

The Pelican

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

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Thoughts from on High

During the summer in Florida, birding sometimes gets forgotten beside the activities of walking the beach, relaxing by the pool, boating and the like. But those intrepid birders who brave the bugs, heat, humidity and storms can assist Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) in locating three species during their breeding seasons. The southeastern American Kestrel, the Burrowing Owl and the Painted Bunting are declining species that are often overlooked by traditional monitoring programs such as the North American Breeding Bird Survey.

FWC is encouraging birders to use their new [Rare Bird Registry](#) to quickly map locations where they observe these three species. There are options to upload photos and additional comments, too. The registry is quick and easy to use. Data submitted will be used by FWC scientists to identify important breeding areas for the kestrel, the owl and the bunting as well as estimate the size of their populations.

Karl Miller, biologist at the FWC's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, says, "The Rare Bird Registry is an excellent opportunity for the public to participate in research. Sightings will provide the FWC with valuable data to help us study and conserve some of Florida's most unique and interesting species. This new website provides a great way to get involved."

The Rare Bird Registry is found on the [MyFWC.com/Get-Involved](#) web page, or you can click on this link, the [Rare Bird Registry](#), to go directly to the site. Breeding season runs from May 31 through July 31, so there is still time to enter data. To report Painted Buntings seen during other times of the year (August through April,) birders are encouraged to create an account on the [Painted Bunting Observer Team](#) (PBOT) website which monitors Painted Bunting sightings throughout their migration and wintering sites.

Paula Wehr

BBA II Needs You and Your Binoculars

If you want to participate in the program our President mentioned above, let me put in a plug here for the Breeding Bird Atlas. This is a 5 year project to document the breeding ranges of all of the nesting birds in our state. This may seem a daunting task but it's been done before, in 1986. If you've lived here for any length of time you know there've been a lot of changes to the environment. We need another atlas to document how those changes have impacted our state's bird population. This is a valuable citizen science project that needs your help and you'll become a better birder in the process of helping. Contact me if you want to get involved.

David Hartgrove

Calendar and Events

NO MONTHLY MEETING in July & August. Next meeting is Monday, September 15. Enjoy the summer. Keep up to date on HRA activities by checking our [website](#) often.

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Volusia County Parks & Recreation Offers Ways to Learn

Do you have children, or are your grand children staying with you for a week or so? If so, there are workshops and classes designed for the whole family at the Lyonia Environmental Learning Center and other locations. Here's just a partial list:

Saturday, July 5th, 2:00 to 3:00 pm Get the buzz on native bees and wasps during a free presentation at DeBary Hall Historic Site, 198 Sunrise Blvd., DeBary. Master Beekeeper Ed Williams will share information about these beneficial insects and their value to agriculture, gardens and landscapes. Attendees may tour DeBary Hall, an 1871 hunting lodge, for regular admission prices, which are \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors, \$2 for children ages 3 to 12, and free for children 2 and younger.

Sunday, July 13th, 2:00 to 3:00 pm Join us in the LEC classroom for part one of two of the film "Earthflight." Soar with countless birds across six continents and 40 countries, and see the world from their point of view. David Tennant narrates this exhilarating adventure, filmed over four years with help from camera-carrying birds, drones, paragliders and remote-control microflight planes. This program is free. Meet at Lyonia Environmental Center, 2150 Eustace Ave., Deltona. Reservations are requested and may be made by calling 386-789-7207, ext. 21028.

Saturday, July 19th, 2:00 to 3:00 pm Fireflies all over the world are disappearing! During this free indoor workshop, LEC staff will discuss some of the reasons these insects are in peril and some helpful tips we can do to help. Meet at Lyonia Environmental Center, 2150 Eustace Ave., Deltona. Reservations are requested. Call 386-789-7207, ext. 21028.

For information on all of their offerings check the [website](#).

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Upcoming Events Elsewhere

September 19-22, 2014 [Cape Cod Bird Festival](#). The Friday night social features David Sibley, who will speak on "The Psychology of Bird ID." Saturday night dinner features Greg Miller of "The Big Year" book and movie. Both David and Greg will lead field trips. Registration is now open.

September 23-28, 2014 [Florida Keys Birding & Wildlife Festival](#). Featured trip - all day, Sunday, Sep 28, boat trip to Dry Tortugas National Park with Mark Hedden of Florida Keys Audubon.

Conservation Notes

A show down is coming with Volusia County over enforcement of regulations designed to protect wildlife, especially birds, in the Ponce Inlet area. Lighthouse Point Park personnel routinely ignore violations of the rules regarding the feeding of wildlife in the park. Someone, who no doubt means well, places heaping mounds of cat food out for the feral cats that still have not been trapped and removed from the park. Their presence is a direct violation of the Habitat Conservation Plan the County has been committed to since the settlement of the law suit which allows continuation of beach driving. Putting the food out for the cats means that the real wildlife, like raccoons, will eat it too. This violates the County's own rules and park personnel turn a blind eye to these violations daily. Repeated attempts by Wilson's Plovers to nest in the park have failed every year because of predation of their nests. Is the predation by feral cats? We don't know but it's estimated that feral cats kill 500 million birds in the US every year. They certainly have no place in a bird sanctuary.

In May, while doing the monthly shorebird survey of the area, we found nesting Least Terns on Disappearing Island. These birds are listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act and extra measures of protection are mandated. To its credit the County has tried to protect these birds. They've installed construction fencing around the colony to deter the folks who routinely go out to the island. Too often the first thing boaters do upon arrival is to allow their dogs and their kids to run amok all over the island. The initial string fencing and signs we put up the first day was ignored by people visiting the island. On June 10th County personnel counted 63 nests in the colony. A week later the number of nests was down to 6. People like the ignorant clowns pictured below, allowing their unleashed dogs to wander through the colony, are the reason for the decline in nest numbers. There's no way they couldn't have seen all the signs.



taken from Lighthouse Point Park by Michael Brothers

The new, more expensive, construction fencing will help but the damage has already been done. Thanks to Steve & Mary Blackledge and Rachel Ramsey for answering the call for volunteers to help with the fencing installation. Rachel spent a very hot day out there helping County personnel.

