

# The Pelican

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

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## Welcome To The New Pelican

This is our first electronic edition of the Pelican. After long conversations at our board meetings it was decided that we needed to make the leap into the digital world. This format will allow us to use more pictures, include hypertext links to other articles and websites, and we hope make for a better experience for you, our members and friends. As this is my first attempt at desktop publishing, I ask your indulgence. As the learning curve becomes less acute and familiarity with the process makes for greater comfort levels, I hope to be able to make improvements. We have long published articles by members and now we can use your photos more easily too. These may be submitted to the new Pelican e-mail address: [hrapelican11@earthlink.net](mailto:hrapelican11@earthlink.net). As I said back in February, "Bear with us as we take this step into the future."

The Editor

### *The Prez Sez:*

Change is our only constant. The winds shift, temperatures rise and fall, we all grow older and sometimes wiser, new relationships are forged and others are ended. Just as with individuals, organizations constantly change as well.

New officers were elected at our June 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting. Some held office previously and others are joining the leadership of our chapter for the first time. Each person brings a wealth of experience, a broad range of backgrounds and a mutual concern for preserving, conserving and enjoying our natural environment.

While we will not have a new venue for monthly meetings as we announced a few months ago, we will be downsizing a bit. Beginning with the September 19 meeting, we will set up using only one room at Sica Hall. This will not only save us money on rent, but keep us closer to the speaker to make it easier for everyone to hear clearly and to facilitate a more interactive dialog for questions and comments. Golden Dog will still display books, clothing and coffee for sale. We will continue to serve light refreshments.

And, for the final point this month, we hope to provide increased opportunities for interaction by chapter members. We are finalizing our field trip schedule for September through May and have included more week-end trips. The Museum of Arts & Sciences in Daytona Beach opened an exhibit in June which features an important collection of Audubon works including not only his famous paintings of birds but also the much rarer quadrupeds which were done in a variety of mediums. Chief Curator Cynthia Duval has agreed to be our speaker in December. The museum has also offered a guided tour at the exhibit for our chapter members. We'll let you know the date/time after details have been finalized.

A roadside clean-up is another potential project for our chapter. This would involve a few hours in the morning where our members meet to pick up trash along the sidewalk or roadway. This may appeal to younger family members who have "community service" requirements. If you have a suggestion for a location that needs a clean-up, contact me. And, please, let us know if you are a member of another organization which can partner with HRA to complete a project which matches the goals of both organizations. Many times we can accomplish a goal with a partner that neither organization could achieve individually.

Until next month ...

## Conservation Notes

Our governor has some strange ideas about what a state park is and what its function should be. He has said that parks must, “pay their own way.” Where does this idea come from, that a park should be a profit generator? It’s all part of his idea to privatize as much of government as possible. In every objective study ever done, the public ends up getting short changed when most government functions are farmed out to the private sector. Trash collection is an exception to this rule but turning over state parks to those whose only motivation is profit is a really bad idea. The latest idea put forth by the governor and his staff is to open some parks for privately owned golf courses, frisbee golf courses and zip lines. They also want to lease park land to private campground developers. Of course, with the governor’s abhorrence of regulations, these developments will be exempted from any regulatory oversight. Species dependent on the park land for survival will surely be placed at risk. Some parks have lists of threatened and endangered species that are dependent on them. Presumably these will not be slated for private development. One that has already been partially privatized is Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park, south of Tallahassee. Our chapter has taken two overnight field trips to this park and stayed in the lodge there. It and the restaurant have been turned over to a private contractor for management. Perhaps, if this slice of 50’s architecture is preserved as it is, this move will be okay. A proposed land use amendment to allow a privately owned campground to be constructed near the park will be debated at a public meeting on Tuesday, July 5th up there. We’ll know more after that. Turning portions of state parks into mini versions of a Disney campground is about as bad an idea as I can think of.

For years now we’ve been inundated with talk about energy independence and how we need to drill here, rather than continuing to import oil from unstable regions. The arguments against this idea are sound. Instead of drilling for more oil we need to be investing in alternative energy sources that reduce the CO2 we’re pumping into the atmosphere. Now comes a new headache, in the form of a proposed pipeline from Canada to Texas to carry oil from Canada’s tar sands project. Capable of transporting 830,000 barrels per day, this pipeline, if built, will further delay the implementation of an energy policy strong on renewable energy. People will think that this is part of the answer to energy independence. Tar sands are mined in Alberta in huge, open pit mines that strip the landscape in much the same way as mountaintop removal is done here for coal. Vast amounts of water are used to heat and separate the bitumen (the oil/tar) from the sand. What’s left is now severely contaminated. This sludge/water mix, which also may contain caustic soda and other chemicals, is pumped into huge holding ponds covering over 50 square miles. 500 migrating ducks landed on one of these ponds 3 years ago and died there soon after. Huge tracts of virgin boreal forest have been scraped off the face of the earth and what was once home to millions of warblers, woodpeckers, and other wildlife now resembles a wet moonscape.

