

The Pelican

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

Vol. 59-No.2 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon August, 2013



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Thoughts From On High

If you've never watched a meteor shower, you have missed a magical display which was not produced by the Disney Corporation, although there are times when it looks as though it may have been. One of the few good memories I have of living in the frozen north was sitting neck deep in 102°F water in our hot tub on the back patio watching stars 'shoot' across the dark winter sky. We were lucky enough to live in a relatively dark area, free of ambient lights from street lamps and commercial buildings.

Our next opportunity to view a meteor shower will be after midnight on August 11 and 12. A meteor shower is a spike in the number of meteors that streak through the night sky.

"Most showers are spawned by comets. As a comet orbits the sun, it sheds an icy, dusty, debris stream along its orbit. If Earth travels through this stream, we will see a meteor shower. Although the meteors can appear anywhere in the sky, if you trace their paths, the meteors in each shower appear to rain into the sky from the same region. "Most showers are named for the constellation that coincides with this region in the sky, a spot known as the radiant. For instance, the radiant for the Leonid meteor shower is in the constellation Leo. The Perseid meteor shower is so named because meteors appear to fall from a point in the constellation Perseus." *1

The meteors we'll see on August 11 and 12 are coming from the Perseus constellation which lies in the northern sky. Ptolemy, a Greek astronomer, first catalogued the constellation in the second century and named it for Perseus, a hero in [Greek mythology](#). Follow the link to read the full story of Perseus.

Mark your calendar now to take your beach chair or blanket, find a dark spot and look up into the sky to watch this yearly summer light show.

Paula Wehr



Calendar & Events

First, a reminder, we have no meeting this month. Our next regular meeting will be Monday, Sept. 16th, at Sica Hall.

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Volusia County Land Management: Hiking, biking and eco buggy tours. Join long time local naturalist, Bonnie Cary, for any or all of the following **free** events:

Aug. 7th, 9:00 am to 11:00am, Longleaf Pine Preserve Eco-buggy Tour. Take an eco-buggy tour of Longleaf Pine Preserve. Participants will experience pine flatwoods, cypress domes and swamps on a riding tour with exploratory stops along the way. This trip requires advanced reservations. See info below.

Aug. 10th, 9:00 am to 11:00 am, Hike a beautiful 1 mile trail in Doris Leeper Spruce Creek Preserve

Aug. 16th, 9:00 am to 11:00 am, Take an eco-buggy tour of Deep Creek Preserve and learn about the forestry, agricultural history, and plant communities that make up this 8,000 acre site. This trip too requires advanced reservations.

Aug. 17th, 8:00 am to 10:00 am, Take a guided hike around Lyonia Preserve, where Scrub Jays flourish. Participants can tour the Lyonia Environmental Learning Center afterward.

Aug. 29th, 9:00 am to 11:00 am, Bicycle the newly opened first segment of the East Central Florida Rail Trail and experience the natural world along the way. Participants will bicycle the multi-use paved trail approximately 5.7 miles from Green Spring Park to State Rd. 415 then return (11.4 miles total). All ages and abilities are welcome. Bike helmets are required. Please register.

Aug. 31st, 9:00 am to 11:00 am, Hike the trail along Lake George through several plant communities and learn about the flora and fauna of the site.

To register for one or more of these activities and to learn more about the "where and what", call Bonnie Cary at (386)-736-5927 x 21263 or her cell: (386) 804-0437. By e-mail, send her a note to bcary@volusia.org

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Sept. 28th, 9:00 am to 10:00 am, Hands Across The Lagoon. The Indian River Lagoon is in serious trouble. No doubt you've seen the reports that so far this year 112 manatees, 52 dolphins and 300+ Brown Pelicans have been found dead in the Lagoon. In 1989 the first Hands Across the Lagoon event drew thousands of supporters. The event is an opportunity for the public to show support for maintaining the health and integrity of this unique and incredibly diverse ecosystem. In the next issue of the Pelican we'll give more details on how you can help out with this important project. It's just one hour and you can help make it a success. For a start, you can "like" them on Facebook [here](#). Stay tuned.

Conservation Notes

First things first. There's nothing any Florida voter can do that would be more important for conservation efforts than to sign the Florida's Water & Land Legacy petition. This is an effort to secure reliable funding for the state's environmental lands program through an amendment to the state's constitution. We wouldn't have to resort to this type of move if our legislators would not spend so much time trying to think up new ways to avoid carrying out the wishes of those who elected them. The amendment, if adopted, will set aside 1/3 of the funds collected from documentary tax stamps for conservation lands purchase. It means no new taxes and will represent less than 1% of the state's annual budget. Still, it will mean wonderful things for those of us working to try to save what's left of Florida before it disappears under asphalt and concrete. Some of you may have already signed a form at our chapter meetings or in one of the many settings around the state where volunteers were collecting signed petitions. If so, thank you! If not, there's a way to print a copy of the petition yourself. It involves a few easy to follow steps and if you haven't signed already I implore you to click on this [link](#) and do so right now. Once you've printed the petition form, sign it and mail it in to the address provided. Please, this really is important.

