

The Pelican

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

Volume 59-No.7 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
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Message From The President

Thoughts from on High

The Dec 4 issue of Time Magazine includes top ten lists for “everything.” Included is a category for the [Top Ten New Species](#) for 2013. One of the newly-identified species is the carnivorous olinguito, a tree-dwelling mammal of the Amazon cloud forest which so closely resembles its common cousins that no one knew it was a different species. Pelts long-stored in museums were mislabeled as common olinguitos. Scientists now surmise that the common olinguitos housed at zoos in the 1960’s did not successfully mate because some were common and others were, in fact, the carnivorous species.

Also included in the top ten list are glow-in-the-dark cockroaches – as if cockroaches need an additional adaptation to help them survive!

NASA was surprised to find a new species of microbes in a clean room at KSC. Seems this particular microbe has only been found in two other places: another clean room in Florida and a bore hole in a Colorado molybdenum mine 1.3 miles underground.

[CNN reports](#) on scientists who found a “lost world” on the northern tip of Queensland, Australia. At least three previously undiscovered species have been documented: a frog that mates in the rain; a leaf-tail gecko (also reported in the Time Magazine article with a photo) and a golden skink.

While it would be amazing to be the person who discovered a new species, I’m just hoping to add a few new birds to my life list in 2014. I was able to add ten new species in 2013, plus the [Eurasian \(Common\) Teal](#), a sub-species of the Green-winged Teal. One male Eurasian Teal was feeding with hundreds of Green-winged Teal at Heislerville WMA in New Jersey on April 22. He was identified by the horizontal white bar on his wing and the lack of a vertical white bar on the breast. Without the excellent spotting skills of an expert bird guide who had recently returned from leading trips in Europe, I’m sure none of us would have found this bird. The wind was stiff and temperature was in the 30’s. But the sun was shining brightly and we all have excellent views of this bird. As of April 2013, the AOU did not recognize the Eurasian Teal as a separate species, but the decision remains under review. IUCN and BirdLife International do list them as separate species. Until the debate is resolved this bird remains on my list, with an asterisk.

Paula Wehr

Calendar & Events

Monday, Jan. 27th Program Meeting- Snail Kites Join us at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill on Monday night, January 27, when Zach Welch of the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission will discuss Snail Kites. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. followed by a short business meeting. NOTE: This is the **fourth Monday of the month**, one week later than our usual meeting date.

Field Trips

Friday, Jan. 10th Join us for the first of two back to back trips to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. We’ll scope the ducks along Black Point Wildlife Drive, check out the shorebirds and have a picnic at the Visitor’s Center. Meet at 7:00 am at International Square, on US 92, east of I-95, behind the Krystal Restaurant. Bring lunch. Questions? Call David Hartgrove, 386-788-2630.

Saturday, Jan. 11th For those who couldn’t make it on Friday we go again on Saturday to Merritt Island NWR. This time Chuck & Joan Tague will be the leaders. Again, we’ll meet at International Square, on US 92, east of I-95, behind the Krystal Restaurant. Bring lunch. On both of these trips we’ll have several spotting scopes so everyone can get good looks at all of the birds. Questions? Call 386-253-1166.

Friday, Jan. 17th Tour Viera Wetlands with Ken & Patsy Hunter. This place has it all, Bald Eagles, Crested Caracara, shorebirds, ducks and more. Meet at 7:00 am at International Square, on US 92, east of I-95, behind the Krystal Restaurant. Bring lunch. Questions? Call 386-679-8457.

Field Trips With Others

Saturday, Jan. 18th Join our friends from Southeast Volusia Audubon for their trip to Merritt Island NWR. Meet at 7:00 am at Indian River Village Shopping Center, corner of US 1 and SR 442. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Gail Domroski, 386-453-1211.

Monday, Jan. 6th Join our friends from West Volusia Audubon for a trip to Smyrna Dunes Park, followed by a boat ride across Ponce Inlet. Questions? Call Eli Schaperow 407-314-7965.

Wednesday, Jan. 22nd Deltona has a number of good birding spots. Explore them with Eli Schaperow and the folks from West Volusia Audubon. Call Eli at 407-314-7965 for information on when and where to meet.

Saturday, Feb. 1st Join the West Volusia Audubon folks for a tour of one of the best winter birding spots in Florida, Lake Apopka. The trip will be lead by Harry Robinson who literally wrote the book on birding the Lake Apopka Restoration Area. Meet at the DeLand Post Office 336 East New York Avenue at 8:00 AM. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Harry at 386-943-8342.

