

# The Pelican

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

Vol. 59-No.10 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon April, 2014



## Message From The President

*Thoughts from on High*

“And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of a whippoorwill or the arguments of the frogs around a pond at night?” -- Chief Seattle, 1854

Chief Seattle (an Anglicized version of the spelling Si'ahl) was a prominent leader among his people who pursued a relationship with white settlers in northwestern US. The city of Seattle is said to have been named for him. The quote above is taken from a widely publicized speech outlining the need for ecological responsibility and respect of the Native Americans' land that has been attributed to him. However, [Snopes's](#) documents that the moving words in the speech were written by a screenwriter, Ted Perry, for a 1972 film about ecology. None the less, the words still ring true. You can read the full speech on the Snopes link above.

“Why?” you ask, am I telling you this. It's my transition into Save The Frogs Day – April 26, 2014. Frogs are declining worldwide at a never before seen rate. Nearly one-third of the world's amphibian species are threatened with extinction. Since 1980 over 200 species have disappeared. The normal extinction rate is about one species every 250 years, according to the [Save the Frogs](#) website. Frogs are an integral part of the food web. Tadpoles keep waterways clean by feeding on algae. Adult frogs eat large quantities of insects, including those that transmit disease. Frogs are a food source to a variety of species from dragonflies, to fish, snakes, birds, monkeys and more.

Frogs, like many bird species, are bio-indicators of the health of local habitats – both terrestrial and aquatic. Their permeable skin readily absorbs toxins in their environment making frogs susceptible to ecological disturbance, often before it becomes apparent to humans.

And lastly, frogs are cool! Who doesn't have memories of hearing a frog chorus on a spring evening as the night grows dark? Frogs are pretty, sporting a rainbow of colors which inspire artists and jewelry-makers. And how would little boys signify that they like little girls if there were no frogs to catch and wave around while the girls shriek?

*Paula Wehr*



Barking tree frog.



Fla. Bog frog photos courtesy of IFAS

## Calendar & Events

**Monday, April 21st** Monthly Meeting. North Dakota's [website](#) lists an annual precipitation range from 13 inches in the northwest to more than 20 inches in the southeast. Average yearly temperature ranges from 37°F to 43°F. January, the coldest month dips to 2°F. July, the warmest month reaches an average high of 73°F. Quite different from Volusia County which has an average yearly temperature of 71°F and average yearly precipitation of 52 inches. Surely that means birders in North Dakota will see different species than we find here at home. David Baker will present photos of the Birds of North Dakota at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, April 21, at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. A brief business meeting follows the presentation. We look forward to seeing you there.

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### Field Trips

**Friday, April 4th** Lake Woodruff/Heart Island. Migration is heating up and these two locations are excellent for spotting migrating warblers. Join Chuck & Joan Tague for this trip. Meet at 7:00 am at International Square Mall, east of I-95 behind Krystal in US 92. This one has some long but easy walks. Bring a lunch. Questions, call Joan at 386-253-1166.

**Friday, April 11th** A1A North Run, Washington Oaks, Matanzas Inlet and Gamble Rogers State Park. Join Chuck & Joan for a trip up the coast to look for returning Least Terns and others. Bring lunch and meet us at Ormond Towne Square at Williamson & Granada in Ormond Beach at 7:15 over near the Chick-Fil-A. Questions? Call Joan at 386-253-1166.

**Friday, April 18th** Tiger Bay State Forest. Need Bachman's Sparrow for your life list? This is the place to get it. There are lots of other pine woods species here too. This is an easy trip with little walking. Join Chuck Tague and Ray Scory for this trip. Meet at 7:30 am at International Square Mall, east of I-95 behind Krystal in US 92. Bring a lunch. Questions? Call Chuck at 386-253-1166.

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### Field Trips With Others

**Monday, April 28th** Join West Volusia Audubon Society on a trip to Gemini Springs Park. Meet Eli Schaperow and the rest of the group at Lake Monroe County Park, 975 U.S. Highway 17-92, DeBary at 8:15 am. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Eli at 407-314-7965.

