

The Pelican

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

Vol. 58-No.7 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
January, 2013



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Thoughts from on High

Early in December, Michael Brothers posted this message on [BRDBRAIN](#), the online site to report bird sightings in Florida. "This afternoon, 12/7, the Marine Science Center received an immature Razorbill into our bird hospital. The bird was found washed up on the beach in New Smyrna Beach, Volusia County. What a totally cool bird to have alive in the hand!" Little did Michael know that birders from all over the state would be reporting Razorbill sightings over the next 10-12 days. By mid-December, Razorbills had been found on the gulf coast, in St. John's, Brevard and Volusia Counties and as far south as Miami and Ft. Meyers. [All About Birds](#), The Cornell Lab of Ornithology website, says "...the Razorbill can be found offshore in winter as far south as New Jersey, and occasionally Virginia." Razorbills are not normally expected here in central Florida.

There has been speculation that this irruption is caused by the lingering effects of Super Storm Sandy – perhaps a decline in food supply. Or maybe this is one of nature's mysteries. Some irruptions occur almost on schedule and others happen once in a decade or even once in a century. In any event, be sure to take your scope with you when you travel to the beach and be on the lookout for what is surely a "life bird" for many of us.

The Razorbill, *Alca torda*, is a 17-inch, handsome sea bird which lives in the icy waters of the north Atlantic and breeds on the steep cliffs and rock crevices in coastal Scotland, France, Norway, Canada and Maine. They have deep bills and long, pointed tails. Their heads are relatively large on top of thick necks. In flight, their bodies look streamlined showing black above and clean white below.

Visit [what-when-how](#) for more information on Razorbills and to see gorgeous photos of this pelagic species.

HAPPY NEW YEAR to everyone!

Paula Wehr

Ed. Note: In 2002 our chapter took a 10 day trip to the Canadian Maritimes. While there we went out to Machias Seal Island, off the coast of New Brunswick, to see the colonial nesting birds there. Though Atlantic Puffins were what most of us went to see, Razorbills made quite an impression too. The inside of the adult's mouth is yellow, **really** yellow. Like the yellow on a Yellow-throated Warbler. They too nest in crevices between large rocks. They return from the sea with their crops full of fish for the young. The puffins arrive with their fish (mostly anchovies) neatly lined up along the outer edges of those gaudily colored bills.

Calendar & Events

Date Change!! Just a reminder, our regular chapter meeting will be on the 4th Monday, January 28th, due to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday holiday.

"Birding Humor"... Peer intently into your binoculars, cup your hands over your ears to strain to hear a distant chip note or song, search your memory as to the differences between a Greater and Lesser Scaup. Phew! Sometimes birding becomes really intense. Don Chalfant, retired educator and active naturalist, takes a slightly different approach as he discusses the light-hearted side of bird identification. You'll surely recognize someone you know (or maybe yourself) as Don talks about habits, eccentricities and foibles of birders. Join us at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill when the doors open at 6:30 p.m. The presentation begins at 7:00 p.m, followed by a brief business meeting.

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HRA Field Trips

January will be a busy month for field trips for us

Friday, 1/11, Lake Apopka. Meet at International Square, behind the Krystal on Int'l Speedway Blvd., east of I-95 at 6:30 am. For information, call Chuck & Joan Tague, 386-253-1166

Friday & Saturday, 1/18 & 1/19 This is the single best time to visit Merritt Island NWR since all of the migrant waterfowl are here now. On both mornings we'll meet at the Target auxiliary parking lot on Dunlawton, east of I-95, in Port Orange. Friday's trip will be lead by David Hartgrove. Call 386-788-2630 for info. Saturday's trip will be lead by Chuck & Joan Tague. For info call 386-253-1166.

Friday, 1/25, An evening hike at Tomoka State Park. Meet Chuck & Joan Tague at the park's camp store at 5:30 pm and discover what's out there in the dark. Low tide and a near full moon offer a chance to see the elusive Black Rail, along with several owl species. If the temperatures cooperate, Chuck may be able to lure in a variety of moths for an identification class on them too. This is sure to be a fun event.

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Wednesday, 1/23 thru Monday, 1/28, The 16th annual Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival, the largest festival of its kind in the country, will again be hosted at Brevard Community College, in north Titusville. Just half an hour south of us, the festival has all kinds of birding related exhibits, exciting field trips, all of the major optical manufacturers and up close and personal experiences with hawks and owls at the Raptor Project. Click [here](#) for all the information. See you there!

Conservation Notes

As the New Year begins let's take a minute to review some of the challenges we worked on over the past year and look ahead to some of those we'll be involved with in 2013.

We signed on to a letter in a campaign organized by the Pew Research Center seeking catch limits on menhaden. This tiny fish is one of the cornerstone species in the food web of the entire Atlantic Ocean. Overfishing for cat food and fertilizer threatened to wipe out the species entirely. Millions of seabirds depend on this species for survival, as do game and commercial fisheries. On Dec. 14th the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission announced regulations that should protect the species well into the future.

