

The Pelican

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

Vol. 58-No.6 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
December, 2012



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Thoughts from on High

“Because Conservation Doesn’t Have a Party” is the motto of the American Eagle Compact, a campaign initiated by National Audubon. Between Labor Day and Election Day, more than 100,000 people across the country signed the American Eagle Compact online demonstrating that we are one nation when it comes to conserving natural resources in the United States. But that was just the beginning.

Now we need to translate our shared vision into an action plan. National Audubon will deliver the Compact with a full list of signers to President Obama and key leaders in the House and Senate in early January. Audubon is developing a bipartisan conservation agenda for 2013 to address specific issues like climate change, energy independence and public land conservation. This plan will be presented shortly after the inauguration on January 20.

It is exciting to think about like-minded citizens across our nation focusing on large-scale environmental issues. Please consider joining forces with your neighbors across the street and people you haven’t met in different states to effect lasting change. If you haven’t already signed the pledge, go to the [American Eagle Compact homepage](#) and fill in the form. Visit the [Eagle’s Nest Blog](#) to read what others are thinking and doing.

Lastly, best wishes for a happy holiday season and a prosperous new year.

Paula Wehr

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A Mouthful of Holiday Cheer



Photo by Jerry Kirshner

Calendar and Events

Monday, 12/17, Our next chapter meeting will feature “Unusual Stories of the Everglades”, presented by James “Zach” Zacharias, Senior Curator of History and Education at the Museum of Arts and Sciences. Learn how people lived, worked and died in the Everglades, America’s largest wetlands. Unusual stories emerging from this wilderness show the determination of the human spirit. Hear about building the Tamiami Trail, Al Capone’s hideout, the Third Seminole War, the 117-year old “Hermit of Panther Island,” the secret nuclear launch base and other fascinating tales of life in the Everglades. Join us at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. **COOKIES!** And now that we have your attention... Since this is our holiday season meeting, if you’d like to bring a plate of cookies to share that would be fine. The chapter will provide hot and cold beverages.

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Field Trips and Fun

Friday, 12/7, Join us for a trip to Viera Wetlands. This site, west of Melbourne, has been great in the past and promises to be an excellent trip for waterfowl, shorebirds and Crested Caracara. There’s very little walking on this trip. So pack a lunch and join us at the parking lot of the Target, east of I-95 on Dunlawton, in Port Orange at 7:00 am. Questions? Call David Hartgrove, 386-788-2630.

Christmas Bird Counts Are Everywhere

There are two other CBC’s here in Volusia County and more in other parts of the state. And participation is now free. The long standing 5.00 charge is no longer collected. Here’s a [link](#) to the other CBC’s around the state, compliments of our friends at the Florida Ornithological Society. Information on ours and the others here locally is as follows:

Saturday, 12/15 The West Volusia CBC. Contact David Stock at dstock@stetson.edu or Harry Robinson 386-943-8342. They have more Red-headed Woodpeckers over on that side of the county.

Saturday, 12/22 Our Daytona Beach CBC will meet at the Publix at Granada and Williamson, in Ormond Beach, at 7:00 am and be an all day affair, followed by our traditional dinner at the Royal Dynasty Chinese Restaurant. If you’re only available part of the day, that’s fine, we’ll get you back to your car. Questions or to register, please call David Hartgrove, 386-788-2630.

Saturday, 12/29 The Ponce Inlet CBC, sponsored by Southeast Volusia Audubon Society covers the area from the Inlet to the Landfill and everything in between. Contact Don Picard - president@sevolusiaaudubon.org Dinner follows at Bella Napoli.

Conservation Notes

In last month's column I mentioned two issues which are of vital importance: Space Florida's plan to grab off part of Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and a proposal to sell a portion of the Lake Apopka North Shore Restoration Area. An area that "coincidentally" is needed so a nearby airport can extend its runway for private jets. The vote by the board of SJRWMD is scheduled for Dec. 11th in Palatka.

The existing runway at the Long & Scott Farms property is 4,445 feet long. However, 1,455 feet of that lies in Lake County. The Lake County Commission just put a monkey wrench in the plans by voting in two zoning amendments. The first prohibits the property owners from extending the runway into Lake County. The second states that if the property owners extend the runway on the Orange County side, the zoning on the land in Lake County will be changed from private airport to agriculture only. This strengthens our position of preventing the airport's expansion at the expense of what could be our next national wildlife refuge. We will still be at the SJRWMD meeting in Palatka, as we were at the meetings held here and in Orange County.

