

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

In much of the US, people begin to think about spring in mid to late March. Birds begin gathering on their wintering grounds to head north to areas where they breed. Spring migration is a relatively focused event with few stops and lingering along the route. It's important for each species to arrive early to stake out the best territories.

There are four basic flyways in the US. Florida is part of the Atlantic Flyway, a super highway in the sky! The flyway stretches between the tip of South America and the Arctic Circle. Hundreds of species and millions of individual birds travel between one point to another during any single migration season. The numbers of birds are great enough to be seen on radar equipment. Much of the travel is at night, and the phenomenon lasts for weeks.

In the eastern US, human populations are dense along the flyway. Habitats preferred by birds are prized by humans, too. To resolve this challenge Audubon created the **Atlantic Flyway Initiative (AFI)** to target specific bird habitats within the various habitats along the flyway. The strategy includes working with public and private landowners to restore the high marsh in coastal wetlands, educating people to modify beach use patterns, and doing the bulk of the work within existing critical habitat identified as Important Bird Areas.

For more information about migration conservation, see

<http://conservation.audubon.org/>. Click on the International Alliances Program link, and then click, "Read More."

Paula Wehr

Our March Meeting

Tom Dunkerton presents "Sandpipers, Plovers & Other Shorebirds". Don't miss the fabulous photographs taken by Tom Dunkerton. See up close and personal shots of confusing peeps, waders, shorebirds and more. Members who subscribe to Birdbrains or check the FL rare bird list on the web will recognize Tom from his posts about sightings of unusual birds in Brevard County. Join us at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill on March 19. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Tom's presentation will begin at 7:00 p.m. See you there!

Calendar & Events

Friday, March 9th. Join Chuck & Joan Tague for our first Greater Daytona Beach Big Day. This field trip will begin at the Port Orange Bridge and we will visit some of the best birding spots in the Daytona Beach area in an attempt to see at least 100 species in this blitz effort. Meet at 7:00 am under the bridge.

Friday, March 23rd. We're off to Tosohatchee Preserve, in east Orange County. Bring rubber boots if you have them. At least one spot could be wet. We'll meet at 7:00 am in the parking lot of Lowe's, on Dunlawton Ave., in Port Orange.

Sunday, March 25th. Join Liz Abrams for another of our late afternoon field trips to the Port Orange Bridge. Nesting has already begun on nearby Rookery Island. This is an excellent way to see the activities there. Meet under the bridge at 5:00 pm.

Friday, March 23rd. Join Southeast Volusia Audubon for their trip to Merritt Island NWR. Meet at the Indian River Village Shopping Center, corner of US 1 & SR 442 near the Dunkin Donuts at 7:00 am. More info: call Gail Domroski, 386-428-0447.

Tuesday, March 6th. Join West Volusia Audubon Society for their trip to Orlando Wetlands Park. Call Sylva Parrillo for details: 386-734-4821.

Thursday, March 22nd. Join West Volusia Audubon Society for a cruise on the St Johns River with Blue Heron River Tours. Call Sylva Parrillo for information and reservations: 386-734-4821.

Big News At The Local Paw Paw Chapter of FNPS

The local chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society has had a few changes recently. They have a new meeting spot in South Daytona and they have several field trips and events coming up in March. For updates and to see their new, digital newsletter.

[Click here](#)

If you're looking for an adventure in the mountains, check out the Georgia Mountain Bird Festival, at Unicoi State Park. It's the first weekend in May, 5/3 through 5/6. More information at this website: www.gamtnbirdfest.com

Science Fair Results

On Saturday, February 11, 2012, the Tomoka Regional Science Fair was held at Atlantic High School in Port Orange. As Conservation Chair, I represented the West Volusia Audubon Society, Fred Mosher represented Halifax River Audubon. He was joined by Southeast Volusia Audubon Society President, Don Picard. The following projects were chosen for cash awards by us serving as judges:

1st Place Senior, \$100, Cyrus Jamidar, Spruce Creek High School.

"Traffic's Effect on the Atlantic Ghost Crab"

Cyrus did a census of Ghost Crab burrows in areas both with and without traffic on the beach. He was able to measure a difference with less Ghost Crab presence in the beach driving area. This project assumes that Ghost Crabs are an indicator species of the health of the beach eco-system.

2nd Place Senior, \$50, Tala Saboungi, Spruce Creek High School.

"The Effect of Environmental Pollutants on the Heart Rate of Daphnia Magna"

Tala measured the effect of fertilizer, motor oil and insecticide on "water fleas" by counting the heart beats of these water creatures after they were exposed to the above chemicals. She found that fertilizer affected the creatures the most.

1st Place Junior \$100 Lauren Bautista, Southwestern Middle School.

