

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

Birdbrains, the USF website where bird sightings are posted continues to detail where hardy birders are seeing unusual, rare or infrequent visitors to Florida. It's normal to be disappointed after driving to a distant location (or even a nearby locale) and not find your target bird. Until, that is, you realize that the search is equally important.

We went to Wekiwa Springs State Park at the end of May because a singing male Scarlet Tanager had been spotted on three separate days. A Short-tailed Hawk was also photographed flying overhead. Unfortunately, we didn't see the Scarlet Tanager, but we had the good fortune to watch a singing Summer Tanager sit out in the open on a snag and preen in the sunlight. We could see the yellow feathers under the red on his breast. The bird was so close we didn't need binoculars to make the ID. We never found the Short-tailed Hawk, but because we looked at **every** bird soaring overhead, we had a magnificent view of a Red-tailed Hawk as he turned and soared in the sunlight, highlighting his red tail. We saw more Eastern Towhees that morning than I've seen in the past year. Three Red-headed Woodpeckers flashed by and began working on the bark of a dead snag. Completely unconcerned with our presence, they went about their daily routine while giving us time to study their field marks, silhouette, flight pattern and activities.

At the end of a hot and sweaty morning, we hadn't seen either of our target birds, but the trip was a great success. My two friends and I enjoyed our conversation during the travel time, we shared a few laughs and we had the opportunity to observe our beautiful feathered friends. It doesn't get much better than that.

Paula Wehr

REMINDER, NO MONTHLY MEETING

There is no general membership meeting in July or August. We are currently scheduling speakers for September through June.

Our Field Trip Co-Chairs, Chuck and Joan Tague are currently compiling a list of potential field trips for next season. If you have any suggestions, please forward them to Joan at babyowl@mac.com or by phone at 386-253-1166.

Meet Our Chapter Volunteers

This is the first in a series of articles to introduce some of our chapter's volunteers. Without them we couldn't exist.

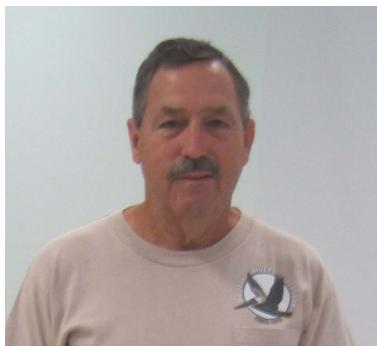
Jari (Welcome Committee) and Tom (Equipment Manager) Arbogast have held HRA volunteer positions for the past several years. Jari sits at the Welcome Desk right inside the door to our meeting room in Sica Hall. She and Celine Sullivan (who will be featured in an upcoming newsletter) greet everyone as they enter, ensure that everyone signs in, answer questions from members and visitors alike and introduce visitors and guests to other members. Tom works behind the scenes, setting up the screen, projector and microphone for our speakers. He sets up the HRA signs directing attendees to the meeting room and handles the lights during the presentation.

Tom moved to Daytona Beach in 1952 from the St. Louis area and worked as a residential and commercial electrician. He retired five and a half years ago. Jari is a native Floridian, living her entire life in the Daytona Beach area. Before retiring shortly after Tom, she worked in retail sales. When they are not volunteering with HRA or their church, Tom enjoys fishing and Jari knits prayer shawls, decorates their home and tends three flower gardens.

About fifteen years ago, Tom read an article in the newspaper about a Bald Eagle falling from the sky and wondered about why the bird died. Coincidentally, Linda White from the Birds of Prey Center was giving a local talk at that time, so he and Jari attended the meeting to get information. Tom has been a member of Eagle Watch ever since and has monitored numerous Bald Eagle nests in the greater Daytona Beach area.

Both Jari and Tom enhance the quality of our meetings. Be sure to thank them when you see them around town or at an upcoming meeting.

