

# The Pelican

*We need to be the stewards of this world, not its destroyers*

Vol. 57-No.8 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon  
February, 2012



## Message From The President

*Thoughts From On High*

On Thursday, January 12, David Yarnold, President & CEO of Audubon, hosted a webinar discussion about Audubon's 2012 strategic plan. He spent about 25 minutes discussing the problems (habitat loss, threats to biodiversity, legal protections which are now under attack, and the narrow base of support for action) and the solution, which is Audubon's 100+ year legacy of on-the-ground conservation. "One Audubon" consists of 450,000 members, 465 chapters, 46 centers, 24 state offices, 1.8 million magazine readers and Birdlife Partnerships in 18 countries.

He spoke about the importance of having effective partnerships to ensure conservation impact "at scale," which means the conservation plan must be coordinated to protect the birds at their winter grounds, along their migration routes and at their breeding grounds. Often that means working with people and organizations in multiple states and/or countries.

The 2012 Strategic Plan focuses on five conservation strategies. Implementation steps have been outlined along with how to measure our success against our 5-year goals. If you were not able to listen in during the presentation earlier this month, please visit <http://chapterservices.audubon.org/news-announcements> where you can listen to a recording of the presentation and/or view a copy of the slides presented during the program.

National Audubon and Audubon of Florida have funding opportunities available for chapters which work on projects aligned with the five conservation strategies. If you have ideas for a project for our chapter, please contact me or one of the Board members. Contact information is listed on the last page of the newsletter.

*Paula Wehr*

## Our February Meeting

On February 20th our speaker will be Florida Parks Service Specialist, Lauren Swanson, who will give a program on the efforts to manage land for Florida Scrub Jays, our state's only endemic species. We meet at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. Socializing begins at 6:30 p.m. The speaker begins at 7:00 p.m. and a brief business meeting follows. And the bridge is still out, so remember to drive in from 10th Street.

## Calendar & Events

Deep Creek Preserve Eco Buggy tour

Friday, Feb. 10th - meet at Lowes parking lot, east of I-95 on Dunlawton Avenue at 7:00 a.m. On this field trip we will ride Volusia County's Eco Buggy to explore this newly acquired conservation property, located on S.R. 415 in the Samsula area. We will ride through pine flatwoods, timberlands and agriculture land. Seating is limited; registration is required. Contact Chuck Tague at [kingrail@mac.com](mailto:kingrail@mac.com), 386-253-1166 or 412-841-8813. Please provide email and/or phone numbers in case plans change. Bring snacks, water and lunch if you'd like. We will eat at Lake Ashby after the tour.

Orlando Wetlands on a Monday

Monday, Feb., 13th - Meet at Lowe's, in Port Orange at 7:00 am and join Bob North for a trip to this exciting spot. This trip involves a good hike on flat trails with chances for 80+ species of birds. For more information, contact Bob at 352-302-3510 or [knorth8@cfl.rr.com](mailto:knorth8@cfl.rr.com)

Overnight To the Circle B Bar Reserve

Thursday & Friday, Feb. 23rd & 24th - We'll meet in the parking lot of the shopping center at 2500 W. Int'l Speedway Blvd., behind Krystal, at 8:00 am. Though we're unable to leave cars at this location overnight, we can caravan to the Reserve, near Lakeland, to begin the trip. The Day's Inn & Suites, at 4502 Socrum Loop Rd., is the hotel we've chosen. Call them at 863-683-5095 if you haven't already made your reservation. Call Peggy Yokubonus at 386-316-4085 or [pyokubonus@cfl.rr.com](mailto:pyokubonus@cfl.rr.com) if you have any questions.

SEVAS & WVAS Go To Lake Apopka

The Zellwood Christmas Bird Count, which includes Lake Apopka, routinely logs over 160 species each winter. So this is a special place.

Saturday, Feb. 4th - WVAS will be going with their Co-President, Harry Robinson, who literally wrote the book on birding Lake Apopka. Meet them at DeLand Post Office on SR 44 east of Amelia St. at 8:00 am and bring lunch. Call Harry if you have any questions, 386-943-8342.

