

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

What would January be without New Year's Resolutions? It's a new year, a clean slate, a fresh start. Anything is possible – at least in our minds. And that is, of course, where change has to start. We have to want to make a change and then we have to determine actions necessary to make that change happen. The first two steps are the easy part. It's the following through on the actions that is the difficult bit of the equation. Here are a couple of ideas I'm mulling over as my resolutions. Fortunately for me, in my mind, every day is a new beginning, a clean slate and a fresh start. So if I don't make good on my resolutions today, I can always try again tomorrow.

1. Bring a non-birding friend with me on a field trip and introduce him/her to the joy of being outside, enjoying the natural surroundings and noticing all the wildlife – birds, butterflies, salamanders, bobcats, whatever – as well as the trees, grasses and flowers and how all the species and systems work together to form a habitat. The hope is that number one, my friend will have a good time, but the lasting effect may be that he or she will have a new respect for preserving natural areas.
2. Take a course to learn more about a nature-related topic. Obviously, I have to give a plug here to the Master Naturalist program run by University of Florida. Visit <http://www.masternaturalist.ifas.ufl.edu/> for details about class times and locations. There are workshops at Marineland, Whitney Lab, the Marine Science Center and many other locations, too. Not only are the classes educational, they are fun. And unlike formal schooling, generally speaking there are no tests.

Those are two ideas on my resolutions list. Even if you don't make an actual resolution, I hope that you will find time to join our members on a field trip or at a general meeting in 2012. Best wishes to everyone for good health, happiness, peace and security in 2012. And good birding, too!

Paula Wehr

Calendar, Field Trips, etc.

Our next meeting will be Monday, January 23rd (not the 3rd Monday since that's Martin Luther King Jr's birthday) at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. Socializing begins at 6:30 p.m. The speaker begins at 7:00 p.m. and a brief business meeting follows. The speaker will be our own Chuck Tague. His presentation, entitled "My Life With Owls", promises to be as intriguing as it sounds. Chuck was Education Director of the Pittsburgh Aviary and dealt with owls both at work and home. His extensive experience with these nocturnal hunters, some of which weigh less than 3 ounces, means we're in for a very interesting program.

Friday, 1/13 and Saturday, 1/14 we'll have field trips to Merritt Island NWR. Peggy Yokubonus will be leading the Friday trip. Chuck and Joan Tague will lead the Saturday trip. For both trips we'll meet in the parking lot at the Lowe's in Port Orange, on Dunlawton just east of I-95 at 7:00 am. Bring a lunch and plan on some of the best winter birding Florida has to offer.

Friday, 1/20, we'll be headed off to Marl Bed Flats. This is on part of the St Johns River flood plain and has both hardwood forest tracts and open wet prairie habitats. We meet in the parking lot at the Lowe's in Port Orange, on Dunlawton just east of I-95 at 7:00 am. Bring lunch and maybe we'll see the elusive Wilson's Snipe.

Friday, 1/20, The Southeast Volusia Audubon Society will host a Gull Fly-In at Frank Rendon Park, in Daytona Beach Shores, 2705 S. Atlantic Ave. at 4:00 pm. This site attracts the largest concentration of gulls on the east coast of the country in winter. Michael Brothers, Director of the Marine Science Center, will lead the group in an exercise in gull and tern identification. If you've never been in the field with Michael, this is an your chance to see what a treat that experience can be.

The Reflections II Exhibition, at the Museum of Arts and Sciences will be on display through March 25th. The prices are reasonable if you're not already a member and the first Tuesday in the month is free for Volusia County residents. This is one you don't want to miss.

Conservation Notes

As we start a new year there are a variety of challenges facing us. In the political arena we're faced with a group of candidates trying to get the nomination of the Republican Party for President. At each of the staged debates they seem to be vying for who can sound the least informed on the issues facing our country and the planet. Then there's the Republican controlled Congress, which wanted to hold the entire national budget hostage until the President approved the Keystone XL pipeline.

This billion dollar boondoggle is meant to transport oil obtained from the tar sands of western Alberta down to refineries along the Texas Gulf Coast. One of the many problems with this plan is that the pipeline would cross above the Oglala Aquifer, one of the most important water resource areas in middle America. A recent spill from an existing pipeline in Montana caused major damage into the Yellowstone River. Exxon has apologized.