"The Effect of Oil on Aquatic Plants"

Lauren used a methodical process to measure the production of oxygen by water plants exposed to motor oil. Her study showed that motor oil does impact the vascular system of these water plants even though the leaves may be above the contaminated water. The effect was measured over a time period of just five hours.

2nd Place Junior \$50 Jade Faber, Hinson Middle School

"Does Animal Hair or Feathers Work Best to Naturally Soak Up Oil in an Oil Spill?"

Jade studied the use of hair in the BP oil spill coastal clean up and learned that one mistake was not using booms to prevent hair from floating away once it had soaked up the oil. So she took nylons and made her own booms of down feathers and animal hair, weighing each carefully before putting them into a pan with oil. She found that the hair soaked up and retained more oil than feathers and that it held the oil differently.

We judged across all scientific disciplines, not just environmental sciences. It is interesting to see how many students had done studies using fertilizers and motor oil. I believe this shows an important awareness in our youth of the challenges facing our world. It was inspiring to see so many young folks interested in science. Who knows what path these children will take in their lives and what problems they may help solve.

As it turns out, Fred Mosher met his wife, Karen, when they both participated in his tenth grade science fair. He went over to check out the competition and was fascinated by Karen's dousing rod project. He was busy testing out the dousing rods when she came over and told him to put her project materials back! They both succeeded in moving on to the County Science fair and later, when Fred's date to the Valentine's Day dance was grounded, he invited Karen and they began their lifelong relationship. Who says science isn't romantic?

*Karyn Hoffman, Conservation Chair,
West Volusia Audubon Society*

Conservation Notes

Our state legislature is up to its old tricks again. Not content to have gutted the five water management districts in last year's budget slashing episode, a bill is now moving through the Senate Budget Committee that would turn control of the various districts' budgets over to the legislature. Funded through local tax districts, the appointed boards of the districts have long been able to fund environmental lands acquisition from which we all benefit. These decisions have rankled some in the development community and now that their stooges are more firmly in control than ever, it's get even time. Control the budget and you control the decisions. With the decision making process becoming more politicized, it's bound to lead to more acrimony and just plain dumb choices for our future. One of the main reasons for setting up the water management districts in the first place was to try to assure that water use decisions were as free of politics as possible and based on science. We could debate how successful that strategy has been but it's going to get a lot worse if this bill passes. The Florida Conservation Coalition is already lobbying against this bad bill. Let's hope they're successful in derailing it.

In 2008, EarthJustice, on behalf of several environmental groups, sued the state of Florida for not enforcing the Clean Water Act by refusing to set "numeric nutrient" discharge standards for sewage and fertilizer compounds released into state waters. The state legislature last year said that Florida would ignore limits set by the Environmental Protection Agency and instead passed some useless piece of legislation aimed at preventing enforcement of the stricter federal standards. Now comes word that US District Judge, Robert Hinkle, has ruled that the stricter federal standards must be enforced beginning on March 6th. This will cause a number of state and local agencies to claim that they can't possibly afford to comply with the ruling. The alternative is to continue to poison the water we all need to live. Toxic sludge is bad for us. No matter what they say.

And in another welcome development involving EarthJustice, they have been engaged by the Florida Defenders of the Environment to file suit against the US Forest Service for its continued refusal to remove Rodman Dam. This remnant of the Cross Florida Barge Canal project has turned the once beautiful and wild Oklawaha River into a stump filled sump that is popular with a handful of bass fishermen near Palatka. So far they've been able to prevent removal of the dam. Now that EarthJustice is on the case, let's hope that will change.

David Hartgrove

Can you identify this bird? Answer on page 3

Photo by Phil Graham



A Man Named George

He first came to Florida in 1885. He was 26 years old and had recently begun the practice of law in Pittsburgh. His father was a Supreme Court Justice and he'd graduated from the Yale Law School. So to say that he'd led a charmed life wouldn't be an exaggeration. He first visited the upper peninsula of Michigan when he was 12 and discovered the spot that would eventually become his favorite retreat, on the shore of what he called Whitefish Lake. It's now called Peter White Lake, after his father in law.

George Shiras III, or George Shiras 3d, as he wrote it, was a pioneer naturalist, photographer, writer, lawyer and a one term Congressman, among other things. In 1906 he bought a small cabin on the Halifax River just south of the Ormond Bridge. He traveled all over this state and many others in pursuit of his passion. The first photos ever published in National Geographic were his. It was the beginning of a long relationship with that magazine and its parent organization. Ernest Hemingway once wrote that , "He's about the most interesting man I know." Though I've yet to confirm it, he almost certainly knew and went birding with the founder of our organization, Rupert J Longstreet.

