).

Please see the story and the photo of the commemorative boardwalk on the back page of this issue.

Sea Turtle Education and Conservation at the Barrier Island Ecosystem Center

During the January meeting of PIPS, Sharon Balavage of the Caribbean Conservation Corp will present a lecture about her work at the Barrier Island Ecosystem Center on Melbourne Beach. Sharon Balavage is responsible for the CCC's educational and volunteer activities at the Barrier Island Center. She coordinates summer day camps and stewardship workshops at the facility as well as assists with the CCC's special events in Southern Brevard County.

The center itself provides a great place for education and hiking around the unique habitats of the barrier island. The staff and volunteers at this center are also engaged in the work of conservation and restoration of the surrounding habitats in the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge.

The Caribbean Conservation Corp (CCC) is the oldest sea turtle organization in the world, started by Dr. Archie Carr in 1959, for which the Refuge is named.

The meeting will be Monday, January 25, 7 PM at the North Indian River County Library, 1001 Sebastian Blvd. in Sebastian. For more information about PIPS and other activities ongoing at our refuges, please visit our website. For more information about the Barrier Island Center, visit the website at www.barrierislandcenter.com or the Caribbean Conservation Corp at www.cccturtle.org.

Visit PIPS on the web at www.pelicanislandfriends.org

Refuge Update – Winter is for the Birds

By Kristen Kneifl, Refuge Biologist

Cooler temperatures have arrived, and along with the change of seasons come thousands of migrating birds seeking warmer climes for food and rest. The winter months provide prime viewing for waterfowl and other migratory birds. Migratory waterfowl require staging and wintering areas that have ample food and cover habitat. The diversity of the refuge wetlands and freshwater ponds provide the needed plant and animal resources to maintain their migratory energy demands. Wading birds need shallow water for foraging and areas with woody vegetation for roosting. These birds utilize the impoundments, salt marshes, interior wetlands, and the estuarine system. Many of the migratory shorebirds spend up to nine months of the year in migration from the Arctic to the Antarctic and back again. Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge provides important wintering and staging habitat that supplements their migratory needs.

Florida is fortunate to have a bounty of places to view these winged creatures. A few of my favorites include Merritt Island NWR, Viera Wetlands, and of course Pelican Island NWR. In the past few months, refuge staff and volunteers have noted the white pelican returning, and of course the “snowbirds”. The Refuge is fortunate to have Andy Bankert, international award winning birder who conducts monthly surveys on the terrestrial lands, impoundments, and ponds within the Refuge. It has been humbling and rewarding to have such a trained eye and ear conducting these surveys. Andy has counted upwards of 1,000 individuals and 50 different species in one day. Some highlights and a few rare sightings from his surveys include roseate spoonbills, peregrine falcon, wood thrush, and the clay-colored sparrow. The National Audubon Society’s traditional Christmas Bird Count was recently conducted at the Refuge and other natural areas. Thank you to all who assisted with this event. The information collected provides researchers with long-term trends of winter bird populations and land managers with useful data.

Another great way to track birds is for the whole family to join the Great Backyard Bird Count. Check out the website below to participate. Also, be sure to check out this year’s Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival for some great bird watching tours and informative talks. Happy New Year and Happy Birding!

Christmas Bird Count - www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/index.html. Great Backyard Bird Count - www.birdcount.org. Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival - www.nbbd.com/fly/.

Update on other refuges managed by the Pelican Island NWR Complex

- **Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge** – Southeastern beach mouse trapping north of Treasure Shores was conducted thanks to a great inter-agency collaborative effort. No mice were captured, but there are plans to continue these efforts to determine if the mice are still occupying areas of Archie Carr.
- **Lake Wales Ridge** – Researchers from the University of Kentucky are collecting data and radio collaring black bears on the ridge. The black bear is a state-listed species due to habitat loss and fragmentation. Natural areas such as the refuge are vital to the bear’s survival.

National Wildlife Refuge Association News

National Wildlife Refuge Association, *The Flyer*, November 2009

2009 Refuge Photo Contest Winners Announced

The winners of the 2009 Refuge Photo Contest were announced on October 28th, 2009. The top prize, \$5,000 generously donated by the ATP Oil and Gas Corporation, will be awarded to Ted Steinke of Layton, Utah for an explosive image of northern harriers taken at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (MBR).

For more information and to view all of the winning entries, please visit the NWRA website at: www.refugeassociation.org/contest/2009winners.html

2009 Duck Stamp Artwork Picked

An American widgeon painted by Maryland artist Robert Bealle was awarded the top prize in the 2009 Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest. Each year, wildlife artists submit paintings depicting waterfowl that they hope will grace the next year’s duck stamp. The contest is the only art competition run by the US Federal government. The 2010-2011 Duck Stamp featuring Mr. Bealle’s widgeon will be available to purchase in June 2010.

For more information and to view the winning artwork, please visit the USFWS at: www.fws.gov/duckstamps/

Visit PIPS on the web at www.pelicanislandfriends.org

Brown Pelican Populations Recovered, Removed for Endangered Species List

Salazar: Brown Pelican Recovery is “an Amazing Success Story”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Tom Strickland, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Sam Hamilton today announced that the brown pelican, a species once decimated by the pesticide DDT, has recovered and is now being removed from the list of threatened and endangered species under the Endangered Species Act.