Obtaining oil from tar sands is destructive enough. Burning it will cause its own set of problems. Most oil is burned in automobiles in the form of gasoline. Capturing the CO2 from that is all but impossible. If we can phase out coal in electricity production and prevent the use of fuels like tar sands over the next 30 years, we have a slim chance of avoiding the climate catastrophe our technology has given us in return for “easy” transportation. For the sake of our grandchildren let’s hope this pipeline isn’t approved.

David Hartgrove

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## Will You Sign A Petition For Cleaner Air?

At our June 20th meeting there was a petition on the greeting table that was overlooked by many folks. It was part of a petition drive organized by Sierra to ask EPA Administrator, Lisa Jackson, to go forward with plans to regulate emissions from coal fired power plants. Twenty years ago the drive was to reduce sulfur emissions which caused acid rain. Nothing however was done to address the far more insidious threat of mercury pollution. Mercury is a heavy metal that persists in the environment for decades. Even tiny amounts can have disastrous on children and lead to permanent brain damage. In addition to the mercury there’s arsenic, lead and dioxin in the emissions from those smoke stacks.

Audubon is a part of this campaign for cleaner air too. Below is a link to a page where you can add your name to the growing list of petition signers. It only takes a minute or two and it’s one of the positive steps we can take to help insure the health of our offspring.

<https://secure3.convio.net/nasaud/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=1043>

# Counting Birds At Night

by David Hartgrove

For the past several years now both Meret Wilson and I have been volunteers with the United States Nightjar Survey. This is conducted nationwide by the Center For Conservation Biology from its headquarters at the College of William and Mary, in Williamsburg, Virginia. The survey protocols require that you establish a route ten miles long, in suitable habitat. You begin your route on a night when it's close to full moon and you listen at one mile intervals for six minutes at each stop. My route is in Tiger Bay State Forest and begins on the old brick road near the forest entrance.

Nightjars is the collective English name for the avian family, Caprimulgidae. The name in Latin means "goat milker" or goat sucker. Back when superstition and ignorance ruled our knowledge of the natural world, it was thought that these birds would sneak up on unsuspecting goats and cattle and attach themselves to the teats of the females and drain them of their milk. It's hard to believe how silly our ancestors could be. The birds are active at night which is why we go out to survey them by the light of the moon. Locally, in spring and summer, the two members of this bird family we have here are Common Nighthawks and Chuck-will's-widows. Both nest here, on the ground, without bothering to make a formal nest. Often people ask if that bird that's keeping them awake at night with its incessant, repeated calls is a Whippoorwill. After all, that's what it sounds like. But if you listen closely you'll hear the bird making a 4 note call. A Whippoorwill's call is 3 notes. These birds pass through our area in migration but don't nest here. Here's a You Tube link to a recording of both species singing at the same time. It's easy to hear the difference. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdxmgTtQC6A&feature=related>

Common Nighthawks, though closely related, sound nothing like the birds referenced above. Here's a link to a page with their sounds. [http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Common\\_Nighthawk/sounds](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Common_Nighthawk/sounds)

It's been said that these birds eat as many mosquitoes in one night as a Purple Martin eats in its lifetime. Both species have small bills but a large mouth which can open very wide and is surrounded by stiff, rictal bristles, thought to facilitate guiding flying insects into the mouth. In addition to insects, the stomach contents of Chuck-will's-widows have been found to contain small birds and bats, including, on one occasion, a hummingbird thought to have been encountered while on its migration flight across the Gulf of Mexico. Both species' winter ranges are from South Florida down into northern South America. Much of the behavior and biology of these birds remains open to speculation due to their nocturnal habits. Both species nearly always lay just 2 eggs and they will replace eggs that have been lost to predation. This means they have a fairly low rate of reproduction. Combined with habitat loss, this contributes to their population numbers being in steep decline.



Chuck-will's-widow, *Caprimulgus carolinensis*  
by Rhys Marsh



Common Nighthawk, *Chordeiles minor*  
by Ken Tracey



Common Nighthawk nest  
by Ken Tracey

When I first moved into my home 28 years ago there was a large, undeveloped area behind it. This slash pine and scrub habitat was perfect for Chuck-will's-widows and the males returned in mid March to begin territory acquisition and courtship began 2 weeks later when the females arrived. By mid April the calls from all of the birds utilizing that small patch of habitat were so loud that neighbors complained to me that they were unable to sleep with their windows open at night for the noise. As development continued over the years, these sounds of Spring diminished. There's still a small patch of woods 200 yards southeast of the house and until this year I could still count on hearing the first calls of the Chuck-will's-widow on or about March 19th. This year there were no calls and haven't been. When I drove the route in Tiger Bay State Forest, which should have been ringing with their calls, I had 4 stops where I heard no birds at all. I'm hoping this could be due to the timing of the survey. Due to other commitments I wasn't able to run the route during the prime time of the full moon. Next year I'll make sure I'm out there on a clear, night with a bright moon in hopes of getting better survey results. But there's no doubt that, along with a number of other species, this bird's numbers are on a downward slope. Habitat loss, both here and on their wintering grounds, portend a less than rosy future.