In his short time in Congress he wrote and tried to get enacted the legislation that later became the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. He knew at the time that he didn't have the votes to get it passed. But he also knew that such monumental legislation often has a number of fathers on its way to enactment and he was prescient enough to see that he was uniquely positioned to get the ball rolling. It only took another 13 years to get the Act passed. He counted Teddy Roosevelt among his friends and wrote of traveling down river with him to Pelican Island NWR. The nation's first wildlife refuge and proclaimed as such by Roosevelt.

When he was getting started in photography the use of flash powder was the only way to illuminate scenes. It smoked a lot, made a loud bang and scared small children. So no one had ever thought of using it to take photos of wildlife. He did. He used a canoe to glide silently up near his quarry. He devised a method of using two flashes, one to startle the animal, another to actually take the picture as it quickly ran away. He also rigged up cameras with trip wires and remote controlled shutters. None of this had been tried before he did it. His neighbors in Ormond Beach would hear the explosions and see the flashes at night in the woods near his home. The next day they'd ask what he'd caught in that magic box.

I like to think that I'm pretty knowledgeable about nature and nature writing. So why had I never heard of this man? Time helps erase the memories and new comers in the field have their accomplishments, the news of which replaces the old. Now someone has decided to remedy the fact that George Shiras has disappeared from our collective memory. James McCommons, an Assistant Professor of English at Northern Michigan University, is writing a book about George Shiras 3d. He contacted Paula Wehr and asked if there was anyone in our chapter who might be able to shed some light on the places where George went birding. She arranged for him to meet up with Meret Wilson, Chuck Tague, Charles DuToit and me. Meret, Chuck and I took him to a number of spots locally to go birding. Charley was able to give him a lot of historical background, especially on Tomoka State Park. When the book is published it'll be an excellent read on a man who gave much to the birding world.

David Hartgrove

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.

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>

We Welcome Our New Members

We welcome our new members this month: Gloria Appell, Dian Disantis, Larry Fable, Teresa Jewell, Brian Lawlor, James Moore and Sharon Westlake. We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting or field trip.

Bird Quiz Answer, etc.

So, did the color fool you on our quiz bird? Or did you look at those greenish yellow legs and the bi-colored bill and say to yourself, "That's an immature Little Blue Heron." If so, you're correct. Below is a species we saw on our recent field trip to the Orlando Wetlands. He's way out of his normal range. This little beauty is a Vermillion Flycatcher and it can take your breath away. Our thanks to Chuck Tague for the photo.



A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors

Florida Power & Light, The Ormond Beach Garden Club and Colonial Colony

Contact Our Board Members

Office	Name	Home Phone	E-Mail
President	Paula Wehr	673-5332	paulawehr@cfl.rr.com
Vice President	Rachel Ramsey	673-1037	gmamimi@cfl.rr.com
Vice President	John Roessler	255-9826	birdman3651@bellsouth.net
Treasurer	Susan Jarosik	676-0056 (ofc)	sjarosik@plantationrealtyservices.com
Corresponding Sec.	Karen Mosher	322-3790	frederickmosher@att.net
Recording Sec.	Peggy Yokubonus	673-7619	pyokubonus@cfl.rr.com
Membership Sec.	John Carr	255-9360	jcarr14@cfl.rr.com
Historian	John Carr	255-9360	jcarr14@cfl.rr.com
Past President	David Hartgrove	788-2630	birdman9@earthlink.net
At Large 2012	Karen Moser	322-3790	frederickmosher@att.net
At Large 2012	Holly Zwart-Duryea	672-8788	hollis1000@aol.com
At Large 2013	Willie Burns	253-2150	wwillie@juno.com
At Large 2013	Becky Schubert	386-447-8916	bschub@earthlink.net
At Large 2014	Renate Calero	761-8179	renate_c@hotmail.com
At Large 2014	Marion Monaghan	760-2747	nautilus411@aol.com

Committee Members

Committee	Name	Home Phone	E-Mail
Conservation	David Hartgrove	788-2630	birdman9@earthlink.net
Education	Marion Monaghan	760-2747	nautilus411@aol.com
	Holly Zwart-Duryea	672-8788	hollis1000@aol.com
Field Trips	Chuck Tague	412-841-8813	kingrail@mac.com
	Joan Tague	253-1166	babyowl@mac.com
Newsletter Editor	David Hartgrove	788-2630	birdman9@earthlink.net or hrapelican11@earthlink.net
Welcome	Jari Arbogast	761-2283	arbofish@att.net
	Celine Sullivan	257-1980	celinesul@aol.com
Webmaster	Paula Wehr	673-5332	paulawehr@cfl.rr.com