

The Pelican

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

Vol. 58-No.5 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
November, 2011



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Thoughts from on High

With no children in the school system and my teacher-husband being retired for nine years, it was easy for me to feel less and less hopeful about our public education system. Newspaper headlines, TV reports, idle conversations at the grocery store – together they made me believe that education was in a decline. That's why I was so glad that teachers from Ormond Beach Elementary School who use Audubon Adventures kits agreed to speak with our members at our October 15 meeting. If these teachers and the students they described are typical of classrooms throughout our state and nation, then public education is alive and well.

The enthusiastic and articulate teachers told us how they use Audubon Adventures in their 4th grade classrooms and brought samples of student posters, reports and projects. Audubon Adventures kits are coordinated with the core competencies for the grade. Students read the articles together in groups (reading skills), they write reports (grammar & comprehension skills) and present their reports to other students in the classroom (oral presentation skills.) Teachers use words from the stories to tie into vocabulary lessons. After students read the articles, they complete suggested projects, and finally cut photos from the used issues to create posters & reports. The AA materials are used over and over until they are literally used up. What more fitting end could there be than to have Audubon sponsored material completely recycled!

Last year the fourth grade students planted a butterfly garden and became mentors to first grade students during weekly walks through the butterfly garden to watch the plants grow, look for caterpillars, explain metamorphosis, find chrysalises and follow the butterflies. Students used math skills to measure and cut wood to make birdhouses. Painting and decorating the houses was part of the art curriculum and lastly installing a birdhouse on school grounds allowed bird identification.

It was wonderful to know how far a \$45 donation goes to provide environmental education to our children. Hopefully, they will discuss what they learned with their families and we'll have a sustainable crop of new Audubon members into the future.

Paula Wehr

Calendar and Events

HRA Monthly Meeting, Monday, 11/19, The differences between birds and all other animals have evolved for one activity, flight. In fact, birds are the ultimate flying machines. Every aspect of a bird—its physical structure, its behavior, its lifestyle—are influenced by flight. HRA member and Naturalist, Chuck Tague, explores the adaptations that enable birds to escape the restrictions of earth-bound creatures and the benefits this ability bestows on them. We meet at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. The presentation begins at 7:00 followed by a brief business meeting.

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Chapter Field Trips

Friday, 11/09, Join us for the first of two field trips to Merritt Island NWR. We'll meet in the Target parking lot east of I-95 on Dunlawton Ave. at 7:00 am. Bring lunch. This trip involves very little walking but lots of great birds! Questions: Call David Hartgrove, 386-788-2630

Saturday, 11/10, Join us for the 2nd of two field trips to Merritt Island NWR. We'll meet in the Target parking lot east of I-95 on Dunlawton Ave. at 7:00 am. Bring lunch. This trip involves very little walking but lots of great birds! Questions: Call Peggy Yokubonus, 386-673-7619

Friday, 11/16, The daily liftoff of the birds on Rookery Island is a sight to behold. And that's just what you're invited to do with Ken & Patsy Hunter. Meet beneath the west side of the Port Orange Bridge at 6:30 am. Perhaps we'll head off for breakfast later?

Wed. & Thurs., 11/28 & 29, Our first of the season overnight trip. For more information, see the article on page 2.

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Another Opportunity

Saturday, 11/13 Join West Volusia Audubon Society for a trip to Lake Apopka. Harry Robinson, who literally wrote the book on Lake Apopka birds, will be leading the trip. Meet them at the DeLand Post Office, 336 East New York Ave. (SR 44) at 8:00 am and bring a lunch. Questions, call Harry, 386-943-8342.

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The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival

The festival is the largest in the country and has excellent field trips, exhibits and vendors. Click [here](#) for the link to their website. Online registration will open soon and field trips will fill up fast. Once again, headquarters for the festival will be Brevard Community College in Titusville, just 45 minutes away. Greg Miller, whose exploits were the basis for the movie, "The Big Year" will be one of the keynote speakers. See you there!

