

The Pelican

Volume 69- Number 12, Newsletter of Halifax
River Audubon December, 2023

For wildlife & people since 1923



The President's Column

What's in a Name?

It was 2021 and I was in the hills of Southeast Arizona above the infamous town of Portal. My wonderful birding companions and I had reached the George Walker House, our home for the next several days. We were tired, but looking at the grounds filled with bird feeders and avian visitors we knew we would be watching birds until the last light of the day. But first, we had to unpack the car.

I stepped out of the house to get my second load when a warbler sized creature flew right up to my nose as if to challenge my very existence. It virtually shimmered in the late afternoon sun. The iridescent black/ebony was striking, but it then flashed the most incredible green gorget. The total effect defied description. Time stood still. The bird took measure of me, dismissed me and flew off. I was in awe and totally speechless.

I ran to the books and found the name for this creature: Rivoli's Hummingbird. I was then informed that it was once called Magnificent Hummingbird. Why would anyone not call this thing Magnificent? What were "they" thinking?

The species was described and named Rivoli's Hummingbird in 1829 in honor of the Duke of Rivoli who was an amateur ornithologist by Rene Lesson. The name was changed in 1980 to Magnificent. In 2017 the AOS split 2 populations into distinct species and the Arizona residents that I saw were renamed Rivoli's.

Now the AOS (the American Ornithology Society), the body that standardizes the common names of birds in North America has announced that it will change the names of 80 species that carry, well, people names. They will be named for descriptive characteristics, or habitat preferences or regional assignment. This is an effort to "address past wrongs and engage far more people in the enjoyment, protection, and study of birds."

I salute this effort. One of my recent presentations on warblers explored the discovery and naming of this group. Most of our birds were named in the early to mid 1800's. Ornithologists and naturalists seemed to name the birds for one another at times. It was a closed group that often ostracized scientists and excluded them from any honors. Many of them held political and social ideas that we find appalling today. All of this is distracting when considering what is really important - the welfare of the birds. *Continued on the next page.*

Calendar & Events

Monday, December 18th, Program Meeting- At this time the meeting is still in the planning stages. We want to have an in person meeting, perhaps a "Birds and Brews" event. An email alert will be sent out as soon as plans are finalized.

Field Trips

Wednesday, December 6th, Morning Bird Walk- Join Joan Tague for this last of the year morning bird walk at Ormond Central Park. Meet at the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center, 601 Division Ave. The walk is scheduled from 8:00 am to 10:00 am.

Friday, December 8th, Merritt Island NWR- Join David Hartgrove for this first of two back to back trips to one of the country's premier winter birding sites. Be ready for a day of exploration. Radios will be available for communication purposes. It is recommended that you carry the radio at all times both in and out of the car. The leaders will use the radios to point out the birds. The trip will be a leaders choice and may include Blackpoint Wildlife Drive and other locations. We will go where the birds lead us. Be prepared for a longer walk or two if we decide to explore areas not open to automobiles. Wear comfortable shoes and pack all of the essentials - snacks, lunch, hat, bug spray. If you wish to carpool, make sure to meet us in Port Orange at Target, 1771 Dunlawton Avenue Port Orange near Panera.

Saturday, December 9th, Merritt Island NWR- Joan Tague will be leading this trip. All of the pertinent information above is applicable to this trip too.

* * *

Field trips With Others

Thursday, December 28th, Eco Buggy Tour, Deep Creek- Our friends in Volusia County Environmental Management have scheduled an Eco Buggy tour of Deep Creek Preserve to learn about adaptations wildlife make for winter. You can register online by clicking this [link](#) or call Tommy Nordmann at 386-736-5927, ext. 12072. Deep Creek Preserve is located at 964 S. SR 415, New Smyrna Beach.

A bird doesn't know its name. We assign a name so that we can communicate the concept of an American Redstart or a Northern Paula to others. When the names contain information that relate directly to the birds the communication will only become clearer. As the names are suggested and finally agreed upon we will discuss and criticize and celebrate each of the assignments. And we will be talking and focusing on birds throughout the process. "Bird people" and the public will be tuned in. We will have opportunities to spotlight diversity and advance conservation. It's going to be interesting.

Joan Tague



Rivoli's Hummingbird

Photo by Jason Vasallo

* * * *

Save Don't Pave Spruce Creek

This group has been fighting the good fight to prevent FDOT from building a new interchange on I-95 at Pioneer Trail. On Saturday, December 9th, from 1:00 to 3:00 pm they will hold a fund raiser picnic. Cost is 50.00 per person, with a 5.00 discount if you purchase two tickets. If this sounds expensive just imagine how expensive the legal costs are for this small group fighting well funded developers. The event will be held at the Yaupon Brothers American Tea plantation, located at 504 Pullman Road, Edgewater, FL 32132.