I attended the recent Space Coast Audubon meeting down in Rockledge. It was a packed house that night and there were presentations by Space Florida, Charles Lee, of Audubon Florida, and Clay Henderson, who (though he's a past President of the old Florida Audubon Society) was speaking as an attorney familiar with the issues. Space Florida made their pitch and outlined why they think they're entitled to get 150 acres of prime Refuge property. The audience listened politely and then tore into the spokesmen. It was pointed out that since Space Florida has put a bid in to also take over the existing Shuttle landing strip, (which is being sold off by NASA) they should keep all of their project inside the existing fences at NASA and leave the Refuge alone. The analysis provided by both Charles Lee and Clay Henderson made numerous points on why the Space Florida proposal is potentially illegal and fraught with legal problems involving title to the property. MINWR was created in a fashion unlike any other refuge in the system. After acquiring 140,000 acres of land, water and marshes in 1962, NASA signed an agreement the following year establishing the Refuge. In 1975 a second agreement established Canaveral National Seashore. The enabling agreements provide for NASA to be able to reassert its authority over any or all of the Refuge. Essentially, it's going to take an act of Congress to allow Space Florida to take possession of any Refuge property. If that's the case, let the Congress give them some of NASA's unused property and leave the Refuge alone. We continue to monitor this situation.

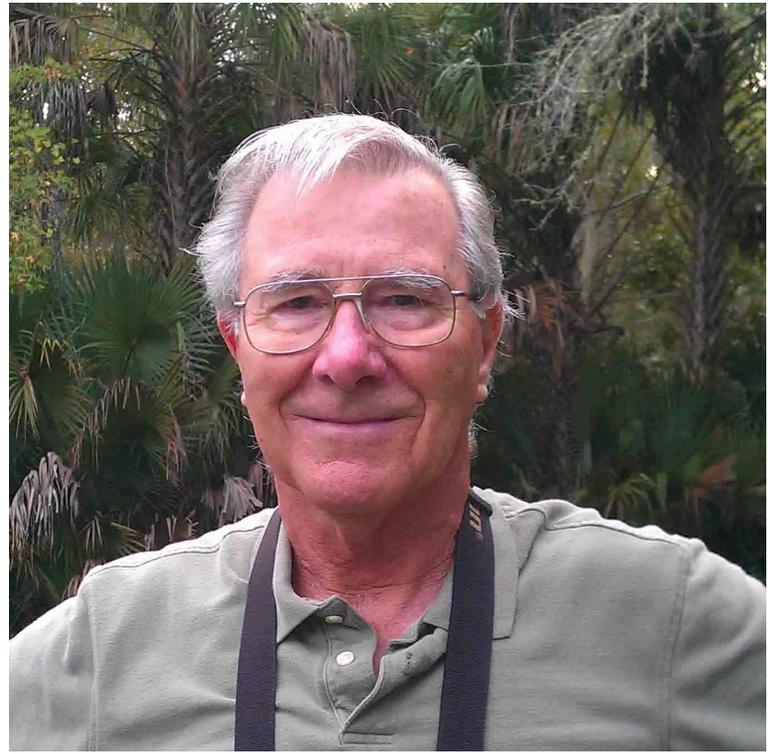
Finally, one of the best things you can do for the future of Florida is to sign Florida's Water and Land Legacy petition. This proposed amendment will guarantee that 1/3 of the funds collected from documentary tax stamps shall go to conservation. There's more information [here](#). Look for us at local libraries, various events and of course at our chapter meetings.

David Hartgrove

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Birds of Paradise

The number of birds whose courtship displays inspire awe and amazement are numerous. The various birds of paradise outdo them all. Here's a [link](#) from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology that proves just how stunning they are. Enjoy!



MEET OUR CHAPTER VOLUNTEER

Bob North compiles our chapter field trip data so it can be posted on our website. He creates individual species lists for each trip and compiles all the data onto one spreadsheet for easy review and analysis.

Bob was born in York, England. At eighteen, he joined the RAF and served four years as an engine mechanic, working on aircraft in 81 Squadron. He now maintains the squadron's website [here](#). Following discharge, he earned his degree in Mechanical Engineering and took a job with Ford Motor Company in England. After coming to the US, he joined Ford Tractor in Troy, Michigan where he worked until retirement. That's when he and his wife, Pam, sold their home and traveled the east and west coasts of the US in an RV for the next six years. Bob has been active with Audubon for many years, serving as President of the Citrus County chapter and Field Trip Chair for both Citrus and Halifax River chapters.

Bob and Pam have two children, six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Be sure to say 'thanks' to Bob when you see him on a field trip or at our monthly meetings.

