



April 2026 Newsletter

PASCO AUDUBON

Upcoming Events

Saturday, April 11th

8am Bird walk in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park. Meet in the Education Center parking lot

11am Feature Presentation: Birding Brazil: From the Pampas to the Atlantic Forest with Klenisson Brenner & The 2026 Photography Awards

Sunday, April 12th

8am Field Trip to Fort De Soto p.8

Wednesday, April 15th

8am Birding-by-Bike - on the Pinellas Trail p.9

April 16th - 26th Birding Southern Costa Rica

Our web address is:

www.pascoaudubon.com

Our Facebook Page is:

Pasco Audubon

Share interesting sightings via Facebook on

Pasco Bird Board



Glittering Emerald by Klenisson Brenner

Birding Brazil: From the Pampas to the Atlantic Forest with Klenisson Brenner

April 11th will be our 2025-26 season finale, and we're very happy to welcome Klenisson Brenner, who will be visiting us from the Miami area. This past November he spent several weeks in Brazil and will share some of his photography and experiences with us. Brazil is the largest country in the Southern Hemisphere, occupying almost half of South America. It is made up of 6 major ecosystems (Amazon, Caatinga, Cerrado, Pantanal, Atlantic Forest and Pampas). This combination (plus the tropical and subtropical climate) makes the country a hotspot for biodiversity. Nearly 2,000 bird species call Brazil home. Join Klenisson on this journey as he shares his birding adventures. As always, our meeting begins in the Starkey Environmental Education Center at 11am. We will also be presenting the annual photography awards (see page 2).

Before the event we will have our monthly bird walk in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park. We will leave from the Education Center parking lot at 8am. We'll be back at the center in plenty of time for Klenisson's presentation!

Also on April 11 the 2026 Nature and Wildlife of Tampa Bay Photography Awards

The Nature and Wildlife of Tampa Bay Photography Competition has become an annual ritual for us at Pasco Audubon, and this year is no exception. With a total of 74 entries, 22 photographers are competing for a variety of awards. The entries have been judged by our panel of three independent judges (John Middleton, John Stalter, Janet Litzel), who reviewed the photographs without the photographers' names attached. Now we're ready for you to have your say with the People's Choice Award.

This year's gallery of competition entries can be viewed at https://www.pascoaudubon.com/Contest2026/2026_contest_entries.html. To cast a vote for your favorite for The People's Choice Award, scroll to the bottom of the competition gallery to the hyperlink where it says VOTE. Voting will end at 5pm on April 9th. The 5 photographs receiving the most votes will then be placed on the screen during our April 11th meeting, and every person present at the meeting will have the opportunity to cast a vote for one of the entries. They will be tallied, and the photograph receiving the most votes will be the People's Choice winner.

We also have the Conservation Award, which we have done a little differently this year. To help elevate and clarify this award we invited all of those photographers entering 3 shots into the main competition to also submit a photograph specifically for this category - giving an explanation of the conservation issue it was addressing. Thanks to Pat Goldberg for judging the Conservation Award.

Special thanks to Hal Sigurdsson for all of his work in organizing and promoting this year's competition, and to Noriko Buckles and Patricia Goldberg for partnering with him in this endeavor. And thanks to Mike Kell, who has worked to post all of this year's submissions on our webpage gallery.



Phil Duncan receiving Best in Show from Jay Walters of Cary Street Partners at last year's award ceremony.

Our Season Finale Annual Fundraiser Silent Auction and Donations

Here at Pasco Audubon, fundraising is critical to support our many important conservation projects.

To this end, we have a number of interesting items available to bid on in our silent auction. Some of the items are shown below. Additionally, the following businesses have donated gift cards: **Argento's, Home Depot, Publix, Sprouts, Sam's NY Pizza.** Thank you so much to all of the local businesses - these contributions will certainly help us advance our work.



