

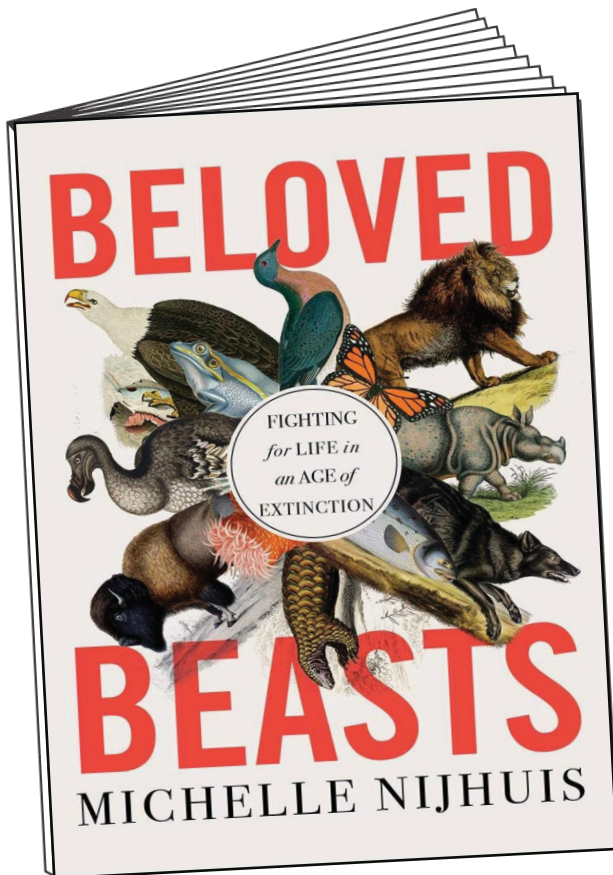
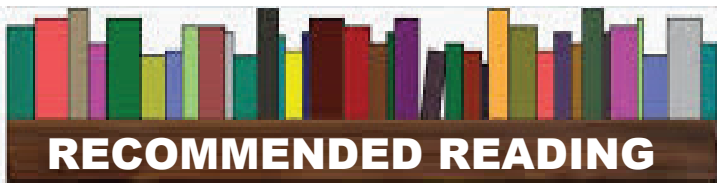


[www.santafeaudubon.org](http://www.santafeaudubon.org) and



Santa Fe Audubon Society - Florida

Santa Fe Audubon Society  
Melrose, FL  
**DECEMBER 2021**  
**NEWSLETTER**



Winner of the Sierra Club's 2021 Rachel Carson Award  
One of Chicago Tribune's Ten Best Books of 2021

"At once thoughtful and thought-provoking," *Beloved Beasts* tells the story of the modern conservation movement through the lives and ideas of the people who built it, making "a crucial addition to the literature of our troubled time" (Elizabeth Kolbert, author of *The Sixth Extinction*).

## GOOD NEWS

### KISSIMMEE RIVER PROJECT: COMPLETE AFTER NEARLY 30 YEARS



After decades of construction, the Kissimmee River Restoration Project has restored 40 miles of river and floodplain and returned almost 25,000 acres to wetlands. The Army Corps of Engineers and partners at the South Florida Water Management District celebrated this important milestone in Everglades Restoration this summer. The Kissimmee River Restoration Project is the largest functioning restoration project of its kind in the world.

Following restoration, Lake Kissimmee is expected to rise one and a half feet, storing water to feed the river during the dry season and rehydrating another 20 square miles of dried marshes. The river's floodplain will flood seasonally and the river will meander again in order to replicate its natural path. Wetland habitats



of the Kissimmee River channel and floodplain support at least 159 bird species, 66 of which are considered wetland-dependent during some portion of their life cycles.

photos from South Florida Water Management webpage:  
<https://www.sfwmd.gov/our-work/kissimmee-river>



## HOW TO DRAW A BIRD

A world of infinite beauty and discovery waits just beyond the point where we usually stop paying attention. Nature offers us peace, a rich and meaningful place to learn. There is no computer program that can replicate the richness of seeing a flower up close, the intrigue of geeking out with bugs, or the calm of laying on your back and watching clouds. The key to developing a closer connection with nature is deliberately enhancing your powers of observation and wonder. Learn how the methods of a field naturalist will help you notice more, remember what you discovered, and be actively curious. A nature journal is a lens that focuses our attention and crystalizes our observations, thoughts, and experiences. The system is creative, rigorous, and playful, easy to begin and learn, and will grow and mature over a lifetime.

This site is a resource of tools for your journey. Start now: you can do this, and the world is waiting.

Free online lessons and much more, at this website:

<https://johnmuirlaws.com>



### FLORIDA WILDLIFE EXTENSION Wildlife Happenings

Click on the link below to check out the  
"Wildlife Happenings" in our area.

