

TROPICAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

SOUTH FLORIDA'S VOICE OF CONSERVATION



Commissioner Covo, District 2

Sent via email

Subject: Support for the protection of a possible rookery on the northern most “Picnic Island” off Morningside Park.

Dear City of Miami Commissioner Sabina Covo,

Tropical Audubon Society¹ (TAS) is writing to give our full support for the protection of a possible rookery on the northern most “Picnic Island” off Morningside Park. It is our understanding that there are at least seven brown pelican nests currently in this location (see figure 1). The brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) is currently under protection by the [U.S. Migratory Bird Treaty Act](#). It is our understanding that you will be introducing a pocket item at the July 13th Commission meeting to direct the City of Miami to work with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to protect the rookery on the island.

A rookery is a communal nesting ground for gregarious birds. While birds do not share individual nest duties, the collection of nests in a small area gives nesting birds and vulnerable chicks extra protection and advantages. Most rookeries are found in wetland areas or locations where many suitable nesting sites may be scarce. Islands, similar to Picnic Island, can be beneficial for nesting wading birds, because the surrounding water provides a natural protective barrier for the nests.

We request that the City of Miami work with FWC to collect more data and to protect the rookery on Picnic Island. If you have any questions or require additional information, do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lauren Jonaitis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lauren Jonaitis

Senior Conservation Director, Tropical Audubon Society

conservationdirector@tropicalaudubon.org

¹Tropical Audubon Society (TAS) is a science- and solutions-based nonprofit conservation organization driven by its grassroots community and principles of equity, diversity and inclusion. TAS's Legacy is to protect, conserve and restore South Florida ecosystems by working closely with local governments and other stakeholders, and by fostering wise stewardship of native habitats, birds and other indigenous wildlife. Our organization's strategic focal areas include: Bird Conservation, Everglades Protection and Restoration, Biscayne Bay Protection and Restoration, Water Quality, Smart Growth and Climate Change. TAS has been educating environmental advocates, leading area bird walks, defending wildlife, and protecting natural resources such as Biscayne Bay/ Everglades since its 1947 founding.



Figure 1. Photos showing active nesting of brown pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) at “Picnic Island” off Morningside Park. Photos taken by Christopher Boykin from Pelican Harbor Seabird Station.