**Wednesday, April 9th** Join Bonnie Cary and Florida Forest Service personnel for an Eco Buggy tour of Lake George State Forest from 9:30 am till noon. Meet at St Johns River Road and Bluffton Road, west of Barberville off SR 40. Space is limited and preregistration is required. Contact Justina Jones, 386-985-7821 or email: [Justina.Jones@freshfromflorida.com](mailto:Justina.Jones@freshfromflorida.com)

## Conservation Notes

The news from Tallahassee is a constant source of amazement. Not content with having gutted growth management controls that previous legislatures struggled with for decades, the current one is working even harder to further assure that any kind of good planning and citizen input on large developments are a thing of the past. HB 703, filed by Panama City Representative (and shameless corporate shill), Jimmy Patronis, is perhaps the worst bill to come up in this year's legislature. There's also a companion bill in the Senate, SB 1464. It's aimed at crippling local governments so they can't pass or enforce environmental restrictions. It also kills the right of local government to have a super-majority vote on comprehensive plan amendments that are really important to all communities. It's like a laundry list of the worst ideas imaginable regarding thoughtful planning, water quality protection and just plain common sense. Contacting our governor is a waste of time in my opinion. House Speaker, Will Weatherford ([Will.Weatherford@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:Will.Weatherford@myfloridahouse.gov)) and Senate President, Don Gaetz, whose email address is [Gaetz.Don.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:Gaetz.Don.web@flsenate.gov) could step in a squash this thing before it goes any further. Please send them a brief note asking that they do just that.

And that's not the only lunacy in Tallahassee this year. Governor Rick Scott and Attorney General, Pam Bondi, have joined a lawsuit to prevent the clean up of Chesapeake Bay. If you're wondering why our governor would decide to spend our tax dollars on fighting the cleanup of a water body 900 miles from the governor's mansion, look no further than his campaign contributors. The American Farm Bureau Federation, the National Home Builders and those famously civic-minded folks at the Fertilizer Institute hate the idea that government wants to regulate what they can dump into our waterways. The cleanup blueprint for Chesapeake Bay includes something called TMDL's. That stands for "total maximum daily load" and it is a line in the sand so to speak. It means that only a set amount of pollution can be dumped before regulatory action is triggered and the polluters have to modify their actions. Florida has been fighting this for years because the polluters don't want to be held accountable. It's bad for their bottom line and they'd rather stick the tax payers with their cleanup costs. The Florida DEP has been sued to force it to establish TMDL's here. The legislature has already forced DEP to abandon that idea but a ruling in the Chesapeake Bay case in federal court could force DEP to do its job here. If you wonder why the Indian River Lagoon and our local springs continue to slide further into complete collapse this is the reason.

Our new Congressman, Ron DeSantis, just voted for a bill that would deal a serious blow to our national park system. In yet another example of Congressional double speak, the bill was titled the "Ensuring Public Involvement in the Creation of National Monuments Act," also known as "EPIC." Sponsored by Rep. Rob Bishop (R. Utah) the bill does just the opposite of what it sounds like. It deals a death blow to the Antiquities Act. This piece of legislation was passed in 1906 and presidents since Teddy Roosevelt have used it to protect some of our most important national treasures, like the Statue of Liberty, Muir Woods and Grand Canyon National Park. Our national park system returns 10 dollars to local communities for every dollar spent on them. Yet the Republican majority in Congress sponsored a bill to slash 380 million from the Park Service budget every year. And again, Congressman Ron was right there voting with the majority. What is wrong with these people? Why would anyone be against what's been called, "America's best idea"? Hopefully this idiotic bill will die a quick a well deserved death in the Senate. But it won't stop guys like Congressman Ron from trying to destroy what we all hold dear.

*David Hartgrove*



## Meet our Chapter Leaders

### Chuck Tague, Co-Chair for Field Trips

Many readers of this newsletter either know Chuck by sight, have heard one of his presentations, seen his photographs on his website or on the HRA home page or have participated in a field trip with him. For those folks who are meeting Chuck for the first time, here is a little background.

Chuck grew up in a small section of Pittsburgh on the other side of the tunnel into downtown. When the tunnel was opened to traffic, it funneled commuters from all the suburbs through his home area to get to the city, changing the small town atmosphere forever. His family lived on a small farm which was previously a working orchard with heritage species of apples, pears, cherries, etc. The family didn't sell any of the fruit, however, because his father didn't believe in using chemicals on the trees and, therefore, the fruit wasn't blemish free. So was it predictable that Chuck would gravitate toward a lifetime of study/work in the field of ecology?

He earned a BA from Point Park College and studied secondary Education at Duquesne University. He was the Education Curator at the Pittsburgh Aviary and adjunct professor at the Rachel Carson Institute at Chatham University. He also served in the US Marine Corps.

Chuck publishes [Nature Observer's Journal](#), an online blog and photo gallery. He is an accomplished photographer and long-time bird enthusiast. He presented classroom and outdoor programs for schools in Pittsburgh and now does the same for local elementary schools in Volusia County. He is a volunteer with The Casements Envirocamp during the summer.

If you haven't joined HRA for a field trip led by Chuck and his wife, Joan, (featured Chapter Leader in February) you may want to mark your calendar to do so in the future. We know how fortunate we are to have Chuck donate his time, expertise and knowledge to our chapter and appreciate everything he does to make HRA a vibrant chapter.

