

The Pelican

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

Vol. 59-No.4 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon October, 2013



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Thoughts from on High

Every October for more than 20 years, volunteers around the country unite in a common mission to improve the lives of others. October is also the month when Audubon Florida holds its annual meeting. This year's Audubon Assembly focuses on Florida's inspiring grassroots citizen scientists and volunteer conservation efforts. So it seems fitting that we should highlight our chapter volunteers this October.

During our fiscal year (July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013,) we had 22 members contribute an amazing 3,100 volunteer hours to further official activities of Halifax River Audubon. A short list of these activities includes creating and distributing materials about how to help conserve birds and wildlife, installing nest boxes, teaching a bird identification class, removing and safely disposing of used monofilament fishing line from receptacles at local piers, attending local government meetings and advocating for wildlife and habitat and writing letters to the editor on environmental issues. Volunteers researched locations, scouted the areas and led 31 official field trips which were attended by 410 members and guests. Volunteers participated in bird counts for the Florida Shorebird Alliance, Eagle Watch, and Jay Watch as well as the Annual Christmas Bird Count for Volusia and surrounding counties. Members are up early in the morning to gather data for the new Breeding Bird Atlas which will cover the entire State of Florida. Chapter members manned tables and booths at numerous local birding and environmental festivals.

Our chapter purchased Audubon Adventure kits for 31 elementary school classrooms. Volunteers visited school rooms to make presentations or assist teachers 25 times. They led 32 field trips for 1,458 students in Volusia County schools. These visits may be the first real contact a child has with nature.

2013-2014 brings new and exciting projects. We have begun working with Mrs. Belsky at Tomoka Elementary School to upgrade the existing butterfly garden to include bird habitat too. As noted in the September issue, we are assisting Cody Carrier to complete his Eagle Scout project of refurbishing the Boardman wildlife viewing platform.

I'm proud to be associated with this group of dedicated, knowledgeable and enthusiastic members. Well done to all!

Paula Wehr

Calendar & Events

Monday, Oct. 21 Program Meeting – Beneficial Bats- Shari Blissett-Clark presents an introduction to bats, outlining their contribution to a healthy, balanced environment and debunking common myths which give rise to unfounded fear of these flying mammals. She will discuss basic bat biology, rabies, and conservation efforts during the program. Join us at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. followed by a brief business meeting.

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Field Trips and Other Fun Opportunities

Friday, Oct. 4 A1A North Run Field Trip. This will be a trip to points north, like Washington Oaks, Matanzas Inlet and Gamble Rogers State Park. Meet at the Publix Shopping Center at Granada Blvd. & Williamson Blvd. near the Chick-Fil-A at 7:15 am. Bring a lunch. For info, call Joan Tague, 286-253-1166.

Saturday, Oct. 12 Lake Woodruff/Heart Island. Ducks, shorebirds, warblers and more are possible on this trip. There's a bit of easy walking. Bring a lunch. For info, call Joan Tague, 386-253-1166.

Friday, Oct. 18 Guana River Preserve in Ponte Vedra Beach is our destination. We'll meet at the Publix Shopping Center at Granada Blvd. & Williamson Blvd. near the Chick-Fil-A at 7:00 am. Bring a lunch. For info, call Joan Tague, 286-253-1166.

Field Trips With Other Groups

Saturday, Oct. 5 Join Flagler Audubon at [Washington Oaks Gardens State Park](#), 6400 N. Oceanshore Blvd., Palm Coast, for what they're calling their "Big Sit, Stand & Walk." Meet the group at 8:30 in the parking lot next to the Friend's Gift Shop. Groups will move to selected spots, take up seats provided by the park and await the arrival of the birds. With over 100 species recorded in the park a good day should be had by all. Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy in this beautiful spot. Here's a [link](#) for more info and to the chapter's entire list of field trips for this year.

Volusia County Land Management has some excellent field trips planned for October. You can hike, bike or ride on the "eco-buggy" with County Naturalist, Bonnie Cary, to some beautiful places and learn all kinds of cool things. Here's a [link](#) to their list of fun activities for October.

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Our friends in the Paw Paw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society have a full month of activities planned, including an over night trip to [Gold Head Branch State Park](#). Participants on this trip are limited to around 10 persons unless you're planning to camp in the park's lovely campground. Here's a [link](#) to the chapter's calendar page with all of the information on October's events.

