

The Pelican

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For wildlife & people since 1923



The President's Column

I love birds. I remember the first time I discovered a Red-winged Blackbird and a Baltimore Oriole at the age of 8. Later I obsessed over my pet parakeets and canaries, enjoying hours of antics and songs. Creatures of seemingly endless joy, I would think. Best companions ever. That led me to the Pittsburgh Aviary as an adult where I could observe 700 species of birds in close proximity. Then I remembered the oriole and the blackbird. Birds live outside, too! I hit the road with other enthusiasts, some experienced, others new to the search like me. I purchased bird feeders and spent hours watching my backyard visitors when the weather was miserable. I bought books, joined a bird club, sought new experiences - hawk watching, travel and more. I spent lots of money...Slippery slope....

If you are reading this text, I can assume that you love birds, too. Your journey probably has many of the same elements as mine. The memories live on, especially through bird lists and photographs, both analog and digital. We announce our travels on our hats and T-shirts. We share endless stories of our adventures. But have you taken the next step?

If you share stories, you are already moving in the direction of "giving back". You are communicating your love and enthusiasm of an lifetime avocation. Can you take this to the next step - can you share while walking down a trail with others? That's a bird walk. Can you display your favorite photographs in a way that tells a story? That's a presentation. Do you enjoy being out in the field, eBirding your sightings? That's a survey.

Through the year, Halifax River Audubon is often fielding requests by our community partners - libraries, fellow conservation organizations, state parks, wildlife refuges, nature centers, schools and more - for those things that I mentioned above. I have responded to those kind of requests for years. I always learn something from each assignment. Each one challenges my assessment of my personal knowledge base. They force me to "hit the books". With each assignment I have found my confidence growing and my skills sharpened.

Many of you have attended our field trips. How many have come to a library program or a nature center outing? Would you like to accompany me? The community is curious about birds. They want to know about bird watching. They want to know how to have birds in their yards. We know these things and we can share what we know.

Continued in the next column.

We have presentations that you can learn. You can bring a new presentation/subject to us. We can pick the audience that matches your comfort level. I hope you will step up for our annual event in February - The Great Backyard Bird Count (see the article on page 3 and check our [website](#) for updates). We need park guides and folks in the booths. If you can't volunteer that day, please stop by and see what we do. We look forward to seeing you!

Joan Tague

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Calendar & Events

Happy New Year From Your HRA Friends

Monday, January 15th, Program Meeting- Join us via Zoom as Joan Tague presents "Migration Defined." This fascinating program reveals all kinds of interesting facts about why birds migrate and how they find their way back home each year. Look for the link to join the meeting in an email to be sent to members as we get closer to the date.

Friday, January 5th, Lake Apopka- Join David Hartgrove for a trip to one of our state's premier birding hot spots. We'll meet at 7:00 am at Int'l Square on Int'l Speedway Blvd, east of I-95, behind Krystal. Bring lunch. Questions: call David at 386-235-1249.

Tuesday, January 9th, Lake Woodruff- Joan Tague will lead this trip to one of our county's better birding spots. We'll meet at 7:30 am at Int'l Square on Int'l Speedway Blvd, east of I-95, behind Krystal at 7:00 am. Bring lunch. Questions: call Joan at 386-871-6049.

Saturday, January 13th, Owl Prowl- See the notice of this event on page 2 for all the details.

Tuesday, January 16th, Shiloh Marsh- Join Joan Tague for a trip to this often neglected hot spot at the north end of MINWR. Bring a lunch and meet at 7:00 am at the Target on Dunlawton Ave. just east of I-95, behind Panera Bread. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Wednesday, January 17th, Disappearing Island Boat Trip- See the article on page 3 for all the details.

Field Trips Information continued on page 3.

Owl Prowl at Tomoka State Park

Saturday, January 13, 2024

5:00PM

Program Building



Join **Halifax River Audubon** and **Friends of Tomoka Basin State Parks** for a fascinating evening focusing on these mysterious creatures. The evening will begin with a short presentation discussing the owls that inhabit Central Florida. For the second part of the program we will explore the park searching for the owls that call the park home. Be prepared for the night!

Wear closed-toed shoes suitable for uneven terrain. Bring a flashlight and bug spray

Tickets: \$25.00

Tickets go on sale December 20 at Eventbrite

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/owl-prowl-at-tomoka-state-park-tickets-771541660877?aff=oddtcreator>

Members receive \$5.00 discount with code HTMBR

Tomoka State Park
2099 N Beach St,
Ormond Beach, FL 32174

Sponsored by:



Our two regular contributors, Ray Scory and Leslie Nixon are taking this month off. Ray had a stroke on December 8th and has had an amazing recovery already. We wish him the best in his rehab. His column will return next month with a doozie. Over the course of 5 days, while hospitalized, he saw 27 species on a single tree branch!

