



PELICAN FLYER

June 2009

From the President's Desk

By Steve Massey

Hello everyone and thank you for your confidence and support in electing our new slate of Officers and Directors at our April membership meeting. This is my first newsletter as your new president and I want to thank all of you for your support – financial and volunteering! The final slate as elected at the April meeting is myself as President, Kerry Firth, VP; Kristen Beck, Secretary; Walt Stieglitz, Treasurer; Bonnie Swanson, Past-President; Tim Glover, Director-2 yr.; Gini Prash, Director-1 yr.

Our first major “nuts and bolts” type project for the refuge is now open for visitors – the Joe Michael Overlook. Please see the article inside by Walt, with more information. We are planning a “ribbon-cutting” later in the coming season when the rest of the interpretive information is completed.

We hope that you will continue your membership in PIPS for the coming year to help us support these type projects on the refuge. All our memberships run from April through March each year and we will be “cleaning up” our membership list soon, in order to save vitally important funds, so please renew soon, if you haven’t already. We’ve also added your membership expiration date to the mailing label to help let you know when your membership is due. If you have any questions about your membership, you can send us an email at membership@pelicanislandfriends.org or call Tim Glover at 772-589-0636.

Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute – “Charting a New Course in Florida”

Johnnie “J.B.” Kump, Executive Director for development of Hubbs-SeaWorld’s new Florida research facility at Coconut Point in Indian Harbor Beach, will be our guest speaker for our June General Meeting. The new Hubbs-SeaWorld facility has been proposed to be built in the Indian Harbor/Melbourne Beach area for some time, but we hope that it is becoming closer to reality! And JB is just the person to bring us up to date on its progress and what we can expect to see at the facility!

“In response to an urgent need for expanded research facilities within the Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge to support a range of research and conservation initiatives on the Barrier Island and Indian River Lagoon, Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute began renovations of its Coconut Point property. The renovated facility will act as a field station for sea turtle research as well as a base of operations for HSWRI's stranded animal rescue and research program.” – HSWRI website.

“Few places in the world are better suited to build and sustain a center for marine and coastal research,” said Don Kent, Hubbs-SeaWorld President. “This region has an exceptional network of coastal, estuarine and marine habitats. Numerous threatened and endangered species exist in our ‘backyard’ as well as many species with direct economic value. We are proud to partner with a community that understands the environmental and economic value of our coastal and marine resources.”

The meeting will be Monday, June 22, 7 PM at the North Indian River County Library on route 512 in Sebastian. Everyone is welcome and refreshments will be served, following the meeting. (cont. pg.2)

Visit PIPS on the web at www.pelicanislandfriends.org

For more information about the Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute, please visit their website at www.hswri.org.

Refuge Update

If you have been following the National Wildlife Refuge Service funding issue, you know that there have been many cutbacks over the last few years. Recent funding has improved slightly though (see article on next page for more information), and Pelican Island had actually increased its staff recently. In our last newsletter we had an introduction and greeting from Pelican Island's new Refuge Manager, Charlie Pelizza. They also have recently regained the services of a staff biologist and below is an article written for us on one of the endangered species of the refuge.

Creature Feature

By Refuge Biologist Kristen Kneifl

The Southeastern beach mouse (*Peromyscus polionotus*) is a threatened species that USFWS staff is actively working on its recovery. Pelican Island NWR has the distinction of being the southern most extent for the beach mouse on the Atlantic Coast.

Our habitat is unusual in the fact that our mice are found on the west side of A1A. Beach mice primarily reside in dune habitat. The refuge does have a large, remnant sand pile from the dredging of the freshwater ponds on west side of Jungle Trail and some small swale areas. The sand pile, ridges, and swales seem to mimic the dune habitat in some respects, and the mice have taken to it for whatever reason.



In mid May, refuge staff and Jack Stout, a professor at University of Central Florida conducted beach mouse trapping on the refuge. The mice that were captured were weighed, ear tagged, sexed, and the location of each trap/burrow was recorded using GPS (Global Positioning System). We located 92 active burrows with 8 mice captured on the first day and 4 mice caught on the second day, 3 of those being recaptures. Based on population dynamics and ecology, our best estimate is that we have a population of about 30 mice.

Just a quick update on the other refuges within the Pelican Island NWR complex:

Archie Carr NWR - sea turtle season has arrived. The nesting season has been off to a slow start with nest numbers being down about 30% from where they were last year. The latest numbers for the refuge as of May 28th are 686 loggerhead nests and 17 leatherback nests. Sea turtle walks have begun. Please contact the Barrier Island Sanctuary, (321) 723-3556 if you are interested in participating in this unique and educational event.

