

The Pelican

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

Vol. 59-No.9 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon March, 2014



Message from the President

Thoughts from on High

The topography of SE Pennsylvania where I lived the first 55 years of my life is ridges of blue rock, shale and clay soil. Topsoil was something we purchased in bags and spread on the flower beds/gardens. Most winters, the ground was frozen for several months at a time. When the spring thaw arrived, our lawn which was covered with a nice thick layer of green turf grass, became a veritable marsh. Our Labrador Retriever and German Shepherd churned it to a sea of mud as they chased each other. We kept a plastic kiddie pool and a hose by the back door of the garage so we could wash off their feet and underbellies each and every time they came back in the house.

We lived on the side of a hill where, according to the hydrologist we hired to help fix our wet basement issues, five or more acres drained into the general area of our back yard. We had backhoes dig trenches to divert the groundwater to run around our house, into the culverts and eventually into the large lake formed by the dam five miles down the road. After burning out numerous sump pumps over the years, a 12-inch wide trench dug inside the basement which was linked to the outside trenches finally provided the dry basement we sought for nearly 20 years.

So when I learned from National Audubon Society that March 9-16 is National Groundwater Awareness Week, I didn't laugh to myself about another "special interest" campaign. Their [webpage](#) asks the question, "Who should be aware of groundwater?" The answer is "Quite simply, everyone." Here in Florida, water issues – ground water, water quality, water quantity, water rights – may be even more important than it is in other areas of the country. The focus of Audubon Florida's 2013 Conservation Action Agenda was "Conserve Water to Sustain Life." In December Eric Draper, Executive Director of Audubon Florida, sent an email message reminding us about the considerable effort put forth by the Audubon family to protect specific waterways and shape water policy. Audubon Florida staff put together a short list of priority efforts which you can read [here](#).

But as surely as the mud season comes to SE Pennsylvania, the drought follows. Then the muddy clay soil turns into a brick and it becomes necessary to hire two guys with a jackhammer to dig the holes to erect the posts to hold a wash line. It would have been much cheaper to just put the sheets into the dryer – but linens dried in a spring breeze just smell so great!

Keep an eye on the Volusia County Council's vote on a fertilizer ordinance. If they vote for a strong one that restricts phosphorus, mandates 50% slow release nitrogen and prohibits application during the summer rainy season we'll be on the road to much better water quality in our lakes, groundwater and the Indian River Lagoon. We'll talk about droughts in another issue.

Paula Wehr

Calendar & Events

Monday, March 17th, Program meeting The original Floridians were the Timucuan Indians who populated northeastern and north central Florida prior to the arrival of European explorers and settlers. Joe Woodbury, a Ranger at Washington Oaks Gardens State Park and Native American Interpreter, will talk about the history and importance of these local tribes. His presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. Doors open at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill at 6:30 p.m. We look forward to seeing you on March 17.

Field Trips

Friday, March 7th Lake Apopka. This place has it all, ducks, raptors, shorebirds, sparrows and more. Join our Field Trip Chairs, Chuck & Joan Tague, for a trip to this exciting location. Meet at **6:30 am** at International Square, east of I-95 behind Krystal on International Speedway Blvd. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Chuck Tague, 386-253-1166.

Wednesday, March 12th Join us for an evening cruise on the lovely St Johns River. Reservations are required so please call trip leader, Celine Sullivan, 386-257-1980. You'll need 20.00 in cash and a sense of adventure. Meet at 3:00 pm at International Square, east of I-95 behind Krystal on International Speedway Blvd.

Friday, March 14th Tosohatchee Wildlife Management Area, in east Orange County, has all sorts of diverse habitats and therefore, all sorts of birds. Join our Field Trip Chairs, Chuck & Joan Tague, as we explore this great location. Meet at 7:00 am at International Square, east of I-95 behind Krystal on International Speedway Blvd. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Chuck Tague, 386-253-1166.

Friday, March 28th Ocala National Forest has Scrub Jays, Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and more. Join us for this trip as we see what we can find. John Roessler will lead this trip. We'll meet at 7:00 am at the Publix lot at Granada & Williamson Blvds., near Chick-Fil-A. Bring lunch. Questions? call John at 386-255-9826.

Field Trips With Others

Friday, March 28th The same day our chapter is going to Ocala you can join Southeast Volusia Audubon Society on a trip to Joe Overstreet Landing and Three Lakes WMA. This is one of the state's most diverse birding areas. Meet at Market Square, US 1 and Indian River Blvd. at 7:00 am between Dunkin Donuts and Chick-Fil-A. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Dick or Gail Domroski, 386-428-0447.

