

The Pelican

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

Vol. 58-No.11 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon May, 2013



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Thoughts from on High

May. The days grow longer, the nights grow warmer, the air grows heavier with humidity. Especially after these long months of drought, we central Floridians are hoping for the rainy season to begin.

Our local amphibians rely on the coming summer rains to fill the swamps and lowlands in order to continue their species. We humans look forward to the nighttime chorus of tiny frogs. In southeastern Pennsylvania, I knew that warmer weather was on the way when I turned onto the narrow two-lane road leading to my home and heard the spring “peepers.” Almost as soon as the ice melted, these tiny frogs began their nightly calling to attract a mate.

Although the volume made it seem that the ground must have been covered in layers of teeny frogs, in actuality the sounds dramatically underrepresented the numbers of frogs because only the males sing. Females and immature males are almost mute. Male frogs sing to attract a mate because it is the safest way to avoid predators. Displaying individually, as many other species do, would be very risky. Individual voices within the large chorus are more difficult for predators to locate and the combined volume carries farther to distant females. Mother Nature and the frogs apparently have thought this through very carefully as they continue to reproduce at an astonishing rate.

Frogs are also excellent natural barometers, reacting to changes in humidity. As rain approaches, some frogs celebrate by calling loudly even in the daytime. By the time the first few drops begin to fall, their frenzied calling reaches a pitch akin to the wild cheering at an international soccer match.

Let's keep our ears attuned to frog calls and document whether they are more accurate at predicting the weather than our local TV meteorologists.

Paula Wehr

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Welcome to Our New Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new members and some who were members in the past and have renewed their affiliation: Eugene Coe, Eleanor Cohan, Patti Gloekler, Wallace Gowett, ? Haig (obviously missing a first name here), William Kisbany, Richard Mabbott, Tom Massfeller, Nan Mather, Robert McCullan, Sharon McKelvey, Mary Jo Mercier, Joan Miller, Ohri Kul, Richard Peterson, Bruce Pyle, Barbara Scarcella, Dee Townsend and Janet Weibolt. We hope to see you all at a meeting or on one of our excellent field trips.

Calendar & Events

Monday, May 20th Program Meeting, Spiders – the Original Web Masters. Hairy and scary? Or furry and friendly? At the May 20 meeting, retired park ranger Linda Chandler invites you to explore the world of spiders, useful and interesting creatures which, whether we see them or not, are all around us. She will introduce you to some of Florida’s common spiders, their anatomy, habits and skills, and perhaps also dispel some myths. Joins us at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Linda’s presentation begins at 7:00 p.m.

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Field Trips

Saturday, May 11th Originally this was to be the Spring Migration Count. However, for a variety of reasons, this count is no longer being done. So we're off to the St Augustine Alligator Farm, one of the best places in Florida to photograph wading birds on the nest. We'll meet at Ormond Towne Square shopping center at Granada & Williamson Blvds., near the Publix and Chick Filet, at 7:30 am. Please bring exact change of 16.07 for the entrance fee. This is a significant savings off the regular price of 22.95 and is made available to us if we have at least 10 people going. Questions? Call David Hartgrove, 386-788-2630.

Saturday, May 18th Join West Volusia Audubon Society for a trip to Merritt Island NWR. Meet up at the NE corner of the Deland Post Office parking lot, 336 E. New York Ave., at 8:00 AM to arrange car pool. Drivers should receive \$4 from each passenger for this trip. There may be an extra charge for Blackpoint Drive. This is an all day trip so bring lunch and snacks to last. Questions, call Harry Robinson, 386-943-8342.

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Refresh your birding skills or learn new ones

Three class workshops, three field workshops. Click [here](#) for details and the application.

Conservation Notes

The Legislature in Tallahassee has almost completed their session and two of the worst bills filed were tabled in committee. SB 584 would have forced the state to sell off land equal to any it proposed purchasing. So if we wanted a new state park, we'd have to sell an existing one. This ill conceived piece of legislation was the brain child of Senator Alan Hays and was designed to limit any government agency, state or local, from purchasing land for conservation purposes. An avalanche of phone calls and e-mails to the members of the Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee convinced them that this was a bad idea and hopefully it won't see action on the Senate floor this session.

The other bad bill to die in committee, at least for now, was SB 1320. This one was designed to facilitate the spread of feral cat colonies. Why anyone would consider this a good idea is beyond me. Feral cats kill roughly 3 billion birds every year and they have been implicated in the extinction of 33 species of birds worldwide. Either of these bad bills could still suddenly be resurrected through the chicanery that takes place in the last 48 hours of every legislative session. Let's hope that doesn't happen.

From the "Birding Community E-Bulletin" comes news that 2 men have been convicted of killing endangered Whooping Cranes. In Texas, a 42-year-old man shot a juvenile Whooping Crane in January after mistaking it for a Sandhill Crane. He pleaded guilty on 6 March to one count of violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and was fined \$5,000, ordered to make a \$10,000 community service payment to the Friends of Aransas and Matagorda Island National Wildlife Refuges, and placed on probation for one year. In South Dakota, a man was sentenced in February for shooting an adult Whooping Crane in April of last year. The 26-year-old man was ordered to pay \$85,000 in restitution, placed on probation for two years, had his hunting rifle confiscated, and lost his hunting rights anywhere in the U.S. for two years.