Conservation Notes

Having just returned from a pleasant vacation in Hawaii, I was hoping this could be a relatively benign column. The forces of darkness have other ideas though. There are two serious threats to two of our most treasured birding spots: Merritt Island NWR and the Lake Apopka Restoration Area.

No doubt many of you saw the recent article by Dinah Voyles-Pulver in the News-Journal about the plans a shady group calling itself "Space Florida" has for a portion of the refuge. In 2008, NASA set conservation and fishing groups aflame with news that they needed to grab off part of the refuge for a new launch facility. That turned out to be a bit of a red herring and after some intergovernmental conferences, it died down. Now this Space Florida comes along trying to get the Department of Transportation to give them 150 acres of what they've convinced our Lieutenant Governor, Jennifer Carroll, is "surplus property." She was inveigled upon to write letters to Transportation Secretary, Ray LaHood and NASA Administrator, Charles Bolden on the group's behalf asking that the land be given to the state. A couple of problems jump out here to me. First, the refuge is managed by the Interior Department, not Transportation. Second, it's obvious to anyone who's ever seen Kennedy Space Center that 150 acres is in no way sufficient for a viable launch complex. So this is disingenuous at best. This is a foot in the door before the real land grab necessary for a commercial space facility. In the meantime, NASA and the Canaveral Air Force Station have existing launch facilities rusting away for lack of use. Space Florida's lame explanation that they need new land not subject to government oversight is ludicrous. Anyone who thinks that NASA and the Defense Department aren't going to know, in advance, every detail of any launch from US territory is living in a dream world.

Of course, this is being couched as a jobs vs. the environment issue. No doubt we need the good paying jobs that this venture could potentially supply. When NASA was running full steam and the space program was humming, many of the workers lived here in Volusia County. So utilizing the existing facilities at either Kennedy Space Center or Canaveral Air Force Station would easily fill this imagined need for more launch capability and offer good jobs to our residents too. The last thing we need to do is begin wrecking one of the major ecotourism destinations in our area for some pie in the sky dream by Space Florida.

The other area under threat is the north shore of the Lake Apopka Restoration Area. It's another case of unnecessary planned construction. In this case, a private jet port. The fact that there are several other airports nearby that can handle the traffic means nothing to the boosters of this boondoggle. In order to make their project work they need some marginal land now owned by the St Johns River Water Management District. It just so happens that this acreage is shown on the latest SJRWMD maps as "potential surplus." This idea of listing conservation lands as surplus is the brain child of our Governor and his clique of slash and burn henchmen who apparently see wrecking decades of conservation work as their mandate. The real problem here is the idea of placing an airport adjacent to an area with the highest bird species count anywhere in the state. If completed, the airport would be operated under the rules of the FAA. They would insist on doing everything possible to remove the threat of bird strikes to aircraft taking off and landing. So what could be one of the nation's newest national wildlife refuges (that's been proposed) could end up being ruined as a birding destination.

David Hartgrove

Traveling The Way It Used To Be

A Cruise on The St Johns River

There are still a few spots available for our overnight outing on November 28 & 29, 2012. We will be taking a leisurely trip down the St Johns River with Blue Heron RiverTours on the MV "Great Blue", exploring the river from the area of the Hontoon Dead River to the southern entrance of Lake George.

Day One: We will leave the dock from Hontoon Landing at 8:30AM. After touring the area of the Dead River, we will disembark midday for self-packed picnic lunches and take an optional short hike at Hontoon Landing State Park. We will continue North down river in the afternoon to the Castaways and our evening destination.

Day Two: After continental breakfast, we will continue North through a section of the Ocala National Forest into Lake George. Here we will see the pilings of the old Volusia Bar Lighthouse and the structures that guide boats through the channel into Lake George. After birding at this fascinating location, we will turn south, stopping in Astor for a lunch at the Blackwater Inn and finally turn for home. Price per person is \$195. For more information, please contact Joan Tague, Field Trip Chair.