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## WHAT DO YOU CALL THAT AGAIN?

Somewhere out there in the land, an etymologist sat down and compiled a list of the various collective nouns that describe a group of birds. For instance, a group of American Avocets is called a colony. That one's not too exotic. There are others far more imaginative, such as: a "chain" of Bobolinks, a "gulp" of cormorants, and the ever popular "murder" of crows. There's also a "hover", a "muster", a "parcel" and maybe my favorite, a "storytelling" of crows. The next time you're peering at a group of Dunlin, remember that's called a "fling." Here's one for Mr. Burns, a "mob" of Emus. Look out your kitchen window at a "charm" of finches under the backyard feeder. Go down to Everglades National Park in January and if you're lucky you might see a "stand" of greater Flamingoes. Rookery Island, off the Port Orange Bridge, is a good place to see a "siege" of herons. Unfortunately, no one's published a catchy name for a group of Brown Pelicans. The next time you're driving along Tomoka Farms Road and you pull over to look at some Eastern Meadowlarks, remember, that's called an "exaltation". If they're flying they're called either an "ascension" or a "bevy". A group of Blue Jays calling from the backyard grapefruit tree is called a "band", a "party" or a "scold." Between the pioneers out west and their European forefathers there are a variety of names for magpies. There's a "tiding", a "charm", a "flock", a "murder" (they're closely related to crows), a "gulp" (they're not at all close to cormorants) a "tittering", a "tribe", and finally, a "congregation." Speaking of the Europeans, there's a "watch" of Nightingales, a "train" of Jackdaws, and a "bellowing" of Bullfinches.

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## News From The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and Beyond

The Spoon-billed Sandpiper's worldwide population had plummeted to fewer than 200 breeding pairs. This is a bird that you have to go to either the Kamchatka Peninsula in far eastern Siberia to see in summer or to Southeast Asia to see in winter. Britain's Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and Birds Russia are teaming up to initiate a captive breeding program in an effort to save this critically endangered species. Once again, habitat loss plays a critical role in the bird's decline. One of its favored stopover points along its migration route are the wetlands along the South Korean coast near Saemangeum. Large portions of the wetlands have been drained and reclaimed for farming in recent years. A study in 2010 points to hunting by Burmese trappers is a major source of mortality too. These poor little guys just can't catch a break. Here's a link to the story on Cornell's website. The photos, by Gerrit Vyn, are excellent.

<http://birdsredesign.wordpress.com/2011/06/17/finding-help-for-the-spoon-billed-sandpiper/>

For those lariphiles (lovers of gulls) in the audience comes news from New England to delight the senses. On April 9th, on a beach near Hyannis, on Cape Cod, a large gull was found that didn't look quite right. At first it was thought that this might be a Lesser Black-backed Gull. But it was too chubby and its mantle was lighter than it should be. A few local experts postulated that it could be a Lesser Black-backed X Herring Gull hybrid. Some still cling to this hypothesis but the smart money now seems to be on Yellow-legged Gull. This gull is a rare but annual European winter visitor to the Canadian Maritimes. Michael Brothers has said that this could be our next rare gull to visit here next winter. Let's hope he's right.

## *Calendar*

The Volusia County Environmental Learning Center at Lyonia Preserve has a lot going on in July. There are programs on honey bees and their role in our environment, protecting our rivers, lakes and streams and two week long sessions of day camp for kids 7 to 12. Below is a link to their events calendar:

<http://lyoniapreserve.com/calendar.htm>

Unlike we bird people, the plant people (and many of us are one in the same) have meetings all year long. The local Paw Paw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society has a full roster of events in July and August. These include a class on planting native plants for birds, their regular meeting on Tuesday, July 19th, and a field trip to canoe the Silver River on Sat., July 23rd. Below is a link to their events calendar:

<http://sites.google.com/site/fnpspawpawchapter/calendar>

Everyone else is on summer hiatus. Next summer we should be the first year of the 2nd of Florida's Breeding Bird Atlas projects. It's time to update the results of the first project which was done from 1986 through 1991. Stayed tuned for future announcements on how you can get involved in this important project.

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