In Florida, water can be a big problem. Sometimes there's not enough of it to go around. In years like 2013, there's way too much in some places. The Indian River Lagoon is in trouble, in part because of the flood control systems designed to protect agricultural lands and ever burgeoning populations of coastal residents south of its watershed. This summer's record rainfall has caused Lake Okeechobee's levels to rise to 15.63 feet above sea level. That's 3.5 feet higher than this time last year. If the level reaches 17 feet, the Army Corps of Engineers considers the lake to be in serious danger of breaching the Herbert Hoover Dike. Built in the 1930's in response to several flooding incidents in the previous decade, the dike is currently undergoing its first major renovation. Due to the increased lake levels, billions of gallons of nutrient and pesticide laden water are being dumped every day into the St Lucie and Caloosahatchee Rivers. The St Lucie feeds into the Indian River Lagoon from the St Lucie Canal via the St Lucie Lock and Dam. Last Friday, July 26th, the brown, putrid water was flowing into the river at a rate of 11,000 cubic feet per second. The Caloosahatchee empties into San Carlos Bay near Fort Myers. That estuary too is suffering major water quality problems.

There is a solution to this problem. Some may remember Gov. Charlie Christ's "River of Grass" plan. This involved the state purchasing 53,000 acres in the Everglades Agricultural Area and converting the land into marshes to clean the water before it flows into the Everglades and on south to Florida Bay. Governor Rick Scott and the collection of dull witted ideologues he's placed in positions of regulatory authority continue to oppose implementation of the River of Grass plan. Aided by a legislature anxious to do the bidding of their sugar industry paymasters, the Governor and his group continue to say that all is under control and going well. Sugar industry commercials tout that we're in the "final phase" of Everglades restoration. It's a cruel joke, and we and our way of life bear the brunt of it. We, the people of Florida deserve better. Or we would if we stopped electing environment wrecking bozos like those in office right now. At a recent meeting facilitated by the Army Corps of Engineers, Marty Baum, the Indian Riverkeeper, asked, "Why are sugar fields more important than the lives and health of our citizens?" A show of hands from those who think he got a real answer?

David Hartgrove



MEET OUR CHAPTER VOLUNTEERS

Marion Monaghan

Marion is a member of a rare species – a true native Floridian. She was born in Jacksonville and moved to Daytona Beach with her family at the age of two weeks. She attended Mainland High School which was located on Bay Street at the time. She earned a BA in English Education after attending University of Florida and University of Central Florida. She earned an MA in American Studies at Stetson University. She spent her entire career at Seabreeze High School – 17 years in the classroom teaching basic and AP English and 18 years as Assistant Principal.

In retirement Marion enjoys spending time with her son, Rod, who is a local endodontist and his family which includes 4 grandchildren. The basketball and volleyball games of the two high school and two collegiate grandchildren keep her occupied and entertained when she is not birding, meeting with the lunch-bunch or volunteering as a guardian ad litem for abused and neglected children who need an advocate in legal proceedings.

Becoming an active member of Audubon was on Marion's 'bucket list' as a result of watching her mother feed House Sparrows. She saw the flyer for Ray Scory's "Beginner Bird Watching Class" and began her learning journey which has taken her on most of the chapter's local field trips as well as to Ohio, New Jersey, Panama, Ecuador and, Costa Rica. She is 'looking hard' at a trip to Africa to continue to add new species to her life list.

Marion and Holly Zwart-Duryea (spotlighted in our February newsletter) provide Audubon Adventures kits to fourth-grade teachers in elementary schools in Volusia County with Marion handling the Daytona Beach and Port Orange areas.

We thank Marion for her contributions to the success of our chapter.

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Florida Keys Birding and Wildlife Festival

Mark your calendars for next month's festival. From Mon., Sept. 23rd thru Sun. Sept. 29th the Keys will be humming with activity such as guided bird walks, boat and kayak trips and snorkeling expeditions that are sure to amaze and educate. This year's festival highlights the Florida Keys Hawkwatch. Rafael Galvez, Hawkwatch Director, will be the keynote speaker and will lead several bird walks. Also on hand will be Pete Frezza, from Audubon's Tavernier Science Center and Mark Hedden of Florida Keys Audubon. See White-crowned Pigeons, Black-whiskered Vireos and Mangrove Cuckoo, among others. Check the link [here](#) for all of the information.

Barbara Hoelscher is Librarian and Outreach Coordinator at the [Enchanted Forest](#) in Titusville. She wrote the following piece.