Saturday, Feb. 18th - Meet the folks from SEVAS at 6:00 am at Market Square, in Edgewater, corner of US 1 and SR 442, near Dunkin Donuts. Then car pool to this outstanding birding location in north Orange County. Call Gail Domroski at 386-428-0447 or [rdomroski@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rdomroski@cfl.rr.com) if you have questions.

## Conservation Notes

by David Hartgrove

The 2011-2012 Tomoka Regional Science and Engineering Fair will be held on Saturday, Feb. 11, 2012 at Atlantic High School, 1250 Reed Canal Road, in Port Orange. Our chapter, along with our sister chapters, the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society and the West Volusia Audubon Society, will again sponsor cash prizes to be awarded to winners selected by a panel of judges made up of chapter members. Each chapter contributes one hundred dollars. Then a one hundred dollar prize is awarded to the first place selections in each of the two divisions, senior and junior. A fifty dollar award is then given to the runners up in each division. The judges are looking for the best entries in the fields of natural sciences. These kids work very hard on their projects. It's really interesting to listen as they describe the steps they took in completing their projects. These are our future leaders and scientists. We want to give them all of the encouragement we can. We're including an abstract from one student's project in this issue of the Pelican to give you an idea of the breadth of knowledge on view at this exciting event.

The Lake Apopka Restoration Area is one of the premier birding destinations in Florida. Though it's currently only accessible with a guide from the St Johns River Water Management District, plans are moving forward to open the area to everyone as a self guided tour, much like Viera Wetlands. The area is listed as an Audubon Important Bird Area, as well it should be. The checklist runs to 350 species. Lake and Orange Counties and the SJRWMD have plans to make Lake Apopka a major eco tourism destination. In March they'll hold joint workshops to announce the plans for miles of auto and biking trails and other amenities. Now comes word that a small private airport nearby wants to become a jet port. This will mean they need to extend their runway. SJRWMD is being "encouraged" to declare 1500 acres as surplus land so it can be bought and the runway extended. Locating a jet port next to a huge bird area is about as dumb an idea as can be imagined. Many airports have issues with birds and spend considerable sums to purchase propane cannons and other noise makers to drive birds away from their runways. There's already a jet port in Leesburg, just a few miles away. Of course, this plan is being pitched as a "job creator." In the interest of safety for the passengers on the jets, as well as the birds, this project needs to be derailed now. As soon as we have more information on a comment period, we'll let you know.

This year has been what's called an "eruptive" year for Snowy Owls. Due to an increase in last summer's lemming population in the Arctic, Snowy Owls had a banner year for breeding. Now, with increased food pressures of this larger population, Snowy Owls have been seen in record numbers much further south than their usual Canadian wintering grounds. They've been reported as far south as Kansas and Oklahoma. Twelve years ago one even showed up in Florida, where it perched on the dunes above the Gulf of Mexico at Alligator Point. It was the first and only time that we know of. Here's a link to a video that was posted by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. It provides some stunning views of this bird that for many of us may never be seen in the wild. Enjoy!

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfkcX-UqIjM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfkcX-UqIjM)

Below is a piece written for the Pelican by a student at Spruce Creek High School as part of his Science Fair project.

## The Effects of Beach Driving on Size and Density of Ghost Crab Populations in Volusia County

Cyrus Jamidar, Spruce Creek High School

The particular species of Ghost Crab studied in this project is the Atlantic Ghost Crab, *Ocypode quadrata* (Johan Christian Fabricius, 1787). This crab is found across the eastern seaboard from Rhode Island in the United States to Southern Brazil. Though there have been other experiments using populations of the Ghost Crab as an indicator species, no one has examined the effect of regular vehicular traffic on Ghost Crab populations. The Ghost Crab is a superb indicator species due to its easily visible characteristic burrow with an entrance shaft. On some beaches across Florida vehicles are allowed to drive on the beach. This field study examines the extent to which vehicular traffic has an impact on Ghost Crabs populations in Ormond Beach, Florida.

My experiment dealt with two different types of beach areas. One, on which vehicular traffic was permitted, and the other where vehicular traffic was not permitted. These two beach areas were side by side and had similar physical characteristics. Vehicular driving is the only variable differentiating the two beaches. In each beach area I marked off 500 meters in which I counted the different Ghost Crab populations. I divided up the 500 meters into 10 sections each 50 meters long and three meters wide, and counted the number of Ghost Crab holes per section. Then I measured the diameter of each hole using an electronic caliper.

