

The Pelican

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For wildlife & people since 1923



Sanctuary

I'm worried. Are you worried, too? Temperatures are soaring and the heat index for the next several days will be in the danger zone - between 103°F and 125°F. 14% of the US population will be exposed to these conditions. My backyard patio is a heat sink causing a trash bag that I had left outside to collect yard debris to melt and stick together yesterday. I came close to heat exhaustion early yesterday morning while detailing my car. Intervention included lots of water, a relief break in air conditioning and assistance from my new best friend - a neck wrap stuffed with mini freezer packs that I purchased at the ball park. Then I read this sentence in the New York Times this morning: *"It is too late to reverse those trends for the current and next few summers, but you can take steps to protect yourself."*

Are we on the defensive now? How deep is this climate canyon that we have fallen into? What will it take to climb out of it? This summer will be a test to see if we can push through. Most of us are lucky enough to have respite in shelter and air conditioning. Some do not. The impact on human activity will be substantial.

But how do we protect everything else: flora and fauna, plants and animals, our precious birds? The word that comes to mind is Sanctuary. The places that provide water, shade, insects and shelter become increasingly important. Real habitat must be maintained. Public lands must be nurtured and protected. Our yards must become native and natural. Programs like our own "Plants For Birds" become even more relevant.

Adult birds pant to cool themselves, splash in water, and seek shade. I had a question, though...how do eggs tolerate heat-waves? The optimum temperature for incubation is 98.6°. Even for desert birds, this is the magic number. A brooding bird on eggs keeps the heat consistent. A recent study of Zebra Finches in Australia has found that during one heat wave that lasted eight days, all of the eggs that the finches had laid or incubated failed. Maximum air temperatures were above 104°F on all eight days. The best efforts of the parents could not overcome the extreme stress.

Here in the U.S., temperatures of 100°+ are becoming more common. What will that mean for our birds? Starlings and House Sparrows may decline, but so may Painted Buntings and Grasshopper Sparrows. Extreme conditions affect the rare and beautiful as well as the commonplace.

What can we do? If everyone made a small step or two, we would accomplish great strides. Keep the bird baths clean, plant sheltering trees and shrubs, encourage insects in your yard to reduce the energy a bird expends to search for food. Enjoy the beauty of a diverse yard that by its very topography may reduce the immediate temperature around your home by a degree or two. Talk to the neighbors about the wonders discovered in your "private reserve". Look for opportunities to establish sanctuaries in our communities. Be vigilant when it comes to protecting our shared spaces and resources -

Continued on the next page.

Above is the new and permanent masthead for the Pelican. It includes the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse, which had been standing for over 35 years when our chapter was founded. It also includes a view of Disappearing Island, one of the premier shorebird hotspots on the Atlantic coast of Florida.

Calendar & Events

As we're in our annual summer hiatus there are no chapter field trips or meetings until September. There are some exciting opportunities with our friends in Volusia County Environmental Management's "Explore Volusia" program. Keeping in mind the summer heat, these involve getting wet. **REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED // CALL 386-736-5927**

Tuesday, July 11th, Blue Spring Snorkel About- Bring your snorkel gear to explore the wonders of the spring habitat. Participants will get the opportunity to learn about the importance of springs while enjoying crystal-clear "72°F" water. Participants must be able to swim, have their own equipment. There will be a park entrance fee for admittance to the park (\$6 per vehicle. Limit 2-8 people in vehicle. Meet at the park, 2100 W. French Ave. Orange City, FL 32763. 8:30 to 10:30 am.

Friday, July 14th, Paddle around Seminole Rest- Explore the Indian River Lagoon while paddling from Seminole Rest Park to surrounding areas. Participants may have the opportunity to see a variety of organisms including manatees, dolphins, and different species of birds. Must have Kayak, Canoe or SUP, life preserver and whistle. Meet at 207 River Rd., Oak Hill 32759. 9:00 to 11:00 am.

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You've been promising yourself you were going to learn more about using your camera to capture images of the beautiful creatures you see. Here's your chance.

Saturday, July 8th, Lyonia Photography Club- Lyonia Preserve has unlimited opportunities for photographing birds, reptiles, and plants. Volunteers from West Volusia Audubon Society lead this monthly program series, which includes in class instruction as well as in the field opportunities to hone your skills. All skill levels are welcome! 10:00 to 11:00 am. RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED. Call 386-789-7207, ext. #21028. 2150 Eustace Ave.. Deltona, FL 32720.

Saturday, July 22nd, Backyard Butterflies- Volusia County is home to many species of butterflies, with several found right here in Lyonia Preserve. Join LEC staff as we learn the most common butterflies found in our area, what their larvae look like, and what their host plants are. Afterward we will take a walk around the native plant garden to look for these pollinators in action. 10:00 to 11:00 am. RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED. Call 386-789-7207, ext. #21028. 2150 Eustace Ave.. Deltona, FL 32720.

wildlife refuges, parks, springs and wetlands and conservation lands.

