

The Pelican

We need to be the stewards of this world, not its destroyers

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

thoughts from on high

With the exception of the first six years of my life, I've always felt that the new year begins in September. First it was going to school myself. Then my husband accepted a position as a sixth-grade teacher and our entire adult working life revolved around the school calendar. We moved to Florida two months after I retired. I joined Halifax River Audubon one month later and began to learn that a long tradition of many organizations in central Florida include a two- or three-month hiatus over the hottest summer months.

So let me be the first to wish all our members and chapter friends a "Happy New Year." After a two-month break, we begin our "new year" on September 19 at 6:30 p.m. We will again meet at Sica Hall, in Room B, which is the back half of the two rooms where we met previously.

Chapter members, County service specialists, a State Park ranger, local nature experts and a curator from the Museum of Arts & Sciences will make presentations on a variety of topics at monthly meetings. Field trips are scheduled to old favorite locations as well as to new hot spots. We have two overnight trips planned. Some trips require walking, many are mostly driving trips. Most trips are scheduled on Friday, Saturday or Sunday, but we have three week-day trips and one afternoon start time. The new schedule has something to please everyone, we hope. Printed hand-outs will be available for pick up at our monthly meetings. The full schedules are available now for review and download/printing at our website www.halifaxriveras.org.

We look forward to seeing everyone later this month. Please bring a friend, relative or neighbor who may enjoy listening to our speaker or who may be looking for a new activity or to meet new people.

Paula Wehr
President, HRA

Calendar

Program Meeting September 19, 2011

William Greening, Environmental Specialist with Volusia County, will speak at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, September 19, at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. He will address efforts to restore abandoned mosquito impoundments and dragline ditches to their original elevations to regain original habitat, restoration of oyster beds and projects which use stocking of native fish for biological control of mosquitoes.

Join us at 6:30 p.m. for light refreshments and socializing with members and guests. Please note that due to a bridge closure, Daytona Avenue cannot be accessed from LPGA Blvd. Use the Tenth Street entrance.

Fall Migration Count, Saturday, Sept. 17th

Once again it's time to do our part for citizen science. We have been participating in this count and the Spring Migration Count since 1994. We will meet at 7:00 am at the southeast end of the City Island parking lot at the Courthouse. There we will break up into teams to cover our territories. This is an excellent learning opportunity for those who want to hone their birding skills. This is an all day event but we can easily get you back to your car if you need to leave early. Contact David Hartgrove at 788-2630 or at birdman9@earthlink.net so that we can begin selecting teams. Many Thanks!

Audubon Assembly Oct. 14 & 15, 2011

This year's Audubon Assembly will be held in Lake Mary, just a 45 minute drive down I-4. There will be workshops on Florida's Special Places, field trips, a special kick off evening at the Bird of Prey Center on 10/13 and much more. The Orlando Marriott at Lake Mary will be headquarters for the event. There will be special recognition of West Volusia Audubon Society's 50th anniversary. Registration is now open. Check out the information here: <http://audubonoffloridanews.org/?cat=39> Be there or be square.

Conservation Notes

Regular readers of this column know that I've written in the past about Rodman Dam and the Cross Florida Barge Canal. Though this ill conceived project was first proposed by Phillip II of Spain in 1567, no one got serious about it until the 1930's. It wasn't until 1964, when President Johnson pushed a button in Washington symbolically setting off an explosive charge, that construction actually began.

There are three women named Marjorie whose contributions to Florida's history are entwined in its environmental well being too. Marjorie Stoneman Douglas is famous for her crusade to save the Everglades. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings wrote of the state's pioneer beginnings and was instrumental in saving much of the remaining long leaf pine and wire grass prairie habitat. Marjorie Harris Carr was the driving force in saving Florida from the ravages that would have resulted to the state if the Cross Florida Barge Canal had been completed. In 1971, thanks to her tireless efforts and those whom she helped organize, construction was halted. In 1991 the whole project was officially canceled.

Now it appears that there are those who prefer to ignore history, science and the state's environmental well being. In addition to the Port of Jacksonville, the Port of Tampa and the Port of Miami, the state now has a Port of Citrus. Where you might ask would this Port of Citrus be located? In land locked Citrus County of course. On July 12th the Citrus County Commission met for the first time as the Citrus County Port Authority. In an effort to breathe life into the now dead canal, Citrus County believes it can become a transportation hub for the container freight business. At this point the Citrus County Port Authority has declined to hire any employees and it exists essentially on paper only. But in the relaxed regulatory climate we're in now here in Florida who knows what wrong headed scheme will quietly be approved. We'll be keeping an eye on the situation. No doubt the Marjories, all of them, would ask nothing less of us.



