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January 2010

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Four photographers honored for images taken along The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel

Lee County, FL -With Lee County being home to more than 50 miles of white sand beaches, state parks, protected wildlife refuges and a strong passion for ecotourism, it is no wonder four photographers recently shot award-winning photographs along The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel in southwest Florida.

Bob Pelkey, Bob Malbon, Jim Urbach and Lorraine Thomas are all honored in the January – February issue of *Audubon* magazine. These four photographers each won an honorable mention in the magazine’s “First Ever Photo Awards.”

Three of the honorable mentions were in the amateur category. Pelkey, a service manager for Publix Supermarkets, submitted a picture of a little blue heron perched on Bunche Beach Preserve in Fort Myers; the photo took him nearly a half-hour to craft. Malbon, a cabinet maker by trade, also entered the competition with an image of a little blue heron. His photograph was taken at J.N. “Ding” Darling Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island. Thomas, who spends her work days selling bottling machinery, entered an image of a reddish egret she took in the water near Fort Myers.

In the professional photographer category, Urbach won an honorable mention with his photo of a mother and newborn snowy plover. This was the first time the photographer had ever seen a newborn snowy plover. “These birds are so tiny and they blend in with the sand so well, so if you aren’t looking you can easily miss them,” says Urbach.

The *Audubon*’s “First Ever Photo Awards” ran in conjunction with *Nature’s Best Photography* magazine. The competition garnered more than 2,500 participants who submitted over 16,000 extraordinary images. To see the Top 100 photos entered, visit www.audubonmagazine.org.

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The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel is known worldwide for its shell-strewn beaches, wildlife refuges, and sparkling waterways. The destination offers an ideal location for reconnecting with southwest Florida's most valuable natural resources. It is for this reason that the destination has always had a strong commitment to the protection and preservation of the environment.

In addition to receiving various honors for its birding, the area has been recognized for its abundance of Atlantic bottlenose dolphins and manatees.

For information on planning a vacation to Florida's unspoiled island sanctuary, visit www.FortMyersSanibel.com.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel in southwest Florida includes: Sanibel Island, Captiva Island, Fort Myers Beach, Fort Myers, Bonita Springs, Estero, Cape Coral, Pine Island, Boca Grande & Outer islands, North Fort Myers, Lehigh Acres.