MDC's 2023 Winter Birding Tours To Disappearing Island Begin Jan. 17

The Marine Discovery Center will once again give avian enthusiasts an opportunity to observe migratory birds with its 2024 Winter Birding Tours. The first tour is set for Wednesday, Jan. 17, starting at 8:30 a.m.

MDC's Winter Birding Tours give guests a chance to learn more about many shorebird species from naturalists and local Audubon chapter members. The tours offer transportation to Disappearing Island onboard MDC's Discovery boat.

The Discovery boat will leave from the dock at 116 North Causeway in New Smyrna Beach to Disappearing Island at Ponce Inlet. Guests will disembark at Disappearing Island and walk the shoreline at low tide to view a variety of migratory species only seen in this area during the winter months.

These popular three-hour trips give beginning to avid birding enthusiasts time to explore with small groups of experienced birders. This is a perfect opportunity for novices to learn from the best birders in this area.

The tours will be offered once a month on Wednesday mornings in January, February, March and April. The 2024 tours are set for the following dates and departure times: Jan. 17 - from 8:30-11:30 a.m.; Feb. 7 - from 9:30-12:30 p.m.; March 6 - from 8:30-11:30 a.m.; and April 17 - from 8:30-11:30 a.m.

Cost per person for the three-hour tours will be \$40 for adults; \$37 for seniors (62+) and students; and \$22 for children under 12. Children participating on these tours must be under adult supervision at all times.

Guests are encouraged to bring binoculars, spotting scopes, water and snacks, and to wear comfortable, water-tolerant shoes to walk along the shoreline.

The Discovery is a 40-passenger boat equipped with an emergency marine head (toilet). Stairs will be provided for guests to disembark at Disappearing Island.

To make reservations, call the Marine Discovery Center at 386-428-4828 or see our [website](#).

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Field Trips Continued

Saturday, January 20th, Tomoka State Park- When we did the Christmas Bird Count we found a number of good birds at this great local hot spot. Plus you'll get to see the famous statue of Chief Tomokie. Meet at the park at 8:00 am, 2099 N. Beach Street, Ormond Beach. If you don't have a state parks annual pass there is a 5.00 per vehicle entry fee. Joan Tague will lead this trip. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Joan, 386-871-4049.



Halifax River Audubon(HRA) and The Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center(OBEDC) are teaming up to present a free, fun outdoor community event in Central Park - The Great Backyard Bird Count. This marks the sixth year for this event.

The Backyard Count is just that - people everywhere go outside and count the birds in their local yards and parks and report the results in the eBird database. A count will be conducted in Central Park in the morning at 7:30AM before the formal event.

From 10AM to 2PM, we celebrate birds with a bird party of sorts at the OBEDC. There will be games, challenges with prizes, crafts for kids, information booths, viewing stations throughout the park, guided walks and more. Experience challenges faced by birds from eagles to hummingbirds. Learn how to identify the birds. Find out how to attract birds to your yard.

Calling all Halifax River Audubon Members - we want to make this day special. Come spend the day volunteering if you can. We need help planning, setting up on Count Day and taking down our exhibits at the conclusion. We need guides and greeters. We need planners and We need you!

Interested in helping or want more information? Please contact Joan Tague at forbirds@halifaxriveras.org.

Conservation Notes

An idea which was soundly rejected back in 2015 is once on the minds of the Volusia County Council. Unable to find a local property owner willing to open his or her land to ATV riders, someone has prevailed on the County Council once again to write a letter to the state advocating the opening of trails in Tiger Bay State Forest to ATV/ORV use. The myriad reasons for why this is such a bad idea remain in place. Use of ATV's on sensitive conservation lands will do irreparable damage to those lands. In Withlacoochee State Forest, where ATV's have been operating on what's called the Croom Tract, the state spends a small fortune on maintenance of the property. Far more than is taken in in user fees. In addition there are a number of plants, birds and animals in Tiger Bay State Forest that are state and or federally listed as Species of Special Concern, Threatened or Endangered. Opening Tiger Bay to off road vehicles would place these species at increased threat. We have written to the Council expressing our opinion that the Council should back away from this issue. It's state land and decisions regarding its management plan should be left to the state. We will be at the County Council meeting when it eventually appears on their agenda.

