



May 2026 Newsletter

PASCO AUDUBON

Upcoming Events

Saturday, May 2nd

8am Bird walk in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park. Already completed

Saturday, May 9th

Birding-by-Bike
CANCELLED

Saturday, May 16th

8am - Field Trip to East Pasco
Details - p.1

Our web address is:

www.pascoaudubon.com

Our Facebook Page is:

Pasco Audubon

Share interesting sightings via Facebook on

Pasco Bird Board

And our mailing address is:

Pasco Audubon

PO Box 1456

Elfers, FL 34680



Blue Grosbeak on Kettering Road, 2025

Field Trip to East Pasco on May 16, 2026: Appreciating Pasco's Rural Birds

They say that time flies when you're having fun. Well - our 2025-26 season certainly flew by, and now we begin our summer pause before we return to a normal full schedule in October. But our tradition here at Pasco Audubon includes a May drive through east Pasco in search of some of our seasonal rural birds. This year we'll be conducting the field trip on Saturday, May 16th.

We'll begin our trip just north of the Pasco border, gathering in the McDonald's parking lot at the I75 exit at SR 50. For GPS purposes the address is 31038 Cortez Blvd, Brooksville, FL 34602. From here we'll be taking the route along Kettering Road, Power Line Road and from there will make choices based on last minute scouting reports. While there has been significant development along part of the route, we will be hoping to see birds including Blue Grosbeak, Summer Tanager, Eastern Meadowlark, Red-headed Woodpecker, Swallow-tailed Kite and Mississippi Kite.

This route involves driving from spot to spot and pulling off the road onto the verge to look at birds. Questions can be directed to president@pascoaudubon.com.

The Nature and Wildlife of Tampa Bay Photography Competition 2026 Results

On April 11th we held our season finale and announced the winners of this year's awards. If you'd like to see a full list, including photographs and photographers, you can scroll through the gallery at https://www.pascoaudubon.com/Contest2026/2026_contest_entries.html.

Best in Show: 'Standoff' by Roy Lockwood

Category: Birds

1. 'Moments Before Disaster' by Ron Buening
 2. 'Pastel Morning' by Noriko Buckles
 3. 'Preening in the Morning Fog' by Sharon Cline
- Honorable Mentions to Rachele Katz, Pat Misajet and David Walz

Category: Other Nature

1. 'Just Daydreaming' by Pat Misajet
 2. 'Spider in Web' by Gail Norwood
 3. 'Mama and Baby Deer' by Melissa Leer
- Honorable Mentions to Rachele Katz, Doreen Damm and Jeannie Martin

The Starkey Park Award: 'Looking a Little Disheveled' by Ron Buening

The Conservation Award: 'Man Helping Nature' by David Walz
Honorable Mentions: Ron Buening and Noriko Buckles

The People's Choice Award: 'Thistle Attraction' by Phil Duncan

We are very grateful to all of those who made this event possible. Firstly to Hal Sigurdson for the many hours he spent planning and working to make the event a success. Also to our primary judges John Stalter, John Middleton, Janet Litzel; to our Starkey Park Award Judge, Timothy Perkins; and to our Conservation Award judge, Patricia Goldberg.

Thanks also to JoAnn Sinatra for her work in securing items for our silent auction. After all was said and done, awards made and bills paid, we were able to raise \$1,049 for our conservation work. Thanks to all who helped to make this event a success!

And special thanks to our event sponsors: Cary Street Partners, Pasco Camera, Pasco Fine Arts Council, Roman Plumbing, and Mike and Laurie Kell. Thanks also to those who contributed to our auction - to the Kells for the cameras; to Pat Goldberg for her prints; to Rick Chamberlain for hand-crafting bird houses; to Fran Sigurdson for the flamingo bowls, to Pat, Pamela, Christine and Kimberly for the birding guides, caps and T-shirt; to Christine and Anthony for the place mats; and to Home Depot, 7-11, Sprouts, Argentos, Publix and Sam's NY Pizza for the gift cards.



