

The Pelican

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River Audubon September, 2023

For wildlife & people since 1923



The President's monthly column

September 2023 - Shake Up the Paradigm!

It's 2023. In fact it's almost 2024. Yikes! Halifax River Audubon (HRA) will soon be moving into its 101st operating year! Incredible!

When celebrating a milestone like this, one tends to compare those days to these days. How often have you read the the articles titled "One Hundred Years Ago Today"? They were my favorite when I was a kid. My take away usually consisted of nostalgia (I wish we still used horses) mixed with a sense of achievement (Hooray for modern plumbing!). However, of late, these type of comparisons are often chilling when applied to climate change, green space, water supplies and bird populations. Our mission is to advocate for conservation and correction as it applies to birds and ultimately people.

I digress. My goal today is to pose a challenge to you. Let's mix some things up!

For 100 years, we met on a monthly basis and gathered in the same hall, listened to a speaker, looked at some pictures and settled into a comfortable routine that sustained us. And then suddenly we were forced to isolate ourselves, stare at a screen and try to find a way to generate that camaraderie that is the best part of meeting in person. We could effectively share information, but we missed the sidebar conversations and interpersonal reactions. We actually hid behind those screens.

Now, like the Munchkins in the Wizard of Oz, we are opening our doors and daring to meet together again. And that gives us an opportunity to upgrade the meeting experience. What might that mean?

Begin by checking out our presentation for September outlined in this newsletter. We are meeting on a Saturday. We will be meeting at a Nature Center. We will have an optional morning bird walk to gain some field experience before diving into the subject. Our program will be available and advertised to the public on a day and at a time that working folks can attend. We will offer an opportunity to socialize after the meeting in the late afternoon, rather than dismissing the meeting in the dark. We will offer the option to join the program online for those friends who wish to maintain that healthy distance or who are still enjoying their alternate domiciles. (Snowbirds)

The October meeting could be something completely different. We may choose another venue and experience. From traditional lecture to rousing event, we can choose the format that best fits the topic. We could show up anywhere between the Flagler County line and the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse. Sound like fun? I hope so - but you will have to pay close attention to our newsletter and on-line postings. Days, dates and times will shift.

Do you find this type of programing inspirational? Got an idea? Let us know about it.

So...let's rise to the challenge! Let's shake it up a little!

* * *

Because you read this letter, I want to thank you. By opening the link in the email and scanning the pages of The Pelican you have chosen to engage with Halifax River Audubon. Many people work hard to protect birds and educate the public through our organization. I hope you are a member of Audubon, either at the Chapter or National level. Thank you for your critical support. We will always welcome everyone to our events but if you are not a member, please visit our website and consider signing on to help us continue our work.

Joan Tague

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Calendar & Events

Saturday, September 30th, Program Meeting- Those Wonderful Warblers.

Tiny, beautiful, ephemeral, frustrating...the group of birds known as the American wood warblers have challenged bird watchers since the eighteenth century. Often difficult to identify and categorize, recent advances in genetic science are finally answering many of the questions that puzzled ornithologists. From the odd choice of the common name for this family to establishing the definition of what makes a warbler a warbler, the history of the human relationship with this group is almost as fascinating as the birds themselves.



Magnolia Warbler

Photo by Chuck Tague

Here's another article from our resident plant expert, Leslie Nixon.

Give Pokeweed Some Respect

Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) is the Rodney Dangerfield of the native plant world. It is a large, lanky perennial that goes dormant in early winter and doesn't return until mid-spring. It's branches will break in strong winds. It spreads like a weed and it is poisonous to people. So not surprisingly, it doesn't get any respect. But pokeweed has some redeeming qualities that make it worthy of adding it to your landscape.

For one, it produces copious berries that are not poisonous to birds or small mammals. Migrating birds especially appreciate the fruit when it ripens in autumn, acquiring the necessary fuel to recover from their long flight or to continue on to the next. Second, flowers bloom spring to fall, bringing in pollinators and more birds hungry for insects. Third, it is moderately deer and rabbit resistant. Finally, in the winter, when pokeweed dries out, its pithy stems serve as a winter hideaway for many beneficial insects. What's not to respect?

Pokeweed grows quickly to 6-8' tall and 4-5' wide. It thrives in full sun or light shade and will survive drought. It can even be planted near the beach. Pokeweed's red stems, white flowers, and deep purple berries add splashes of color to your landscape.