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We Welcome Our New Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new members: Nancy Beville, Evelyn K. Eubank, Harriet Foster, Pat Grimes, Robert Jarboe, Leo & Linda Johnson, Brian Lawlor, Phil Mastin, Jr., Stewart & Evelyn Pinsof, Karen Powell, Judith Schwarzenbacher Wilma Wagner, Robert White, and Lynn Wright. We hope to see you all at a meeting or on one of our field trips.

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The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival

The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival (Jan 23rd thru the 28th) is the largest birding festival in the country. Click on their [website](#) to see all of the fantastic opportunities for field trips, classes on birding skills and photography. Get up close and personal with raptors when you visit the Raptor Project in the exhibition hall at BCC's Titusville campus. DON'T MISS THIS!!

Common Yellowthroat

An Uncommon Bird

Lynn Bowen is a member of West Volusia Audubon Society and has a regular column in the DeLand Beacon. This piece was posted Nov. 18th and appears here by permission.

An energetic, elusive female Common Yellowthroat kept flying and flitting about in the tall grass and weeds at Lake Woodruff NWR in October. She's 5 inches long, has a 6.75-inch wingspan, and weighs only .35 of an ounce. She has a black bill and pink legs, her upper part has olive-brown feathers, and her underside is pale yellow. Yellowthroats are very common, yet not easy to see, because they live in wet thickets and damp brushy places in marshes and swamps and near streams, but not in forests. In the winter, they live in the southern U.S. and south to Central America, but not in desert areas. In the summer, they live as far north as the Yukon.

Common Yellowthroats are songbirds whose usual melody is a loud, high-pitched, three-part "wee-chee-tee, wee-chee-tee." These petite birds eat moths, beetles, spiders, grasshoppers, grubs, ants, plant lice, butterfly larvae, and seeds. They are not strong fliers, but easily dart among reeds and weeds searching for food from sunrise to sunset. When breeding time comes, the female builds a cup like nest in low growths of vegetation just 3 or 4 inches from the ground. The male helps to find dead grass, weed stems, dead leaves and ferns with which his mate will construct the nest. The inside is lined with delicate fibers of bark and, often, with hair.

These wise little feathered friends are very careful about their nests and never fly directly to or from them. They fly to the ground and walk to their nest and then leave the same way, so predators can't find it. If a predator, such as a snake, opossum, raccoon, hawk, owl or person, does come close, the yellowthroat silently jumps out of the nest and creeps away. Yellowthroats are quite successful at making their nests next to impossible to find. The female lays three to five eggs, and incubates them for 12 days. When the eggs hatch, the helpless chicks grow quite fast, and are able to leave the nest in only eight to 10 days. Both parents care for them and help feed them for a few weeks; then they're on their own.

Lynn Bowen



Female Common Yellow-throat
photo by Chuck Tague

More Birding Opportunities

Orlando Wetlands, in east Orange County, is holding its annual birding festival on Saturday, Feb. 16th, 2013. Click [here](#) for all the details.

And Further Afield

Florida Nature Tours has scheduled 3 trips to the Dry Tortugas beginning on April 11, 2013. These will depart from Fort Meyers Beach aboard the very comfortable "Ultimate Getaway." Cost is 1100.00 and birding doesn't get any better than the Dry Tortugas in April. Check the website [here](#) for all the details.

How about a trip to see some African birds? Ken Gunn and Tad Fyock, from Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, are putting together a trip to Kenya. The trip dates are March 13 to April 1st. Cost is 6500.00/7000.00, plus airfare. Depending on how many hot air balloon trips they take flying over the herds of migrating African mammals. Contact Tad at 386-426-8793 or Ken at 386-423-2334. Just imagine your life list after this once in a lifetime trip!

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"Snowbirds" Wintering Here In Florida

Below are 2 photos of birds only seen here in Florida in Winter.



Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Photo by Dennis O'Neil*



Purple Sandpiper *photo by Phillip Simmons*

Ruby-crowned Kinglets spend some of their time in Florida eating poison ivy berries, which are rich in fat. This Purple Sandpiper was photographed on the north jetty at Ponce Inlet.

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.halifaxrivers.org For information on upcoming field trips, etc.

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 2015	Karen Moser	322-3790	frederickmosher@att.net
At Large 2015	Holly Zwart-Duryea	672-8788	hollis1000@aol.com
At Large 2013	Willie Burns	386-405-4468	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
Bird ID Class	Ray Scory	763-4260	colors@cfl.rr.com
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