First place 'Birds' winner Ron Buening receives his award from Jay Walters of Cary Street Partners



First place 'Nature' winner Pat Misajet receives her award from Angie Orrego of Pasco Camera



Conservation Award winner Dave Walz receives his award from judge Patricia Goldberg



Starkey Park Award winner Ron Buening with Angie Orrego of Pasco Camera Exchange



People's Choice Award winner Phil Duncan receives his award from Jay Walters of Cary Street Partners

'Best in Show' award winner Roy Lockwood could not be present to receive his award, which was generously given by Pasco Fine Arts Council, represented at the event by Lena Bottiglieri.

All photographs on this page taken by Ron Buening and Laurie Lew - thanks to both!

Report: Field Trip to Fort De Soto April 12, 2026



Cape May Warbler by Christine Rowland



American Oystercatcher by Christine Rowland

This year our 'migration' visit to Fort De Soto took place a week or two earlier than is typical - on April 12th - just one day after our season finale event. The reason was that many of us were departing for a trip to Costa Rica later in the week, but didn't want to miss the occasion altogether.

Early eBird reports were not looking promising, and indeed we did not see the sheer numbers of migrant warblers that we would normally expect to see on this trip. However, we still had some notable sightings. We saw a couple of Cape May Warblers behind the warden's house, a Black-throated Blue male in breeding plumage, and Joe Colantonio spotted a scarce Swainson's Warbler skulking among the leaf litter, and was able to get several of us on it.

Additional sightings included a range of shorebirds including a breeding pair of American Oystercatchers, and an early Gray Kingbird in the North Beach area. Some spotted a Hooded Warbler too. Check out our list at <https://ebird.org/checklist/S320793962>.

Birding-by-Bike Update

Last month we needed to cancel our program due to an injury to our fearless leader, Bob Burkard, and this month Bob needs to cancel again to take care of a health matter. We hope to return Birding-by-Bike to our schedule next month.

Thanks for Special Donations

This month we'd like to say a very special 'thank you' to Susan McNally and Joanne Sinatra for their very generous donations! Your gifts will help make our conservation initiatives happen.



Leandro Castro Mora



Rosy Thrush-Tanager by Patricia Goldberg

The Rosy Thrush-Tanager: A Costa Rican Story by Christine Rowland

In April a group of our members took a wonderful trip to Southern Costa Rica. Since we only returned last week, we'll hold off on a full report until next month to give time to do it justice, but there is one aspect of our trip I thought you might enjoy hearing about.

One of the special opportunities our chapter members had while birding in the Buenos Aires area of the central valley, was the opportunity to visit with a local birder and guide Leandro Castro Mora, arranged for us by our in-country guide, David Mora.

David explained that the pineapple fields in the area are an important crop for Costa Rica, but have been a mixed blessing as they have led to much habitat being leveled in order to produce them. The local farms are owned by the Del Monte corporation, but they have kept some adjacent forest habitat intact, and Leandro has been monitoring it.

Every afternoon Leandro works on the factory floor. But in the morning he surveys the conservation land surrounding the pineapple fields. Our visit comprised of three different stops: First, a visit to a Pearl Kite nest with three youngsters about to fledge. This was followed by a brief visit to the edge of a conservation zone where we were able to see some special birds including the Green Shrike-Vireo, Purple-crowned Fairy, Turquoise Cotinga, White-shouldered Tanager, and several others. But the final stop was the cherry on top, when Leandro led us through a narrow and winding forested trail to see the Rosy Thrush-Tanager - the only bird in its Family and Genus, a sort of cross between a thrush and a tanager..



Pearl Kite by Patricia Goldberg



Green Shrike-Vireo by Joe Colantonio

The Rosy Thrush-Tanager is described by eBird as 'skulking and rarely seen', and stays deep in thick undergrowth, with each pair requiring about a hectare of land, and moving regularly to keep their food sources safe. David explained that we would need to be patient, as the birds are hard to photograph while foraging among the leaf litter on the ground, but that if we were patient the male would pop up to about eye level to sing. Sure enough, soon after we walked into the wooded area we began to hear a bird singing. Leandro helped us take turns to get optimal positions to view him, as he was still a few feet away and through tangles of vegetation. The male is mostly brown, but has a 'rosy' front and forehead and thin pale brow giving it a striking appearance. After we had each had an opportunity to move closer to view and photograph the male, Leandro gathered us around and explained, through David, how he had managed to gain the trust of the birds, without the use of meal worms or other enticements.