Conservation Notes

One of the founding fathers of the environmental movement in Volusia County passed away on December 11th. Lee Bidgood was a retired chemical engineer who moved to Florida from Delaware. He soon saw that there were serious problems in his newly adopted home. Sewage effluent and storm water runoff were killing the Indian River Lagoon. He wrote well crafted letters to the Daytona Beach News-Journal outlining steps that could be easily taken that would have major positive effects on the conditions. His pleas fell on the deaf ears of local government leaders who didn't want to hear that what they and their predecessors had been doing the cheap way would eventually cost a lot more money to fix. The conditions in the Indian River and Mosquito Lagoon now would be a thing of the past if Lee's sage advice had been heeded then. As Conservation Chair for the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society he spearheaded the move to get Smyrna Dunes Park established when the Coast Guard decided to surplus the property. It could have become yet another condo development. Instead it became a prime nesting spot for Least Terns, Black Skimmers, Wilson's Plovers and others. A lack of vegetation maintenance has reduced its usefulness to these birds now but it's still an environmental treasure.

He was also an early voice on the issue of climate change. He wrote eloquently about this in guest editorials. He worked with the New Smyrna Utilities Commission to pioneer a system whereby those with solar cells could sell their excess power back to the utility. He worked with state legislators to establish a tax holiday for energy efficient appliances. Brynn Newton, another stalwart of the local environmental community, wrote the following when announcing Lee's passing. "During the 2000s, Lee authored a regular column, *Natural Connections*, for the New Smyrna Beach *News Observer*, explaining in understandable language and with irrefutable logic the issues and dangers of global warming and nuclear waste and, as a World War II veteran, always arguing for peace. He always backed up his points with sound research and facts and urged his fellow conservationists to do the same because, he frequently reminded us, credibility is an environmentalist's only currency." He will surely be missed.

The proposal by Space Florida to grab off a chunk on Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge has moved to its next phase. The comment period that's part of the Environmental Impact Statement process opened on Friday, December 27th. Call me a cynic but I don't think it's a coincidence that this process is being announced in the middle of the holidays. After the disaster they had at the Brannon Center in New Smyrna Beach they're hoping to slip this by with as little public involvement as possible. Just to remind you of that disaster, State Senator, Dorothy Hukill and County Councilwoman, Deborah Denys, both strong supporters of Space Florida's proposal, organized a public forum at the Brannon Center. They were hoping for a lot of positive comments from Chamber of Commerce types to reinforce the idea that the public supported a new launch facility. Ten minutes before the scheduled start of the meeting, it was standing room only and nearly everyone there was vehemently opposed to Space Florida and their idea of a new and totally unnecessary launch site. The fishing guides spoke eloquently (if a bit forcefully) about how much of a negative impact the proposal would have on their business. Several retired NASA engineers pointed out that the existing facilities more than filled any needs Space Florida could possibly want for its clients. And though Space X was often referred to by Space Florida's spokesmen as the driving force wanting a new facility, they just signed an agreement with NASA to use their existing facilities. The public meeting here will be on Feb. 11, 2014 from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., at the New Smyrna Beach High School Gymnasium, 1015 10th Street, New Smyrna Beach, Florida 32168. Please plan to attend. And Happy 2014!

David Hartgrove

Audubon Academy 2014 Coming Soon

SAVE THE DATE and register as soon as possible! The 2014 Audubon Academy is being held at DaySpring Episcopal Conference Center located in Parrish, Florida, near Bradenton. DaySpring, with 92-wooded acres on the north shore of the Manatee River, offers hiking, biking and canoeing/kayaking opportunities and is near some great birding areas. This year's Academy is being held April 11-13 and the theme is "Walking the Walk-Making Conservation Real". Academy will offer outdoor and indoor workshops and information sharing sessions to enhance the abilities of both current and future Audubon chapter leaders to build stronger and more effective chapters. Regardless of your chapter size or location, the fun activities—entertainment, chapter displays and poster sessions, conservation training, hospitality and more—can help enable chapters to expand and invigorate their outreach and conservation activities. Information—including the schedule, descriptions of the workshops and registration—will be sent out in January and posted on the Audubon Florida website. Registration is by mail. Note that early registrations, received by February 7th, will help the organizers make arrangements. Do not miss this once a year opportunity to network at this "for the chapters, by the chapters" event, dedicated to protecting and conserving Florida's natural resources.

Bob Stamps, Audubon Academy 2014 Co-coordinator

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Welcome To Our New & Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to all of our new and returning members: Judy Adamson, Karen Allick, Sadie Anderson, Joseph Babila, Cassandra Ballard, Kathryn Blannett, Nancy Brown, Elaine Carlini-Davis, Marlene Estep, Bernie Gandy, Shelly Green, Cynthia Hansen, Ocena Hasty, Sarah Ho, Michelle Lewis, Virginia Lukas, Joyce Merkel, Miguel Morias, Danny O'Cain, Kathy Olivero, Richard Poppel, Kathleen Prastitis, Ann Rodgers, Deanna Schaeffer, Donna Sheean, Kenneth B. Sipes, Karen Vandusen and Susan Wilson. We hope to see you at our meetings or on one of our field trips.