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In the December issue of the Wrack Line, the Newsletter of the Florida Shorebird Alliance, we learned...

The totals are in for the 2022 statewide abundance estimates for American Oystercatchers, Snowy Plovers, and Wilson's Plovers.

Data entered into the Florida Shorebird Database by monitoring partners around the state was used to estimate the abundance of the three focal shorebird species: American Oystercatcher, Snowy Plover, and Wilson's Plover. The statewide abundances below are reported as number of individual breeding adults, not pairs, to more accurately reflect how data are collected under the Breeding Bird Protocols.

The first two species listed above are state listed as Threatened. Wilson's Plover, a species that has experienced marked declines in population is not yet listed at the state or federal level. The estimated statewide populations are as follows: American Oystercatcher, 458; Snowy Plover, 397 and Wilson's Plover, 984. And these are individual birds, not nesting pairs. As our climate warms and sea levels rise these birds will be at increased risk. The research continues.

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Shore nesting species, like those mentioned above, along with Least Terns and Black Skimmers may benefit from a new innovation when we humans try to provide new nesting habitat. Here's a link to an article in Audubon Magazine about building floating nest platforms. There's one in use at Fort DeSoto that's been quite successful.

David Hartgrove

Member Photos

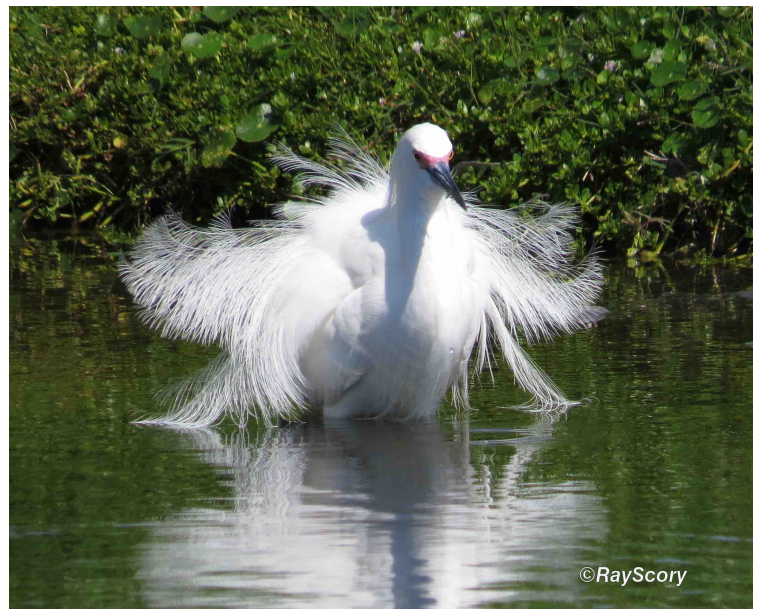
Below are two photos from members past and present. The first is of a Purple Sandpiper. This photo was taken by Chuck Tague. If you were ever on a field trip with Chuck you certainly were guaranteed an interesting and informative experience. Though no longer with us, Chuck's legacy lives on in his prodigious catalog of photos and writings.



Purple Sandpiper

Photo by Chuck Tague

The photo below is by Ray Scory. As usual Ray has captured an image of unsurpassed beauty. This Snowy Egret is in peak breeding plumage, as evidenced by the beautiful aigrette feathers, present only during breeding season, and the red lores. Lores is the term used to identify the skin at the point where the bill meets the face. Its yellow feet turn red at this time too. As is mentioned on page 2, Ray's monthly articles and photos will return next month as he recovers from a stroke.



©RayScory

Snowy Egret

Photo by Ray Scory

COMING SOON



Community Conservation Education Center



Work on the new Community Conservation Education Center, which will eventually replace the current Visitor Center at the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, is set to kick off in March, 2024. Due to a variety of issues it's taken seven years to get to this stage in the project. Our chapter donated five thousand dollars to the project in 2021. The new facility will house exhibits, classrooms (each year one thousand+ children are bussed out to the Refuge on school field trips), an auditorium, Nature's Treasures Gift Shop and offices. Watch MIWA's [website](#) for the date of groundbreaking.

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From The Quotable Birder

"Perfect as the wing of a bird may be, it will never enable the bird to fly if unsupported by the air. Facts are the air of science. Without them a man of science can never rise."

Ivan Pavlov



If you were in the Boy or Girl Scouts you may have gone on a "snipe hunt" as a kid. Here's a Wilson's Snipe. The photo was taken while doing the Daytona Beach CBC. *Photo by Joerg Kessler*

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THE PELICAN

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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.