

The Pelican

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

Vol. 57-No.4 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon October, 2011



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

thoughts from on high

October is often one of the more "perfect" months in central Florida- slightly cooler temperatures, bright blue skies and a seemingly unending variety of community events, wildlife festivals, outdoor art walks and charitable fund-raisers. Absent a tropical storm offshore, there is hardly a reason not to spend time outdoors.

Perhaps it is the very richness of all the opportunities we have here in Volusia & Flagler Counties that makes it important to me to think about those people and organizations that may be struggling.

October 22 is "Make A Difference Day"
<http://www.usaweekend.com/section/MDDAY/Make-A-Difference-Day>

This is the largest national day of service in the country. USA Weekend magazine was instrumental in launching this volunteer project which takes place on the fourth Saturday of October each year. In just one day, thousands of community projects are completed across the country. In previous years, my husband and I have painted classrooms for the PACE School for at-risk girls, landscaped an after-school program building in Bunnell and cleared brush to prepare for new landscaping at the ARC in Daytona. Our Board will discuss partnering with a local State Park or environmental group to adopt a project next year. We'll provide details about how HRA members can participate. In the meantime, keep your eyes open for local "Make a Difference Day" projects. To learn about ongoing volunteer opportunities, visit United Way of Volusia-Flagler Counties Volunteer Center
<<http://www.liveunitedinvolusiaflagler.org/>> .

Enjoy the upcoming month!

Calendar

Program Meeting October 17, 2011

Dan Gribbin, nature photographer and HRA member will speak at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, October 17th, at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. Dan will present a show of bird and nature photos and give tips on digital photography. Join us at 6:30 p.m. for socializing with members and guests. Please note that due to a bridge closure, Daytona Avenue cannot be accessed from LPGA Blvd. Access Daytona Avenue from Tenth Street.

Audubon Assembly In Lake Mary

The Audubon Assembly will be held Oct. 14th & 15th. It's not far away and it's a great opportunity to see what we're doing at the state level. Check the website for more information on this exciting event.

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

West Volusia Audubon Society meeting

On Tuesday, 10/25, our own Chuck Tague, wildlife photographer and writer, will present "Caught In The Act: Birds In Action". It's sure to be a hit with the crowd. WVAS meetings are held at The Garden Club of DeLand 865 South Alabama Ave. at 6:30 pm.

WVAS Field Trips

Monday, Oct. 3rd, Washington Oaks State Park

Saturday, Oct. 29th, Blue Springs State park

Check the WVAS website for more information:

<http://www.westvolusiaaudubon.org/index.htm>

Watch this space in future for information on our sister chapters' activities in the Southeast Volusia and Flagler Audubon chapters.

Paw Paw Chapter/ Florida Native Plant Society

This month's program will be Butterfly and Hummingbird Gardening With Native Plants, presented by Kevin Bagwell. The meeting is on Tuesday, Oct. 18th, at 7:00 pm at Grace Lutheran Church, 338 Oceanshore Blvd., corner of Neptune Drive and A1A. See their website for more information:

<http://sites.google.com/site/fnpsspawpawchapter/>

Field Trip Preview

A Synopsis of Where We Are Going and What To Expect....

Sunday, October 2, 2011 5:00 PM
Sunday, November 13, 2011 4:00 PM
Dunlawton Bridge

These outings, led by Liz Abrams and David Hartgrove, respectively, meet under the bridge by the picnic table overlooking the seabird rookery island. This is an easy outing and great for beginners and experts alike. The afternoon timing can lead to a spectacular avian show as the birds come in for the evening to roost.

Directions: East on Dunlawton, cross US1, right at Sea Bird Island, take left, follow narrow paved road to parking lot.

From A1A, go west on Dunlawton, over bridge, right at the bottom of bridge, take right and follow paved road into parking lot.

Friday, October 14, 2011 7:30 AM
Washington Oaks/Matanzas Inlet

Joan and Chuck Tague will lead this outing to birding spots along A1A. We will walk along the beach looking for shorebirds at the inlet and stop in across the highway at the Fort Matanzas Visitor Center to look for migrants. Our last stop will be at Washington Oaks State Park to explore the small maritime forest and gardens. We will also scope the intracoastal waterway while there. We will meet at Publix on Granada and Williamson. Pack a lunch. There is a fee to enter Washington Oaks SP.

