

As we begin the second century of our organization we start with a new look for the Pelican and our new logo Editor

Legacy

On Thursday, May 25 I led my last walk of the Spring in Central Park in Ormond Beach. The group that assembled in the parking lot were "The Regulars". No introductions were necessary. Expectations were realistic regarding what we might see. The morning sky was overcast and slightly threatening, but the radar on my phone showed no precipitation until the afternoon. One of the walkers queued up his Merlin app, another scrolled screens on a bird app. I had checked the eBird digest that morning to see what might be around, others had searched eBird for recent sightings. During the walk I played a Tufted Titmouse call from my Sibley Field Guide on my phone while discussing the gibberish that a little gray bird is capable of producing. They have fooled me a lot.

Quick note - the last big bird that we saw while returning to the parking lot was a very cooperative Mississippi Kite, a regular Spring appearance from a species that seems to vacate town in June just when you were hoping they would hang around

On my desk at home is a book published by The Halifax River Bird Club in 1930 entitled "Bird Study in Florida". The book was written by the President of the Florida Audubon Society, R. J. Longstreet, one of the founders of HRA. The intent of the volume is to introduce students to bird identification specifically in Florida, which the author contends is a very different puzzle separate from the rest of the United States. The methods are familiar, some of the names of the species are different, the discipline required to "get it right" (my words) requires time and commitment. The book is both quaint and inspirational.

How birding has changed in 100 years. In 1930, bird banding was new, many Audubon Chapters were in their infancy, avian taxonomy was far different, people were still slaughtering birds. The apps that provide today's students of the birding art with instant answers and gratification could never be imagined. The tools of the bird watcher in 1930 were a field notebook, binoculars and maybe a cumbersome camera. Peterson's first field guide was still four years away.

How birding has remained so familiar in 100 years! We could go into the field with any of those folks from that time and have those same excited discussions comparing impressions and field marks of a fleeting observation.

How the birders - the observers - the students have remained committed to the birds, to conservation, to the environment. This is the legacy of Halifax River Audubon, a legacy I, for one, am proud to advance.

To this end I humbly step into the roll of chapter president this month. The HRA Board will address challenges in our planning sessions over the summer. We want to reinstate face-to-face meetings, improve the quality and variety of field trips,

engage the community through outreach and education and expand successful programs, like "Plants For Birds". We will continue to advocate for birds in public forums when appropriate.

Here it is - the call to action: WE NEED YOU! Let's make this the year of the volunteer. Participate in a large or small way, just step up to make our organization successful. I personally want to hear from you. Forward me your ideas and suggestions. Start a dialogue. We will be developing specific ways you can help. A few hours here and there from many contributors can really make a big impact. Be a part of the legacy and join Halifax River Audubon as it moves into the next 100 years.

Joan Tague, President, Halifax River Audubon

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Mississippi Kite, seen in Central Park, Ormond Beach

Photo by Joan Tague

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From The Quotable Birder

Our hopes, like towering falcons, aim
At objects in an airy height;
The little pleasures of the game
Is from afar to view the flight.

Matthew Prior

Conservation Notes

May is supposed to be the month of bursting blooms and the beauty of Spring. This year it was also a dark time for our country and our state. The US Supreme Court, now packed with right-wing ideologues whose legal opinions are straight out of the age of Jim Crow and the Robber Barons, gutted the Clean Water Act. Wetlands protections so important for the health of our environment and us were tossed out like so much used Kleenex. In Tallahassee, Governor Ron "Slavery Was A Myth" DeSantis signed SB 540, a bill designed to stop public participation in land use decisions. Thousands of voices across the state, in the form of petitions, letters, emails and phone calls pleaded with the governor to veto the bill. Those voices were ignored by an administration leading the march of progress backward into a dark past. We in the environmental movement will soldier on as best we can trying to protect what's left of our beautiful state. Those who worship at the altar of the almighty fast buck are now freer to plunder for profit.

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Hunters and fishermen are some of our best allies in seeking to protect the environment. But there's an irresponsible part of those groups too, the "Hook and Bullet" crowd. The folks who think hunting season bag limits are for suckers and catch limits on selected fish species are for those too sissy to break the rules. Next year our state legislature will place on the ballot something called the Right to Hunt Constitutional Amendment. An excerpt reads: "...Fishing, hunting, and the taking of fish and wildlife, including by the use of traditional methods, shall be reserved forever as a public right and preferred means of responsibly managing and controlling fish and wildlife." Board member, Melissa Lammers, sent a note to the board of the Environmental Council of Volusia and Flagler Counties alerting us to this unnecessary amendment. As she pointed out in her comments, "What are traditional means? Leg traps, dynamiting streams?" These were traditional methods of trapping and fishing back in the "good ole days." Fewer than 1% of Floridians have hunting licenses. The NRA is the force behind the bill and we all know how obsequious our legislators become when they get a call from that group. Put this into the Constitution and killing will become the preferred and required method for dealing with fish and animal populations in our state. Look for more on this issue as the calendar advances into next year.

