

# The Pelican

Volume 70- Number 3, Newsletter of Halifax  
River Audubon March, 2024

*For wildlife & people since 1923*



## Chipe Celeste\* or *Setophaga cerulea*

My favorite website has been dormant since November 30, 2023. I had no need of its information during the winter. Its purpose is to track and predict the movement of birds across the United States. It only becomes interesting when the epic event of Bird Migration kicks into full gear. Today it was turned back up. Of course, I am talking about Bird Cast. If you are not familiar with it, please check it out and read the science behind the beautiful maps that are painted throughout the night by the journeys of billions of birds. It's a stunning record of an incredible natural phenomenon.

I check the map each morning in the Spring. If "traffic" was heavy over my house during the night, there might be birds descending from the sky in the morning to feed and rest before the next leg of the movement north. It always bears a listen and a look, even if I only have time to check my local trees. If I am lucky, I come face to face with a stunning representative of the avian pageant. Imagine a Cerulean Warbler...



Cerulean Warbler *Setophaga cerulea* Photo by Joan Tague

The bird moves deliberately through the trees, gleaning insects from each leaf. The tiny beak is delicate, the action is accurate. Tiny little gnats and midges, leaf miners and caterpillars are plucked and devoured. The bird bulks up,

storing fat in its tissue. Its running a marathon today and energy is at a premium.

I observe this activity at a distance through binoculars. My interaction with this bird is passive.

Or is it?

Did I turn off all of my outside lights last night? Did I disguise my large windows with any number of films or stencils so that they do not reflect the skies or the trees? Did I spray my garden with pesticides that kill the very food this bird requires? Do I have the right plants in my yard? Do I keep my kitty indoors at all times? Did I ask my municipality to adopt a "Lights Out" policy? Do I lend my voice to those who protect and preserve Wildlife Corridors and Conservation Properties?

It's a 21st Century reality that we have to work hard to provide and protect natural areas. It is a daunting task. Victories seem few and far between, but there have been many. There are just so many battles and fronts to this campaign. One can be overwhelmed by the complexity, the entities involved, the legality...can we make a difference?

Ask the warbler - you won't get an answer. You won't get a thank you. You will get a visit, a "drop-in" when things are right for this bird. He refuels and thrives and moves on. Just one of those actions listed above, performed by a thoughtful person may have saved its life today. For this bird, all of your efforts, large and small, are personal.

Subtly beautiful, the Cerulean Warbler is listed as near threatened. In 36 years of birding I have had the privilege of spending maybe 300 hours viewing them. We were familiar with several local nesting areas in Pennsylvania and with the hilly terrain we could position ourselves in way that we looked into the tops of the riverside sycamore trees. We watched nests and babies. It's all personal for me too.

\* *Mexico's name for Cerulean Warbler. Joan was there last month. Ed.*

Joan Tague

\* \* \* \*

## House Sparrows, Welcome or Reviled?

A little reading in a back issue of Audubon Magazine brought this literary nugget to the surface. Enjoy!

## Calendar & Events

**Wednesday, March 13, The Birds!**- Join us at 5:00 pm for a meeting unlike any we've ever had before.



Get ready for an evening of fun and fear, friends and feathers, food and frolic. Halifax River Audubon will explore the dark side of man's relationship to the birds. The human imagination can see the most benign creatures as monsters and birds have not escaped this treatment. Is the reputation deserved in some cases? We shall see.

The set point for the evening will be an "analysis" of the iconic 1963 film "The Birds". From the plot to the ornithology all facets of the film will be reviewed. Some critics at the time chose this film as Hitchcock's most frightening film. (Did they see "Psycho"?)

This presentation encourages audience participation - think Saturday morning kid flicks at the movie theater. There will be trivia questions with prizes. Cheering, booing, random comments and any other verbal forms of disruption are encouraged. There will be finger food and munchies. A cash bar for beverages includes beer and wine offerings. Get up anytime to refill your plate or order a libation.

If you have never been to this theater, you are in for a surprise. The venue is casual club meets the movies. Seating is open, with tables and chairs throughout the space.

Seats are limited. We **strongly** suggest that you reserve your spot. Respond to either of these addresses: [members@halifaxriveras.org](mailto:members@halifaxriveras.org) or [Meet Up](#).

Location: Cinématique of Daytona 242 South Beach Street Daytona Beach., FL 32114 Reservations/RSVP - donation appreciated at the door.

\* \* \*

Our field trips are on a brief hiatus. We have a number of activities out in the community coming up over the next two months as you'll see in the next column.

On selected Fridays, 3/8, 3/22 and 4/12, join our friends from our sister chapter, the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, for morning bird walks on Canaveral National Seashore. Meet at the Apollo Beach Visitor's Center, 7611 Atlantic Ave S, New Smyrna Beach, at 8:00am. Check their page on [MeetUp](#) for all the information.

## HRA in the Community

It's the time of the year when Halifax River Audubon hits the road and participates in a number of local events. We hope you will stop by and help us in supporting these organizations and programs. Click on the links for more information.