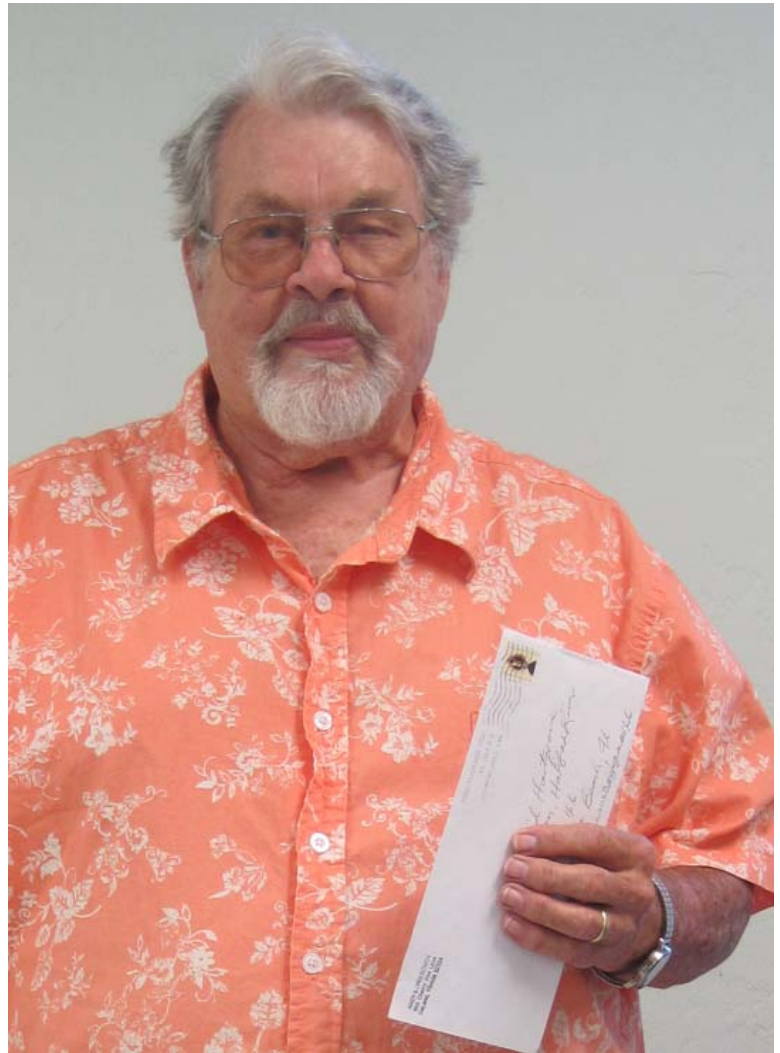
Progress is slow but steady on the proposal to establish our newest national wildlife refuge at Lake Apopka. In last month's Pelican I wrote about the St Johns River Water Management District's Governing Board voting on the possible surplussing of 594 acres along the northern border of the property at the Lake Apopka North Shore Restoration Area. The Board listened to the concerns of the 20+ people who spoke in opposition to the sale of this property since it would facilitate a planned expansion of a nearby airport. They voted to adopt a motion made by Board Member, Richard Hamman, that places a restriction on any land to be surplus and sold. The restriction states that, "future use of the property may not be incompatible with the conservation uses on the remaining land." This restriction may end up being challenged in court but it's a step in the right direction. We continue to monitor the situation.

Also in last month's Pelican I mentioned the plan to grab off part of Merritt Island NWR for a new, private, space launch facility. In a recent article in the News-Journal, District 3 Councilwoman Elect, Deborah Denys, praised the project as a positive step in getting Volusia County's economy revived. She met with the President of Space Florida, Frank DiBello. At the December meeting of Space Coast Audubon, he tried to paint a rosy picture of what could be done if his company were allowed to steal 150 acres of prime Refuge land for this venture. The fact that there are plenty of existing facilities at Kennedy Space Center going unused was glossed over. The main reason they want to build new launch facilities outside NASA's property is because those facilities at KSC are under the aegis NASA's safety regulations. These are far stricter than what they would operate under at a new facility. Those would be under the guidelines set out by the Federal Aviation Authority, whose experience with space launch safety and that of the nearby public is far less comprehensive. There's a reason NASA likes to have a considerable safety buffer zone between its launch facilities and residential neighborhoods. The chemicals in solid fuel rockets are extremely hazardous and could, in the event of an accident, kill hundreds, if not thousands. Somehow I doubt this point was brought up in Ms. Denys's meeting with Space Florida.

The Governor and his staff of misfits has been rearranging things to suit their friends in the polluting industries of the state. The Department of Environmental Protection handed out pink slips to 58 long time employees just in time for Christmas. We can't have those pesky inspectors going around finding leaky pipes that threaten the public health. The new DEP Secretary has staffed his office with people who've spent their entire working lives advocating for the state's worst polluters. It's James Watt and the Reagan Interior department all over again. When will they learn that profits at the cost of public health won't be tolerated?