What? Me worry? Sure - but I am still hopeful.

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From Kite Tales, the monthly newsletter of the GFB&WT



Avian Biologist Heather Levy holding an Eastern Black Rail. Photo by Nick Asreen.

One Foot in the Black: Prescribed Fire Promotes Optimal Black Rail Habitat

The search for North America's most secretive bird is in full swing in the Florida panhandle! Eastern Black Rails act more like a mouse than a typical bird. They spend most of their lives hidden underneath thick wetland vegetation and rarely fly or call. Because of their secretive nature, many aspects of their life history are poorly understood.

Found mainly on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, Eastern Black Rails also have populations in a few interior states. They use a variety of marsh types, including both fresh and saltwater, but have specific needs when it comes to plant cover. They need vegetation that is thick enough above to provide protection, but more open lower down so they can move about easily. They also don't like getting their feet wet and only tolerate a few centimeters of water. Occurring year round in Florida, Eastern Black Rails are usually found in high marshes, an environment located between the low marsh and the uplands where flooding is rare. Although Eastern Black Rails are difficult to study, surveys across the past few decades show a steep population decline of nearly 70% across their range. In 2020, they were listed as federally threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

Throughout the year, staff members of the Stoddard Bird Lab at Tall Timbers Research Station and Land Conservancy conduct surveys of Eastern Black Rails and the habitat they are in. Fieldwork is still underway, but so far, we've learned that a two-to-five-year interval between fires seems to provide the best habitat. The Florida panhandle still supports a relatively strong population of Eastern Black Rails, but there has likely been a decline from historic numbers. The results of this multi-year project will help inform management decisions made to conserve this rare species.

Heather Levy

Conservation Notes

The Rural and Family Lands Program (RFLP) is a special state fund for securing conservation easements on mostly agricultural lands, ranch lands, etc. Our state's "Lege", as the great columnist from Texas, Molly Ivins, used to call to that state's meddlesome legislative body, passed 100 million dollars for the program. A serious shot in the arm to enhance transactions needed to complete our state's wildlife corridor. It was heavily promoted by then Senate President, Wilton Simpson. So you'd think it would be a guaranteed funding source.

That's not the way things work in our state. At least not under the current administration. You see Presidential candidate, Donald Trump, endorsed Simpson when he ran for state Agricultural Commissioner in 2022. Of course, with Trump's blessing, Simpson steamrolled over his Democratic opponent, Naomi Blemur, the first Haitian-American to be a major-party candidate for a Cabinet seat. Simpson hasn't officially endorsed any candidate for the 2024 Presidential election. But apparently he seems too close to "the Donald" from the perspective of the governor's office. After all, he's running too. Using his line item veto, Governor DeSantis zeroed out the 100 million dollars for the RFLP. That money could have been leveraged with federal funds from the US Department of Agriculture's recently announced new program designed to help smaller, often minority, land owners take advantage of conservation easements on their property. It could also have been instrumental in acquiring lands here in Volusia County when paired with Volusia Forever funds. It seems that punishing one's political adversaries (real or imagined) is more important than saving family farms from the developer's bulldozers.

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The big meeting room at the Ormond Beach Regional Library was filled to capacity on Saturday, June 24th. The organizers of the first "ReGrow the Loop" workshop were hoping for maybe two dozen attendees. Sixty-seven showed up. By any standard it was a big success. The idea behind ReGrow the Loop is to encourage the planting of native plants, especially live oaks to replace the centuries old trees that are beginning to age out and die off. We had our information table set up to pass out information on Plant For Birds and other things. The Paw Paw Chapter of FNPS was there too of course. This will be an ongoing effort and more workshops will be scheduled in the future.

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Monitoring of rooftop nesting Least Terns in our area continues. I have some on the roof of the City Island Library in downtown Daytona Beach and atop the roof of the Together Unisex Salon in Ormond Beach. The library rooftop I can see from the east bound side of the Broadway Bridge. By stopping and setting up my scope I've been able to see the chicks taking refuge from the incredible heat in the depressions around the roof drains. I'm unable to see the roof of the salon but based on the numbers of adults seen carrying in small fish in the feed their little ones I estimate at least a dozen nesting pairs up there.

Earlier, in late May, the American Oystercatcher pair that nests each year on the tiny island directly across from the boat ramp on the south side of the Port Orange Bridge were seen with 3 chicks. By mid June they were down to just one chick. Were the other two lost to avian predation? No way to know. A pair that nested on a small island on the east side of the ICW behind the Deck Down Under restaurant also fledged a chick and two chicks from an unknown nest were seen on what's called Pink Pelican Island further south.

David Hartgrove

by Ray Scory

Verdant Creek

Jane and I have been walking along Country Lane for the past few months. It is approximately a forty minute walk depending how long we stop at the creek that cuts through our neighborhood and under the road that we walk along. The creek has a rivulet of water serpentine down through the neighborhood, under the bridge and out the other side of the road to continue its merry way. Consequently the creek is a delightful potpourri of plants, grasses, small trees, flowers and wildlife that reflect the fauna and flora that abide in our town.