In the non-driving section there were consistently more holes and with greater diameters than in the driving section as evaluated using t-statistic. The average hole diameter of the non-driving beach area was 2.71" while the driving beach area had an average hole diameter of 2.34". In addition, the total number of holes for the non-driving beach area was 751 compared to the driving beach area which had 244. That's 507 fewer holes.

Compaction tests with a cone-penetrometer showed a significant difference in the compaction of sand in both the superficial and deeper layers. The non-driving beach had an average compaction at shallow depth of 101 psi and 225 psi at the deep depth, whereas the driving beach had an average compaction of at the shallow depth of 133psi and at the deep depth 300psi.

In conclusion, vehicular driving adversely affected the number and size of Ghost Crab burrows. There were significantly fewer and smaller burrows on the driving beach in comparison to the non-driving beach. Compaction of sand on the driving beach was also much greater statistically than on the non-driving beach. So along with crabs being killed or run over by the beach traffic, it is probable that compaction of sand by vehicles is a major factor in the decrease in burrows on the driving beach area either from cars collapsing the Ghost Crab burrows or making it difficult for the crabs to dig into the sand.

## We Welcome Our New Members

Welcome to our new members this month: Edna Andre, Chuck Bachstein, Vera Becker, Dorothy Bowden, Anthony Buglione, Renee Burson, Billie Clevenger, Dian Disantis, Veronica S. Eads, Dona Elliott, Joan Freburger, Marion Fuentes, Karen Granville, Lindy Kopp, Nancy M. Lackey, The Librarian at Daytona State College, Laura Morgenstern, Dorothy & Kenneth Pearce, Richard Poppel, Katie Rodgers, Elaine Stacey, Robert Stillwell, Ann Walden, and Rose Williams. We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting or field trip.

## Festival at Lake Woodruff NWR

Saturday, Feb. 25th, the Friends of Lake Woodruff NWR will host their annual Festival from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm at the Refuge. There will be all kinds of fun events, including Eco Buggy rides, food, live music, guided nature walks and presentations on water birds, bird identification and other subjects by chapter board members Chuck Tague and David Hartgrove, as well as other presenters. There will be lots of ducks and other water fowl, as well as raptors, warblers and sparrows.



Ring-necked Duck

*photo by Danny Sauvageau*

Here's a link to some other photos from the refuge:

<http://www.friendsoflakewoodruff.org/photo-tour.html>

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## Experience the Magic of the Dry Tortugas

And do something good for yourself and the environmental organization of your choice. The Dry Tortugas during Spring migration is one of the best birding experiences in Florida. Florida Nature Tours is scheduling a number of trips from Key West to this birding wonderland beginning in April, 2012. FNT will donate \$100.00 to the environmental organization of your choice when you book your trip. Check their website for all of the information: <http://floridanaturetours.net>

## The Christmas Bird Count

*by David Hartgrove*

Our Daytona Beach Christmas Bird Count was again a big success. Twenty-eight people found 129 species and counted 20,165 birds. This was our first year having a sea watch. A sea watch is conducted from one spot on the beach and birds seen offshore (and on the beach) are counted all day. A spotting scope is required for this type of counting, as well as in depth knowledge of the birds one is likely to see. Fortunately, Harry Robinson, WVAS Co-President, who conducted the sea watch with help from WVAS member, Eli Schaperow, has extensive experience with pelagic birds. His efforts paid off with 2 jaeger species: 5 Pomarine and 7 Parasitic. They also had 9 Black Scoters and 1 Surf Scoter, along with many gulls and terns. The find of the day on my team were 80 American Pipits, seen on the front lawn of Riverbend Church. Michael Meisenburg and Liza Caudillo drove over from Gainesville to help out again. This time they brought along little 5 month old Lola for her first CBC. When she wasn't sleeping I'm told she was laughing at the adults as they tried to tally the birds seen. We ended the day at the Royal Dynasty Chinese Restaurant where we told bird stories and enjoyed the good company. For a look at the results you can click on this link: <http://www.halifaxriveras.org/CBC%201996-2011.pdf>

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## Audubon Adventures

We are now soliciting sponsors for the classroom sets of Audubon Adventures. If you have been a sponsor in the past you know how important this program is to Volusia County students. For some children it's their first exposure to learning about the environment, wild birds, and other animals.