Conservation Notes

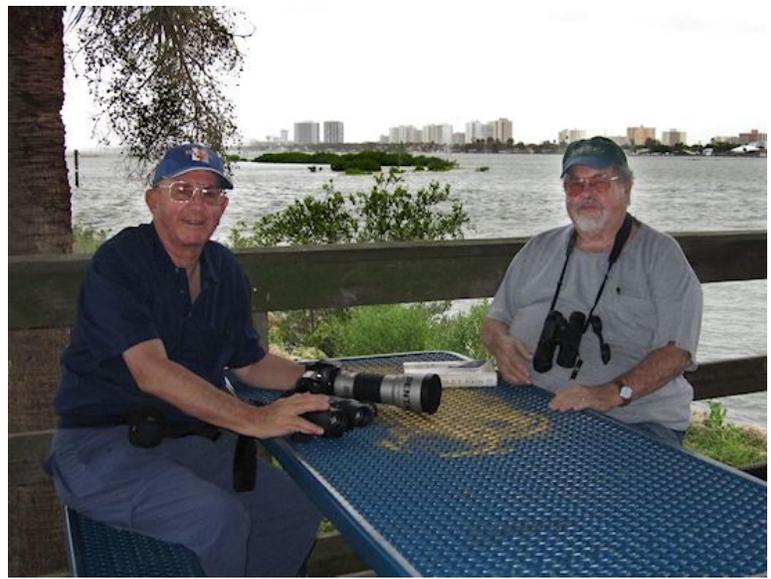
Many people are familiar with the plight of the Red Knot. This robin sized shorebird annually migrates an amazing round trip of 28,000 miles. From the Canadian Arctic to Tierra Del Fuego at the southern tip of South America and back. They can be seen here in Florida nearly any month of the year but they're only migrating through. About 10 years ago there was considerable press coverage of the plight of these birds as they reached the shores of the Chesapeake Bay and the Delmarva Peninsula and found that the horseshoe crab eggs they had long gorged themselves on each year were depleted from over harvesting. On September 27th, the U. S Fish & Wildlife Service, in response to a court ordered deadline, proposed listing the Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*) as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act. This will be a major step in the hoped for recovery of a species whose population has declined by 75% in the past 30 years. As required by the ESA, the Service plans to publish a separate proposed rule identifying critical habitat for the Red Knot before the end of 2013 and expects to make a final decision on both rules in 2014. The public comment period extends through November 29th and if I can decipher the arcane maze of the regulatory comments process, I'll enter a comment on behalf of the chapter online. Fortunately there's also a way to use regular mail.

For a variety of reasons our chapter will now be affiliated with two Regional Conservation Committees. The Central Florida RCC, to which we've been affiliated since Audubon Florida proposed these entities. And the new Indian River Lagoon RCC, the inaugural meeting of which I attended in Fellsmere recently. We are certainly involved in the issues at Lake Apopka and in the efforts to establish the North Shore Restoration Area as a new national wildlife refuge. There are a number of other issues which the CFRCC works on that we follow too, including water quality issues in our springs, growth management, etc.

The monumental problems facing the Indian River Lagoon have been growing worse with each passing year. The environmental community has been sounding the alarm for at least 25 years. Regulatory agencies listened. However, with their enforcement budgets being slashed nearly every year by the local, state and federal governments, they could do little more than document the slide into the catastrophe we see now. Over 300 Brown Pelicans, at least 71 dolphins and 115 manatees have died in the Lagoon over the past 12 months. Our state Legislature would dismiss those as "collateral damage" in their insane drive to slash taxes and the regulatory authority of the agencies that are supposed to monitor water quality. Now however, the sport fishing industry is screaming about the collapse of its future. Worse yet, the real estate industry has to Photoshop images of the water in front of those multi-million dollar mansions they're trying to sell. They are reluctant to show potential customers that what should be a pristine shoreline is now littered with masses of dead fish and murky water which has been posted as unfit for human contact by local health departments. It was to better address these and other environmental issues that the new RCC was proposed. The original CFRCC was too large geographically to easily facilitate meetings, even when we moved to a quarterly schedule. It is our choice to maintain a presence in both RCC's.

The Hands Across The Lagoon event that was mentioned in last month's Pelican was a rousing success, in spite of rain that arrived just as the 250 + participants were exiting their cars to walk up onto the bridge. Our own Dan Gribbin joined in the festivities down on the river in his kayak and other members and those from our sister chapters stood on the bridge as the sun broke through and a small rainbow was seen in the west. Let's hope government at all levels was watching.

David Hartgrove



The Big Sit

The Big Sit is a different kind of birding challenge. Non competitive in nature, it originated with the New Haven Bird Club in Oct., 2002. This will be the 13th year that our team of John Carr and Ray Scory (a past President of the NHBC) will sit together in Port Orange Causeway Park, under the west side of the Dunlawton Bridge. The rules state that you must stay within a circle 17 feet in diameter. Any bird seen or positively identified by sound from within the circle counts. In 2002, when Ray arrived in the park before first light, he heard the courtship of two Great Horned Owls. In 2011, while the "No Name" tropical storm lashed the coast with 40 mph winds and the rain blew sideways, Ray and John had 4 Magnificent Frigatebirds and a Brown Booby fly by just a short distance away! This year, on Sunday, 10/13, Ray and John will spend all day trying to get a higher tally than they have previously. If you'd like you can drop by for a while to help out. There's no limit to the number of participants. They just have to be inside the circle.

At the beginning I said this isn't competitive. There is a reward though for a team that finds the "Golden Bird." What is the Golden Bird? After all of the Big Sit! results are tabulated nationwide, a bird species will be selected by random drawing from the total list of all species seen in North America. All of the circles that listed that bird will be put into another random drawing. The randomly selected winning circle wins the Golden Bird prize of \$500. The winner is required to choose a non-profit, environmental organization to receive the \$500, donated by Swarovski Optik. Those qualifying can include bird clubs, Audubon chapters, land trusts, etc. Bird Watcher's Digest sponsors the Big Sit!. Here's a [link](#) to more information.