There will be great food, live music, local speakers, a small raffle/auction, and special presentation of the 2023 "Courage in Leadership" award(s). Purchase tickets in advance [here](#).

Conservation Notes

In a recent column in the Florida Phoenix, Craig Pitman asked some scathing questions about the love affair between our state legislature and the development industry.

State law says that in coastal areas, the density of development is not supposed to exceed an evacuation time of 16 hours for a Category 5 storm. A month before Hurricane Ian hit, Lee County officials admitted in a hearing that their evacuation time was 96 hours — in other words, 80 more hours than it should have been. And they said that only nine of the state's 45 coastal counties could claim to be faster.

An objective person might look at what happened and say, "Hey, let's not build back exactly where the storm surge knocked down houses and drowned people. And maybe we should try to stick to the evacuation times in the law." You won't find any of those folks in the legislature of course.

"There is nothing more important than protecting private property rights." So said Rep. Bob Rommel, R. Dist. 81, Collier County. Yes, right next to Lee County, where 61 people died in the storm. Not to be outdone in the rush to make nice with those big contributors, Senate President, Kathleen Passidomo, said, "The aftermath of a hurricane isn't the time to impose new costly, burdensome, bureaucratic requirements and might inhibit the ability of a family or business to rebuild on land they have owned for generations,". So no changing existing building codes. Even if they've now proved inadequate. Those "costly, burdensome, bureaucratic requirements" might save lives. But they're costly and burdensome.

The possible saving grace in this story lies with federal flood insurance. If developers can't get flood insurance they can't get bank loans. Lack of the use of 'other people's money' can put the brakes on the steam roller development machine.

* * *

From the Birding Community E-bulletin of the National Wildlife Refuge Association comes this bit of information.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has been working on an ambitious proposal to create an Everglades to Gulf Conservation Area. This could allow the USFWS to work with willing landowners to protect important habitat and related wildlife species in an area spanning four-million acres in 12 counties west of Lake Okeechobee from Lakeland to Naples, including the watersheds of the Peace River, Myakka River, Fisheating Creek, and the Caloosahatchee River. These habitats include wet prairie, freshwater marshes, forested wetlands, dry prairies, pine flatwoods, scrub/shrub, agricultural lands, and associated pastures. This proposed Conservation Area is no stand-alone Important Bird Area (IBA), but it would embrace some already in existence (e.g., the Babcock-Webb Ecosystem, the Fisheating Creek Watershed, the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, and the Bright Hour Watershed).

David Hartgrove

by Ray Scory

An Avian ID Callout

Reams and reams of words have been written about the identification of the more than 9000 bird species that inhabit our planet Earth. In fact, many, many more will be written as more new species are discovered and the behavior of familiar species will continue to be researched.

However, to repeat what I have read about a particular bird's identification is not my intent here. I will briefly describe what I see when a bird first enters my yard. Briefly and my way - "an ID Callout", I call it. My method is immediate and the bird's behavior is obvious and repeatable.

When I see a small bird with rapid, beating wings, and flying very low across the water of our backyard pond, I know the Spotted Sandpiper is back for a few days. Twice a year it comes, normally alone. And the first and last bird to come to our bird feeder each day is a male Northern Cardinal and it is red. A christening of sorts, I gather.

From the first day that I wandered through our backyard 24 years ago and spied a small greenish bird with a white eye ring quietly brushing through the saw palmetto plants, I guessed that Painted Buntings would be regular visitors. Immediately, I anchored a bird feeder in our yard and attached a six inch stove pipe to the pole to keep the squirrels from daily devouring the bird seed. I knew they would come. I have past experience with squirrels.

Blue Jays, first you hear their raucous, loud "Jay, Jay" call, then they fly hard and forcefully into the bird feeder. They are blue and white. Conversely, the Mourning Dove first lands on the feeder's crossbar, patiently and quietly looks around, then drops to the ground and lazily picks up the discarded seeds to eat. No hurry here.

If a large black bodied silhouette is locked vertically on our pine tree's trunk, I know immediately that it is a Pileated Woodpecker - not a Downey or a Red-bellied Woodpecker. A Downey Woodpecker is about the length of my hand. And with the Red-bellied, what clue do we need to know except the black and white horizontal stripping on the back of this beauty. Surely not the Red-bellied Woodpecker's red belly, which is normally squeezed unseen tightly up against a tree trunk.