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Track Those Birds! A Citizen Science Opportunity

That was the headline of an article in the New York Times on My 18th. In the article they wrote, "This summer, we're inviting readers around the world to participate in a science project we are working on with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. We'll be gathering observations about the birds around us, filling in data gaps and giving researchers a clearer picture of biodiversity in places that birders frequent less. It's important work. Nearly half of all bird species worldwide are known or suspected to be in decline, and climate change could accelerate this trend. By gathering data like this, you'll help inform decisions about the conservation and study of birds."

Our chapter President, Joan Tague, wrote, "This is an interesting activity for the summer birding lull. Through eBird or Merlin, Cornell Lab of Ornithology is asking us to track the birds we see - anywhere - with emphasis on areas that are not the usual birding destinations and hotspots. There will be several activities suggested through September to accomplish this experiment. Download [Merlin](#) and [eBird](#) if you don't have them already and let's get out and find some birds!

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

We're in our annual summer hiatus, no field trips or chapter meetings until September. Chapter board meetings continue though and the next one's on Monday, June 5th at 1:30 pm via Zoom.

Just because we're not hosting field trips doesn't mean there aren't birding opportunities out there. The [June Challenge](#) celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. Started by members of Alachua Audubon this friendly competition is enjoyed by birders all across Florida and other states.

And our friends at Volusia County Environmental Management's Explore Volusia Program have some field trips lined up. **These trips require pre-registration by calling 386-736-5927.**

Friday, June 9th- Waterbody Paddle, Callalisa Creek- Are you looking for an opportunity to try out your new kayak or SUP? From 9:00 am to 11:30 am enjoy a wonderful backwater paddle through a maze of mangroves. Participants will navigate oyster beds, learn about mosquito canals, and possibly see a variety of birds during this paddle. Must have kayak/canoe/SUP, life preserver, and whistle for this adventure. Meet at 598 S. Peninsula Ave, New Smyrna Beach, 32167

Wednesday, June 21st, 10:30 to Noon, Snorkel/Swim Adventure - Lighthouse Point Park- Bring your snorkeling gear and sense of adventure to learn about the wonders of this underwater ecosystem. Participants will learn about various marine species, while snorkeling the high slack tide near Ponce DeLeon Inlet. Participants must be able to swim, have their own equipment, and anyone under the age of 18 will be required to wear a Personal Floatation Device (PFD) and be accompanied by an adult guardian at all times. Meet at the park, 5000 S. Atlantic Ave. Ponce Inlet

Thursday, June 22nd, Lyonia Preserve, Pollinator Week- If you're not into getting wet here's a volunteer and learn project that might be just what you're looking for. Participants will learn about the importance of pollinators and pollinator gardens and assist with gardening tasks in the Lyonia Environmental Center pollinator garden. Meet at the Lyonia Environmental Center at 2150 Eustace Ave., Deltona

Friday, June 23rd, 9:00 to 11:00am, Paddle Blue Spring- Bring a canoe, kayak, or SUP for a paddling trip near Blue Spring State Park to explore the area while learning about local wildlife and the history of the area. Participants will paddle through history by taking old logging canals along with paddling to the head of the spring. Must have Kayak/Canoe/SUP, life preserver and whistle. Meet at the end of W. French Avenue in Orange city. About 1 mile past Blue Spring State Park Entrance

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Mosquitos Will Be the Buzz for MDC's June Lecture

"What's bugging you?" That will be the topic for the Marine Discovery Center's June Public Lecture Series scheduled on Thursday, June 15, at 6:30 p.m. 520 Barracuda Blvd. NSB.

Shane Anderson, an environmental specialist and education/outreach coordinator for Volusia County Mosquito Control, will present on the insect that gave this area the nickname, the Mosquito Lagoon and discuss things like the County's aerial spraying program. MDC's Public Lecture Series is free, but donations to the center are always appreciated. [Pre-registration](#) is requested. Scroll down and click the "Book Now" button. And be advised, there's bridge construction to detour around.

by Ray Scory

A Defining Moment

I sit in our backyard screened porch, looking up to an azure blue sky; white puffy clouds set still. A Mallard flies by; to my right a Tufted Titmouse comes to the feeder - takes one seed and quickly flies off to a nearby orange tree. Not unusual, that's what Tufted Titmice do - one seed at a time - eat - then back to the feeder to take another seed back to the orange tree to crack it open - eat and back to the feeder again.

Observing the antics of birds is a fun and interesting thing to do. Another Tufted Titmouse just flew onto the feeder, grabbed one seed, pounded the shell open, ate the seed, grabbed another seed cracked it open and did the same. It did not fly back to the orange tree. First time I ever witnessed this feeding behavior from a titmouse. I have been watching titmice at bird feeders for 49 years. This was different: observation created discovery, which revealed a changing titmouse habit. All from a screened porch.