The Audubon Adventures program is aimed at third, fourth and fifth grade classrooms. Each sponsored class receives four sets of a newsletter with materials for 32 students in each set. They are filled with information and learning activities. There is also a teacher's manual with support ideas, activities, and evaluations.

Send your donation to Halifax River Audubon, P.O. Box 166, Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166. Any donation is welcome; \$45 will supply a classroom. Please specify on your check that your donation is for Audubon Adventures. And thank you for thinking of our future leaders.



Snowy Owls at Boundary Bay, British Columbia  
*photo by Kimberle Stark*

## Seven Tips for Great Bird Photography

from noted wildlife photographer, Jeff Parker,

reprinted with permission

### GO WHERE THE BIRDS ARE.

If herons are skittish at your local pond, go where they're not so nervous (i.e. fishing docks). Need your spirit to soar with sharp-shinned hawks? Head to Georgia's Cumberland Island in the fall. Roaring to ride the wind like a raptor? Glide to El Paso for golden eagles, Corpus Christi for its annual Hawk Watch, or Pennsylvania's Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. Seeking the serenade of a red crossbill? North Georgia's Cohutta Wildlife Management Area provides a home to these finch-family birds. Crave the currents of swallow-tailed-kites? Make your way to Florida's Lyonia Preserve. Desire dramatic sandhill crane sunrise silhouettes? Set up your tripod near Orlando at the Lake Apopka Restoration Area. Long for the luck of bluebirds? Take the Northeast Texas Bluebird Trail in Titus County. Ready for rowdy vociferous green jays and kiskadees? South Texas provides a haven for these entertaining birds. Melodic golden cheeked warblers? A limited number of Texas Hill Country ranches offer specially-built photo blinds within this species' habitat.

### FIND KNOWLEDGEABLE HELP.

Along with tip #1, hiring a guide or taking part in a tour gets you in the right place at the right time. For example, South Texas' photo ranches offer exceptional opportunities for gathering high quality images of dramatic scenes like crested caracaras duking it out -- sometimes with Harris's hawks -- but you need a guide to gain access. In addition, someone who not only knows the local avian species, but is also an expert photographer will know when and where the animal activity and the lighting suit your lens best.

### DON'T PUT THE BIRD IN THE CENTER OF THE FRAME.

One thing most great bird photographs have in common is that they're interesting. Thus, in the spirit of adding interest, when composing the shot do your best not to place your subject dead center in the frame. Instead, use what pros call the "rule of thirds," a visual trick which breaks the space into, well, you guessed it...thirds. The eye tends to find an object off to one side or the other more pleasing than one sitting smack dab in the middle. (And, just because a bird's breathtaking, don't think you can skip this rule; nope, this one holds true even with such stunners as, say, vermilion flycatchers!)

### WATCH THAT BACKGROUND!

A messy, jumbled background that distracts from the real object of beauty spoils many otherwise fine photographs. Any background elements need to be far enough away to go out of focus. Also, remember, when you're working at a feeder, that perch can be moved!

### BE AWARE OF THE LIGHT ANGLE.

Ask pros about the single most important element in photography and most would say, "The right light!" With that in mind, generally speaking, for birds you want front light (light coming from behind you). Back light works for nice silhouettes and on wading birds with plumes (...ah, the elegance this adds to the already-elegant great egret!). Try to avoid side light as it rarely does our winged friends justice.

### SELECT A PHOTO-WORTHY PERCH.

If you're creating your images at a feeding station, you've got the flexibility of providing your own perch, so get creative! Pick something interesting and make it even more so by adding a little something interesting (i.e. berries, flowers, lichen, etc.). But be careful not to add too much or you'll distract from the beauty of the bird. And keep in mind the size of the perch versus the size of the bird. A dainty painted bunting, for example, will look out of place on a big log.

