

The Pelican

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

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November, 2011



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Words from on high

Early in October a good friend sent an e-mail inviting me to share the bounty of warblers in her back yard. The timing worked out and I spent an hour watching Black-throated Blue, Palm, Black-and-white and Cape May Warblers work the giant oak tree before the no-name storm hit. Two weeks later we enjoyed another hour or so watching Prairie Warblers, Common Yellowthroats and Northern Parulas take a break on their journey south. Migrating tanagers, which had been present both times before I arrived, remained elusive during my presence. As we said good-bye, we both commented that it would have been nice to see the tanager (and perhaps identify whether it was a Summer or a Scarlet Tanager,) but we focused instead on the excellent views of beautiful birds which were present, the lovely weather and the opportunity to catch up with each other.

Maybe that's why we all love birding so much. There is always a bird that we missed seeing, but generally speaking, we'll have another opportunity to see it in a different spot or on another day. Knowing that the Red-necked Phalarope, which has eluded me on four separate trips to find it, will probably return to MINWR sometime in the future gives me just the excuse I need to get outside in the fresh air, focus on the beauty of nature all around us and enjoy the companionship of other like-minded people.

Enjoy this coming month; we all have many reasons to be thankful.

Paula Wehr

If you like what you read in The Pelican

There's a good chance someone else you know will too. Please feel free to forward this newsletter on to friends and family.

Our November Meeting Will Highlight The Christmas Bird Count

by Ray Scory

My Christmas Bird Count Program is a one hour, three part show explaining the origin of the Christmas Bird Count and the fun of a Christmas Bird Count day.

The first part is a narrative about Frank Michler Chapman's early birding life in Florida, a historical look at the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) and Frank Chapman's role in creating this count and why. Florida's list of natural wonders would be far shorter if not for the work of Frank Chapman. He is considered one of the greats of ornithology.

The second part is an audio/visual show featuring the excitement, dedication and fun that I have experienced on past Halifax River Audubon's Christmas Bird Counts. This show is dramatically illustrated with important Florida birds and Central Florida's semi-tropical landscape.

For the third part, David Hartgrove, the compiler of the Daytona Beach CBC, will explain how the Count works. This show will uncover the mysteries surrounding the how, when, where and whys of the Christmas Bird Count.

Audubon Adventures

The start of the school year means 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.

Conservation Notes

Yankeetown, in Levy County, due west of us on the Gulf Coast, has some of the strongest protections for its environment and quality of life of any municipality in the state. In 2008, having watched other parts of the state being paved over and over developed, the city leaders wrote some tough development rules and an even tougher comprehensive plan. The developers squealed like stuck pigs and raced off to court. Where they promptly lost, all the way to the First District Court of Appeals. Yankeetown's leaders then tweaked the nose of the development community further by adopting a version of Hometown Democracy. They put in place a law requiring a vote of the people for any changes in the comprehensive plan. Our state legislature, anxious to reward their paymasters in the development industry, passed the state Community Planning Act prohibiting communities from allowing local referenda. Yankeetown again filed suit over the legislation to uphold the rights of citizens to participate more fully in the local planning process. The suit is still pending. Because of their principled stand and enlightened attitude, 1000 Friends of Florida, one of the state's growth management watchdog groups, has awarded Yankeetown its "Better Community Award" for 2011.

Twenty people applied for the vacant position on the board of the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission. Two had previously served on the Commission, another was vice president of the Florida Wildlife Federation, another was the operator of an animal rescue group and former Humane Society investigator. The Governor passed over all of these obviously qualified applicants and selected Chuck Roberts, a paving contractor from Panama City. Other than being an avid quail hunter whose affluence affords him the luxury of owning his own bird hunting plantation, one wonders what possible qualifications he brings to the table. The FWC is under tremendous pressure now with withering budget cutbacks and a reduced work force. An experienced person would have been a better choice at this time.