Finally, the American Bird Conservancy has a list of ten things you can do to help birds in your yard this Spring. Check out the link [here](#) for all the information.

David Hartgrove

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Hummingbirds At Home Has Fledged!

Audubon's first all-digital, mobile citizen science program will build a continent-wide network of citizen scientists to help uncover how hummingbirds are affected by climate change. Using a mobile-optimized web portal and smartphone apps, people from across the U.S. can report their hummingbird sightings using their computer or smartphone. The data collected will guide Audubon in devising actions to help hummingbirds thrive despite climate change and other threats. Click on this [link](#) to the website for all of the information. There are videos, apps for smart phones, etc. All of this is designed to help you help those marvels of avian architecture.

Paula Wehr



MEET OUR CHAPTER VOLUNTEERS

Susan Jarosik

Susan holds the position of chapter Treasurer, responsible for tracking all our income, expenses and investments.

She was born in Iowa and moved around to several states during her childhood before ending up at Loyola University in New Orleans where she earned a BA in Communications. After graduation she moved to Florida with friends. She worked in advertising for a radio station and two different magazines. Most of her career, however, has been spent in real estate sales. She and her husband, Tom, currently own and operate Plantation Realty Services.

Her dad always liked birds and kept his binoculars handy so he could watch birds in the backyard or at the feeders. In 2007 Susan traveled to the Amazon with chapter member and friend, Ann Collins. Seeing all the exotic birds on that trip piqued her interest and she began birding in earnest when she returned to Florida.

In her limited time off from work, Susan loves to travel, read, cook and socialize. She looks forward to the day when she can spend more time birding. She has fantastic eyes and can spot movement at good distances. She can see the bird clearly, but what is difficult, she says, is quickly sorting through all the possibilities in her head to select the correct species. Don't we all have that problem!

We thank Susan for all she does to ensure the success of our chapter.

Chapter Field Trip Co-Chair, Chuck Tague, has a [blog](#) where his excellent writing informs his readers on a variety of natural subjects. In December of last year he wrote of Piping Plovers. Our thanks for his permission to include a portion here. Editor.

Piping Plovers

A genuinely rare bird

The sea air was warm yet crisp; the wind calm. A shadow appeared to float ahead of the waves as the surf rolled gently across the sand. With my binoculars I saw it was a Piping Plover, a shorebird that resembles a sand-colored tennis ball with short, orange legs and a pigeon's beak. A white collar circled its neck.

The plover's legs scissored frantically to stay ahead of the water. When the surf retreated, the plover stopped and waited as a wet, glass-like film formed across the beach. The bird skidded onto the wet sand then stopped abruptly. It extended its right foot, tapped rapidly on the beach, tilted its head slightly, hopped forward three steps and tapped again.

I watched the plover for five or six minutes. It pecked the sand a dozen times or so, but if it caught anything it was too small for me to see. Something spooked the gulls and terns loafing a short distance away. They circled and when they landed the plover was gone.

There are three distinct breeding populations of Piping Plovers. Those that nest on the Atlantic coast from North Carolina to Newfoundland are listed as threatened, as are the plovers that breed in the midwestern prairies. The endangered population around the Great Lakes declined drastically during the Twentieth Century. Historically Piping Plovers bred in all the Great Lake states and provinces. Several pairs nested on Presque Isle in Erie County through the late nineteen-fifties. Their breeding range is now limited to northern Lake Michigan. The plover's main threats are habitats lost to coastal development and disturbance by beach-loving humans. In 1986 there were only 17 breeding pairs in the Great Lakes region. By 2011 there were 54 pairs. Because their population is so small, nest predators -- raccoons, snakes, gulls, dogs and feral cats -- have a disproportionate effect and the nests require constant monitoring and protection. Although conservation efforts have increased the Great Lake population the plovers have a long way to go before they are no longer endangered. Piping Plovers are not unusual along Florida's Atlantic coast, but I seldom see more than a few at a time. Birds from all three populations migrate to the Gulf and the southern Atlantic coasts and mix freely during the winter. I wondered where the bird with pattering feet came from.

On October 27th, 2012, Hurricane Sandy passed by Daytona Beach on her way to the shores of the northeast US coast. I met my friends, Ken & Patsy Hunter, for a walk along the wind swept Ponce Inlet shoreline. Among the birds we saw was a Piping Plover sporting several colored bands and a red flag on the bird's left tibia. I carefully noted the color combination and sent it off to the bird banding clearing house in Patuxent, MD. They forwarded the information to the bander, Alice Van Zoeren. She sent the following reply: *Thank you for taking the time to report your sighting of a Piping Plover from the Great Lakes population. The plover you saw and photographed was hatched in 2009 on North Manitou Island in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore and banded as an adult last summer (2012) at Gulliver, MI along the north shore of Lake Michigan in the upper peninsula.*

It was from one of the Great Lakes plovers on its fourth journey to Florida -- a rare bird indeed.

Chuck Tague



Lunar high tide & Hurricane Sandy's waves over wash the Ponce Inlet Jetty



From the Upper Peninsula to a Ponce Inlet beach. A long flight for a truly rare bird.

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

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