**Saturday, March 9th, Lyonia Preserve Wildlife Festival-** We'll be there from 9:00 am to 3 :00 pm with our table and canopy to reach out to the public. There will be guided hikes, ecobuggy tours, guest speakers, environmental exhibitors, kids' activities, food for purchase, and more. Free admission! Fun for the whole family! 2150 Eustace Ave. Deltona, behind the Deltona Regional Library.

**Thursday, March 21st, Daytona Beach Regional Library,** 105 Jackie Robinson Pkwy. 5:30 to 6:30 pm. Joan Tague will present a program, "Birds of Volusia County" in the north auditorium. Free and open to the public.

**Saturday, March 27th, ReGrow The Loop-** Join Melissa Lammers for her presentation, "Big Beautiful Birds of the Loop" from 5:00pm to 6:30pm at the Ormond Beach Regional Library, 30 S Beach St Ormond Beach, This is a free, ticketed event. Register at [EventBrite](#).

**Saturday, April 6th, Paw Paw Plant Sale-** The Paw Paw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society Annual Sale will be at the Piggotte Community Center, 504 Big Tree Rd. South Daytona. The event is held primarily outdoors. Come early for the best selection if you are in the market for native plants. Join Melissa Lammers for this fun event. Then head south to Turtle Day.

**Saturday, April 6th, Turtle Day at the MSC-** The Marine Science Center is hosting their annual Turtle Day from 10:00 am to 3:00pm. A great event for the whole family. We'll be there.

\* \* \*

## MDC's 2023 Winter Birding Tours To

**Disappearing Island, Continue-** Join Joan Tague, Bob and Catherine Kellogg and Don Chalfant from SEVAS, on this boat trip to see wintering and migrant shorebirds. The trips leave the MDC boat dock. There are two trips left: Wednesday March 6th and Wednesday, April 17th from 8:30am to 12:30 pm. 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 their website.



*Time once again for another in our continuing series, Everyday Birding, by Ray Scory. This month something different.*

## Lemon Tree With No Leaves

A tree stands alone with no leaves.  
More purpose it has, it surely believes  
“Just cut it down. It’s a scraggly, dead tree.”  
Can’t do that to me!  
I like standing here. Oh, so free.  
I carry so many fond memories -  
an aroma of sweet blossoms, the honey for bees,  
the gift of lemons, so yellow and ripe.  
It pleases me to know, you hold me so tight.  
I love when the birds come to me.  
The cover I give, the protection I offer.  
I feel so good when people see good in me.  
When people show love, I’m so much warmer.  
I know I’m just a tree and my leaves have long been  
gone,  
but some people say, they still like looking at me.  
I have a reason for being here. I find there’s nothing  
wrong,  
to show my twigs in all their glory. Feel free to look at  
me.  
I am told there is a nice design in my lengthy stay.  
I like the way my friends enjoy a branch as well as a  
leaf.  
They say it’s simply Nature’s way.  
And to see something in a different way as birds do.  
Is such a visual relief.  
If you like twigs, you’ll certainly love me.  
The moral of the story is:  
Look on Nature’s favor, as a kind, friendly neighbor.

*Ray Scory*



Our Lemon Tree rests standing, leafless, and lifeless in our backyard. Yet it still is as attractive, useful, active, and full of life as the many years it grew leaves and lemons here. All living things that enter our yard still use this tree, such as - dragonflies, birds, butterflies, squirrels, and various insects. We still enjoy looking at this tree and the vital life it attracts.



The Monarch Butterflies and Carolina Wrens are some of the many critters that find reprieve in the tangle of the entwining branches.

*Photos by Ray Scory*

\* \* \* \*

## Black-capped Petrel Endangered

From the Birding Community E-bulletin of the National Wildlife Refuge Association comes this alert. Last month, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service finalized the listing of Black-capped Petrel as an Endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This is a bird seen off our coasts on pelagic trips. Roughly the size of a Laughing Gull with slightly shorter wings. Their high arcing flight easily separates them from other birds seen at sea.

Once again, an article from our plant expert, Leslie Nixon.

## Sunshine on a Cloudy Day

Sunflowers brighten anyone's day, the vibrant flowers inspiring feelings of joy, hope, peace, love - and still life paintings. For birds, sunflowers bring cheer in the form of food. Whether it is the insects gathering around the plant or the oily seeds on the dried flower heads, sunflowers supply savory snacks for hungry birds.

The common sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) - the towering stalk with the oversized bloom - is native to the western US but has been hybridized and naturalized to the remainder of the country (and the rest of the world). Fortunately, Florida has several truly native sunflowers which are smaller and yet more valuable to birds for the variety of insects they attract. They are prized by people too, as the flowers bloom for a longer period than the hybridized giants.

Dune sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*) is an easy-to-grow Florida native wildflower that makes a fabulous groundcover in a sunny spot. Found naturally on sand dunes, this sunflower likes the beach life: hot, sandy, salty, windy, and dry. While it thrives in this harsh environment, it is adaptable to most home gardens if provided with enough sunlight (4 hours per day) and well-drained soil.

Dune sunflower blooms all year long, bringing bright color to your garden even in winter. More down to earth than the common sunflower, it reaches only about 1-2' high but sprawls 4' laterally. This sunflower not only elicits joy in people and birds, it provides safe shelter for smaller animals. As a bonus, it is one of the best pollinator plants around.