Alberta's Athabasca River is the 3rd largest watershed in the world and it's being turned into a giant toxic sewer. Tailings ponds line its banks and seep deadly compounds into the river daily. An area the size of the state of Florida has been converted from pristine boreal forest into a moonscape of environmental degradation that's hard to imagine. The technology used to extract the oil from the sands requires vast amounts of water. Water that, once it's been used for this process, is forever contaminated. With an expanding population, the world needs all the water it can get. If your children have parched lips and swollen bellies from lack of adequate water and nutrition, knowing that you can still drive your car isn't much of a consolation. Carried to its extreme, this is the dilemma we're facing if we don't begin to make more rational choices.

In the meantime, President Obama dithers and holds his moistened finger to the wind waiting to see where public opinion will lead on the issue. The problem is that public opinion is manufactured by slick, well funded PR campaigns designed to convince us and our legislators that toxic sludge is good for us and that global climate change is a hoax. Our neighbors to the north are experiencing a problem that we here in the US have seen before: the complete corruption of government regulations for the benefit of oil company stock holders. Here's a link to a You Tube video that puts it all into perspective: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkwoRivP17A>

Al Gore named his award winning documentary, "An Inconvenient Truth." It is inconvenient to have to finally deal with the consequences of 100 years of a hydrocarbon economy. In much the same way that the grass hopper fiddled in Aesop's fable, we have been profligate in our waste of opportunities to adopt a cleaner, more cost efficient life style. The costs of all the environmental damage and health effects aren't factored into the cost of a gallon of gas. But we're paying them none the less. The time is now coming when the choices we've made will be reflected in rising sea levels and catastrophic weather events that will affect food production. Will our great grand children curse us for our inaction and self interest? Or will we finally have the courage to see the truth and recognize its implications? The future of the planet dear friends is in our hands.

Our Christmas Bird Count was a roaring success. Twenty-eight people participated and though I don't yet have all of the data sheets, I know we'll end up with over 110 species. I'll have a complete report next month. Till then, keep watching those birds.

David Hartgrove

Canaveral Marshes and Blue Heron

Water Treatment Facility

A birding field trip is a dynamic thing - always moving and gyrating to the whim of birders, weather and the nature of birds. Never the same. Always exciting - anticipatory.

Our field trip to the Canaveral Marshes and the Blue Heron Water Treatment Facility on December 9, 2011 was uniquely different than any other field trip. It had its own rhythm, always offering unexpected moments. The beginning excitement of one could easily be swapped with the ending excitement of the other.

Our last moments of this field trip were spent watching a flock of twenty-five Black-bellied Whistling Ducks at Blue Heron Water Treatment Facility, secretly hidden from casual viewing. They were feeding in a space between the dike road and the water's edge. A good view of these ducks was accomplished by patiently searching for an opening through high grasses and impenetrable thickets.

Our first stop, heightened by the anticipation of seeing Painted Buntings, was at a home in the Great Outdoors Campgrounds. We parked our cars, quietly exited, focused our spotting scopes on a small plastic feeder attached to a window of the house, and waited. A short while later, the owner came out to inform us that the buntings hadn't appeared all morning and it was the first time they hadn't in six years. We did spot three female buntings near the feeders hidden quietly in green brush. The friendly owner of the house did show us some beautiful photographs of the male bunting at the feeder. He was quiet proud of his Painted Buntings.

On to the library and the trail-head into the marshes. A stop here was very productive with many Tufted Titmice, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Pine Warblers and Carolina Wrens putting on a flitting display in the pine trees. The walk to the marshes was beautiful with serenading birds and natural, visual delights. Our host, Matt Heyden, led a very informative walk into the marshes recalling historical stories and birding updates at the marshes. The water was high in the marshes leading us to observe at the edge, which yielded a flock of Horned grebes, cruising Northern Harriers, gulls, Blue-winged Teal and a Swamp Sparrow. We walked to a turtle mound in a near by wooded area and saw three White Ibis contentedly feeding - a very unusual sighting.

At the Blue Heron Water Treatment facility we were entertained by an American Bittern doing it's best at imitating tall grasses. Listening for Marsh Wren songs and searching for a peek at the elusive wren kept us alert in our drive around the impoundments. All heard the song of the Marsh Wren and some of our members were able to see a few in the brush. A very secretive tiny bird.