Finally, there's a glimmer of good news from the Caribbean. In last month's issue of the Pelican I wrote of the fate of Machi and Goshen, two of the four Whimbrels that had received satellite tracking devices. They were both shot on the morning of September 12th at different "shooting swamps" on the island of Guadeloupe. International outrage over the incident has renewed calls for more controls on these places. As many as 45,000 Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Whimbrels, Pectoral Sandpipers and American Golden Plovers are slaughtered each year on the island of Barbados. Lures, caged birds and taped bird calls are used to entice the birds into these "sport shooting" sites. Often the birds are left to die where they fall. Now comes word that two former shooters have bought a parcel that will be converted to Packer's Conservation Wetland. Bird Studies Canada and Birdlife Caribbean have contributed additional funding for this new sanctuary. There's a long way to go and this spot is only 10 acres in size. But this is a good first step.

David Hartgrove

The Big Sit, 2011

By Ray Scory

Fog, ominous gray skies, hurricane force winds and driving sheets of rain pummeled Florida for three days. The storm without a name created havoc and destruction. Coastal towns and low lying communities flooded and felt the shearing power of wind. Surging ocean waters rushed at the coast showing no mercy. Beaches eroded, trees toppled and buildings collapsed. The Big Sit was right in the middle of it. For ten years I have sat The Big Sit under the Dunlawton Bridge and never on a day like this one.

Birds twisted and spun recklessly, speeding by, controlled by the force of the wind. The wind was too violent for a spotting scope and tracking a bird in the sky challenged the use of a camera or binoculars. Boaters did not venture out. No sunning in a lawn chair this day.

Our seventeen foot circle was located on the banks of the Halifax River and less than a mile from the roiled ocean waves. Daylight broke through about 7:15 AM and for the next hour I experienced one of my most exciting birding moments ever.

Without warning great numbers of Eurasian Collared-doves, Boat-tailed Grackles and Rock Pigeons swooped into the adjoining parking lot and surrounded our circle. A flock of Willet whirled overhead and a Bald Eagle appeared on a mid river oysterbar. My excitement level rocketed, a lone Magnificent Frigatebird sailed down the river, not far behind a Roseate Spoonbill, Peregrine Falcon and Merlin whizzed over a small barrier island where a Reddish Egret indifferently stood. A rousing hello to a storm laden day.

Early in the afternoon John Carr brought his expertise to the circle by spotting a Brown Booby that gave us ample time for a positive ID. Three Magnificent Frigatebirds flew down the river and again John Carr and I got good looks. An American Oystercatcher, reams of Laughing Gulls along with Royal, Caspian and Forster's Terns hosted our entertainment. David Hartgrove, who encountered us by accident, punctuated the end of the day with the discovery of a Lesser Black-backed Gull hiding among a flock of gulls and terns. Thirty-two species of birds were counted on this storm swept day.

We definitely will be back next year.



"The Under Bridge Team Sitters" - Ray Scory & John Carr

HRA Welcomes Our New Members

Linda Adams, Ann Alberti, Kathleen Andrews, Beth Barnes, Marion Barrett, Bonnie Berns, Alfred Blais, Joyce Carque, Pat Dbow, Dian Desantis, James Eden, Robert & Betty Edinger, Dianne Gracie, Roger Grubic, Eileen Gunderson, Marie Harrison, Sam Hook, John & Beatrice Johnson, Mary S. Jones, Karen Jorgenson, Bill & Janet Kappa, Virginia L. Klotz, Lynn Kruse, Kathy Moore, Sandra O'Rourke, Kelley J. Peterson, Olga Pocil, Kathryn Powell, David Romeo, Gordon Russell, Marion Schenkl, Avis Schonlau, George Severance, Linda Smarse, Karen Stone, Donald Versigghel, Sonia Walker, Arline Warwick, Carolyn West, Carolyn Williams, David Williamson, Virginia Young, Virginia Young-Carrasquillo.