Early this morning a movement at the front of the front yard called my attention, so I walked forward on the veranda. Four or five vultures walked, jumped and bounced around. Looking further, I spotted a little lump on the street. Grabbing binoculars, I saw that it was a Bobcat. I shrieked to myself, ran into the house, put on some jeans and went back outside, striding toward the street. A car slowed and stopped, but saw me coming and drove on. A lady with her two large dogs stopped and expressed concern.

The victim was a Bobcat kitten, likely hit no more than an hour or two earlier. It was dead, or nearly so. I brought it up to a wooden table near the verandah, its foot-long body stiffening, legs and huge feet still and in fixed positions. My eyes scanned and searched for some movement, some hair twitch, some ever-so-light breathing. Nothing. Still warm, still soft. Eyes open, face peaceful. So beautiful. Over the next hour I left messages for Florida Wildlife Hospital, our own beloved Enchanted Forest, and finally reached the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Helpfully, they listened to my report. When I asked about taxidermy and having the kitten be a display ambassador at the Enchanted Forest Sanctuary in Titusville, they thought that was a good idea and told me to proceed (just no selling it).

Outside my office window a movement turned my head and there, walking forward toward the front of the house, tail straight down, was the Mother. She walked slowly and determinedly, sitting for a moment among palm trees, looking toward the street and toward the wooden table. She trotted off toward the wetlands next to the house and disappeared among the plants and grasses.

Two of the vultures were still hanging out in the swale with their wings outstretched, collecting the sun's warming rays. What Mother Bobcat thought as she saw them we'll never know. Little One is wrapped in a bag and lays in the freezer. Next is to identify a fine taxidermist and hope he/she will prepare him/her for the Forest. Maybe the vultures needed to eat. Maybe we and the next life-long learners will honor Little One forever.

Barbara Hoelscher

If you know of a taxidermist willing to mount this bobcat kitten as a donation or at a reduced rate, please contact Barbara at bhoelscher@cfl.rr.com Thank you.

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We Welcome Our New Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Julie Carter, Linda McQuaig, Gwen Mugg, Lesley Nace, Trish Reonas, and The Thompsons. We hope to see you at a meeting or on a field trip when our regular schedule resumes next month.

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The Tea Is Canceled

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the high tea/luncheon planned for [Polly's Tea Room](#) on Aug. 6th has been canceled.

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Springtime In The Dry Tortugas

Birding in the Dry Tortugas in Spring is really exciting. Florida Nature Tours is your ticket to excitement. See the info [here](#).

Field Trips Co-Chair, Chuck Tague, maintains and outstanding and very informative [website](#). His Nature Observer's Journal entry from July 7th introduces us to the Glassy-winged Sharpshooter.



Stranger In A Strange Place

Several weeks ago I planted some basil seeds and ended up with all the potted basil my herb garden could hold plus many surplus plants. To see if basil could survive as a window plant I brought one into my office. It survived although it's far from thriving. Two days ago I noticed a leaf-hopper like insect on its stem. It blasted off as I examined it. This morning I noticed it was back. It was more tolerant of me as I photographed it with a flash and macro lens. It had huge eyes and red spots on clear wings. With the "Field Guide to North American Insects" (Eric Eaton) I identified it as Glassy-winged Sharpshooter, *Homalodisca vitripennis*. I confirmed it on [Bugguide.net](#). It's called Sharpshooter, because it expels liquid with enough force to shoot it a fair distance. In its native range, the southeastern US and Mexico, it poses no problem to humans and their crops. I have plenty of basil and it's welcome to some of the juices. However, it was introduced to California and became a major vineyard pest as a vector of destructive bacterium.

Chuck Tague

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Peregrine Falcon Sets New Record

A recent post on the Tennessee birding list serve, TN-Bird, tells of a new record for the oldest Peregrine Falcon known. Alix Parks, a wildlife rehabber in the Chattanooga area, received an injured Peregrine Falcon from the Chattanooga Zoo. The bird appeared to have flown into a window and was not too badly injured. She saw that the bird was banded. She called the [Bird Banding Laboratory](#) and was told that the bird was banded in Binghamton, NY on June 3, 1986, making the bird 27 years old. The previous record for a banded Peregrine Falcon was 19 years and 6 months. The plan is to release the bird at the Chickmauga Dam. This was long the site of one of only 2 known Peregrine Falcon nests in Tennessee. Roi, a male who went through several female partners, nested at the site for over 10 years and died after a similar window collision accident in 2007. Here's a [link](#) to the story of Roi.

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Remember the Centennial Park Bald Eagles?

If you went to the park last year to see the nesting Bald Eagles you probably saw film maker, Steve Brown. He hopes to have a short preview of the film ready for our September meeting.

A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors

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

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