Lake Wales Ridge NWR - Refuge staff is currently in the process of writing the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the refuge. This is a 15-year management plan that will provide future direction for the refuge. Although the refuge is closed to the public due to high number of endangered plants and lichens, there are other conservation lands in the area for visitors to enjoy.

Joe Michael Memorial Project

By Walt Stieglitz

As reported in the October issue of the Pelican Flyer, PIPS, in cooperation with the refuge, is developing a project on the Pelican Island Refuge as a memorial to Joe Michael (for those unfamiliar with Joe, he was instrumental in protecting the uplands surrounding Pelican Island – you will find a tribute to Joe, written by Paul Tritaik upon Joe’s death, on the “News & Information” page of our website). At this point, a 100’ walkway and covered viewing platform, designed to enhance wildlife observations in Pete’s Impoundment, have been completed. Needed to finish the project are a trailhead kiosk, interpretive signing, and a spotting scope for the viewing platform. Additional funding is needed. If you wish to contribute toward this important project please earmark your check for the Joe Michael Memorial Project and mail to PIPS, P.O. Box 781903, Sebastian FL 32978.



Please visit the “Pelican Island” page of our website for more photos of “Joe’s Overlook”.

Refuge System Funding Crisis

By Walt Stieglitz

Severe under-funding for operations and maintenance of the National Wildlife Refuge System has been, and continues to be, a serious problem. Moderate increases the past two fiscal years have served to suspend workforce downsizing plans that resulted in an overall 10% reduction in refuge staffing since 2004 (a 66% reduction of the Pelican Island Refuge staff).

Refuge management programs have suffered due to the loss of manpower, both locally and across the more than 550 refuges which are included in the System. This fiscal year \$463 million has been appropriated for operations and maintenance (O&M) of the refuge system. Refuge supporters are seeking to increase O&M funding to \$514 million in Fiscal Year 2010 (starts 10/1/09), with the overall goal of reaching \$808 million per year by Fiscal Year 2013.

PIPS has submitted written testimony in support of these increases to the Senate and House subcommittees which consider refuge system funding, and will take other actions designed to gain support for the funding needed to properly protect and manage our magnificent National Wildlife Refuge System. We encourage you to periodically let the members of your congressional delegation know that you are concerned about inadequate funding for local refuges, as well as the System as a whole, and ask for their support in solving the problem.

For more information you can visit the “Take Action!” page of our website.

Kayaking Pelican Island

The next Kayaks, Etc. kayak trip to Pelican Island will be July 12, 9:30 AM. Please call them at 772-794-9900 or check their website at www.kayaksetc.com for more information and for reservations.

Visit PIPS on the web at www.pelicanislandfriends.org

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

Observations from Pelican Island

The following are observations of a birder, nature lover and obviously satisfied "customer" on a recent visit to the Pelican Island NWR.

I arrived at PINWR at 9am and found the main pond by the butterfly garden filled with birds. The beautiful morning was dressed in soft sunlight and the calm water reflected the dancing of at least 75 Snowy Egrets, their yellow feet brightly appearing in and out of the shallows.

Not to be outdone were the 18 Tri-Colored Herons darting to and fro, never stopping for a second in their quest for breakfast. Suddenly pink colors appeared on the water and looking up, there upon the wing were 9 breathtaking Roseate Spoonbills soaring overhead.

No sooner than the pink faded from my view that one Magnificent Frigate bird appeared in their place, the large wingspan making it hard to miss. My attention was brought back to earth by the loud squawking of 2 Reddish Egrets, seemingly not happy by the intrusion of 10 Brown Pelicans making splashes here and there in their diving quests.

Several Great Blue Herons were quietly standing on the shoreline, observing the activity and probably wishing the place was quieter. Two pair of Mottled Florida Ducks flew off noisily over my head....

The tree at the end of the pond was filled with white birds, mostly Snowys, but I did find one Wood Stork in the midst along with some White Ibis. Several Ospreys did a few flybys, deciding it was too busy to fish. A few Double Crested Cormorants shyly surfaced a few times, just to look around and figure out whatever they needed to figure out before diving into the deep again. Once in a while one would surface with a small fish in its beak.

After an hour of watching the seemingly cooperative nature of so many different species in one place, I continued on my walk. A Loggerhead Shrike took up its post on a tree in front of me and fiercely stared me down as I passed. Red Cardinals called in the distance and Mockingbirds mocked them. A black vulture rested on its perch, no movement being missed by its sharp eyes.

On the way out of the parking lot I found 2 Killdeer nests and slowed down to take a photo from the car. A killdeer immediately appeared and did a broken wing display in an attempt to lure me away. I of course immediately left, and he proudly returned to his mate knowing he had protected his family once again. I drove down Jungle Trail feeling refreshed and rejuvenated by nature and the fresh air. I was already looking forward to returning soon to PINWR.

Nancy S.
Barefoot Bay

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!