



PELICAN FLYER

June 2010

From the President's Desk

By Steve Massey

It was a beautiful morning when I arrived at the refuge. Ann Michael, her son Gordon and grandson A J were preparing to drive to the overlook area. I rode with them and on our way we talked about old times that we spent together, living in Orchid and Wabasso Florida. We talked about Joe and the variety of palm trees he had planted on their homestead. Ann was happy to see the numerous butterflies that were flying around the refuge.

When we arrived at the overlook, we all went out to view the great scenery, as we had done on a previous visit - it was as great as it had been before. As the dedication took place, it was evident that the invited guests were great fans of Joe and his family. Many inspiring stories were shared about how the refuge evolved and the roles that Joe and other citrus families played in its history. At the end of the ceremony, Ann and Gordon spoke about how proud Joe would have been of the overlook and the affects it would have on the visitors coming to the refuge.

When we left, the family was overwhelmed with the responses from the guests and speakers and how inspiring the overlook was to everyone. Thanks to everyone who made this such a special day for the Michael family and the refuge!

The Greater Everglades Initiative: Protecting habitats from the Everglades headwaters to the boundaries of Florida Panther NWR and Big Cypress Preserve

The presentation this month for the Pelican Island Preservation Society General Meeting will be by Pelican Island/Lake Wales Ridge National Wildlife Refuge Complex manager, Charlie Pelizza. Charlie has not been seen much by his staff over the past several months, as he has been busy working with several other parties on protecting wildlife and their habitats throughout central Florida.

The project is an offshoot of the acquisition of a magnificent piece of property, by The Nature Conservancy near the Disney Wilderness Preserve in the recent past. It is also a concept initiated by the late Sam Hamilton, who was the Director of the US Fish & Wildlife Service and passed away unexpectedly in February. Sam's vision and realization is that we will never be able to conserve enough habitat through land acquisition alone, necessary for the protection of all wildlife species. Therefore the Service needs to think beyond the boundaries of its managed properties and ones that it could realistically expect to be able to acquire. The Service needed to partner with private land owners providing incentives, education and conservation easements to have a much broader and more effective influence on protecting wildlife habitats and the species that depend on them.

What this means for central Florida is a much more far-reaching effort to protect and restore the unique and rare habitats from the headwaters of the Everglades to Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge and the Big Cypress Preserve in southwest Florida - the majority of the watershed of the Everglades itself. The effort will provide linkages and corridors between existing conservation lands, important for shifting wildlife patterns as climate change affects Florida. It may include the establishment of some new National Wildlife Refuges in central Florida and the expansion of a few others.

Some of the key species and habitats providing direction for the conservation efforts are the Florida grasshopper sparrow, Everglades snail kite, red-cockaded woodpecker, Audubon's crested caracara, Florida panther and black bear, scrub, pine flatwoods, wet and dry prairie, and a diversity of wetlands.

Needless to say, this is a huge undertaking for Charlie and the others working on this initiative. Be sure and join us for this program to learn about this exciting project and many more details about the efforts to protect some of the oldest and rarest habitats in Florida!

The meeting will be Monday, June 28, 7 PM at the North Indian River County Library in Sebastian and everyone is welcome to attend. For more information, please visit us at our website listed below.

Visit PIPS on the web at www.pelicanislandfriends.org

Creature Feature - the Wood Stork

By Kristen Beck, Master Naturalist

This is the only stork in America and the largest of the wading birds. A true angler, the wood stork feeds by wiggling a toe to attract fish to nibble. They also feel around in the shallows with their beaks and once it feels the fish, it grabs the fish up with incredible speed.

The wood stork stands about 3 feet tall, has a bald head that is grayish, their wings are white with black feathers. The number of birds has been declining because of water management practices. They feed in shallow waters.

Right now there are a few dozen nests on the southwest end of Pelican Island. The wood stork is a colonial nester, nesting in large groups, usually in mangroves and Cyprus trees. Once hatched a baby stork weighs about 2 ounces and takes about 8 to 10 weeks to grow to fledgling size.

The White House Is Listening

By Greg Siekaniec, Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System

Could this be the next chapter in wildlife, land and water conservation history in America?

The White House Conference on America's Great Outdoors, held April 16, ignited hope in those of us who have been waiting for years for an administration to be this interested in the Refuge System and conservation across the landscape.

The president spoke about the pursuit and partnership of conservation outside of Washington – by state and local governments, by tribes and by private groups – “so we can write a new chapter in the protection of rivers, wildlife habitats, historic sites and the great landscapes of our country.” “... we're called to take the long view to preserve our national heritage – because in doing so we fulfill some of the responsibilities that falls to all of us as Americans, as inhabitants of this small planet.”

So, where do we go from here? First, make your voice heard. Go to the Department of the Interior Web site to join the conversation: www.doi.gov//americasgreatoutdoors. Scroll down the page to the link to “Share Your Story,” where you can tell the White House and the Department just how important wildlife refuges, waterfowl production areas, conservation easements and large working landscapes are to you and your community.

Then there's the link to “Share Your Ideas & Join the Conversation,” where you can tell the administration your thoughts about what should be happening regarding land conservation.

President Obama launched the national dialogue about conservation in America following the April 16 White House Conference on America's Great Outdoors, where more than 600 invited sports enthusiasts, conservationists and others joined in the first such conference in more than a century. Americans are now being encouraged to share their ideas about community-level conservation.