Found in the entire eastern US and into Canada, pokeweed has some interesting ethnobotany. Pokeweed berries were used as a dye by Native Americans. But it is an internet myth that the Declaration of Independence was written in pokeweed berry ink. (Iron gall ink was used.) Some residents of the deep South take the not-so-poisonous young stalks, boil them with multiple water changes, and make what is known as poke sallat* out of them; do NOT try this at home. Show some respect for pokeweed: plant it in your yard for the birds and other wildlife, but don't eat it yourself.

Leslie Nixon



Poke berries, Photo by Mark Hutchinson, FNPS

* Sometimes you may see "poke salad." That's incorrect. Ed.

Our first program for the 2023-2024 will dive into the world of the warblers and the people who first noticed, described and studied these wonderful creatures. Joan Tague will be our presenter. During her first season as a "birder" in 1988 she was captivated by a fallout of these previously unimagined sprites along the shores of Lake Erie. She never looked back. It's a narrative repeated by thousands of fellow birders.

As outlined in the President's message, our meeting day, time and place will diverge from our club's historical monthly meetings in terms of time and place. We will celebrate warblers on Saturday, September 30, 2023 with 2 separate events. Beginning at 8AM, a walk through Central Park in Ormond Beach will leave from the Environmental Discovery Center at 601 Division Avenue in Ormond Beach. We will stroll along the sidewalks and paths of the park to see what migrants we can find for 2 hours. Later in the day, we will enjoy the presentation inside the EDC at 2pm. The talk will be a "hybrid", presented both live and virtually via ZOOM. It will also be recorded and posted online for those that cannot make the event on Saturday. Details will be available on our [website](#) as the date approaches.

IMPORTANT! This is expected to be a popular program, so reservations for those planning to attend in person, especially for the afternoon program, are recommended. Please call the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center at (386) 615-7081 to reserve your spot

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Field Trips

Saturday, September 30th, Warbler Day Morning Walk- Ormond Central Park, 8:00 to 10:00 am. Joan Tague is leading an easy bird walk through Central Park in Ormond Beach. Explore the groomed trails in the park looking avian migrants with an emphasis on warblers. The pace is very casual. Binoculars are highly recommended. All levels of experience are welcome, from beginners to "experts". Hosted by the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center and Halifax River Audubon.

This is a prelude to the afternoon the same day program about warblers. You can attend both activities, or one of the other, as you please. We ask for both that you call the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center so that we can prepare for the proper number of guides to search for birds in the park.

Meet in the parking lot of the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center on Division Avenue. Again, please bring binoculars if you have them.

Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center,

601 Division Avenue Ormond Beach FL 32174

Phone: (386) 615-7081

Puzzle

From UteCoot, Wasatch Audubon Society, Ogden, Utah

Find the hidden (or not) birds in this saga by the renowned French authoress, Phoebe Guillemot, based on a classic tale by Guy de Maupheasant. (Hint: There are two names hidden in the title):

My Name is Tork

I crave nothing but the heart-throb I never really knew. She was so rabid, my Dora. I left her behind, but loving me was her only crime.

The King was wallowing in the mud, sinking, letting out a hearty ranting. How low can you get? He asked me, "Would you like to take a dip?" "Perhaps", I replied. I felt that I had to demur, reasoning that getting in the mud with the King would be golly-gosh awkward, though I felt that I'd do very well in there, gullible as I was.

Sensing my negativity, the King roused himself, saying, "Hello" only loud enough for one to hear. Meanwhile, the ogre Nemesis and the ogre's coterie arrived. This consisted of an Arab Sultan, a German Prince and a hick in a comic hat, all with big egos, preying constantly on the weak. Then, in walked Merlin the magician. He practices the darkest religions. Untold riches are his to bestow. He even made me a Barbie Doll once.

Answers on page 5

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Aberrant plumaged Northern Cardinal

Photo by Becky Cole

The yellow Northern Cardinal that was found in New Smyrna Beach back in June by Deedee Tobe has been wandering to other neighborhoods. Still in New Smyrna, he's seen here in Becky Cole's yard. A question was posed, "How do you tell if it's a male?" Males have far more extensive black on the face than females.

David Hartgrove

Conservation Notes



Wilson's Plovers, Photo by *Jean Hall*

Wilson's Plovers are in trouble. A bird that nests on our beaches, its population here in Florida is now estimated at fewer than 1,000 pairs. Plovers need natural coastline and beaches to survive and are sensitive to disturbance—when unwitting beachgoers flush adults from their nests, eggs and chicks can die quickly from opportunistic predators or the intense Florida sun. They have already lost much of the habitat they once called their home—beaches and coastal marshes are the only place they can find fiddler crabs and other prey to eat and raise their families. What remains of their natural habitat is increasingly vulnerable to development, disturbance, and sea level rise.