Saturday, October 29, 2011 7:00 AM Lake Woodruff NWR

Meet on International Speedway Boulevard behind Krystal, in the International Square Parking lot. This will be a hike led by Chuck and Joan Tague around the impoundments of the refuge. Pack a lunch.

Plan ahead for the next trip - it should be very special!!!!

Saturday, November 19, 2011 St. John River Cruise with Blue River Heron Tours Charge - \$20.00. Make check payable to Halifax River Audubon. Checks can be sent c/o Chuck Tague, 1000 Walker Street #91, Holly Hill, FL. 32117

This will be a late afternoon, relaxing cruise around Hontoon Island and into the Hontoon Dead River. This is a new concession operating from Hontoon Landing just past the ferry port for Hontoon State Park. Many birds return to the river this time of year and the afternoon to evening light is wonderful for photography. The meeting place is the same as the Lake Woodruff trip.

The 2011/2012 Field Trip schedule is on-line and can be accessed at http://www.halifaxrivers.org/Field_Trips.htm.

Birds we hope to see on our field trips

Below are a two of the birds we hope to see on our trips. This first one, a Sora, has been heard calling from the cat tails in the pond at the Port Orange Bridge in the past.



Sora Rail, by Chuck Tague



Wilson's Plover, by Chuck Tague

Wilson's Plovers were named for Alexander Wilson, considered the father of American ornithology. Strictly coastal in nature, they nest here in Volusia County at Lighthouse Point Park, Smyrna Dunes Park and other suitable areas. They are easily identified by their heavy, dark bill and single dark breast band. That heavy bill comes in handy while dining on its prey of choice, fiddler crabs. When nesting, males seem to do most of the incubation at night while the females feed. She takes over at sunrise while he goes out to feed. The birds breed along the Atlantic coast from Virginia to the Dry Tortugas. Northern birds migrate to our area in winter and supplement our local, non migrant population.

Conservation Notes

by David Hartgrove

In May of this year I wrote about a Whimbrel named "Hope" that had been fitted with a tiny satellite tracking device. On her north bound migration this year she left St Croix, in the Virgin Islands, on April 5th and flew non stop for the next three days to cover 1,850 miles. She made landfall at the same tidal creek on the coast of Virginia where she was captured and fitted with the device on May 19th, 2009. Hope was one of four Whimbrels fitted with tracking devices as part of a program designed and monitored by researchers from The Center for Conservation Biology, The Nature Conservancy, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Georgia Department of Natural Resources, The Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program, and The Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences. Now comes word of two more Whimbrels, whose fate was determined by a chance encounter with tropical storms and a need to rest.

"Machi" and "Goshen" had the misfortune to land on the island of Guadeloupe after encountering different storm systems. During her spring migration in 2010 Machi flew non stop for 3,400 miles, from the coast of Brazil to South Carolina. Earlier this month she was tracked as she flew into Tropical Storm Maria. After this encounter she landed on Montserrat and then flew to Guadeloupe on the morning of September 12th. "Goshen" was tracked as she flew through the east side of Hurricane Irene. She too landed on Montserrat, then spent a week on Antigua before flying to Guadeloupe on the morning of September 12th also. Both birds were shot by hunters at one of the most notorious "hunting swamps" in the Caribbean within a few minutes of arriving on Guadeloupe. Half of the birds being monitored were lost.

Guadeloupe, Martinique and Barbados all have what are called "shooting swamps." Some of these are artificial wetlands created for the purpose of attracting migrant shorebirds so they can be blasted out of the air. These birds are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. However Guadeloupe and Martinique are French overseas departments, part of the European Union and are not signatories to the treaty. Barbados was once a British colony but is now sovereign country. They too aren't bound by the treaty. Every year tens of thousands of shorebirds are slaughtered on just these three islands. This offers graphic proof of the necessity of having protection plans in place throughout the migratory path of these birds. All over the world shorebird populations are in severe decline. The good that we and our conservation partners in Canada, Chile, Argentina, Brazil and other countries do can be offset by the actions of a relatively small number of people on islands where no regulations exist. The last Eskimo Curlew known to science was shot on Barbados in 1963. Will the last Whimbrel known to science perish there in our lifetime? The groups mentioned above are working to at least establish some kind of hunting regulations on these islands but the "old boy network" is resistant to interference from outsiders.