Sony A77 camera, 400mm f4.5 lens, battery, charger + card



GoPro Hero 9 camera kit



Handcrafted Nesting Box



Cloth Place Mats from Tinamu Lodge, Colombia

Thank you to our Sponsors!

We are extremely grateful to our generous photography competition sponsors whose contributions are helping to make our conservation work possible!

Sponsors for the Nature and Wildlife of Tampa Bay Photography Competition 2026 include:

Cary Street Partners \$500

Pasco Camera Exchange \$150

Anonymous donation \$150 (for competition ribbons)

Pasco Fine Arts Council \$100 (given directly to the Best in Show winner)

Mike and Laurie Kell \$100

Roman Plumbing \$50



*Pasco Fine
Arts Council*



Thanks to Our March 2026 Donors

In addition to the photography event sponsors, we also received a number of additional donations in March for which we would like to express our thanks:

Anonymous donation \$1200

Bob Burkard \$250 (in-kind contribution of materials for the Bluebird Project)

Mike and Laurie Kell \$110 (towards the acquisition of a Motus tower)

Karen Stigell (to honor Pamela Graber) \$100

Carlos Zubillaga \$75 (towards the acquisition of a Motus tower)

Not able to attend our event on the 11th? Send your donation to Pasco Audubon at P. O. Box 1456, Elfers, FL. 34680 OR via PayPal to (Joanne Chamberlain, treasurer@pascoaudubon.com).

Report: Birding-by-Bike Outing at Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park on March 15th by Bob Burkard

The weather was perfect for biking, birding, and photography. We started at the Education Center and during our six mile ride through the park we made multiple stops at “birdy” locations along the way. We identified 37 species of birds during our outing. It was great to hear over a dozen Bachman’s Sparrows throughout our ride, and we were able to get a couple of photos. It was also a day when we got close to numerous Swamp Sparrows and heard many more of them. With the help of Merlin, I counted over 20 Swamp Sparrows during our ride. We also heard (and saw in the distance) two Northern Flickers. We heard Brown-headed Nuthatches but did not get close enough to see or photograph them.

Special thanks to Joe Colantonio for sharing his expertise on good birding locations in Starkey Park, and for his extensive knowledge of bird calls and songs.



Bachman's Sparrow by Bob Burkard



Red-shouldered Hawk by Bob Burkard

Report: Colombia: Birding the Central Andes March 8-16

We had a tough start to our trip when our COPA Airlines flight, scheduled to get us to Colombia a full day early, was abruptly cancelled while we waited to board. We had to return to Tampa airport in the middle of the night for a 5am departure the next morning.

Traveling via Panama City, we arrived in Pereira, Colombia, early in the afternoon of March 8th, and after moving swiftly through arrivals, we were met by Alex, our driver for the week, who took us on to the Sonesta Hotel for our first night. The grounds of the Sonesta held plenty to pique our interest and we had more than 2 hours to bird before meeting with Fredy Cardona, our in-country guide, for dinner and an orientation.

Some of the highlights of our trip included seeing a pair of Torrent Ducks frolicking from rock to rock in a stream, going up a mountainside in 4x4 vehicles to see the Indigo-winged Parrot - a highly endangered species once thought to be extinct. In several spots we were able to visit antpitta feeders, where wardens have trained these ant-seeking birds to come in for mealworms, making it possible to actually see and photograph these elusive birds up close. We saw 32 different species of hummingbird, some of the most dramatic and impressive being the aptly-named Sword-billed Hummingbird, the Great Sapphirewing, the Rainbow-billed Thornbill, the Long-tailed Sylph, and the Buffy Helmetcrest - the latter which occurs only on only one mountaintop in Colombia. We traveled to a dizzying elevation of 13,500' to see it! We were also fortunate enough to visit the lek (breeding ground) of a vocal group of Golden-collared Manakins at Tinamu Lodge.