### TRY TO CAPTURE A MOMENT.

What pros call "bird on a stick" shots refer to the kinds of photos that, even though they might display birds clearly and follow other tips featured here, tend to be pretty boring overall. Let's face it - we like seeing animals in action! Capturing a behavior makes for a much more interesting image and can still show off the beauty of the bird. Even a small one like an orchard oriole chomping on a berry can give great glimpses into species' personality. (Sure, a spider would be better, but don't underestimate the power of a berry!) There's certainly more to learn about each of these topics, but put these tips to work and you'll immediately take better photos of the birds within your focal point.



American Oystercatcher  
photo by Jeff Parker

## Contact Our Board Members

Office	Name	Home Phone	E-Mail
President	Paula Wehr	673-5332	<a href="mailto:paulawehr@cfl.rr.com">paulawehr@cfl.rr.com</a>
Vice President	Rachel Ramsey	673-1037	<a href="mailto:gmamimi@cfl.rr.com">gmamimi@cfl.rr.com</a>
Vice President	John Roessler	255-9826	<a href="mailto:birdman3651@bellsouth.net">birdman3651@bellsouth.net</a>
Treasurer	Susan Jarosik	676-0056 (ofc)	<a href="mailto:sjarosik@plantationrealtyservices.com">sjarosik@plantationrealtyservices.com</a>
Corresponding Sec.	Karen Mosher	322-3790	<a href="mailto:frederickmosher@att.net">frederickmosher@att.net</a>
Recording Sec.	Peggy Yokubonus	673-7619	<a href="mailto:pyokubonus@cfl.rr.com">pyokubonus@cfl.rr.com</a>
Membership Sec.	John Carr	255-9360	<a href="mailto:jcarr14@cfl.rr.com">jcarr14@cfl.rr.com</a>
Historian	John Carr	255-9360	<a href="mailto:jcarr14@cfl.rr.com">jcarr14@cfl.rr.com</a>
Past President	David Hartgrove	788-2630	<a href="mailto:birdman9@earthlink.net">birdman9@earthlink.net</a>
At Large 2012	Karen Moser	322-3790	<a href="mailto:frederickmosher@att.net">frederickmosher@att.net</a>
At Large 2012	Holly Zwart-Duryea	672-8788	<a href="mailto:hollis1000@aol.com">hollis1000@aol.com</a>
At Large 2013	Willie Burns	253-2150	<a href="mailto:wwillie@juno.com">wwillie@juno.com</a>
At Large 2013	Becky Schubert	386-447-8916	<a href="mailto:bschub@earthlink.net">bschub@earthlink.net</a>
At Large 2014	Renate Calero	761-8179	<a href="mailto:renate_c@hotmail.com">renate_c@hotmail.com</a>
At Large 2014	Marion Monaghan	760-2747	<a href="mailto:nautilus411@aol.com">nautilus411@aol.com</a>

## Committee Members

Committee	Name	Home Phone	E-Mail
Conservation	David Hartgrove	788-2630	<a href="mailto:birdman9@earthlink.net">birdman9@earthlink.net</a>
Education	Marion Monaghan	760-2747	<a href="mailto:nautilus411@aol.com">nautilus411@aol.com</a>
	Holly Zwart-Duryea	672-8788	<a href="mailto:hollis1000@aol.com">hollis1000@aol.com</a>
Field Trips	Chuck Tague	412-841-8813	<a href="mailto:kingrail@mac.com">kingrail@mac.com</a>
	Joan Tague	412-841-3302	<a href="mailto:babyowl@mac.com">babyowl@mac.com</a> <a href="mailto:conniepaulding@aol.com">conniepaulding@aol.com</a>
Newsletter Editor	David Hartgrove	788-2630	<a href="mailto:birdman9@earthlink.net">birdman9@earthlink.net</a> or <a href="mailto:hrapelican11@earthlink.net">hrapelican11@earthlink.net</a>
Welcome	Jari Arbogast	761-2283	<a href="mailto:arbofish@att.net">arbofish@att.net</a>
	Celine Sullivan	257-1980	<a href="mailto:celinesul@aol.com">celinesul@aol.com</a>
Webmaster	Paula Wehr	673-5332	<a href="mailto:paulawehr@cfl.rr.com">paulawehr@cfl.rr.com</a>