*Paula Wehr*

## Filming Birds In China and Korea

Cinematographer, Gerrit Vyn, of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, was recently filming shorebirds along the coast of the Yellow Sea. This [link](#) is to a short video of birds we'd have to travel far to see, like the Spoon-billed Sandpiper. One of the rarest birds in the world. Enjoy! *Editor*

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## Beak Deformities and the Ongoing Case of Why



*photo courtesy of the USGS*

An ongoing study is trying to discover the causes of beak deformities in a variety of species. The Pacific Northwest has seen a rise in incidents recently but it happens closer to home too. Dr. Peter May, of Stetson University, wrote about it on his [blog](#) last December. It's fascinating reading. *Editor*

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## Welcome to Our New Members

Due to an oversight on my part last month, there's a long list this month. We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Marguerite Ainsworth, Tina Appel, Grace Brown, Anne Catinna, Jacqueline Coffee, Jeanette Davis, Christina Farrell, James Fenlon, Pamela Hanson-Peterson, Marie Helser, Judson King, Shirley Levkulich, Barbara Loomis, Robert Maddern, Mary Michaud, Margaret Palmieri, Nanette Rocha, Harry Scharadin, Joseph Ships, Vicki & Tim Sprunk, David Vedder, Theresa Vrettas, Lorene Wartick, Nancy Wencil and Dennis Wolf. We hope to you at one of our meetings or on a field trip soon. Welcome aboard!

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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. 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!

## 7 Tips For Raptor Photography

Some time back we published some wildlife photography tips from Jeff Parker, a Texas based photographer and eco trip leader. His [website](#) lists upcoming workshops some of you might wish to attend, like wild flowers, South Texas Birds and one on Painted Buntings. Our thanks to Jeff for making these available. *Editor*

**Burst mode's best.** When birds blink, their second eyelid (called a nictitating membrane) opens and closes, which can result in strange looking images. Since an in-focus eye is one wildlife-photography "must," burst mode ups your chances of capturing keepers. It also helps collect quick action such as birds fighting over carrion, landing, and taking off.

**Wary is the word.** Nobody had to teach raptors about stranger danger—these birds are born nervous! Quick movement catches their eyes the most. In and out lens movement may even give them pause. Act like a statue, staying still as much as possible. Nervous birds will look at you; if one does, FREEZE! If not careful your actions will scatter your subjects—for the rest of the day. Allow raptors to relax after you shoot your landing shots. A raptor on one foot signifies a relaxed bird. A bird stretching its wings might make you think he's relaxed, but not necessarily! If he has sat still for a while the opposite is probably true—he's probably preparing for take-off.

**Keep concealed.** There's a reason we use the phrase "eagle eye": raptors will see you before you see them (see tip #2). Your best bet's to work from a blind. Often a vehicle works well as a blind, especially if you bring your biggest lens and sit extra still for a while after shutting off the engine. Since I'm talking about photographing non-captive birds, plan on staying far away from these subjects.

**Stay silent.** Raptors can hear well. Vertically offset ears located just behind the eyes help hone in on sound location. Some species get extra ear-range from facial disk feather arrangement. Your voice and your shutter—especially non-stop actuation—could cause the birds to leave for the day. If you must talk, keep your voice down. And use short bursts when shooting.

**Lookout for landings.** Focus on where a bird is headed before she arrives. Like airplanes, most birds (including raptors) take off and land into the wind. Considering when the light's best for photography, an a.m. east wind and a west wind in the afternoon, means you're in luck!

**Prepare for lift-off.** You get some of your best action shots as birds leave. That means you've got prepare for take-off. Good news! Raptors also prepare for take-off and will give you plenty of signs that they're about to depart. A bird looking into the breeze and/or crouching is a bird about to take-off. So, too, is a bird that defecates.

**Practice patience.** Patience pays in wildlife photography, especially when shooting raptors. Don't fire away at a perched bird just sitting there. You're creating lots of boring images and running the risk of scaring your subject away with the sound of your shutter. Wait for natural behavior, the kind of show a relaxed bird puts on: stretching, preening, calling, eating. Wait for her to do something before taking your shot.

*Jeff Parker*

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A friend in Colorado, Kent Nygard, sent me a [link](#) to a short video of a "murmuration" of European Starlings. These birds get a bad rap here in the U.S. because of their habit of out competing our native species for nesting cavities. I once watched some starlings harassing a Red-headed Woodpecker from his newly excavated nest cavity. I know there are several of these videos making the rounds on the Internet these days but this one is really well done. Enjoy!  
*Editor*

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**Our website is [www.halifaxriveras.org](http://www.halifaxriveras.org) For information on upcoming field trips, etc.**

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