Prothonotary Warbler, by Ken Tracey

From the Eco-Voice daily digest (<http://www.eco-voice.org/>) comes news that a 1,000 mile expedition will begin, organized by the "Florida Wildlife Corridor Initiative." The goal is to create awareness of the need to protect and restore connected landscapes down the spine of Florida: The centerpiece of this strategy is the Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition scheduled to launch January 17, 2012, and traverse the Everglades ecosystem into Big Cypress, over to the Everglades Agricultural Area, back to the Okaloacoochee Slough, across the Caloosahatchee, over to Babcock Ranch, back along Fisheating Creek toward Lake Okeechobee, up the Kissimmee River with excursions toward the Lake Wales Ridge, up the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes, east around Orlando into Ocala National Forest, and north along the O2O corridor (Ocala to Osceola) to Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. The trek will cover approximately 1,000 miles over 100 days. The goal: protecting and restoring connected landscapes from the Everglades to Georgia. You might consider learning more about this worthwhile effort at the [website](#). In addition, it's just been learned from Senator Bill Nelson's office that he met with a couple of Cabinet officers a few months ago to argue for conserving ranch lands north of the Everglades as part of the ongoing restoration efforts there. Due to those discussions, the USDA recently announced \$100 million in financial assistance to acquire permanent easements from eligible landowners in four counties and to assist with wetland restoration on nearly 24,000 acres of agricultural land in the Northern Everglades Watershed. This will go hand in hand with the efforts to establish the proposed Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge. It's great news for the state and its environment.

On a sad note, we mourn the loss of Kathy Marsh. Her's was the voice of reason and passion in fighting for the environment. She served as Group Chair and as Conservation Chair of the Volusia/Flagler Sierra Club. Born in Lakeland, her roots in Florida go all the way back to the Minorcan colonists brought over to what became New Smyrna Beach by Doctor Andrew Turnbull. I sat in many meetings with Kathy over the years and often sought her council on issues ranging from water quality to growth management. Along with Lee Bidgood, Conservation Chair of the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, she was instrumental in getting the Tomoka River listed as an Outstanding Florida Waterway. As we face an uncertain future of relaxed growth management rules, Kathy's wise voice and sense of dedication will be sorely missed.

David Hartgrove,
Conservation Chair, HRA

Bald Eagles Will Be Nesting Soon

Official nesting season for Bald Eagles here in Florida is supposed to begin on October 15th. There's an old saying, "The birds don't read the books." So it's not uncommon for the birds to return to long established nest sites in September or even earlier. The pair of Bald Eagles that have nested successfully in Centennial Park, in Holly Hill, have returned. So far they've just been seen at or near the nest tree. Over the next few weeks they'll be working to refurbish the nest and reestablish the pair bond they maintain year after year. Pair bonding is done through elaborate courtship rituals which include truly amazing flight acrobatics. The birds will fly to a great height while appearing to chase one another. Then they lock talons and tumble downward separating at the last moment.

By early October they should have eggs in the nest, at least two, often three. Eggs are laid over several days, and so hatch at different times. The youngest bird often succumbs to nest fratricide when it's denied food by its older siblings. It's a rare event when three youngsters fledge from a nest. Incubation, carried on by both adults, though the female does the majority of it, takes roughly five weeks. The young fledge in two and a half to three months. By the time they leave the nest the young outweigh their parents. Once denied the nutrition the parents have been supplying, it's a tough world for the youngsters. Mortality in their first year is roughly thirty-five percent. Their diet is varied and consists of fish, birds, small mammals and carrion. One of the best places in Volusia County to see them is at the landfill, on Tomoka Farms Road. On a field trip there in January several years ago, I counted 56 in twenty minutes.

Bald Eagles have undergone major population fluctuations over the last two centuries. Early reports by explorers said the birds were abundant all along the eastern seaboard. In Alaska, which continues to host the largest population, the birds were long considered a nuisance and in 1917 a bounty of fifty cents was posted on the birds. In 1949 it was upped to two dollars. Finally, in 1952, federal regulation abolished the bounty system but the slaughter continued. By mid century the population had crashed due to human persecution and reproductive failure. The latter was attributed to the use of the pesticide, DDT. When this substance was banned in 1972, under the Endangered Species Act, the birds began to recover. There are now breeding populations in all but two of the contiguous states, all of the Canadian Provinces, and even in northern Mexico. Florida has the third largest population. Even when seen fighting with gulls over scraps at the landfill, these are spectacular birds. They continue to be an inspiring site wherever we see them.

David Hartgrove



Chapter member, Lori Staudt, took the photo at the right of one of the Bald Eagles which nest near her home in Port Orange. She reports that earlier this year she saw three juveniles in the area and that one had made several attempts at catching its own mullet.

Traveling For Birding Adventures

The Florida Keys Birding and Wildlife Festival will be held from September 21st through the 25th. This coincides with one of the largest raptor migration events in the state, which is held at Curry Hammock State Park, in Marathon. Nationally famous birders, Ken and Kim Kauffman will be keynote speakers. In addition to birding trips, there will be kayaking, bicycling and snorkeling opportunities and presentations on photography and the ecology of the Keys. For more information check out the website: www.keysbirdingfest.org

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