Leandro explained that Rosy Thrush-Tanagers are very territorial, and that there were probably 30 pairs in the area he monitors, but that they do not cross into each others' territories as this would be seen as an act of aggression. He did not use playback with them, as he was wary of scaring off a male who may misinterpret a call as a statement of territorial dominance. When he first came across them, instead of trying to take time to observe them, he'd back away from them carefully to show respect for their space. He continued to do this for many months until he gained their trust and they did not view him as a threat. It took a total of about 9 months to gain their confidence. They now tolerate his presence, and that of those who arrive with him.

Over our past couple of international trips we have seen a number of instances where hard-to-see birds have been coaxed into view by patient wardens. But in every other instance we have witnessed there was food involved. Leandro stands out for having used patience and his understanding of the bird to gain its trust. Look for more from our trip in next month's newsletter.

Pasco Audubon Bluebird Project Update and Volunteer Request by Bob Burkard



Male Eastern Bluebird feeding its fledgling by David Walz

Our nesting Eastern Bluebirds are doing surprisingly well, despite the drought causing food to be scarcer than the “wet” years. Let’s hope that we get some rain and additional nesting broods this May and June.

I thought that you would be interested in the number of boxes with two broods last year. We have a few second broods started and these should fledge in May (see the chart on the next page).

I am reading that other areas of Florida are seeing a major decline in the number of eggs that hatch and successfully fledge due to the severe drought conditions.

They are adaptable: a pair of bluebirds made a nest in the cavity of this dog waste station at W.H. Jack Mitchell Jr. Park.

While we cannot remove an active nest, we will place a nest box by this location and hopefully the bluebirds will use it if they have a second brood.



Eastern Bluebirds Improvising for a Nesting Cavity



Hungry Babies in Joanne Sinatra's box

Almost ready to fledge from Judith Zollo's Box

Date of last inspection	Monitor	Location	Box ID	Status	Comments	2026 Total Fledged	Num of Broods In 2025	2025 Total Fledged
4/20/2026	Judith Leslie Zollo	Airpeka Road Weekee Wachi Preserve	AR01	Empty			1	4
			AR02	Empty			1	4 CC
			AR03	4 EBB Babies	Fledged, Cleaned out Nest	3		
4/14/2026	Christina Rowland	Heartwood Preserve off Starkey Blvd	HW01	Empty	1st brood of eggs did not hatch, Second Brood Started		1	5
			HW02	Fledged		3	2	9
			HW03	Empty			1	5 CC
4/21/2026	Judith Leslie Zollo	Hudson Sugar Creek	HU01	Fledged	5 EBBs Fledged	5	1	4
4/29/2026	Robert Burkard	Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park Bike Trail	BT-01	Fledged	Fledged since last visit, cleaned out old nest	4		
			BT-02	Empty				
			BT-03	Empty				
			BT-04	Empty				
4/29/2026	Robert Burkard	Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park South of Entrance road	SP01	Fledged	Fledged since last visit, cleaned out old nest	4	2	11
			SP01A	Fledged	Fledged since last visit, cleaned out old nest	5 CC		
			SP02	Empty				
			SP03	Fledged	Fledged since last visit, cleaned out old nest	3	2	7
			SP04	Empty	Removed abandoned nest		1	2
			SP05	Empty	Removed abandoned nest			
			SP06	3 EBB Eggs				
			SP07	Fledged	Fledged since last visit, cleaned out old nest	5 CC	1	7 TTM
			SP07A	Empty				
			SP08	Fledged	Fledged since last visit, cleaned out old nest	4	2	10
4/29/2026	Robert Burkard	Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park Edge of Timber Greens	TG01	5 EBB Eggs	Second Brood Started - 5 eggs	4	2	9
			TG02	Empty				
5/3/2026	J Mike Kell	Seven Springs Golf Club	SS01	CC sitting on Nest				
			SS02	Empty				
5/2/2026	Dave Waltz	Sunlake Blvd Community on Hwy 54 West of Hwy 41, Land O' Lakes FL	DW01	EBB Nest	New Boxes	4		
			DW01	EBB Nest	New Boxes			
4/29/2026	JoAnn Sinatra	Timber Oaks	TO01	5 EBBs Fledged	Fledged, Cleaned out Nest	5		
4/29/2026	Sara Peters & Jeff Gruber	Trinity College	TR01	New EBB Nest, No Eggs	1st brood fledged, new nest started for second brood	1	2	8
			TR02	Fledged	Fledged	5 CC		
4/18/2026	Judith Leslie Zollo	Veterans Memorial Park Hudson, FL	VP01	Empty	1st Brood Fledged	4		10
			VP02	3 EBB Babies			1	2
			VP03	3 EBB Babies			2	8
4/29/2026	Robert Burkard	W.H. Jack Mitchell Jr. Park	JM01	Fledged	Fledged since last visit, cleaned out old nest	4	2	9
			JM01A	Empty				
			JM02	Fledged	Fledged since last visit, cleaned out old nest	4	2	7
			JM03	Fledged	Fledged since last visit, cleaned out old nest	3	2	9