Fifty-seven species of birds were counted this day with the highest number of one specie being the American Coot. Eighteen birders enjoyed the perfect birding day and drove back up I-95 very happy.

Ray Scory



Painted Bunting
by
Danny Bales

Audubon Adventures

We are now soliciting sponsors for the classroom sets of Audubon Adventures. If you have been a sponsor in the past you know how important this program is to Volusia County students. For some children it's their first exposure to learning about the environment, wild birds, and other animals.

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.

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.

HRA Welcomes Our New Members

Evelyn Bible, Steve & Mary Blackledge, (who were inadvertently left off last month's list) Jennifer Cash, Sandra Falcon, Laurie Gawriluk, Bob & Frieda Holt, Bill Kappa, Amanda Kowal, Annie Marsh, Katherine H. Millen, Bonnie Powell, and James Valk

We encourage you to join us at our monthly meetings, on one of our excellent field trips and to perhaps consider volunteering to serve on our board.

The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival

One of the year's premier events begins on Wednesday, January 26th. Now is the time to make your plans to attend if you haven't already. This will be the 15th year of the festival and it's the biggest and best organized birding festival in the country. Online registration is open or you can print a registration form from their website to mail in. Some of the best field trip leaders in the country will be here and field trips will fill up fast. So now's the time to make your choices. And there's lots to choose from. In addition to field trips there are work shops on bird identification for beginners and more experienced birders alike, photography work shops taught by some of the best photographers in the country and other activities for history buffs and the non birders in your family. Check out the website for all of the information:

<http://www.spacecoastbirdingandwildlife festival.org>

Experience the Magic of the Dry Tortugas

And do something good for yourself and the environmental organization of your choice. The Dry Tortugas during Spring migration is one of the best birding experiences in Florida. Florida Nature Tours is scheduling a number of trips from Key West to this birding wonderland beginning in April, 2012. FNT will donate \$100.00 to the environmental organization of your choice when you book your trip. Check their website for all of the information: <http://floridanaturetours.net>

Our First Overnight Field Trip of the Season

For our first overnight field trip of the year we're going to the Circle B Bar Preserve, in Polk County, south of Lakeland, on Thursday and Friday, February 23rd and 24th. This promises to be a very good trip. We'll be staying at the Day's Inn & Suites 4502 N. Socrum Loop Road. That's at Exit 33 off I-4. The rate for a double room is \$80.26, including taxes. This was the best rate Peggy Yokubonus, our trip leader, could find and she suggests making your reservation for the night of Feb. 23rd as soon as possible. Call the hotel to make your reservation: 863-683-5095. We'll rendezvous in the parking lot behind the Krystal on Intrn'l Speedway Blvd. east of I-95. This is called International Square Mall, where Michael's, Bed, Bath and Beyond, etc. are located. Meeting time is 8:00 am. This should allow us to drive through Orlando after the morning rush hour.

The Circle B Bar is named for the ranch that used to occupy the property. It was purchased by the Southwest Florida Water Management District in order to protect the water resources on the property. The species list runs to well over 100 and includes Purple Gallinule, Limpkin, and many others: Here's a link to their list: <http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/recreation/species/birds.pdf>

American Swallow-tailed Kites have nested on the property before. The birds return to the US in February. So there's a good chance we'll see this lovely bird while we're there.



American Swallow-tailed Kite

by Joyce Stefanic

Gulf of Mexico Longline Fishing Update

Our chapter has been partnered with the Pew Charitable Trust and its Pew Environmental Group for several years now. Our participation has been limited to signing on to letters to the National Marine Fisheries Service requesting better enforcement of existing laws and mandated limits on those species seriously over fished. We recently received word that the NMFS has now established a policy that will help existing surface longline fishermen to replace their gear with newer, less damaging equipment. This is good news for any number of species. Surface longlines are the cause of death for thousands of birds each year. Surface longlines have long been used to catch yellow-fined tuna and swordfish. These long lines unfortunately are indiscriminate in what they hook. So endangered sharks, birds, and many other species are simply discarded as unwanted "bycatch." The new rules are a step in the right direction.

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