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Meet Our Chapter Volunteer, John Carr



John Carr is something of a fixture at HRA meetings – he is always one of the first people to arrive, he knows almost everyone who comes through the door and he has been active with the chapter about as long as any current members can remember. He holds the elected office of Membership Secretary, with the thankless job of sorting through all the data to know how many official members are in our chapter and when their memberships expire. He also holds the elected office of Historian and is tasked with keeping records of chapter activities. Together with his wife, Fran, who was Newsletter Editor for about 14 years, they teamed up to create, edit, proofread and mail 500 to 600 paper newsletters each and every month until we changed to the electronic newsletter in 2011. In his spare time, John is also the chapter's unofficial mailman. He picks up the US mail from our PO box twice a month and brings it to our meetings.

Fran and John moved to Daytona Beach in 1996 from Harkers Island, N.C. Prior to retiring, John worked as a microbiologist at a Veteran's Hospital in N.C. They have been married for nearly 60 years and have three children.

When you see John at an upcoming meeting, be sure to say hello and thank him for all he does for our chapter. And don't be surprised if he has an amusing anecdote to tell you relating to whatever topic you may be discussing. His memory is legendary, and I think that most of his tales are true!

Paula Wehr

Finally, there's a move afoot to open Tiger Bay State Forest to off road vehicles. The wildlife out there isn't stressed enough and mixing people on horses with noisy ATV's is such a safe idea. So let's open the place up to dirt bikes and ATV's. It's hard to imagine a more destructive decision. This didn't stop the Daytona Beach City Commission from endorsing this lunacy at its meeting on October 3rd. And apparently several of our County Council members think this is a fine idea too. The Blue Ribbon Coalition, which states on its website that it's "Preserving our natural resources **FOR** the public instead of **FROM** the public" is helping push the issue. This national group is dedicated to opening all public lands to off road vehicles. It should come as no surprise that this "astroturf" grass roots group is funded primarily by off road vehicle manufacturers. Imagine standing in a pristine forest trying to listen to the soft and high pitched song of Cedar Waxwings over the high revolution whine of a 250 cc Suzuki with no muffler. 2013 is shaping up to be an interesting time.

David Hartgrove

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We Welcome Our New Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new members: Sophie Citrowske, Alicia Dana, Harry M. Demontmolin, Sharon Donohue, Joe Dowding, Marion Jacobsen, Doris C. Keene, Jeffery M. Kim, Jerry C. Krietzburg, Wilton Lisk, Kathlene Lowery, Carolyn Ricks, Genieveve Schwarz, Raymond Shaw, John W. Sheirich, Lucy Sroka, Terry Strickhouser, Lani Van Petten, Adam D. Warren, and Helen Whalen. We hope to see you soon at a meeting or on one of our great field trips.

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Travel and Birding Opportunities

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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Audubon Adventures For Our Local Schools

Audubon Adventures is a wonderful program that helps engage kids in the natural world around them. Ranked as one of the most popular environmental education curricula in the country, Audubon Adventures is perfect for anyone looking for supplemental science activities for upper elementary students. See the link [here](#) for more information.

Donations from members fund this program. 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!

Communication Towers and Birds

Every year, approximately 7 million birds die from collisions with communication towers in North America. In July, 2012, the Federal Aviation Administration proposed changes to tower lights requirements that will reduce impacts on migratory birds. The American Bird Conservancy, working with other environmental organizations like Defenders of Wildlife and National Audubon, spent 10 years researching possible solutions to the problem with those in the communications industry, federal agencies, and tower erectors. The Federal Communications Commission licenses towers. The lighting requirements are set by the Federal Aviation Administration. While all involved expressed concern for the levels of bird mortality, the primary concern was for aviation safety. Old habits die hard. The old style, red, incandescent lights that slowly pulsed from on to off had been doing a good job of warning pilots away from the structures for decades. Research into the problem showed that this type of light proved the most attractive to migrating birds. They can become disoriented in fog or rain at night when most birds migrate and collisions occur.

Finally, science and research prevailed and the outcome is good for all concerned. The new tower lights requirements that were approved by the FAA are less expensive, reduce tower energy costs, reduce tower maintenance costs and, most importantly, reduces bird collisions by a whopping 70%! Michigan State University was heavily involved in the research and has a [website](#) that offers lots more information.

David Hartgrove



Green Heron photo by Ray Scory

Green Herons, *Butorides virescens* (this one was photographed at MINWR) can be a difficult bird to find, especially when you're trying to find one to add to your list on a bird count. Old time names for the bird included "Green Bittern", "Poke" and my favorite, "Fly-up-the Creek." They are solitary feeders, often staking out a spot near flowing water and waiting patiently while frozen in place for fish to swim by. They have also been seen to use bait, like a feather or small twig dropped onto the surface of the water, to lure fish in closer. Its diet consists mostly of fish but like its larger cousins it will eat anything it can swallow. Unlike the other herons and egrets Green Herons tend to be solitary nesters, rather than in colonies. The male selects the nest site and begins construction. The female does the final work and incubation is done by both birds for about 3 weeks. At around 2 weeks of age the young begin climbing around the nest area and they fledge at just over 3 weeks. Two broods per year are not uncommon here in Florida.

David Hartgrove

A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors

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

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

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