I don't need to hear the creative singing, the siren of a fire truck, the whistling of the wind or another bird's unique melody. All I need to see is a blinding flash whiz by and physically knock another bird off from our bird feeder. That's the Northern Mockingbird that patrols our yard.

When I was leading birdwatching field trips with students from my Beginners Bird Watching class, someone would invariably ask as they pointed to a bird, "What's the name of that bird?"

I would not answer with the name but ask, "What did you notice first about that bird?" They would reply with their first observation. "There, that's your personal ID hook. From now on recall that hook (a shape, a sound, a gesture, something personal) and you will remember that you first learned that it is a (Willet or etc, etc,) and that bird's name will stay in your birding memory.

Birding is fun - addictive. There are countless way to enjoy it. My best wish to you is to enjoy it your way.

Jane and I sincerely wish you a pleasant and Happy Holiday Season!

Ray Scory



Brassy, fearless, highly protective of family; I have watched our resident Northern Mockingbird twosome dive-bomb birds off my feeders; chase hawks and other birds from our yard; and attack a Great Blue Heron. They are Florida's State Bird.

Photo by Ray Scory

* * * *



North Carolina is Banding Terns!

Conservation partners in North Carolina have begun banding Royal Tern and Sandwich Tern chicks in North Carolina! The bands are black and field-readable. Banded terns from North Carolina have already been sighted in Maryland and New Jersey. If you see a banded tern, you can report your sightings to the Banded Bird Lab or email laddison@audubon.org.

Time now for another article from our plant expert, Leslie Nixon.

Plant Books for Bird People

Call me old-fashioned, but I still like real, physical books. Since some of you probably feel the same way, here is an overview of three favorite gardening books for native plants, focusing on those that identify bird-attracting plants. If you're a bibliomaniac like me, you will put them on your holiday wish list.

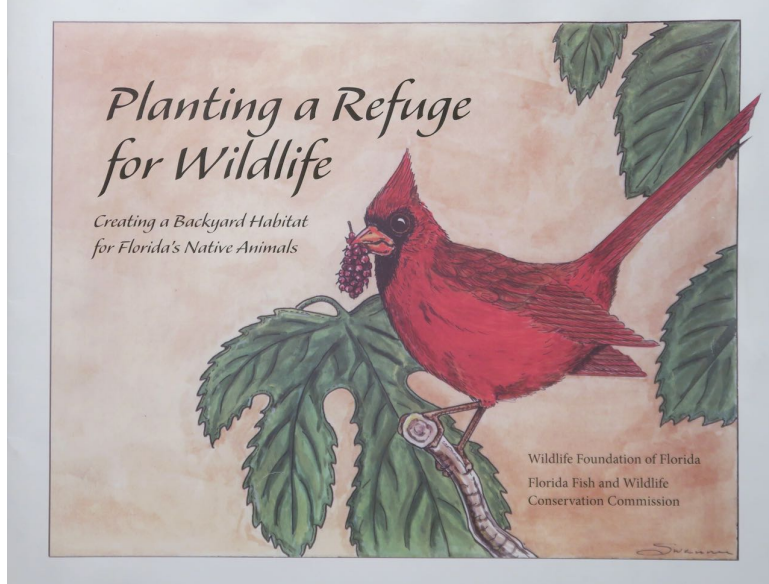
Planting a Refuge for Wildlife is a 40-page booklet from the Wildlife Foundation of Florida worth much more than its \$5 price tag. It is an excellent guide to creating wildlife habitat in your yard, describing general methods for attracting various small animals, from birds to bats to bees, outlining changes anyone can easily make in their landscape. Bird-lovers will appreciate the 5-page chart that lists Florida's resident and migratory birds and their habitat needs. To find plants for birds use the large plant chart listing readily-available Florida native plants along with their specific benefits to wildlife.

Native Plant Landscaping for Florida Wildlife is one of several outstanding plant books by Craig Huegel, a wildlife biologist who has been growing Florida native plants in the St. Petersburg area for decades. Based on this experience he gives practical advice on incorporating natives into home landscapes. The first few chapters provide helpful information on wildlife needs for food, cover, and water, and includes a chart of Florida's birds with their habitat requirements. The descriptions and photos of plants are excellent. As a bonus, the book ends with a primer on landscape design techniques that yield the best results for wildlife.