We encourage you to join us at our monthly meetings, on one of our excellent field trips and to perhaps consider volunteering to serve on our board.

The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival

One of the year's premier events is just a few months away and now is the time to make your plans to attend. This will be the 15th year of the festival and it's the biggest and best organized birding festival in the country. Online registration is open or you can print a registration form from their website. Some of the best field trip leaders in the country will be here and field trips will fill up fast. So now's the time to make your choices. And there's lots to choose from. In addition to field trips there are work shops on bird identification for beginners and more experienced birders alike, photography work shops taught by some of the best photographers in the country and other activities for history buffs and the non birders in your family. Check out the website for all of the information:

<http://www.spacecoastbirdingandwildlifefestival.org/>

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/>

Paw Paw Chapter Going to Turtle Mound

The Paw Paw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society will be taking a trip to Turtle Mound, at Canaveral National Seashore on Saturday, 11/12. They'll be searching for the rare, white plumbago. Lunch at JB's Fish Camp follows. Car pooling is encouraged. Contact Sonya Guidry 386-690-1797 or by e-mail: sonyaguidry@yahoo.com

Field Trips, Events, etc.

HRA Field Trip to The Port Orange Bridge: On Sunday, 11/13 we'll meet under the Port Orange Bridge at 4:00 pm. An easy walk to see the birds on nearby islands. Leader: David Hartgrove 386-788-2630

HRA Field Trip, St Johns River Cruise: On Saturday, 11/19. We will be going with Blue Heron River Tours. The cost is just 20.00 per person for this exciting and beautiful trip. We will meet at 1:30 pm in the parking lot of the International Square Mall, behind Krystal on Intrn'l Speedway Blvd. just east of I-95. Advanced reservations are required for this trip. Leader: Celine Sullivan, 386-257-1980

HRA Field Trip, Viera Wetlands: This is a rare Tuesday, 11/22 field trip to one of the area's birding hot spots. We'll meet at the Lowe's parking lot on Dunlawton, just east of I-95 at 7:00 am. Leaders: Chuck & Joan Tague, 386-253-1166.

HRA Field Trip, Lake Apopka: On Friday, 12/2 at 6:30 am we'll meet in the parking lot of the International Square Mall, behind Krystal on Intrn'l Speedway Blvd. just east of I-95. Leaders: Chuck & Joan Tague, 386-253-1166.

Information on all HRA field trips is on our website:

http://www.halifaxriveras.org/Field_Trips.htm

SEVAS Field Trip, Viera Wetlands: On Saturday, 11/19 meet at 7:00 am in the Market Square parking lot, southwest corner of US 1 and SR 442 (Indian River Blvd.) in Edgewater. Contact Gail Domroski, 386-428-0447

WVAS Field Trip, Lyonia Preserve Jay Walk & Presentation
On Thursday, 11/3, meet at the Deltona Library at 9:00 am for a presentation and hike through Lyonia Preserve, which hosts one of the largest populations of Florida's only endemic species, the Florida Scrub Jay. Call Arnette Sherman: 386-734-5840

WVAS Field Trip, Lake Apopka: On Saturday, 11/19, meet the West Volusia group at 8:00 am at the Post Office, 336 E. New York Ave. in DeLand. Trip leader, Harry Robinson, has been surveying the birds at Lake Apopka for years and probably knows the place better than anyone in the state. Contact him at 386-943-8342

Trail Walk With Don Spence: Sunday, November 13 - 10:00 a.m. Meet at Smith Creek Landing parking lot on Highbridge Road (NE corner of bridge; heading toward A1A) Free. Bring water, sunscreen, bug spray; wear comfortable walking shoes/hiking boots. Walk 2-3 hrs on dirt paths. Don will discuss plants/habitats along the trail. Questions: 386-441-3930 Hosted by Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail CME, Inc.

Contact Our Board Members

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

Committee Members

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