I have walked past this creek many times the past twenty years, at times for a thirty-five minute walk or a one and half hour journey along this sidewalk trail. Some wonderful birding along the way, For many years a flock of White-winged Parakeets glided by and discovering the Great Horned Owl perched high in a pine tree was always a treat. Behind the community clubhouse is a medium sized fresh water pond. A favorite place for residential Mallards and migratory ducks. Always during this period Lesser Scaup make an appearance and once I observed a Redhead mixed in with the floating flock. One time I photographed a Prairie Warbler in the parking lot of the community clubhouse. "A Prairie Warbler in a parking lot!" I witnessed a Cooper's Hawk attack on a Black-throated Blue Warbler as its mate screamed in angry terror. And listened to the repetitious song of a Brown Thrasher on a branch no more than six feet from me.

Now by this creek Jane and I stand and look and point out nuances of Nature we keep discovering in the creek. We say hello to people as they walk by. It seems to me, at this particular time of early morning, I see more people walking than ever before. Jane mentioned that more people are taking walks closer to home and therefore they are taking closer looks at things. And we are taking closer looks at the creek and the meandering stream of water. The art of it, the life of it, the memories of it. The joy of it.

Can a stream hold a dream? Can it be a roaring, a cascading river, or a babbling brook, or just a trickle of running water in a shallow creek? Is it a place to stop and look and just let your mind follow the flow of the shiny water? Isn't it a place to look for things that are there that we miss when we frantically walk by or dismiss as, "there is nothing to see here, its only a sidewalk over a creek?" Isn't it refreshing to see, and hear and feel the strength of the creek. To see small fingering fish darting by, a three leaf water plant pushing through the surface of the soft flowing water and "Yes" the singing of the birds - Northern Cardinals, Northern Mockingbirds, the melodic tunes of Carolina Wrens and then, two Mottled Ducks feasting on tiny aquatic plants. Occasionally a raccoon appears or a Eastern Black Racer snake. Blue colored dragonflies make appearances. So much to see, to enjoy the contrasts of colors or the shades of green. A place to relax at your pace to reminisce to look ahead or to let the creek do what it does best- to steadily move along with your dreams as you relax and watch and absorb the charming mystique of the creek.

Ray Scory



Roseate Spoonbills at Merritt Island NWR

Photo by Ray Scory

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From the pages of [Funny Times](#)



Food For All

Here's a plant that can feed an army: the red mulberry tree (*Morus rubra*). This medium-sized tree, native to the eastern US, provides food for a multitude of animals, everything from a bee to a bird to a human being. In the spring, pollinators feast on the flowers, while in the summer, all the other creatures (birds, small mammals, reptiles, and people) savor the blackberry-looking fruit. It's a regular food bank.



Red Mulberry, Photo by Leslie Nixon

Not only does the red mulberry feed a lot, it provides cover for birds and shade for humans. Historically, Native Americans also used the berries for dyes, the wood for bows, and various plant parts for medicinal purposes. Not just a food bank, it was Florida's first Walmart.

Red mulberry is a fast-growing tree that needs little care. To produce sufficient flowers and berries, it requires full sun or light shade. It needs supplemental water only to get established; after that it will tolerate short-term drought. In the unlikely event some of the fruit falls from the tree and the ground-dwellers don't clean it up, there can be a mess to contend with. Hence, plant your mulberry tree away from your patio, sidewalks, or driveway.

There are three other species of mulberry trees: white, black, and paper, none of which are native – and the paper mulberry is invasive. Also, some of the ornamental red mulberry varieties do not produce fruit. Get your red mulberry tree from a reputable native nursery so you can be sure to feed your wild neighborhood battalion.

Red mulberry can grow to 35 feet in height; needs full sun to partial shade; is deciduous; is freeze tolerant but does not tolerate salt spray. Its white spring flowers are attractive to pollinators. The female plants produce 1" berries that are a favorite of many birds and people.

Leslie Nixon

Pale Male: Goodbye?

Pale Male, the Red-tailed Hawk that lived in and near New York City's Central Park in the 1990s, and took up residence on the ledge of a plush Manhattan apartment building at 927 Fifth Avenue, across the street from the park, has died.

This bird, the subject of at least hundreds of newspaper articles, three books, and an award-winning documentary film, was known for establishing a dynasty of urban-dwelling Red-tails and was one of the first of his kind to have nested on a building rather than in a tree. At the age of 32 Pale Male was one of the oldest known Red-tailed Hawks on record.

But almost immediately, a number of New York City's birders and Pale Male fans began to ask: "Was it really the same hawk - after all those years?" It was suggested that Pale Male might have died sometime over the years and had been replaced without birdwatchers noticing. Another male, with similar coloring, might have taken its place. Still, no solid evidence has been provided for this scenario, but you can read all about it [here](#).

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