Over our 7 days of solid birding we were welcomed everywhere we went by the hospitable people of Colombia, and had a chance to experience many different habitats. For a day-by-day account, please see the narrative on our trip report at <https://ebird.org/tripreport/487525>, where you will be also able to see a full list of species and photographs of most of the species we saw. Our group saw a total of 286 species during our visit - for many of us topping over 200 'lifers', and obtaining photographs of most of the species we saw. We plan to share our photographs and experiences with you at our 2026-7 season opener on October 3rd.



Chestnut-crowned Antpitta by Christine Rowland



Andean Emerald by Noriko Buckles

Report: Welcome Back Songbirds Festival at Chinsegut

Hernando Audubon hosted their festival on March 20-21st, and several of our members traveled up to enjoy the array of displays, including bird banding by FWC, numerous talks, including a keynote by Audubon Florida Executive Director Julie Wraithmell, and several walks at Chinsegut and other nearby locations. It was a wonderful event and we look forward to supporting it again next year. Congratulations to all of the Hernando Audubon team, who worked so hard to make this event a success.

Report: Field Trip to Felts Audubon Preserve - March 28th

Eleven of us set out on our Manatee County trip on the 28th. We had initially hoped to spend some time with shorebirds on Courtney Campbell Causeway on the way down, but the birds had other ideas and had parked themselves a long way from the parking area. While we had distant views and a few close up, we decided to focus on our main location and headed on down to Felts Audubon Preserve.

We had not conducted a field trip here in many years and were very pleasantly surprised to see some lovely new features in the preserve, the obvious result of some serious fundraising and many hours of volunteer investment. The highlight of our trip was undoubtedly the abundant Indigo Buntings, with many males in full breeding plumage. They come into the feeders behind the bird blind, but can also be seen on the trails. Additionally we saw three Bald Eagles, and were happy to hear arriving Great Crested Flycatchers - some of the first of the season.

We had intended to follow this location with a visit to Terra Ceia State Park, but as we took our time on the trails at Felts, we made a plan change and decided instead to visit nearby Sweet Bay nursery for some native plants. Upon arrival Joe Colantonio took us all back to a special viewing spot for a nest of Great Horned Owls, with two owlets in the nest - it was a wonderful bonus that most of us had not anticipated and a very positive way to conclude our trip.



Indigo Bunting by Christine Rowland



Great Horned Owl by Phil Duncan

Report: Photography Club Outing to Anclote River Park by Noriko Buckles

The March outing was to the Anclote River Park in the late afternoon to photograph two totally different situations. First we were to photograph birds in flight where the shutter speed setting was set to very high to capture the flying birds. We were able to see and photograph Osprey, Bald Eagles, Brown Pelicans, gulls, Palm Warblers, Nanday Parakeets and Eastern Bluebirds. After visiting a Bald Eagle nest we headed to Anclote Gulf Park to photograph the sunset. Here we switched our camera settings to aperture priority using high f-stop to get everything in focus from near to afar. Sunset was very dramatic, with the clouds lighting up, and as a bonus we saw a bull shark being reeled in by a fisherman. What a way to end the evening!



Pileated Woodpecker by Noriko Buckles

Field Trip to Fort De Soto for Migration - Sunday, April 12th

This year our migration field trip to Fort De Soto is taking place a week or two earlier than usual. Why? Because a large group of us are heading to Southern Costa Rica later this week for a birding tour, and we did not want to leave without doing this trip. While we never know what we may find on any given day, we have often experienced some very interesting migrant birds coming through the park early.