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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!

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The Big Year Record Is Broken!

If you saw the movie, "The Big Year", you know it's based on fact. Based on the book with the same title by Mark Obmascik, it tells the story of the 1998 quest by 3 men to set the record for the most bird species seen in North America in a single year. Sandy Komito set the record at 745 and it held until until a few days ago. Neil Hayward, a birder from Boston set out to break the record this year. On December 28th, on Brian Patteson's boat, "Skua", out of Cape Hatteras, NC, he finally got his record breaking bird, number 746, a Great Skua. Neil maintained a blog about his adventures and it's fascinating reading. Check it out [here](#).

David Hartgrove

Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*)

a feature of Everyday Birding

by Ray Scory

Pileated Woodpeckers in my backyard! Wow, what a treat and what an introduction to Florida living through birds. A wonderful surprise to see and hear so many of them.

My first experience with the showy Pileated Woodpecker occurred long ago during a Connecticut Christmas Bird Count. On a granite rock hill overlooking a babbling brook, ice fringed in Winter's splendor, I heard what sounded like chopping on one of the many trees that dot the hillside. My companions and I decided to search out this perpetrator of wintery serenity. To our surprise the perpetrator wasn't a wood chopper but a bird, a Pileated Woodpecker. Large wood chips flew from the tree in response to its hammering. The wood chips we inspected under the tree were two to three inches long. An impressive wood chopping feat, and a dramatic display or my first Pileated Woodpecker experience. Also, a nice addition to our Christmas Bird Count.

I have come to learn that a Pileated Woodpecker chops a long rectangular hole when searching for food. However, a round hole about three inches in diameter could indicate its nest entrance, especially if drilled on a bark-free surface of a tree. An eye-stopping, heart-thumping sighting of the Pileated Woodpecker, whether in flight or boldly attached to a tree, is a life-memory experience. Not secretive is the Pileated Woodpecker. As large as a crow, the silhouette of this woodpecker is unmistakable. Big, large pointed bill, obvious crest and powerful chopping strokes readily identify this woodpecker. It appears to lean back from its vertical position when searching for food tucked in the crevices of bark. Carpenter ants are a favorite food source. I have watched them climb from the base of a pine tree to the top - always moving, always chopping. Determined, powerful and loud, that's our Pileated Woodpecker.

This handsome red crested North American woodpecker is dressed in black and sports white on its face, neck and flashy white under the wings. Mustache stripe malar feathers under its jaw are obvious, red for males, black for females. It flies with a pumping action, beginning with its wings at a level position, pushing both wings down for its power stroke and then back again. At times, during its flight it will glide. In Port Orange and surrounding places the Pileated Woodpecker is a common sight. They can be observed flying across open spaces, in backyards and local parks and nesting in small woodland pockets. How fortunate we are to have such a dramatic bird as a neighbor.

Bird Calls

*Pileated (pronunciation) - a vowel (a, e, i, o, u) before one or two consonants is pronounced as a long (i) as in "pie", Pileated rhymes with - animated, saturated

*oldest known age of Pileated Woodpecker - 12 years 11 months.

A male Pileated Woodpecker feeds its about to fledge youngster.



photo by Ray Scory

Gainesville Trip Provides Great Memories

Our chapter's 2 night overnight trip to Gainesville was a big success. We saw 83 species, including some sparrows seldom seen in our area. Our first stop came on our way over as we saw Eastern Bluebirds perched wires along SR 326. While there Renate Calero found an Eastern Meadowlark and we saw Savannah and Chipping Sparrows. We arrived in Gainesville in time for lunch and rendezvoused with Frank Brandt, who joined us from Dunedin. After lunch at Appleby's we drove out north of town to the Hague Dairy, a working dairy farm and teaching facility of the University of Florida. We met up with new Gainesville resident, Matt Bruce, who many of you will remember from lots of counts and field trips we've done in the past. Our hike along the La Chua Trail brought us quite close to some very large alligators. A bit too close for some members of our party. We saw White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows, White-eyed Vireo and Sora. We had lunch in the cool shade of Boulware Springs. After lunch we headed off to the Museum, where Dr. Andrew Kratter, Ornithology Collections Manager, gave us a behind the scenes tour. Seeing the work done by ornithology students and their professors was fascinating and one of the high points of the trip. We made it over to the bat houses in time for the evening fly out and to see a Red-tailed Hawk fly in as it does nightly and try to grab one of the bats as the mass of them flies out to hunt insects. After a stop at Payne's Prairie State Park, we said goodbye to some of our party and headed back home. The plan was to stop in Flagler County and look for the Cassin's Kingbird that's returned again to its spot on CR 305 just south of SR 100. We didn't find him. It was a fun trip and one day we'll do it again.

David Hartgrove



Dr. Kratter shows us some ducks. photo by Lois Posey



Our group at La Chua Trail photo by David Hartgrove

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

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