



PELICAN FLYER

October 2009

From the President's Desk

By Steve Massey

I was visiting the Pelican Island NWR on October 10, the day Suzanne Valencia and another volunteer were working on gardening chores at the butterfly garden. Suzanne does great work transforming this plot into a flowering garden of native plants, but she always needs more volunteers. Now that the weather will be turning cooler soon, we hope that you will join Suzanne by volunteering. If you are interested, please contact Suzanne at 321-984-0604.

I also saw visitors out enjoying our refuge. I noticed continued improvements to the refuge, including the recently opened Joe Michael Overlook. Soon, refuge rangers will be adding interpretive panels for the butterfly garden with information about native butterflies and the plants that they rely on for both food and laying eggs. We hope you'll take the time to stop by every now and then to see the improvements and enjoy the refuge.

Real-Life Aliens: Invasive Plants and Animals in South Florida

Exotic invasive species have become an increasing problem as more and more non-native species are introduced and become established in our local natural areas. Art Roybal, senior staff biologist with the Vero Beach U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service office, will address this topic as the guest speaker at our general meeting this month.

He will first discuss the most destructive invasive animals, especially reptiles, that threaten Florida ecosystems. He will then outline programs in place and new initiatives being developed to manage invasive species, as well as discuss what the public can do to help prevent the spread of invasive species.

The meeting will take place on Monday, October 26, 7:00 PM at the North Indian River County Library in Sebastian. The meeting is free, and all are welcome to attend.

Douglas Brinkley's *The Wilderness Warrior*

Author Douglas Brinkley has written a new biography about President Theodore Roosevelt entitled *The Wilderness Warrior*.

"Destined to become a classic, this extraordinary and timeless biography, offers a penetrating and colorful look at Roosevelt's naturalist achievements, a legacy now more important than ever. Raising a Paul Revere-like alarm about American wildlife in peril—including buffalo, manatees, antelope, egrets, and elk—Roosevelt saved entire species from probable extinction. As we face the problems of global warming, overpopulation, and sustainable land management, this imposing leader's stout resolution to protect our environment is an inspiration and a contemporary call to arms for us all" (HarperCollins website).

Several other noteworthy reviews can be found on the Internet, and of special interest is a full-length interview with Brinkley and C-Span's Brian Lamb. See the website: <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/287150-1>.

Pelican Island Wildlife Festival Planning

Planning for the 2010 Pelican Island Wildlife Festival is underway, and we need your help! We are always looking for volunteers to help out with the event, either as part of the planning process, the day of the event, or both. This year's event will be on Saturday, March 13. If you are interested in helping out, please **contact us at info@pelicanislandfriends.org**, or call Joanna Webb, Refuge Ranger at the Pelican Island NWR. Joanna can be reached at 772-562-3909, ext. 258.

Refuge Update – Exotic Species Control

By Kristen Kneifl, Refuge Biologist

Most Floridians are familiar with exotic species, such as the Brazilian pepper tree and Burmese Python. However, many other exotic species have become invasive as well and can be destructive to native habitats and even kill native wildlife.

Federal law requires that the barrier island uplands of Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge provide additional foraging, resting, and nesting grounds for birds and other wildlife. These lands were previously used for agriculture, such as citrus groves. The citrus groves, when removed, have caused much disturbance and have provided ripe conditions for exotic plants to take hold.

Guinea grass, para grass, Australian pine, Brazilian pepper, cogon grass, and natal grass are the primary invasive species that thrive in disturbed areas on the uplands at Pelican Island NWR. These invasive species have the ability to overwhelm native vegetation and create a monoculture with little diversity or sustenance.

During the wetter, summer months, the exotic plants proliferate at a much faster rate. Staff and volunteers have been working hard to eradicate these species, using both mechanical and chemical treatments. Some of you may have noticed brown, dying vegetation. Rest assured that these are dead exotic plants and that we are using strategic management techniques to restore a more diverse landscape. The habitats have been, and are in the process of being restored to historical maritime hammock conditions.

A few months ago, the refuge was selected to participate in an invasive mapping program. This program utilizes volunteers to create maps using both a global positioning system and ArcMap. Volunteers use these instruments to identify species of exotics, gather percent coverage of each species, and categorize each. The information gathered will help management focus their resources and better evaluate the success of present eradication techniques and efforts. The hope is that each year the areas of exotic species will grow smaller and smaller. If anyone is interested in volunteering with exotic removal or mapping of invasive species, please contact Kristen Kneifl or Joanna Webb at 772-562-3909.

Vegetation is not the only type of exotic. Due to its tropical location and international trade activities, Florida is a mecca for exotic wildlife species. Exotic wildlife can include fish, reptiles, mammals, birds, and invertebrates. To learn more, be sure and attend this month's PIPS meeting with Art Roybal.

Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders Ride Again

Annual Theodore Roosevelt Association Meeting, October 23-25, 2009

The 90th annual Theodore Roosevelt Association (TRA) meeting will be held this year in Tampa, Florida. "Come to the city where Theodore Roosevelt and the Rough Riders assembled for his 'Crowded Hour' in Cuba in 1898. Tampa is now one of America's most vibrant America's cities and remains closely associated with Theodore Roosevelt" (TRA website).

A weekend of activities is planned. For more information, please visit the TRA website at: www.trassociation.org and click on "Events".

Celebrate National Wildlife Refuge Week!

"What's the most natural place to marvel at autumn's show? A National Wildlife Refuge is hard to beat — and you can see for yourself during National Wildlife Refuge Week, October 11-17, 2009."