David Hartgrove

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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!

Gainesville Birding Trip, December 4th & 5th

This year's overnight birding trip will be to Gainesville. Fans of other schools, whether located in Tallahassee, Tuscaloosa, Athens or elsewhere need not feel disloyal. We're going for the birding, not the football. Alachua County offers some of the best birding in the state. So the idea of spending an extended visit there seemed like a good idea. We have what we think is an ambitious, though relaxed schedule. We'll depart for Gainesville on Wednesday, 12/4, from the parking area near the Publix on Granada & Williamson Boulevards at 8:30 am. We'll arrive in Gainesville just before noon and have lunch. Afterward we'll head to the Hague Dairy. This is a teaching farm that is part of the University's IFAS program. It's famous for the diverse bird species it attracts in the winter months. Around 4:30 we'll head to our hotel, where we'll be staying both nights, the [La Quinta Inn](#). We have a block of rooms reserved at a very reasonable price of 64.80 plus tax. Dinner that night will be on your own. There are a number of good restaurants located near the hotel.

The hotel offers a free continental breakfast beginning at 6:00 am. We'll rendezvous at 7:30 and head out to bird the north end of the La Chua Trail. Around noon we'll have a picnic lunch at Boulwer Springs Park and then head over to the University. Dr. Andrew Kratter, Ornithology Collections Manager at the Florida Museum of Natural History, will give us a behind the scenes tour of the collection. This will provide a fascinating look at aspects of birding and ornithology many of us have only guessed about. Sunset on December 5th will be at 5:30 pm. Since we'll be on the campus already, we'll head over to the bat house. This structure is home to over 100,000 bats of two species. Brazilian free-tailed bats and Southeastern bats, which are outnumbered by their Brazilian cousins 1,000 to 1. They fly out each evening around sundown to feed and as you can imagine, it's quite a sight. After this we'll head back to the hotel and dinner. The following morning we'll meet at 8:00 in order to give everyone time to check out. Then we'll go to San Felasco Hammock State Park for a morning of birding before heading home. Hotel reservations are on your own. Call 1-352-332-6466, and tell the reservations person you're with the Halifax River Audubon group. The cut off date for reservations is Nov. 13th. We're limiting participation to 24 people. For questions about the trip, call David Hartgrove, 386-788-2630.

David Hartgrove



photo by David Hartgrove

This young White-tailed Tropicbird defied the statistics by surviving rehab to be released back into the wild. Here he's about to be released by volunteer, Tim Durst, while on the pelagic trip sponsored by the Marine Science Center, 9/29/13.



photo by Brian O'Connor

A sure sign of Fall migration is the sight of American Avocets in Florida waters again. Brian, took this photo at Fred Howard Beach, in Pinellas County. You can just barely see one on the right still clinging to the remains of his alternate plumage. And notice the bird in the center of the photo has a more pronounced recurve in her bill. That's a field mark of females.

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Welcome To Our New & Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new members and to those who are rejoining us again: Bernadette Devery, Edward Flanagan, Karen Wilkie, Elmore Haynor, Corliss Lawrey, Janice Lowry, Robert Morgan, Kathleen Prastitis, Elezebeth Reed, Walter Snell, Mary Snow and Joyce Stringer. We hope to see you at our meetings or on one of our field trips.

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Plan to Attend the Audubon Assembly

This year's Audubon Assembly will be held at Innsbrook Golf and Spa Resort, in Palm Harbor. Dr. Reed Bowman, of the Archbold Biological Station, will be the keynote speaker. Several HRA board members are going and you can join us for this fun and educational weekend. There will be interesting field trips, discussion groups on a variety of important issues and of course, a banquet dinner. Tickets are available through [Ticketleap](#) and all of the information is available at this [link](#) to the Audubon of Florida website.

A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors

**Florida Power & Light, Garden Club of the Halifax Country,
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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.

Contact Our Board Members

Office	Name	Home Phone	E-Mail
President	Paula Wehr	673-5332	paulawehr@cfl.rr.co
Vice President	John Roessler	255-9826	birdman3651@bellsouth.net
Treasurer	Rachel Ramsey	673-1037	gmamimi@cfl.rr.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@gmail.com
Historian	John Carr	255-9360	jcarr14@gmail.com
Past President	David Hartgrove	788-2630	birdman9@earthlink.net
At Large 2014	Renate Calero	761-8179	renate_c@hotmail.com
At Large 2014	Marion Monaghan	760-2747	nautilus411@aol.com
At Large 2015	Karen Moser	322-3790	frederickmosher@att.net
At Large 2015	Holly Zwart-Duryea	672-8788	hollis1000@aol.com
At Large 2016	Deborah Green	407-625-1390	skylarkfolkart@gmail.com
At Large 2016	Dan Gribbin	760-8226	bluzeman1@hotmail.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