So the next time you see a Whimbrel, a Red Knot, a Marbled Godwit or any of the other shorebirds whose populations are less than half what they were thirty years ago, count yourself lucky and savor the moment. We're working to help insure that it's an experience our grand children can have too.

Additional information: here's a link to a map showing Whimbrel migration routes:

<http://www.ccb-wm.org/programs/migration/Whimbrel/whimbrel.htm>

There is a somewhat disturbing video on You Tube that documents the behavior at one of these shooting swamps on Guadeloupe. Our board was divided on whether or not to provide the actual link. However, repeated attempts to locate the film via Google searches weren't successful. So those wishing to view the 6 minute video can click on the link below. Be warned, it is graphic.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bWFC2fEqVfI>

Dry Tortugas Birding Trips

The Dry Tortugas, several islands located 70 miles west of Key West, offer some of the most spectacular birding in the country during Spring migration. Florida Nature Tours and its leader, Wes Biggs, has taken more people to this incredible spot than anyone else. If you've never been to the Dry Tortugas it's hard to describe just how special the place is. As the first spot of land migrating birds see as they transit the Gulf of Mexico, its water and food offer rest and nourishment. Fort Jefferson, located on Garden Key, is a spot that can be awash in tanagers, warblers, flycatchers and other species, many just a few feet away. For the 2012 season they have an ambitious schedule that offers the best in Florida birding and includes some trips that offer additional destinations. Prices are reasonable: The Dry Tortugas tour is \$1,100.00, with a \$250.00 deposit & the balance due 90 days prior to the tour. South Florida I & II are priced at \$850.00 in double occupancy with a single supplement of \$200.00, & a \$200.00 deposit. The Super Tour is \$1,250.00 with a single supplement of \$300.00, & a deposit of \$250.00. It is possible to combine tours. All fees are returned in the case of a true emergency. Forgetting your second cousin's wedding in East McKeesport is not an emergency.

Dry Tortugas I Friday April 13 - Monday April 16
South Florida I Monday April 16 - Friday April 20
Dry Tortugas II Friday April 20 - Monday April 23
Dry Tortugas III Tuesday April 24 - Friday April 27
Florida Super Tour Friday April 27 - Thursday May 3
Dry Tortugas IV Thursday May 3 - Sunday May 6
South Florida II Sunday May 6 - Thursday May 10
Dry Tortugas V Monday May 7 - Thursday May 10

Florida Nature Tours has a strong commitment to nature and in keeping with that thought, is putting its money where its mouth is. For every person going on the Dry Tortugas trips listed above, a 100.00 donation will be made in that person's name to the birding/conservation organization of their choice. The website is undergoing updates. Check it for the latest information soon. <http://www.floridanaturetours.net>

Chasing A First State Record

The phone rang around 3:30 Saturday afternoon. Wes Biggs had called to see if I was interested in running up to St George Island to see the first state record of an Inca Dove. John Murphy, a member of the Florida Ornithological Society's Records Committee, had found the bird the day before perched on a power line. In addition, the bird was heard calling. This indicated that it may be trying to attract a mate and that meant it may linger in the area a while. I told Wes that I was certainly interested in going. He called back around 6:00 pm to say that I should meet him at his house in Orlando. He and I and David Simpson were to leave around 12:30 am, drive all night, and be at the site where the bird had been reported by sunrise.

The Inca Dove (*Columbina inca*) is native to Central America and Mexico. It was first collected in Texas in 1866 near Laredo. Since that time it has been expanding its range northward, westward and now eastward. They have been confirmed breeders in Louisiana for some time. It has been assumed that sooner or later one would show up here in Florida. Doves, of any species, seem quite good at exploring new habitat and expanding their range. Eurasian Collared-Doves were first released in the western hemisphere in the Bahamas in the 1972. In 1973 a nesting pair in Florida City were mis-identified as Ringed Turtle Doves. When I was in Portland, Oregon last year, I saw Eurasian Collared-Doves there. In less than 40 years they've colonized much of the country. Now it appears that another dove species has decided to expand its range in the other direction and is moving east. Inca Doves were introduced to Florida in 1965 by an aviculturist living near a convent in Key West. A woman named Frances Hames, who lived nearby and was something of a legend in Florida birding circles, first reported these birds then. Descendants of these birds were last seen in the early 80's. So how can this bird found at St George Island be a "first state record?" Because this bird is assumed to have arrived here under its own power, as a consequence of its species' range expansion. Of course, until this record has been accepted and its provenance investigated by the FOS Records Committee, it will remain on the suspect list.