Paula Wehr



Tom Arbogast



Jari Arbogast

Conservation Notes

The dictionary defines "perpetuity" as, "the state or quality of lasting forever." Apparently the governor and his merry band of mischief makers have been reading a different dictionary. The thousands of acres of conservation lands that have been purchased by the St Johns River Water Management District for the protection of our drinking water supplies and for recreation were supposed to held in conservation "in perpetuity." They have been placed in a sort of legal limbo by official edict from the governor's office. The District has been ordered to inventory all of its land holdings for possible listing as surplus. Those tracts listed as surplus would then be sold off to the highest bidder. If you're thinking that this idea stinks to high heaven, you're not alone. Our County Council feels the same way and unanimously rejected the plan when it was presented to them by Robert Christianson, Director of Operations and Land Resources for the SJRWMD recently. They sent a 4 page letter to the District outlining why this is a bad idea.

Apparently, some of the governor's Tea Party supporters subscribe to a theory that the acquisition of lands for conservation by government entities is part of a clandestine United Nations plot to turn our country into a socialist nation. This ludicrous notion would be laughable if not for the fact that state policy is supposedly being made in response to it. Perhaps it is. It could also be that some of the governor's heavy weight campaign contributors have designs on some lands that they'd like to see turned into yet another housing development and this silly United Nations story is cover for their dreams of quick profits at the expense of the tax payers. If this sounds like I'm the one with the paranoid fantasies, think back ten years to when the guy in Flagler tried to grab off half of North Peninsula State Park for a seaside golf course and condo development. A lot of people are keeping an eye on this. There will be a public meeting held here in the county on this plan, though it hasn't been scheduled yet. We'll let you know when it is so you can show up and register your thoughts on the issue.

In another negative development, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge has chosen to close Shiloh Marsh Road. The only entrance into MINWR in Volusia County, Shiloh Marsh Road is one of the best winter shore bird sites in North America. Loss of access to this excellent spot denies all of us easy access, though it is still possible to walk in. What about those with limited mobility? I spoke with Refuge Manager, Ralph Lloyd, about this issue. He apologized for the inconvenience and said that there's little he can do at this time. As usual, the problem comes down to money. With a Congress more concerned about maintaining tax breaks for millionaires than about whether or not kids have good school lunches, it's no wonder that this refuge, like all of the others around the country, is severely under funded. The hurricanes in 2003 and several storms since have done major damage to the dikes. It's essential to maintain the dikes for the benefit of the wildlife that depend on the fluctuating water levels offered in the impoundments. Anyone who's driven the road before its closure knows that it wasn't in good shape. Those with high clearance vehicles could, with a lot of bouncing around, make it to the road's end. That bouncing around was doing serious damage to the dikes themselves. So in order to protect the integrity of the dike, the road was closed. When and if funding becomes available, the road can be reopened. So it's up to us to help that happen. Call or write your Congress person and ask for expanded funding for our wildlife refuges. It's something important you can do.

David Hartgrove

"Coastal Wings" Opening in Flagler Beach

Palm Coast photographer, Charlie Badalati, will present a one man show of beautiful bird photos at Ocean Books & Art, 200 South Oceanshore Boulevard, in Flagler Beach. Located across from the Flagler Beach Pier, Ocean Books & Art will be providing light refreshments at the opening reception on Friday, August 3rd from 5:30 to 8:30 pm. Mr. Badalati has won numerous awards for his photographic work and has taught classes at the Flagler Art League. For further information, contact Sandi Sitesat: sandi@oceanpublishing.org

Our Chapter Welcomes Our New Members

Barbara Crittenden, Robert J. Hanson, Gaylen Phillip Harms, Kelly Hunt, Joyce M. Parks, Sherrie Wentworth and Martha Wirkutis. We hope to see you at a meeting or on a field trip when they resume in September.