It should be noted that the previous two books limit their plant lists to Florida's trees and shrubs, for as Huegel says, those are the plants most valuable to wildlife. But birds flock to wildflowers, grasses, and vines too, so reach for ***Native Plants for Florida Gardens***. Published by the Florida Wildflower Foundation, this book covers all plant forms and is a good companion to the other two. It is an easy-to-use plant profile book in which each profile takes up two facing pages: the left displays a gorgeous color photo while the right describes the plant and how to grow it. Not directly focused on wildlife, the plant descriptions do identify each plant's benefit to our local animals. This little treasure is a poor man's coffee table book: a pretty paperback that is a pleasure to pick up and peruse on a regular basis.

All of these books can be purchased online, but if you are not interested in book hoarding you can borrow them from the Volusia County library system or, if you are a member, from the Pawpaw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society. May your holidays be filled with the joy of books in your hand and beautiful birds in your yard.

Leslie Nixon



This invaluable little booklet is available online from the Fish and Wildlife Foundation of Florida at this [link](#).

* * * *

How About Some New Checklists

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has long had free checklists available for butterflies and birds. Now there's a new one for amphibians and reptiles. There's an easy online order process. Begin by clicking on this [link](#). This will open the Publications Order Form. Under Title, type the word "Checklist" and then scroll down and click "Search." All three checklists will show up in the results. Then check the box next to the checklist(s) you wish to order. One copy of each per person is free. Multiple checklists can be ordered for a fee. Now click "Submit Selection(s)". Now click "Check Out". Now, scroll down and enter your shipping information. Then scroll down to the bottom of the page and click "Place Order". In a few weeks your choices will arrive in the mail.

* * * *

From The Quotable Birder

"What is more cheerful, now in the fall of the year, than an open wood fire? Do you hear those little chirps and twitters coming out of that piece of apple wood? Those are the ghosts of the robins and blue birds that sang upon the bough when it was in blossom last Spring. In summer whole flocks them come fluttering about the fruit trees under the window: so I have singing birds all the year round."

Thomas Bailey Aldrich, *Miss Mehitabel's Son*

Volunteers Help With Mangrove Mile Project

Volunteers helped Riverside Conservancy plant mangrove trees in late October as a part of the Mangrove Mile project. The group worked together to restore one mile of shoreline along the Mosquito Lagoon Aquatic Preserve – a portion of the Indian River Lagoon. The organization "One Tree Planted" funded the tree planting project. The group of Riverside



Staff and volunteers doing good work. Photo by Kelli McGee

Conservancy staff and volunteers planted 1,075 mangrove trees along an eroded coastline directly across the lagoon from the Riverside Conservancy Center in Edgewater.

"We are so thankful to One Tree Planted for funding the Mangrove Mile project," said Kelli McGee, executive director of Riverside Conservancy. "We're also grateful to the Mosquito Lagoon Aquatic Preserve staff for their support, YBE consulting for delivering the mangroves to the planting sites, Captain Frank Brownell for bringing our volunteers to Firecracker Island and our community supporters for helping us restore living shorelines."

The Riverside Conservancy staff and volunteers will conduct vegetation and water-quality surveys every quarter at this site and the Conservancy will replace mangroves that are lost to storm/wave damage (to ensure an 80 percent survival rate).

Help us restore a mile of shoreline and double your gift! Dr. Art Litowitz will match all donations made in 2023 up to \$50,000. Here's the [link](#).

Lisa Mickey



* * * * *

THE PELICAN

is published monthly by Halifax River Audubon, a chapter of the National Audubon Society and a member of Audubon Florida serving eastern Volusia County.

PO Box 166
Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166

Email: editor@halifaxriveras.org

Web: <http://www.halifaxriveras.org>

Halifax River Audubon

forbirds@halifaxriveras.org

Meets monthly September through May

President: Joan Tague

Vice President: David Hartgrove

Past President: Melissa Lammers

Treasurer: Bob Kellogg

Recording Sec.: Catherine Kellogg

Membership Sec.: Joan Tague

Corresponding Sec: Vacant

Historian: Vacant

At-Large: Bob Kellogg, Carol Roberts

Committee Members

Conservation: David Hartgrove

Education: Holly Zwart-Duryea

Field Trips: Joan Tague

David Hartgrove

Newsletter Editor: David Hartgrove

Welcome: Vacant

Webmaster: Joan Tague

* * * * *

We wish to thank our sponsors, whose contributions play a vital part of allowing us to continue our work: Florida Power & Light, Colonial Colony and the Spruce Creek Garden and Nature Club.