After a race across the darkened landscape of Florida we arrived in the lovely residential section of St George Island at 7:00 am. The sun was just breaking through dawn clouds on the horizon and it was going to be a beautiful Sunday morning. We walked around the unpaved streets while the neighborhood dogs barked at the strangers with binoculars around their necks. At 7:21 Wes Biggs heard the bird call from a small oak thicket in the front yard of a vacation rental house. By now we had been joined by Gallus Quigley, who had just driven in from Lake County, and Dave Goodwin and Ray Webb from St Pete. A few minutes later David Simpson saw the bird fly across the street and back to a telephone cable, where it perched for several minutes. Photos were taken and congratulations extended to one and all. By 8:55 we were sitting down to order a celebratory breakfast before driving back home. It was a great weekend.

David Hartgrove



Inca Dove, Photo by Jim Cavanaugh

Bird Watching Classes

Once again our chapter is offering bird watching classes. If you've ever looked out your window thought to yourself, "Wow, That bird's beautiful! I wonder what it is? We have the solution for you. Our own Ray Scory, long time president of the New Haven Bird Club, is again teaching our Beginning Bird Watching Class. Ray's patience and expertise has made him something of a local legend when it comes to introducing people to the joys of bird watching. There are 3 classroom sessions of 2 hours each, followed by 3 field trips a few days later to try out your newly acquired skills. Class room sessions are held at the Port Orange Library on Fridays with field trips set for the following Tuesdays. Classes begin on Friday, October 28th. Field trips will be to the Port Orange Bridge, one of the newest stops on the Great Florida Birding Trail; Spruce Creek Park, on US 1 south of Port Orange; and finally to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, a premier winter birding destination that's world famous. The cost is just a 25.00 donation. For more information, check out this link: <http://www.halifaxriveras.org/Beginner%20class%20flyer.pdf>

There's no time to dawdle. We need your registration in by October 18th. As that commercial says, "Just do it!" You'll be glad you did.

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.



Fran & John Carr Honored For Their Long Years of Service To Our Chapter

After our board meeting on Monday, September 12th, the board reconvened at Port Orange Causeway Park to dedicate the new bench that honors Fran and John Carr. For 14 years they worked every month assuring that the Pelican was written, proofread, pasted up, carried to the printers, picked up from the printers, had 600+ mailing labels attached, sorted by zip codes (as the Post Office requires), and delivered to the Post Office. It was a Herculean task by any measure and this bench is a small token of our gratitude for their dedication. Pictured are, from left to right: Peggy Yokubonus, Paula Wehr, Becky Schubert, Rachel Ramsey, John Carr, Fran Carr and David Hartgrove. Not pictured, since she was taking the photo, Treasurer, Susan Jarosik. Again, our sincere thanks to Fran and John for all they've done and continue to do for the chapter.

Willie and the Golden Dog

In 1998 a large man with an even larger heart joined the organization and immediately volunteered to be on the board. Willie Burns is a retired iron worker and biker who somewhat resembles "Hagar", of newspaper comics fame. He's also something of a tax wizard. So he came up with the idea of creating a non profit corporation called "Golden Dog Books." He has a passion for golden retrievers. The idea was to sell a popular line of books about Florida wildlife and have all of the profits go to the chapter. In the intervening years this enterprise has contributed over 15,000.00 to the organization. Eventually, the stock expanded to coffee, magnets and the infamous clocks.

Early last month Willie returned from visiting his daughter in upstate New York. Kitty Albee picked him up at the train station (Willie's other passion is trains) and thought he looked terrible. After arriving at the emergency room, an EKG revealed that he'd suffered a mild heart attack. Further blood work revealed that he is now battling leukemia. As I write this he's back in the hospital for another round of chemo therapy. Needless to say the Golden Dog has fallen by the wayside. So if you're planning on getting a pound of shade grown coffee from Willie at one of our meetings, or hoping to see his smiling face at one of the many events held around the area where we set up the Golden Dog sales table, you'll be disappointed. Willie has a long road to recovery and loads of good karma to help him along the way. Keep him in your thoughts and prayers. Like all of us, he needs all the help he can get.

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