Audubon Florida has petitioned the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission seeking to have Wilson's Plovers listed as "Threatened" under the Florida Imperiled Species Rule (68A-27.0012, Florida Administrative Code). Threatened status at the state level will confer important new protections on this bird and its habitat. Your voice is needed in this effort. Here's a link to sign the [petition](#). Please, these little birds need all the help we can give them. Thank you!

David Hartgrove

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Welcome to Our New Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new members this month: Robert Ahlert, Mary Connolly, Mary Deiniger, Katherine Dodd, Heather Harrison, L. F. Kline, Anthony McMahon, Kate Staley and Rebecca Wetzel. We hope to see you soon at one of our meetings or on one of our field trips. Welcome aboard!

Time now for another in our continuing series Everyday Birding, by Ray Scory.

Goodbye Red-tailed Hawk

Goodbye Red-tailed Hawk and family. Jane and I will miss you.

Your attention to the upbringing of your young ones was a true mark of devotion and care. I watched you every day fly from your nest site and travel out of sight to parts unknown, to bring back food for your spouse and nestlings. I saw you perched in our pine tree - same spot every morning, every day, same time, communicating with your family. And all this without a cellphone or a GPS unit. It is truly remarkable and mysterious. I watched you circling high over your nest, dipping down low to ward off unwelcome guests. You perched in our pine tree quietly, always alert, diligent, ignoring the attacks of feisty songbirds. Always watching your nest where your growing family resided.

You trained them well and today, May 10, 2023 - your nest is empty. Your family is about to begin its second phase of their life. We welcome you back on your next visit to your nest high in the lone pine tree - and we thank you for being there. I remember four years ago when you two Red-tailed Hawks decided to build a nest high in one of four pine trees remaining on our circle that have survived the ravage of countless hurricanes in the past 23 years. On our property alone we had 12 pine trees standing. Today - two.

Three years ago, you and your spouse began bringing sticks and strips of bark to this tree. Your progress ended with a nest half built. You disappeared. Only you know why. For us humans on the ground, we can only guess and wonder why. We were sad.

The next year you came back to rebuild on the weather ravaged nest that you started the year before. To no avail. You abandoned this seemingly completed nest again. At the beginning of this year you came back for a third try. Not to the same site but to another tree in an adjoining yard. This tree was the same height as the other but loaded with a thicket of large branches and a cover of abundant pine needles. More to your liking, I understand, from the reading I did during your visit here.

Within two weeks your nest was completed. This time you did not leave. We watched. We could see the back of your spouse showing above the rim of the nest and you, ever watchful of your home - keeping all intruders away.

One day, I saw you and your spouse looking down into the nest. I watched expectantly and then later, I saw you bring food to the nest, pass it to your female and then you flew off to gather more food for your growing family. A few weeks later, a lone featherless head wiggled up from the interior of the nest and then silently settled back. You looked down into the nest and flew off.

I quietly let my eyes rest on the nest, then slowly looked up higher into the open sky, closed my eyes and smiled.

Ray Scory



Everyday at daybreak the male Red-tailed Hawk would occupy the high spot on our backyard pine tree. Always alert to the safety of his nest and nestlings. Even the distraction of a few pesky Northern Mockingbirds could not sway him from his protective family instincts.



Two recently fledged Red-tailed Hawks practice their hunting skills in our backyard. Only one was successful. The other, top right in the frame, tried to steal the prey from the one that was successful. But to no avail.

Photos by Ray Scory

In the photo above, the bird with its wings spread is engaging in behavior often seen in raptors. It's covering and hiding its prey from potential rivals, like its hungry nest mate. Editor

Answers: My Name is Tork

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Myna, stork, raven, robin, sora, rail, heron, swallow, kinglet, owl, dipper, murre, goshawk, hawk, dove, gull, grouse, loon, scoter, tanager, chat, osprey, merlin, kestrel, towhee.

Extra credit if you found these puzzlers: mew (European gull - twice), emu (three limes - "the mud" "demur") tyrant (substantive name), Oo (In "loon") & ou (Hawaiian birds) and hen

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Audubon Adventures

September starts the school year here and here's your chance to help. 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. They are specifically designed to mesh with the science curriculum offered by our local schools and help the students prepare for their end of class exams.

Please 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

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Education: Holly Zwart-Duryea

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David Hartgrove

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