"Whether you prefer to admire the fall colors, thrill to a skyful of migratory birds, explore a mountain trail or learn about the cultural resources that are part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's conservation mission, you can find what you like at a National Wildlife Refuge. National Wildlife Refuge Week celebrates the richness of the 550 locations that make up America's National Wildlife Refuge System. And it's a great opportunity to find an outdoor family event near where you live."

"President Teddy Roosevelt established tiny Pelican Island in Florida in 1903 as the first National Wildlife Refuge. Roosevelt's mission was clear: protect Pelican Island's birds from poachers and plume hunters," said Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. "And with that simple promise of wildlife protection, the National Wildlife Refuge System was born. It is my hope that citizens across the country will take advantage of this weeklong celebration to experience wildlife in their natural

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habitats and play a firsthand role in conservation by participating in special events and programs, or simply observing and enjoying the great outdoors at a local refuge.”

To read the full U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service announcement of National Wildlife Refuge Week, visit www.fws.gov/refuges/news/celebrateNwrWeek_093009.html.

Refuge Funding Update

A U.S. government report published by the Government Accounting Office (GAO) concludes that federal funding for wildlife refuges is not keeping up with the growing problems at refuges. The “...GAO specifically pointed to the impact of development, including the conversion to agricultural or industrial use of land near refuges, as contributing to habitat problems of nearly half the nation’s wildlife refuges. The report found that invasive plants and habitat fragmentation were the Refuge System’s leading problems, and both were increasing on more than half the wildlife refuges....” (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service “Refuge Update”, Nov/Dec 2008).

Citizen Science

“One of the many things that the proliferation of home computers and the internet has made possible is the participation of average citizens in scientific research.”

“What is citizen science? ‘Citizen science is a way for individuals to learn about birds, plants, insects, science and conservation by participating in real scientific studies....’ Citizen science is also a way for researchers to expand the scope of their observations from that of their staff and cooperating graduate students to the backyards and wild areas around the country.”

Some of the citizen science projects were developed for specific wildlife refuges, but many more are now found by searching the Internet. The following are a few that may be of interest:

Project Bud Burst

“Project Bud Burst is a study of phenology. Phenology is the relationship between climate and periodic biological events such as bird migration and plant flowering. Dr. Sandra Henderson is enlisting volunteers nationwide to observe when plants first leaf and flower. The date will be compiled and analyzed to detect trends or changes, or to see if the dates are remaining constant. For more information and to volunteer, see: www.windows.ucar.edu/citizen_science/budburst.”

Join the Hunt for Bees

“Bee populations have come under increasing stress. Much of our food is pollinated by bees, so this growing problem could have a serious impact on both bees and humans. Mites have attacked bees, causing colonies to collapse, and whole hives of bees then disappear and die off.”

“Dr. Gretchen Lebuhn’s study involves planting sunflowers, and as they bloom, tracking the number of bees that visit the flowers. Volunteers plant the seeds and wait for the bees.” For more information, visit: www.greatsunflower.org.

Citizen Science at Cornell Lab of Ornithology

“For the bird watchers, the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology has been a leader in citizen science. Dr. Janis Dickinson leads programs such as Nest Watch and Feeder Watch along with the Great Backyard Bird Count.”

“Although avid bird watchers lead some of these programs, folks who just like to watch the birds at their feeders organize such programs as well.”

“Both approaches are valuable and geared toward people with different levels of expertise and varying amounts of time that they can donate to the project. Eleven projects with different levels of skill and involvement are found at www.birds.cornell.edu/netcommunity/citsci/projects.” (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Southeast Region, “Focus on ‘Friends’”, Spring 2009)

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Sebastian, FL 32978-1903

Searching for the Mangrove Buckeye

by Nancy Soucy, Barefoot Bay

On a recent morning in August, I awoke to the sun shining and the thermometer starting its daily climb into the 90's. With the blue skies beckoning me, a visit to PINWR sounded like a perfect outing, especially since I was interested in seeing some Mangrove Buckeye butterflies.

I arrived about 8:30am and stopped by the butterfly garden. Upon finding it quiet, with only a few Sulphurs and Great Southern Whites, I decided to try Pete's Impoundment and the new Joe's Overlook.

Along the trail, I witnessed many Ceraunus Blues and White Peacocks, with a Common Buckeye here and there and quite a few Dainty Sulphurs. A Queen gracefully winged by; she seemed in no hurry to go anywhere. Perhaps she was enjoying the day as I was.

As I made the turn into the mangrove trail leading to the new overlook, I was greeted by a Mangrove Buckeye. Happy to have my wish of the day come true, I tried to photograph it. I continued west on the grassy road and suddenly the area around me was filled with Mangrove Buckeyes.

Every once in a while, I made a photograph attempt, but mostly I enjoyed my companions who seemed to lead me on my way.

Arriving at the new overlook, seven Roseate Spoonbills came into view, their pink colors dancing on the still water. A Reddish Egret was a constant blur of movement, and Little Blue and Great Blue Herons and a few White Ibis searched for their breakfast.

Several Wood Storks worked the pond, and Osprey cried overhead. Reluctantly, I turned to leave, and my walk was once again filled with Mangrove Buckeyes, some mating and others dancing as they played with one another.

This magical scene carried on to the end of the trail. I once again felt grateful to be at PINWR and looked forward to a return visit soon.



Photo: Nancy Soucy

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!