Thursday, March 20th Join West Volusia Audubon Society for a cruise on the St Johns River. Meet at Hontoon Landing on River Ridge Rd in DeLand at 9:45 AM. Reservations are required. Questions? call Eli Schaperow 407-314-7965.

Conservation Notes

Thanks to the efforts of volunteers from around the state the amendment we all signed petitions for will be on the ballot in November. Amendment #1 is the Florida's Water & Land Legacy amendment and we need to remind our friends and neighbors to vote for it. Strong forces are against the amendment's passage and in the coming months we'll see an increasing number of misleading commercials about it. Working for its passage is one of the best things we can do for our state's future. Watch this space for future updates on how you can help.

On March 6th the Volusia County Council will decide what to do about a fertilizer ordinance. Their choices are to go with the very lenient state standards or opt for more restrictive rules favored by those concerned with actually doing something about our impaired waters. Several counties and municipalities around the state have already enacted these stronger rules. These include: a summer rainy season ban on the application of nitrogen and phosphorus; no phosphorus without a soil test indicating a deficiency; at least 50% slow release for the nitrogen content; and a 10' fertilizer free zone next to water bodies, without exception, or comparable provision protecting the Indian River Lagoon shoreline. Some have extended that last one to 25 feet from the Lagoon's shoreline. Councilpersons, Pat Northey and Doug Daniels have already spoken in favor of a strong ordinance. The others are either opposed outright or leaning toward the more lenient standards. The Indian River Lagoon has a variety of serious problems and some may require expensive solutions. This is one thing we can do now which will begin to have positive effects right away.

When we hear or read about a place like the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge or Big Cypress National Preserve or even Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, you think these places are permanently protected. But it turns out that all of these places were established on lands where someone else owns the mineral rights. In all of these cases that someone is Collier Resources, the actual owners of mineral rights to over 800,000 acres in southwest Florida. They have recently leased the mineral rights under 115,000 acres to the Dan A. Hughes Company of Beeville, Texas. The Hughes Company has applied for a permit to drill an exploratory well less than a mile from the Florida Panther NWR. In spite of strong opposition from a variety of environmental groups, Audubon included, Florida DEP issued the permit. Now the Collier group has announced two more leases. One of 103,000 acres to Tocala LLC, of Ridgeland, Mississippi and one of a whopping 234,510 acres to Burnett Oil Company of Fort Worth, Texas. The latter one lies almost entirely under Big Cypress National Preserve. This is not geological research. These leases are going to oil drilling companies who have every intent of setting up roads, wells and extraction operations once deposits have been located. So far there's been little interest among oil operators to utilize hydraulic fracturing, also known as "fracking." The limestone bedrock that underlies most of the Florida peninsula isn't a good substrate for fracking operations. Still, the Hughes Company has applied for a permit for a waste water injection well. This is a necessary step if fracking were to be used. There have also been two bills filed in Tallahassee by Representative Ray Rodrigues, Rep., Estero. One mandates that chemicals used in fracking be identified to Florida DEP, though it conveniently doesn't require the concentrations to be listed. The other bill allows drilling companies to exclude information on anything they conclude is proprietary in nature. So essentially they don't have to tell us what they'd be poisoning our water with or how much they're using. My bet is that both bills were written by attorneys for the oil drillers to give them and the state regulatory agencies cover when and if fracking is used. Stay tuned, this is going to become a hot issue.

David Hartgrove

Meet Our Chapter Leaders

Mary Blackledge



photo by Steve Blackledge

Mary is a Michigan native who met her husband, Steve, in her home town. They lived in Michigan until the late 1980's when they sold everything and headed to Florida in their sailboat. They made the journey from Michigan via the Erie Canal to New York Harbor and into the Atlantic Ocean. They headed back inland through Delaware Bay and traveled the rest of the way to Florida via the intracoastal waterway, ending up at the city marina in Daytona Beach. They lived there, on the boat, for about three years until they once again became land lubbers nearly 20 years ago.

In Michigan, Mary pursued a career in sales. She chose an entirely different career after arriving in Florida when she went back to school and became a physical therapist – a career she enjoyed until retiring several years ago. Mary has two daughters and Steve has two sons, all but one of whom are scattered in other states.

In the fall of 2011, Mary and Steve registered for the HRA Beginner Bird ID Class. They have both always loved outdoor activities and learning about nature. They enjoyed the class and began coming to meetings and attending field trips. Audubon just "felt right" to them. Mary has taken co-responsibility for sales of 50-50 tickets at our monthly meetings.

She enjoys a wide range of other interests including reading, container gardening and making pottery. We thank Mary for her contributions to making our chapter a success.

Paula Wehr

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Lighter Side News And Views

Once every three years, there is an international competition in horticultural sculpture, called "mosaiculture," in a major city in the world. Last year it was Montreal. At the Montreal Botanic Gardens there were 50 major sculptures along a path two miles long. Click on this [link](#) and enjoy.