[https://wec.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/wildlife\\_info/happenings/](https://wec.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/wildlife_info/happenings/)

## ONLINE JIGSAW PUZZLES

<https://www.jigsawplanet.com/SantaFeAudubonFL/santa-fe-audubon>



# THE NATIVE PLANT CONNECTION

## YAUPON HOLLY (*Ilex vomitoria*)

Native from southern Virginia south to Florida and west to southeast Oklahoma and central Texas, Yaupon is a picturesque, upright, single- or multi-trunked shrub or small tree, growing 12-45 ft high but usually no higher than 25 ft. Female plants produce prodigious amounts of bright red, persistent berries. The leaves are dark green and small, usually less than 1 1/2 in. long. The pale gray bark is marked with white patches.



Photo courtesy of Michael Drummond

Yaupon Holly is often grown in residential landscapes and trimmed into hedges, with many cultivars popular: weeping forms, columnar forms, and dwarf forms. The ornamental twigs with shiny evergreen leaves and numerous red berries have been used as holiday decorations and make cheerful accents in the winter landscape. The leaves and twigs contain caffeine, and American Indians used them to prepare a tea, which they drank in large quantities ceremonially and then vomited back up, lending the plant its species name, *vomitoria*. The vomiting was self-induced or because of other ingredients added; it doesn't actually cause vomiting. Tribes from the interior traveled to the coast in large numbers each spring to partake of this tonic, and it was also a common hospitality drink among many groups. It remained popular as such among southeastern Americans into the 20th century and is still occasionally consumed today, with a flavor resembling another holly drink, the South American yerba mate, from *Ilex paraguariensis*. Yaupon is slow-growing and tends to get thick and twiggy on the inside, making it ideal for dense hedges but requiring careful pruning to shape it into a tree. You must have both a male and female plant to have berries. Nursery plants are typically female (fruiting) and are propagated by cuttings.

To learn more about native plants in our area:

<https://www.audubon.org/plantsforbirds>

Also, visit <https://www.fnps.org> Florida Native Plant Society for info and plant lists and sources.



# BIRD OF THE MONTH

## **PIED-BILLED GREBE** (*Podilymbus podiceps*) band code "PBGR"

Pied-billed Grebes live on bodies of flat or sluggish, fresh to slightly brackish water, at altitudes from sea level to about 8,000 feet. They forage in open water but construct their floating nests using materials and anchors of aquatic vegetation and/or dense stands of emergent vegetation—plants that root underwater with leaves and stems that extend into air. Habitat types include freshwater wetlands, wet fields, bays, sloughs, marshes, lakes, slow-moving rivers, and even sewage ponds. Pied-billed Grebes can nest in moderately to heavily populated areas. They occupy similar habitats during migration and winter.

Part bird, part submarine, the Pied-billed Grebe is common across much of North America. These small brown birds have unusually thick bills that turn silver and black in summer. They use their chunky bills to kill and eat large crustaceans along with a great variety of fish, amphibians, insects, and other invertebrates. Rarely seen in flight and often hidden amid vegetation, Pied-billed Grebes announce their presence with loud, far-reaching calls.

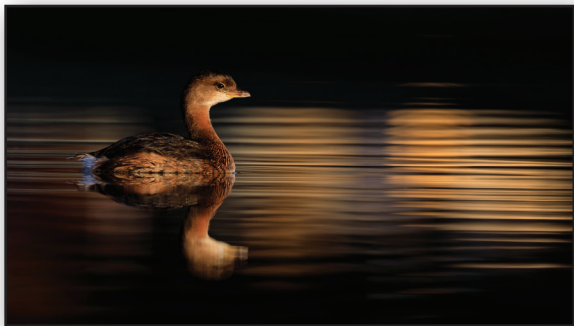
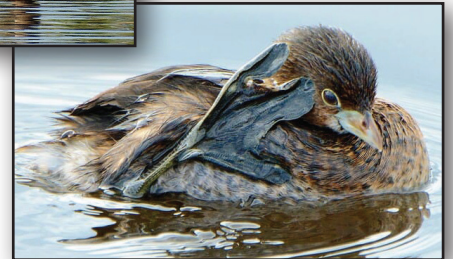
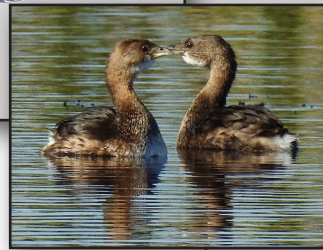


Photo courtesy of Michael Drummond



Photo courtesy of Michael Drummond



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### **COOL FACTS:**

The Latin genus name for "grebe" means "feet at the buttocks"—an apt descriptor for these birds, whose feet are indeed located near their rear ends. This body plan, a common feature of many diving birds, helps grebes propel themselves through water. Lobed (not webbed) toes further assist with swimming. Pied-billed Grebes pay for their aquatic prowess on land, where they walk awkwardly.

For more information about Pied-billed Grebes visit:  
[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Pied-billed Grebe/overview](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Pied-billed_Grebe/overview)



**Fun Fact:** A group of grebes are collectively known as a "water dance" of grebes.