EBB Eastern Blue Bird
 CC Carolina Chickadee
 TTM Tufted Titmouse

Colony Watch: The Embassy Rookery by Gillian Lankshear

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Around the beginning of February about 40-50 Wood Storks, 8-10 Anhingas and a few Great Egrets began building nests at the rookery, almost exclusively on the island behind the Embassy Crossing Shopping Center. Initially, I thought there were about 40 Wood Stork nests, but one very windy day I realized that there were more egrets, as their feather plumes were fluffed up from the wind. I amended the egret numbers to about 10-15 nests, and reduced the estimated Wood Stork nests to 30-35.

By mid-late February the 30-35 Wood Stork nests were established, with an adult sitting continuously on the nest, and often a mate seen standing or perching nearby. Meanwhile, more Great Egrets had begun nesting bringing their total up to about 10 nests, and a total of 7-8 Anhinga nests which were all occupied and beginning to hatch out.

By late March, 2-3 Wood Stork nests, as well as 2-3 Great Egret nests, and all 8 of the Anhinga nests had young. The first week of April produced 4-5 more stork and 4-5 egret hatchlings. It is starting to get noisy and very busy, with both parents often attending their young to keep them well fed.

Early to mid-April: Are storks and egrets hatching? Unfortunately the vegetation is growing rapidly, which makes it difficult to count the number of hatchlings, but I expect by the end of the month most of the birds will have emerged, making the rookery not only busy and noisy, but quite odiferous as they tend to be.

A Roost as Well as Rookery:

At dusk large numbers of Great Egrets, Wood Storks, Snowy Egrets, Little Blue Herons, White Ibis, Glossy Ibis, and a few Great Blue Herons, Tricolored Herons, Double-crested Cormorants, and night herons flow in, usually in numbers of tens and twenties. Glossy Ibis were the last to come in. Christine Rowland spoke of recording possibly 1000 or more birds using this site for the night on the Christmas Bird Count.

A Predator Lurks from Below:

A 6-foot alligator can often be seen “prowling” under the overhanging branches of the island, probably waiting for an unfortunate youngster to misstep from the nest.



Nesting Wood Storks by Gillian Lankshear

Looking Ahead to June...

June 6th - 8am - Monthly walk in Starkey Park

And coming in our June newsletter, a final season update on our Bald Eagles (a few are still waiting to fledge), and news and photographs of the repairs of the Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park bird blind, that is being renovated with expertise and labor from Rick Chamberlain, Joe Colantonio and Bob Burkard.

Pasco Audubon Board of Directors

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