Wading Birds At Indigo Lakes

Former Education Chair and long time member, Glade Koch, lives in Indigo Lakes, a development north of International Speedway Boulevard, west of Williamson Boulevard. She called President, Paula Wehr, recently to announce that she'd discovered a wading bird roost on the Indigo Lakes Golf Course. Each evening large numbers of non breeding herons and egrets fly in to roost for the night. Indigo Lakes Golf Course is located at 312 Indigo Drive. Enter Indigo Lakes on Indigo Drive South, which pulls west off Williamson Boulevard just north of Bayless Boulevard. The roost is easily viewed from an area adjacent to the golf course. For the photographers among us, this might be a new spot for photo opportunities. Call Glade at 386-253-8438 for directions.



This young Eastern Screech Owl is mentioned in the article on the next page. Photo by Chuck Tague.

This first appeared in *The Peregrine*, the newsletter of Pittsburgh's Three Rivers Bird Club.

Birding In A Snow Globe

At Magee Marsh, in northwestern Ohio, we could not escape the airborne fluff from cottonwood trees nor the Warbling Vireo's song -- *If I could see ya I would seize ya and squeeze ya til ya SQUIRT!* This was especially true as we walked along the Estuary Trail that follows the dike from the parking area to Crane Creek. Lake Erie's waves splashed on the other side of the trees. Rustling cottonwood leaves sounded like flowing water. There were only a handful of small clouds in a sky too blue for northwest Ohio in May. Yellow Warblers chased across the trail. A Tennessee Warbler sang, so did a Black-throated Green Warbler and an Indigo Bunting. A catbird scolded us and an American Lady butterfly glided between us. Wispy spheroids of cottony fluff drifted slowly, barely over our heads while the vireo sang continuously.

We passed three large cottonwoods and another Warbling Vireo greeted us. *If I could see ya I would seize ya and squeeze ya til ya SQUIRT!* I was with Monica Miller, my butterflying companion. It was her first visit to the self-proclaimed "Warbler Capitol of the World" and her senses were overwhelmed. She noted it was like walking through a snow globe that someone had just shaken.

The trail was an overload of stimulation, but it was also an affirmation of spring's regenerative power: singing songbirds, fluttering butterflies, cotton-covered tree-seeds floating by -- peaceful, tranquil, an idyllic spring scene -- then the screech owl called.

It whinnied, trilled and whined repeatedly, each call more plaintive. I searched for several minutes until something moved near the top of a thick cottonwood snag. There was an owlet, a down-covered screecher, standing in a notch where the crown had snapped off. The notch had once been the entrance to a woodpecker's cavity. The owlet's gray down blended perfectly with the sun-bleached wood.

We watched the youngster call for ten minutes until its eyes grew heavy. It turned and waddled into the hollow. A Tree Swallow with a mouthful of fuzz flew into a woodpecker hole lower on the snag. More fluff, loaded with cottonwood seeds, floated by.

I first encountered cottonwood trees, and the annual fuzz storm, in the 1980's on the eastern shore of Lake Erie. Then I birded Presque Isle State Park in Erie County, PA almost weekly. On the side of the peninsula that faces Erie Bay the cottonwoods' straight, furrowed trunks towered fifty feet or more beneath wide, spreading crowns. Some of the trunks were four feet or more in diameter. Many were dead. Their branches long fallen, the barkless, bleached trunks stood like stone pillars. Great Horned Owls nested in the hollow tops. Smaller cottonwoods grew along the trail to Gull Point, the eastern tip of the Presque Isle. These ranged from lines of medium trees to saplings on the edge of cattail marshes. Their size decreased sequentially; the largest at the trailhead and the smallest closest to Gull Point's tip.

Cottonwood seeds only germinate on wet sand, in full sun without competition from other plants. They sprout after floods along midwestern rivers and in freshly deposited sand on the Great Lakes shores. On Gull Point the cottonwood's role in shaping the topography of Presque Isle, indeed the existence of the peninsula, was evident. The sand and

gravel flats where Erie Bay met Lake Erie were open and windswept with very little vegetation. Some depressions were kidney-shaped but most were long, narrow and parallel to the bayshore. They varied in depth from puddles to waist-deep ponds. A bristly margin of foot-high cottonwood seedlings surrounded each depression. These germinated from seeds carried to the pools on wind-blown fluff. According to Otto Jennings in *Wildflowers of Western Pennsylvania and the Upper Ohio Basin*: ". . . the cottony seeds stick to wet sand around the recently formed beach pools and lagoons where they quickly germinate. As the trees grow they accumulate drifting sand about them, thus form dunes and sand ridges."