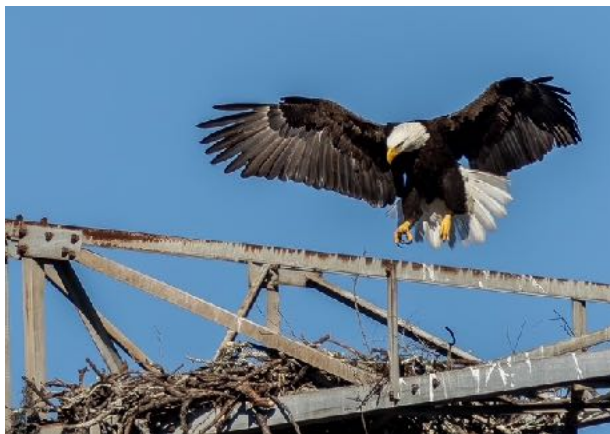
A small group of us will scout the park in preparation for our field trip 2-4 days prior to our visit in an attempt to make our trip as productive as possible. We will also be keeping a close eye on eBird reports. For this reason we ask that you register for the trip at president@pascoaudubon.com, and we will respond with the meet up location based on our scouting experience. Our official start time that day will be 8am.

We will, as always, visit several spots within the park, and will be focused primarily on the migrants passing through, although we do usually also visit at least one of the beaches at some stage to add some shorebirds to our list. Please be sure to pack snacks/lunch and plenty of water.

April 15th - Birding-by-Bike Outing on the Pinellas Trail

We are rescheduling our April Birding-by-Bike outing to a weekday for this month and will meet on Wednesday, April 15th. If you have not participated on one of our Birding-by-Bike outings I recommend that you give it a try. For May and June, we are scheduling an outing for the second Saturday and an additional Birding-by-Bike on a weekday.

I really like this location. We start at the Brooker Creek Preserve parking lot at 8:00 AM and bike up to the trail. It is a terrific opportunity to see a large variety of birds, including Eastern Bluebirds, Loggerhead Shrikes, Eastern Meadowlarks, American Kestrels, Bald Eagles and Red-tailed Hawks. There were a pair of nesting Red-headed Woodpeckers in 2025, and I am hoping that they have returned to their nest tree, which is easily seen from the trail.



Bald Eagle by Phil Duncan



Eastern Meadowlark by Bob Burkard

Month	Date	Location	Time
April	Wednesday, April 15, 2026	Pinellas Trail - Meet at Brooker Creek Preserve Parking lot	8:00 AM
May	Saturday, May 9, 2026	Chassawahowitzka Wildlife Area	8:00 AM
May - Weekday	Thursday, May 14, 2026	Fort DeSoto Park	8:00 AM
June - Weekday	Thursday, June 11, 2026	Flatwoods Park Trail, Thonotosassa - Carpool to area	8:00 AM
June	Saturday, June 13, 2026	Pinellas Trail - Meet at Brooker Creek Preserve Parking lot	8:00 AM
July		No Outing	8:00 AM
August	Saturday, August 15, 2026	TBD	8:00 AM
September	Saturday, September 12, 2026	Jay B Starkey Wilderness Park - Meet at Education Center at the Park	8:00 AM
October	Saturday, October 10, 2026	Chassawahowitzka Wildlife Management Area	8:00 AM
November	Saturday, November 14, 2026	Pinellas Trail - Meet at Brooker Creek Preserve Parking lot	8:00 AM

April 16th - 26th: Birding Southern Costa Rica

Eleven of us are heading back to Costa Rica in April, having enjoyed our trip there last year so much. We look forward to exploring new areas of the country, so look for our report in next month's newsletter.

Birding the Choco-Andes Region: Western and Eastern Slopes of Ecuador - February 7-16, 2027

An extraordinary abundance of bird life inhabits the forests of northwestern Ecuador. Amid cloud forest, rainforest, páramo, and the eastern and western slopes of the Andes Mountains, you'll seek out as many of the country's 1,640-plus species as possible with assistance from your local expert guide on this 10-day adventure. In particular, much of the avifauna you'll encounter is endemic to the Chocó region, while other species are more easily found here than in any other place in the world.

Highlights include:

Explore the Chocó ecoregion across a variety of protected areas, including Alambi Cloud Forest Reserve, Milpe Bird Sanctuary, Antisana Ecological Reserve, Rio Silanche, and others.