“At a time when so many species of wildlife are threatened, we once in a while have an opportunity to celebrate an amazing success story,” Salazar stated. “Today is such a day. The brown pelican is back!”

The brown pelican was first declared endangered in 1970 under the Endangered Species Preservation Act, a precursor to the current Endangered Species Act. Since then, thanks to a ban on DDT and efforts by states, conservation organizations, private citizens, and many other partners, the bird has recovered. There are now more than 650,000 brown pelicans found across Florida and the Gulf and Pacific Coasts, as well as in the Caribbean and Latin America. (US Department of the Interior News Release, November 11, 2009)

To read the full news release, please visit the USDOJ at: www.doi.gov/news/09_News_Releases/111109.html

National Wildlife Refuge Association: 2009 Year in Review

In the past year the National Wildlife Refuge System and America’s wildlife expanded as administration policy shifted, and a significant influx of federal funding for conservation programs and operational support has started to address important needs.

The Refuge System - in terms of total acreage - is now considerably larger than it was only one year ago and provides additional protection to a stunning array of exotic corals, seabirds and other marine animals in the new marine national monuments.

Congress passed two record budget increases for the Refuge System this year, demonstrating powerful support for conserving America’s wildlife heritage. The budget for FY09 passed in March, after a continuing resolution (CR) allowed federal agencies to continue operating on FY08 budgets into the new year. The much-needed increase brought the budget for the Refuge System to \$462.8 million and funded the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at \$42.5 million for NWRS land acquisition.

The Refuge System saw a second major increase in funding this fall when Congress passed the Interior Appropriations Bill for FY 2010. The \$40 million increase brought the NWRS budget to \$503 million, signifying the most robust NWRS budget in years and reaffirming Congress’s commitment to providing safeguards for wildlife such as black-footed ferrets, peregrine falcons, and caribou. Additionally, Refuge System funding for land acquisition within the LWCF was doubled in FY10 to \$86 million, giving the FWS a powerful tool to acquire habitat to protect West Indian manatees and other species. The effect of such funding is to strengthen the world’s preeminent wildlife conservation system (National Wildlife Refuge Association, *The Flyer*, December 2009, www.refugeassociation.org/new-publications/fldec09.html).

Important Reminders!

Attention all PIPS members, this is our last newsletter before the 18th celebration of upcoming Pelican Wildlife Festival on Saturday, March 13. We hope that you can all come and enjoy the event and support our local Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge! For the first time this year, this event will be held from 10 AM until 6 PM. As a result, our music schedule and food offerings will change slightly. We need plenty of volunteer help – now and especially the day of the event. If you are interested in helping out, please email us at info@pelicanislandfriends.org, or contact PINWR Ranger Joanna Webb at 772-562-3909, x258. You will find more information about the festival as it becomes available on the 2010 Wildlife Festival page of our website.

Volunteers are also needed for the new monthly workdays at the Pelican Island refuge. Please consider joining the “Pelican Pals” for some hands on assistance for the refuge and its residents. The first workday will be Thursday, January 21 from 8 AM to noon. Please visit our website for more dates, or for more information and to volunteer, please call Joanna Webb at the number above.

This is also the last newsletter prior to our membership renewal month, which begins on April 1 each year. We encourage your continued support of our advocacy for the National Wildlife Refuge System and Pelican Island itself. Please note that we now include your membership expiration month/year on the mailing label on the back page. You will find more information about membership on the back page and on our website too. Please let us know if you have any questions about your membership, or if you believe the information is not correct. We have recently set up a new database for our membership, and undoubtedly there will still be some “bugs” to work out. Thanks for your support!

Visit PIPS on the web at www.pelicanislandfriends.org

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

Observations of Pelican Island NWR

by Nancy Soucy

For the Christmas holiday, my sister came down from Connecticut. Every time she comes to Florida, we visit Pelican Island Wildlife Refuge. One time in 2007, we saw a beautiful bobcat lounging in the tall grass clump in the empty parking lot, and as we parked and watched, it reluctantly and lazily walked off down the paved walkway toward the pond. We decided that day to leave without getting out of the car so that the cat would have its privacy.

During the cold snap of Christmas week, we decided it would be perfect temperature for a walk. Although the refuge was very quiet, we enjoyed the visit. Indian Paintbrush (*Gallardia*) and Butterfly Pea wild flowers were among the blooming plants, along with Coneflowers and Tassel flowers. We were delighted to find that new wildlife refuges were added in 2009 as we started along the boardwalk displaying the names. We searched the individual boards for Connecticut listings. I wondered how many visitors do the same, looking for boards with names of refuges from their home states. Arriving at the overlook to Pelican Island, we saw several White Pelicans along with the browns on the island. My sister was amazed at how large they were.

When I left the refuge that day, I was happy to be reminded of the beauty and uniqueness of our park. Seeing the view through the eyes on one who does not often see the sights Florida offers gave me a renewed appreciation for all we have here in the Sunshine State, including our precious wildlife refuges.

Boardwalk to Pelican Island Observation platform



Photo by Nancy Soucy

The date following 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/yr.
- Individual - \$10/yr.
- Family (joint) - \$15/yr.
- Contributing \$50/yr.
- Corporate/Business - \$100/yr.
- Supporting - \$250/yr.
- Life - \$500

Name(s) _____

Company _____

Street _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Send completed application and dues to:
PIPS Membership
P.O. Box 781903, Sebastian, FL 32978-1903

Or use your credit card online at our web address below!