Here in Volusia County, be sure to purchase the east coast variety, *Helianthus debilis* subspecies *debilis*. There are two other subspecies that grow in different parts of the state which will hybridize with the east coast version and undesireably dilute the gene pool.

For a quick ecological boost to your landscape, dig up some turfgrass and replace it with east coast dune sunflower. Then you and the birds and the pollinators can enjoy sunshine every day of the year.

\* \* \* \*

### From the Quotable Birder

"...somewhere in the woods beyond the river a nightingale had begun to sing with all the full throated zest of a bird conscious of having had a rave notice from the poet, Keats and only a couple of nights ago a star spot on a programme of the BBC."

*P G Wodehouse, Ring For Jeeves*



Dune Sunflower (*Helianthus debilis*)

The photo was taken on on Feb 8 of this year - to demonstrate how pretty dune sunflower looks even in late winter. *Text and photo by Leslie Nixon*

\* \* \* \*

## 57th Tomoka Regional 2024 Science and Engineering Fair

On Saturday January 27th, three judges from the local Audubon Society chapters (Catherine Kellogg, Eli Schaperow and Bob Kellogg) had the pleasure of judging science projects at the Tomoka Regional Science and Engineering Fair. The three chapters have combined resources to provide monetary awards to the First and Second place finishers in the Senior and Junior divisions. Past Science Fairs have been remarkable for the quality of projects submitted and this year was no exception.

The categories of the selectees covered Animal Sciences, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Environmental Engineering, and Plant Sciences. Although we reviewed dozens of topic-appropriate projects, these four individuals stood out for their critical questions, thoughtful discussions, research methodology, findings, and poise/professionalism. Those are the King sisters, who won our senior division awards. Amy went to the nationals last year.

It was an honor for the three of us to see the work and hear the presentations of these four fine young scientists. Across the entire competition, we were inspired by the depth of talent, knowledge, and commitment demonstrated by all of the students in the Senior and Junior Divisions. Our four Audubon awardees are listed below on page 5.

*Bob Kellogg*



## Senior Division Winners



First Place: Amy King

Title: Building a Sustainable Future with Recycled Plastic Aggregate Concrete

## Junior Division Winners



First Place: Jake De Luca

Title: How Do Different Fertilizers Affect Earthworms?



Second Place: Amanda King

Title: Carbon Sequestration Throughout the Lifetime of Slash Pine (*Pinus Elliott*)



Second Place: Leona Gibson

Title: A Leaf of Faith



## The Kelloggs Lead Their First Field Trip

On Tuesday February 6th, a group of 12 intrepid Halifax River Audubon members braved cool temperatures and high winds for a Light House Point Park and Marine Science Center bird walk.

We had a full and exciting day of experiences. The high winds and heavy surf kept us from walking the beach, but we made up for it by walking toward the Halifax River along the inlet. We actually had a pretty good day of sightings in spite of the blustery weather.



Black Skimmers face into the wind on the beach. The three birds in front, showing brown edges on their wing covers, are hatch year birds.  
*Photo by Bob Kellogg*

Following our walkabout, we visited the Marine Science Center (MSC) for three presentations. Shell Webster (Department Head of Education) provided an awesome lecture on Great Horned Owl and an encounter with Bubba, the resident Great Horned Owl ambassador. This was followed by Mindy Ash (the MSC's most experienced docent) giving us a tour of the new exhibit, Raptor Row. Last, but not least, Tracy Dawson (Department Head of the Bird Hospital) gave us a detailed tour of the different divisions of the Bird Hospital and Rehabilitation areas. A great big "Thank You" to the special presenters and the entire staff of the Marine Science Center!

After the Marine Science Center tour, we shared a delightful lunch (out of the wind) at Hidden Treasures. We shared stories, reviewed our bird lists and discussed future bird walk opportunities. Catherine and I thank all of the members who joined us for this most excellent day of exploring Light House Point Park and the Marine Science Center.

*Bob Kellogg*

*Bob had some good photos of the birds and the folks who made the visit to MSC special. Alas, not enough room. Ed.*

## Conservation Notes

Just when you think you've seen the worst our state's government can do they strike a new low in common sense. Last year, in a give away to the state's fertilizer industry, Governor Ron Desantis signed into law a bill allowing the use of phosphogypsum in road building materials.

Phosphogypsum is the waste product left over from the mining of phosphate for fertilizer. It contains radioactive byproducts like radium 226 and uranium. According to the EPA, "The radium is of particular concern because it decays to form radon, a cancer-causing, radioactive gas." It's no surprise that the fertilizer industry disagrees and says there's no danger. Fortunately phosphogypsum is a known hazardous waste and is regulated by the EPA. Any use of it in road building materials will be subject to EPA testing and the process will be open to public comment. Stay tuned. We'll be watching for our chance to comment on this idiotic proposal.

*David Hartgrove*

\* \* \* \* \*

### 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](mailto:editor@halifaxriveras.org)

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

### Halifax River Audubon

[forbirds@halifaxriveras.org](mailto: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.**