Most of us have seen the movie, "The Big Year." Three obsessed birders are doing a big year. Trying to see as many species as possible in 365 days. Dorian Anderson grew up in Philadelphia and started birding at an early age. He's taking time off from a career in molecular biology at Harvard Medical School to do a big year, on his bicycle. He passed through Daytona Beach on Monday, February 24th where he saw Florida Scrub Jay and Parasitic Jaeger, birds # 201 and 202 respectively. Read all about his adventure on his blog [here](#).

Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*)

a feature of *Everyday Birding*

by **Ray Scory**

how interesting it can be

when you see a little bird by the sea...

A walk along an ocean beach can take us thousands of miles away. I visualized this escape from reality as I walked along the ocean beach stretching from Daytona Beach Shores to Ponce Inlet for a Christmas Bird Count with the Southeast Volusia Audubon. I observed shorebirds defining the edge of a receding tide, white-capped waves rolling in with boundless splendor and seamless fog shrouding the ocean's horizon into a mystery of endless space. The scene was breathtaking. My dream lifted to undefinable heights.

Through the mysteries of imagination we can soar and achieve things not humanly possible. How special would it be to self-propel and fly 20,000 miles a year, look down at the far reaches of our planet while covering a time period of six and a half months. This is what the Red Knot does as it makes a migratory round trip from the tundra of arctic regions to countries in the southern hemisphere.

To follow this imaginary exercise I must travel with the Red Knot on a circumpolar journey from its arctic tundra breeding grounds in upper Canada to the tip of South America and back. Such a magnificent journey for a nine inch shorebird that feeds and rests along the tidal edges of our ocean beaches. We in Florida have the opportunity to observe the Red Knot as it migrates along the east coast of North America in the early Spring and Fall. Our CBC team observed Red Knots on the beach in mid December. Some remain in Florida during the summer.

While I can not fly like the Red Knot or travel as far. I can study their behavior and read their story. This has led me to an interesting sidebar to my study - bird banding. On the day of the Christmas Bird Count our team counted over 350 Red Knots. Six of them were banded with a lime green flag on the left leg. Four of those bands had readable characters. I was able to record them quiet clearly with a 1200mm lens. I submitted my results to www.bandedbirds.org. One bird (U6E) was banded on the west coast of Florida on February 27, 2009 and not resighted again until January 4, 2014 by our team.

After reading the instructions, submission questionnaires and email responses from Jeaninne Parvin, database administrator, I realized that recording the smallest detail and seemingly insignificant observations while at the location of the sighting is paramount. Collecting data in writing at the location of the sighting prevents loss of data through oversight, memory lapse and eye witness imperfections. The location of the band on the upper or lower leg, and right or left leg - important. Degree of human disturbance of birds - important. Degree of weather conditions - important. Feeding habits: rapid nonstop, intermittent, occasional - important. Time of day - important. Location - important. You will be asked all of the above questions and more . The more information you collect on site and in writing, the better chance your sightings will be recorded.

I have had attached a "Birding Conditions" checklist on the Halifax River Audubon website, www.halifaxriveraudubonas.org for your use.

My involvement with Christmas Bird Counts has always been fun and exciting. My extended involvement which will include more attention to all details in bird observation can only enhance my interest and maybe help a bird, a research scientist or two.



Red Knots along the shore in Ponce Inlet



Red Knot # X7J

The silver band on the bird's right leg is its USF&WS band and is applied to all birds that are banded. *Photos by Ray Scory*

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Volunteer Opportunity

Volusia County Environmental Management is seeking motivated, team-oriented adults to participate in the 2014 sea turtle and shorebird nesting monitoring program. Monitoring begins on May 1 and continues through October 31. The experience you gain from this position is limited only by your initiative to learn. The position is multifaceted, including sea turtle and shorebird nest monitoring work. Self starters and eager learners are highly encouraged to apply. This is an experience that can change your life. So take advantage of the opportunity. Click [here](#) for details, on the duties, physical requirements, how to sign-up, etc. You'll be glad you did.

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Join Florida Nature Tours In The Dry Tortugas

Our friends at Florida Nature Tours have an ambitious schedule set for Spring of 2014. There will be five trips out to the Dry Tortugas and one South Florida land tour that can be coupled with one of the Tortugas trips. Cost is 1195.00 per person for 4 days in paradise. Our boat, the MV Spree, is perhaps the finest craft sailing out of Key West. It's clean as a pin and the food will have you begging for the recipes. And, if you don't want to drive back after being on the water all day, you can sleep aboard the boat the night we return, saving you another hotel bill. Click on the link above for all of the information.

A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors

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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.

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