A female Northern Cardinal just departed the feeder, replaced by an energetic female Painted Bunting. Painted Buntings are still feeding in our yard into the middle of May. In past years, they have moved on by now. A change in migratory behavior? Observation. I'll continue watching.

Two Muscovy Ducks sit quietly looking at each other from across the pond. Two other Muscovy fly in and land next to the single duck. All three walk away out of sight, leaving the Muscovy on my side of the pond alone. The Muscovy raises and turns its head to look at me sitting in our screened porch. Then tucks its head back under its wings and lies still. Why? Is the Muscovy wondering what I'm doing out on the screened porch?



A lone Tufted Titmouse sings to the awakening of a new day.

A Red-bellied Woodpecker just landed on the feeder as did a few Painted Buntings. A Northern Cardinal serenaded me with its "Cherry, Cheery, Cheery" and a Northern Mockingbird charged by chasing the buntings from the feeder. A Monarch butterfly just alighted from our blossoming Lantana bush. While across the yard a Marsh Rabbit cautiously feeds on our St. Augustine grass.

The birds coming to our yard have been active this day. Now, it is becoming very quiet here as a sleepy looking Northern Cardinal dines at the feeder, always signaling the end of the

end of the bird feeding day. Northern Cardinals are always the first bird at our feeders in the morning.

As the light of the day fades away and darkness quiets bird feeding activity in our yard, I am thankful for this defining moment of blissful observation.

Ray Scory



A Northern Cardinal begins its morning breakfast under the glow of an early Florida sunrise. Photos by Ray Scory

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The following information was gleaned from the USF&WS website.
Editor

Duck Stamps Fund More Than Just Ducks

The annual Federal Duck Stamp goes on sale at the end of June. Anyone can contribute to wildlife habitat conservation by purchasing a Federal Duck Stamp. Since quality wetland habitats provide habitat for a myriad of species – including threatened and endangered plants and animals – as well as provide clean water, aid in flood control, and reduce the effects of soil erosion and sedimentation a current Federal Duck Stamp purchase allows you to be an active conservationist. Healthy habitats also enhance outdoor recreation opportunities which can provide an economic incentive to local communities.

While waterfowl hunters 16 years of age or older are required to purchase them, anyone can contribute to conservation by buying Duck Stamps. In addition to serving as hunting license and conservation tool, a current Federal Duck Stamp is also a free pass into any national wildlife refuge that charges an entry fee. ***Because nearly all of the proceeds are used to conserve habitat for birds and other wildlife, birders, nature photographers and other outdoor enthusiasts buy Duck Stamps to help ensure that they can always see wildlife at their favorite outdoor spots.***

You can purchase your stamp either online or in person. To purchase in person, check with your local post office, sporting goods or outdoor recreation stores, or any national wildlife refuge to see if they have them in stock. Beginning in July they should be available at the Visitor's Center at Merritt Island NWR.



Aberrant plumaged Northern Cardinal

Photo by DeeDee Tobe

Yellow NOCA Shows Up In New Smyrna Beach

First, NOCA is the banding code for Northern Cardinal. New Smyrna Beach resident, DeeDee Tobe, looked out her kitchen window one morning recently and saw what appeared to be a cardinal that had been dipped in saffron. This is the third such plumaged NOCA recorded in Florida recently. The first made headlines in Gainesville two years ago and continued to be seen in a small natural area on the campus of UF until last November. Daytona Beach News-Journal columnist, Mark Lane, wrote earlier this year about a yellow cardinal that was a 2 day wonder in his backyard. And now number three shows up. What's going on?

A little online research on Cornell Lab's [Birds of the World](http://birds.cornell.edu) website revealed that these color variations are quite rare. Plumage color in birds is regulated by compounds in the foods they eat. Carotenoid pigments are important components in the plumage of many birds. Red and orange colors in Northern Cardinals result from deposition of carotenoid pigments: canthaxanthin, astaxanthin, phoenicoxanthin, etc. Research suggests that these individuals might lack enzymes necessary for conversion of yellow carotenoids to red forms.

Enzyme deficiency isn't always responsible for the other color variations observed in Northern Cardinals across their range. A gynandromorph is an organism that contains both male and female characteristics. This is another rare example seen in Northern Cardinals. A gynandromorph can have bilateral symmetry—one side female and one side male. Gynandromorphs occur naturally, usually resulting from a random genetic error during early embryo development. Often this is revealed in colors that are quite different from birds with normal coloration, with gray replacing brown on the female side. The photo to the right shows such a bird. It was photographed in Guerrero, Mexico in 2020.

Fortunately these colorful oddities are rare and provide a treat for birders lucky enough to come across one.

David Hartgrove



Possible bilateral gynandromorph NOCA

Photo by Santiago Castro

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