- Visit the famed Refugio Paz de las Aves, known as a haven for antpittas and Andean Cocks-of-the-rock.
- Take in Yanacocha Biological Reserve, a protected area established to safeguard the critically endangered and endemic Black-breasted Puffleg, the official emblematic bird of Quito.
- Bird the Mashpi-Amagusa Reserve for target species like the Rose-faced Parrot, Orange-breasted Fruiteater, Chocó Vireo, Moss-backed Tanager, and Indigo Flowerpiercer.

Enrollment for this trip begins at the end of April. The link to the registration page will be privately sent to those who have requested it. Once again we will be using our trusty travel partners, Holbrook Travel, to take us on another wonderful international adventure. **Joanne Chamberlain** will be leading this trip, and you can reach her for additional information or with questions at treasurer@pascoaudubon.com.

We are also in the early stages of planning a trip to **Peru** for later in 2027 with **Patricia Goldberg** leading. While we do not have additional info at this time, we'll be sharing it here as it becomes available. To reach Pat about this trip, please email projects@westpascoaudubon.com.



Andean Condor (courtesy of Holbrook Travel)

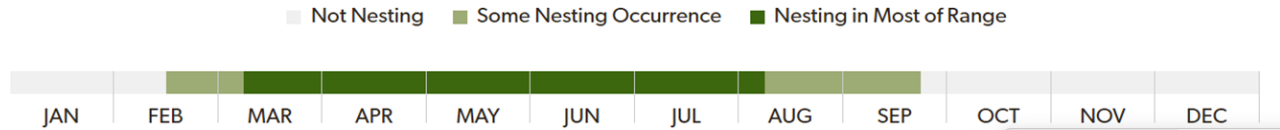
Pasco Audubon



Andean Cock-of-the-Rock (Holbrook)

Pasco Audubon Bluebird Project Update and Volunteer Request by Bob Burkard

The Eastern Bluebird nesting season is now in full swing, and our nesting is off to a great start. As of March 21st, we have 24 active nests with 42 babies or eggs.



Our Pasco Audubon Bluebird Project team currently has seven volunteers who monitor the nesting boxes at 12 locations. Participating as a nesting box monitor is an extremely rewarding experience and only requires a little time every 10 to 14 days. I am currently looking for someone to monitor the two nesting boxes at the Trinity College location. I will work with you to show you how to check the boxes and record the results, so even if you do not currently have experience with Eastern Bluebird nesting, we can work together until you are confident with the activity.



Eggs and hatchlings from among this season's nests by Bob Burkard.



Pasco Audubon Bluebird Project: 2026 Updates by Bob Burkard

3/21/2026	Airpeka Road Weeki Wachi Preserve	AR01	Empty
		AR02	Empty
		AR03	5 EBB Eggs
3/24/2026	Heartwood Preserve off Starkey Blvd	HW01	4 EBB Eggs
		HW02	5 EBB Eggs
		HW03	Empty
3/9/2026	Hudson Sugar Creek	HU01	New EBB Nest, No Eggs
3/20/2026	Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park Bike Trail	BT-01	4 EBB Eggs
		BT-02	Empty
		BT-03	Empty
		BT-04	Empty
3/20/2026	Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park South of Entrance road	SP01	5 EBB Eggs
		SP01A	New CC Nest, No Eggs
		SP02	Empty
		SP03	3 Newly Hatched EBB Babies, 1 Egg
		SP04	New EBB Nest, No Eggs
		SP05	Empty
		SP06	Empty
		SP07	A Few Blades of Grass
		SP07A	Empty
		SP08	New TTM Nest, No Eggs
SP09	New EBB Nest, No Eggs		
SP10	Empty		
3/20/2026	Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park Edge of Timber Greens	TG01	4 EBB Eggs
		TG02	Empty
3/8/2026	Seven Springs Golf Club	SA01	Empty
		SSO1	Empty
3/20/2026	Sunlake Blvd Community on Hwy 54 west of Hwy 41, Land O' Lakes FL	SSO2	Empty
		DW01	EBB Nest
3/20/2026	Timber Oaks	DW01	EBB Nest
		TO01	New EBB Nest, No Eggs
3/26/2026	Trinity College	TR01	5 EBB Eggs
		TR02	5 CC Eggs
3/21/2026	Veterans Memorial Park Hudson, FL	VP01	5 EBB Eggs
		VP02	3 EBB Eggs
		VP03	New EBB Nest, No Eggs
3/20/2026	W.H. Jack Mitchell Jr. Park	JM01	New EBB Nest, No Eggs
		JM01A	Empty
		JM02	New EBB Nest, No Eggs
		JM03	New EBB Nest, No Eggs