Second, the Secretary of the Interior will be holding public listening sessions. Frequent the Department Web page (www.doi.gov) regularly to make sure you get to one of those public sessions.
US Fish & Wildlife Service “Friends NewsWire”

Butterfly Update

The presentation at our April General Meeting was on butterflies of Florida. A field guide to Florida butterflies was displayed and some folks were interested in purchasing a copy. Unfortunately that guide is no longer available, but we understand that a similar one is available for sale at Rock City Gardens nursery in Wabasso. There are others available too and you will find information about some of them on the “Events & Volunteering” page of our website.

This newsletter is published four times a year – January, April, June and October, corresponding with our General Membership Meetings. Subscription is included with membership and is also available on our website.

Please contact us at the address below for change of address.

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Funding for the Refuge System

By Walt Stieglitz

In previous issues of the Flyer we have discussed the critical funding problem facing the National Wildlife Refuge System. Increases the past two years have provided some relief, however funding needs for refuge operations and maintenance (O&M) are well above that which is currently available. Unfortunately, the Administration's budget request for Fiscal Year 2011 represents a cut in O&M funding compared to FY2010.

The CARE (Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement) group has recommended an O&M funding level of \$578 million in FY2011. PIPS has submitted written testimony to the appropriate House and Senate subcommittees urging them to support the \$578 million for O&M as well as \$300 million for refuge land acquisition from the LWCF (Land & Water Conservation Fund).

At the local level, inadequate funding has significantly affected refuge management programs. A central staff currently manages three refuges - Pelican Island, Archie Carr, and Lake Wales Ridge. Recent funding increases have allowed increasing the staff to three permanent full time employees and two term employees. Five employees to manage three refuges, two of which are urban in nature, simply doesn't provide the manpower to do an acceptable job of refuge management. No one on the staff has law enforcement authority, which makes it very difficult to protect refuge resources. The recommended funding level, if appropriated, would provide a badly needed boost for the refuge system, which, in turn, should increase funding for refuge management at our local level.

PIPS Membership Renewals Now Due

April was the start of our membership renewal season and we hope that you will consider continuing your support of PIPS and the Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge. PIPS is dedicated to helping support the Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge through advocacy, fund raising, educating the public about Pelican Island, and the need to protect the entire refuge system for wildlife and habitat conservation.

"Friends organizations are crucial to the collective mission of the Refuge System to conserve and protect the wildlife of this great nation. Friends organizations are essential to helping millions of Americans understand that their actions today determine the legacy we leave for tomorrow – and they are the motivation for a new generation of conservationists."

Our memberships run from April through March and you will find the date our records show that your membership is/was due, on the mailing label on the back of this newsletter. You may renew by sending us a donation by mail, at our upcoming June General Meeting, or online through our website (where you will find more information about membership), using your credit card or PayPal account. If you have any questions about your membership, please let us know by either sending an email to the address listed on page 2, or calling Tim Glover at 772-589-0636.

Gulf Oil Spill Information from the Service

The US Fish & Wildlife Service has created a special website with lots of information about the effects of the oil spill and the efforts they are taking to help protect wildlife and clean up the damage it is creating. The site includes daily updates on collection of dead or injured of wildlife, fact sheets, maps, refuges being affected, and information on how you can help. Please visit the website at www.fws.gov/home/dhoilspill.

PIPS Annual Elections, April 2010

Current PIPS members voted on this year's nominations to our Board of Directors at our April Annual/General Meeting. We would like to welcome Sandy Peterson as our newest Board members. You may have noticed in our masthead that there are still a few vacancies for Directors. If you are interested in being a Director and helping out, it is never too late! IF so, please let us know by sending us an email or calling Walt Stieglitz at 772-663-9750.

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Endangered Species Day at PINWR

Text and photos by Nancy Soucy

On May 22, I attended Endangered Species Day at PINWR with a friend. The beautiful day presented itself with clear blue skies and a warm breeze. The main event of the day was the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officially opening "Joe's Overlook", a gorgeous observation deck giving the public viewing access into the salt marsh wetlands. This deck was named in memory of Joe Michael, a man who fought to protect and preserve this land.

Arriving at the overlook, we joined our tour group and took our first pass with the binoculars not seeing much other than lots of Great Southern White butterflies. As we relaxed and enjoyed the view, birds came into view on wing and in the water. Ospreys did their call overhead, joining White Ibis and a Great Egret doing flybys. A Reddish Egret danced in the shallows off in the distance, only visible with bins. An immature White Ibis sitting close by on a dead tree with its speckled brown and white colors prompted some discussion on the molting of the species.

Suddenly, there appeared a glint of pink in the sky! I yelled "Roseate Spoonbill", pointing out her flight path off in the distance. There were oohs and aaahs, as several found her. With my binoculars I continued to search where she landed and suddenly my lens were filled with White Pelicans and Spoonbills

moving as a group into a clearing. This enabled the tour members to see them through bins and the mounted telescope. We counted at least 30 White Pelicans and 4 Spoonbills, but there were probably more. One of the tour attendees was so happy, saying she had never seen a White Pelican before. I high-fived her, congratulating her on a new life bird for her bird list.

In the van, on the way back to the event booths, we saw a Wood Stork in the mangroves. Just a fitting sight on this Endangered Species Day. Thanks, Joe Michael, for your commitment and your effort to preserve this very special place.



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

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Send completed application and dues to:

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