I'd return to the main trail and circle the thickets and ridges to the parking area at Beach 10. Progressively the dunes got higher, the cattails thicker and the cottonwoods taller, as if I were traveling through time. In fact I was. Near the end of the trail rows of well-formed trees replaced the thickets; the cattail marshes became bayberry swamps. Across the main park road were more, and progressively higher, ridges. Between each was a pond, an alder thicket or a cattail marsh. Oaks replaced cottonwoods on the older, higher sand ridges. Cottonwoods do not live long. Their life is seldom longer than a century.

Geologically, both Presque Isle and the lake shore near Magee Marsh are very young. Eastern Cottonwood, *Populus deltoides*, is the fastest growing tree in North America. It can grow four to five feet during a good year and, according to Donald Culross Peattie, in *The Natural History of Trees*, may reach fifty feet at the age of fifteen years and a diameter of two yards when it's fifty.

At Magee Marsh, the next morning Monica and I returned to the Estuary Trail. We watched a Warbling Vireo extract a mouthful of spider silk from a dead cottonwood's bark. The owlet was not visible in the snag but the Tree Swallow stood guard from the top. A Warbling Vireo carried fluff to a cottonwood branch over the trail. Its nest and its tail feathers were well-concealed among the triangular leaves.

The male vireo sang, *If I could see ya I would seize ya and squeeze ya til ya SQUIRT!* A sudden fluff blizzard squalled around as if someone had vigorously shaken the snow globe. How many cottonwood seeds spun around us? Thousands? Millions? Would one land on fresh wet sand?

Chuck Tague



Warbling Vireo, by Chuck Tague

Drought Relief Comes At A Cost

When Tropical Storm Debby was forming in the Gulf of Mexico I thought it would a good thing for the state's long drought. While it was a short term solution to our water problems, it also caused serious flooding near Live Oak and wiped out ground nesting shorebird colonies all along the Gulf Coast. A Black Skimmer colony on Long Boat Key was one site lost. Lou Newman, a photographer who lives in Sarasota, was on the beach shortly after a storm surge from Debby washed over the beach front colony. Hundreds of eggs and chicks were washed out to sea and many others were deposited in the high tide wrack line where they were quickly devoured by Laughing Gulls, Royal Terns and others. Only four chicks were seen to make it up the beach to where the adult skimmers were standing in the lee of a building. Black Skimmers are notorious for their habit of abandoning their eggs and chicks. In spite of the evidence we had here locally a few years ago with the skimmer pair that were found on the beach, "Homer and Marge." They proved to be tenacious at defending little "Bart."

Lou, and Gail Straight, who runs Wildlife, Inc. on Anna Maria Island, were able to rescue 32 of the chicks and take them to her rehab facility. Their plan was to return them to the beach and their parents as soon as the threats from Debby passed. But things didn't work out that way. They learned that the adults will not accept chicks, apparently even their own, after such colony disturbance. So now the chicks will be held at Wildlife, Inc. until they're able to forage for themselves. Black Skimmers are listed as a "Species of Special Concern", the lowest rung on the ladder of protected species designations. Based on the information so far, perhaps half of Florida's Black Skimmer nests were wiped out by the storm. Let's hope they have a better luck next year.

David Hartgrove

Below and right are some of Lou's photos of the Black Skimmer colony at Long Boat Key



Chicks and eggs trapped in the foam and debris at the high tide wrack line.



This little guy made it and was later rescued.



A typical scene in the colony the day before the storm.



A Royal Tern is part of nature's plan, capitalizing on the destruction of the colony.

A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors

**Florida Power & Light, Garden Club of the Halifax Country,
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