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Audubon Adventures

Audubon Adventures is a wonderful program that helps engage kids in the natural world around them. Created by the National Audubon Society, each kit contains four different editions of the award-winning Audubon Adventures Student Nature News Magazine. 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!

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We Welcome Our New Members

Our new members this month are: Nadine Bagwell, Sandra Firth, Debra Kuhnly, James Mackey, Marjory Monat, Florencia Morais, Shirley Orme, Gil & Sue Rushton, Earl Stutzman-Miller, Maria Sugia, The Williamson Family, Kay Wood, Elizabeth Woods, and Carole Wylie. We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting or field trip.

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Kitty Cams Document The Avian Carnage

A recent study by a team of researchers from the University of Georgia has shown that the damage done by house cats is even more widespread than originally thought. Using "crittercams" developed by the National Geographic Society, the researchers recorded the activities of ordinary house cats wearing special cameras around their necks. The cats averaged killing 2.5 animals per week, 13% of them birds. They averaged bringing home just 25% of their kills. Based on this study, the American Bird Conservancy estimates that house cats kill 500 million birds per year. Click on this [link](#) to read more of the story. Many folks have cats as pets and consider them members of the family. If at all possible, please keep those cats indoors. They'll be safer from fast cars, snakes, coyotes and bobcats and Great Horned Owls. And our dwindling bird populations will have one less threat to their existence.

David Hartgrove

Meet Our Volunteers

Karen Mosher, Corresponding Secretary and At-Large Board Member, has been active with our chapter for the better part of a decade. She was born in Pennsylvania, lived in Florida until the age of 4 and grew up in southern Maryland. She and her husband, Fred, attended rival high schools. Fred's science fair was over but he went Karen's



school to scout out the competition – winners from the two schools went on to the County Fair. Fred was interested in Karen's project about dowsing rods (at least that's his excuse,) and he asked her out. They dated throughout high school and college. They married and moved north where Fred completed his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin. A stretch in the US Army took them to Arizona and later to Missouri for a job. They moved to Port Orange in 2004 when Fred accepted a position as Associate Professor at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. Karen and Fred have been birders since the early 90's when they started a life list. Karen said they selected Audubon because they like the people in the chapter who are knowledgeable and helpful with bird identification. She enjoys the programs and the environmental consciousness. She and Fred have two daughters and three grandchildren. She loves quilting and has been creating quilts and sewing since age 11 or 12. She belongs to three quilting / fiber arts groups and is also a voracious reader. Be sure to say hello to Karen at an upcoming meeting and thank her for her service to our chapter.

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Osprey, The Ultimate Fisherman

Ospreys are truly incredible at catching fish. They have the longest, sharpest talons of any of the birds of prey and the skin on the inside of their feet is like very rough sandpaper. Click this [link](#) to see just how good they are. Enjoy!

Looking For Proof of Migration?

Michael Brothers was out on Disappearing Island, in Ponce Inlet, doing a shorebird survey when he captured the following 2 photos.



Photos by Michael Brothers

They're Black Scoters, a species that nests along the western shore of Alaska and in northern Ontario, just south of the Arctic Circle. Along the east coast they usually winter from Maine to Rhode Island. However each year a few are seen in Florida. In fresh water they primarily eat insects, larva and some plant matter. In salt water, where they're usually see here, they feed at depths of up to 30 feet on mollusks and shell fish.

And some old friends are back down at Orlando Wetlands Park. A Pair of Vermillion Flycatchers has returned to the area to winter for the second year. Breeding in southern California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, they usually go to Mexico for the winter.



Vermillion Flycatcher

(C) Reinhard G

Photo by Reinhard Geisler

A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors

**Florida Power & Light, Garden Club of the Halifax Country,
The Ormond Beach Garden Club and Colonial Colony**

Our mailing address is PO Box 166 Daytona Beach, FL 32115-0166

Our website is www.halifaxriveras.org For information on upcoming field trips, etc.

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