EBB Eastern Blue Bird
 CC Carolina Chickadee
 TTM Tufted Titmouse
 Nesting Active in Current Year
 Currently Active Nesting

Your Help Needed: Southeastern American Kestrels Dr. Karl Miller

The imperiled Southeastern American Kestrel, a small non-migratory falcon, lives in open sandhills, prairies, and pastures, and increasingly in some of our urban areas. FWC researchers are continuing their study of urban-dwelling kestrels in the Tampa Bay region. We need your help locating urban and suburban nests in Pasco, Pinellas, and Hillsborough counties! If you have information that you would like to share, please visit [Rare Upland Bird Sightings](#) to enter your sightings and photographs. Nesting behavior during mid-April through mid-July is especially of interest. For more information, please contact Dr. Karl Miller at karl.miller@myfwc.com or karl.miller.bird@gmail.com.



Southeastern American Kestrel at Arthur Engle Park last June

Additional Ongoing Conservation Projects

We currently have several additional conservation projects underway, and hope to give you more information on their progress in the near future. We have two Colony Watch volunteers this season - Pamela Graber at Seven Springs and Gillian Lankshear at Embassy Roost. Both have been trained by the Coastal Island Sanctuaries team, and are keeping tabs on our Wood Storks. EagleWatch nest monitoring is continuing under the leadership of Kimberly Rexroat, and we hope to have a full report at the end of the season - thanks to all of our nest monitors! And thanks to those working on the Black Rail Project in partnership with the Werner-Boyce team, and a special shout-out to Joe Colantonio, Don Fraser and Pat and Jeff Goldberg, who have all been out on the salt marsh moving the ARU monitoring unit as part of this season's study.

Additionally, thanks to Bob Burkard again for his ongoing monitoring of the Purple Martin house at W,H, Jack Mitchell Sr. Park.

Looking Ahead to May...

May 2nd - 8am - Monthly walk in Starkey Park

May 9th - Birding-by-Bike trip to Chassahowitzka in Hernando County

May 16th - Field Trip: East Pasco: Looking for Pasco's Rural Birds

Pasco Audubon Board of Directors

Christine Rowland, President - president@pascoaudubon.com

Don Fraser, Vice President and Conservation Chair - dmfraser31@gmail.com

Joanne Chamberlain, Treasurer - treasurer@pascoaudubon.com

Phil Duncan, Secretary - pascoaudubon@gmail.com

Mike Kell, Web Master - jmike65@gmail.com

Patricia Goldberg, Special Projects - projects@westpascoaudubon.com

Bob Burkard - Birding-by-Bike, The Bluebird Project - robertburkard9@gmail.com

JoAnn Sinatra, At-Large

Ken Landry, At-Large

Other Important Contacts:

Fran Sigurdsson, Membership Chair - fsigurds@gmail.com

Hal Sigurdsson, Photography Competition Coordinator - PascoAudubonPhotos@gmail.com

Noriko Buckles, Photography Club Coordinator - nbucklesphoto@gmail.com