There have been several failures of rooftop colonies of Least Terns locally. The colony atop the Together Unisex Salon, in Ormond Beach suffered heavy predation by Fish Crows. The colony on the Music Building at Bethune-Cookman University was fitted with a camera to monitor the roof at all times. The failure of the colony there was perhaps due to water ponding problems on the roof after heavy rains. Further review of the hours of digital video may reveal predation by crows, gulls or other natural causes. Those are part of the natural cycle. Feral cats and loose dogs are not.

David Hartgrove

The June Challenge Was A Big Hit Around The State

The June Challenge, started by the folks in Alachua Audubon and reported on last month, was a big hit around the state. First state records of birds being seen in the month of June were broken all over the place. Bill Pranty had a pair of Caspian Terns in eastern Pasco County, a first record for that location. Alachua County birders found a Broad-winged Hawk, unusual that far south in June. They also found an American Bittern, as did birders in Pasco County. That bird was photographed for a first June record of that species in the county. American Bitterns were once very rare breeders in Florida but are now seen almost exclusively in winter. While out combing Marion County for her June Challenge list, Alice Horst found this striking Mississippi Kite.

David Hartgrove



Mississippi Kite, photo by Alice Horst

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Bird Flies To The Moon and Back, Sort Of

Articles have appeared in the Pelican about Red Knots on several occasions. These small, 4 to 6 ounce birds make annual migrations of 20,000+ miles round trip, from the Arctic tundra to Tierra Del Fuego at the southern tip of South America. In 1995 a young Red Knot was given band number B95. Over the years this banded bird was resighted by a number of researchers. In the past few years when the bird was seen again it was assumed that it might be for the last time. In the years since it was banded its migration travels would have taken it a distance equivalent to a round trip to the moon. Hence the bird's nick name, "Moonbird." Here's a [link](#) to an article about the bird from the Nature Conservancy.

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Blue Spring Alliance Offers Course

The Blue Spring Alliance is once again offering the Springshed Academy, which will include six weekly class sessions to be held on Fridays, starting September 12, 2014. Click on this [link](#) for more information.

Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularius*)

a feature of Everyday Birding by Ray Scory

I walked by my kitchen window and watched a small, stiff winged bird fly rapidly, low over my backyard pond. It lands and begins an exaggerated body bobbing, repeatedly tilting back and forth from head to tail, feeding. Unique. The Spotted Sandpiper is back. Alone, ready to glean minute bits of energy from the edges of the pond during its brief stopover here before continuing on to its breeding grounds in the sub Arctic regions of Canada and Alaska, or to its wintering grounds as far as South America.

Yes, I would like to think that every little bobbing Spotted Sandpiper that stops by my pond is merely stopping by for a few days before continuing onto exotic places in South America or the upper reaches of Canada. In reality it is the most wide spread breeding sandpiper in North America. It breeds from the upper reaches of Alaska and Canada to the southern states of the continent. It winters in our southern states to Mexico and South America.

This is a very busy bird, covering great distances in migration. Migrants arrive in Florida in mid-July and return north as late as May. On their wintering grounds they lose the bold, black chest spots. My impression of the black spots of their breeding plumage reminds me of the streaky, black spots of the Brown Thrasher or the Wood Thrush's black, spotty look of its breeding plumage.

I am on the lookout for the Spotted Sandpiper whenever I am out near the edges of fresh water ponds, lakes, streams or freshwater wetlands. I photographed one in breeding plumage on the side of Bio Lab Road, Merritt Island NWR long ago. Mostly, I have been able to collect photographs of them at my backyard retention pond. This year, for the first time, two came together. The handbook and reference "Florida's Birds" ©1990 shows the Spotted Sandpiper present in Florida every month except June. My yard records show the non-breeding sandpiper visiting my pond during February, March and August. The breeding plumaged Spotted Sandpiper has appeared during April, May, July, September.

This very interesting sandpiper prefers to travel alone and is seldom seen in flocks. On their breeding grounds the female mates with more than one male and leaves the incubation up to the male. Females that don't find a mate will help incubate and rear other chicks.

I enjoy keeping a yard list, listing the birds on a quarterly basis in categories of feeder birds, yard birds and others. Now and then, I will flip through the pages to see if I can discover patterns of appearances in my yard. The Spotted Sandpiper is one of them. It's nice to know that this unique bird visits my back yard pond and allows me to dream. To dream of its travels and experiences and through my observations I imagine the life it leads.

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Welcome to Our New Members

We welcome our new and returning members: Jean Beckwith, Susan Blank, Leanne Fedele, Ben Harrington, Marie Heisler, Bob Hillenbrand, Jenny Meyers, Mimi Munro, Frederick Telling and Ralph Vosdingh. We hope to see you in September at our next meeting or on one of the exciting field trips we're now planning.



Spotted Sandpiper in alternate plumage, photographed in May.



Spotted Sandpiper in basic plumage, photographed in September.

photos by Ray Scory, taken along the shore of a retention pond near his home in Port Orange.

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Audubon Adventures For Our Local Schools

Audubon Adventures is the 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. Created by the National Audubon Society, each kit contains four different editions of the award-winning Audubon Adventures Student Nature News Magazine (32 copies of each).

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!

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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