

The Pelican

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

Vol. 60-No.2 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon August, 2014



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Thoughts from on High

In the words of Mark Lane, columnist for The Daytona Beach News-Journal, we have reached ultra-summer here in central Florida. Everything slows down in the heat and humidity. The birds are up at first light and hiding in tree cavities, deep canopy or marsh grasses by 10:30 a.m. when the air gets steamy. Now may be a time to reflect on our birding goals for the fall and winter.

Our Field Trip Co-Chairs, Joan and Chuck Tague, are finalizing the list of official field trips which will begin in September. Details will be posted on our website and a quick reference card will be forwarded to all our members. We look forward to seeing our regular field trippers again in September and encourage them to bring someone new on a future trip. We also invite all our members who've never been on a field trip to join us. We'd love to have some teens or young adults participate.

Over the many years that I attended workshops at Cape May Bird Observatory, I picked up some tips for enhancing the enjoyment and learning experience of field trips.

* Stay together as a group and keep conversation to a minimum so you'll be able to hear the birds calling/singing/moving. You'll also have the best chance of hearing someone call out when they've spotted a bird. Everyone has the best opportunity to find the bird before it moves on if the first announcement is heard by all and we don't have a chorus of "where?" or "what did he say?"

* Birders love to share the birds they spot with everyone in the group. But don't take your glasses off the bird unless you've had a satisfying look and you are positive about the identification. Describe the size, shape, profile and field marks to the group as you make your ID.

* Another, more difficult aspect of calling out the bird you just spotted, is to give clear, concise directions so that others are able to find the bird. Look for something to use as the reference point; i.e.: See the tallest pine tree in the group of four. Follow the trunk to the longest branch angling out to the right. The bird is in the pinecone clump at the end of that branch. Using the reference point allows everyone in the group, no matter where they are standing or how tall/short they are to have the best chance of finding the bird.

Hope to see you at a future HRA field trip.

Paula Wehr

Calendar & Events

There is **NO MONTHLY MEETING** in August. Our 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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October 3-5, 2014 – [3rd Annual Wings & Wildflowers Festival](#) at Venetian Gardens, Leesburg, FL. Keynote speaker is Greg Miller, inspiration behind the movie "The Big Year," Stacy Tornio, editor of "Birds & Blooms" and Roger Hammer, director of Castellow Hammock Nature Center.

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Pack Your Bags, We're Going To Cuba

If you want to see a Bee Hummingbird or a Blue-headed Quail Dove, the only place to do so is in Cuba. They're two of the 28 species endemic to Cuba. The [Caribbean Conservation Trust](#) has been running birding trips to Cuba for over 17 years. They have experienced guides, comfortable, 1st class accommodations and safe, well planned itineraries. The trip begins on December 1st with a charter flight from Miami to Havana. It ends 12 days later back in Havana, with the possible extension of a one day tour of old Havana for a nominal extra fee. All ground transportation, fees, tips, etc. are included in the price of 4,375.00 per person, double occupancy. Single supplements are an additional 425.00 per person. Final payment is due by September 15th. So there's no time to lose. We need a minimum of 12 people to make this trip happen and a maximum of 15. We have 7 already so that means just 8 more openings. For all the information, call David Hartgrove, 386-788-2630 or e-mail: birdman9@earthlink.net.

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Lyonia Environmental Learning Center Programs

Saturday, Aug. 2nd, 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm Earthflight: Europe. Beat the summertime heat and join LEC staff indoors for an amazing look at storks flying thousands of miles to reach their breeding grounds in Africa. This free program is sponsored by the Friends of Lyonia Environmental Center. Meet at Lyonia Environmental Center, 2150 Eustace Ave. Deltona

Saturday, Aug. 23rd, 8:30 am to 9:30 am "Early bird gets the worm." LEC staff will lead this hike into Lyonia Preserve to observe what native birds are out and about searching for food. Bring binoculars and cameras for this wonderful birding opportunity! 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. And plan to stick around afterward for a history of the Everglades presented by Zach Zacharias, of the Museum of Arts and Sciences. Learn things you never knew, like the story of the 120 year old hermit, the first airboat and more. Call the number above for more information.

Conservation Notes

In a surprise announcement that went almost unremarked upon in the media, the Obama administration last week opened the entire eastern seaboard to offshore oil and gas exploration using seismic canons that produce sound levels dangerous to ocean wildlife. Fish, turtles and marine mammals all use sound to communicate and to locate prey and mates. These seismic canons kill fish eggs and larvae and scare fish away from important habitats. They also likely deafen marine mammals, like manatees, dolphins and whales. This is all in preparation for the opening of vast areas of the eastern continental shelf to oil and gas exploration in 2018. A move eagerly anticipated by the petroleum industry.

Having promised a change in the way Washington works, the President has been a serious disappointment to his supporters in the environmental movement. The human race faces the greatest crisis in its history as our planet's climate warms in response to the carbon dioxide our fossil fueled mechanisms continue to spew into the atmosphere. Encouraging the continued use of these fossil fuels through more production means the new, cleaner technologies we need for the future are pushed further off into that future. And at what cost? There are fewer than 500 northern right whales left in the world. They come to our coastline in winter to breed and have their young. How many of them will we see beached and bloated as a result of this irresponsible decision? How many dolphins and other marine mammals will suffer permanent damage or die from these tests? What price are we as a society willing to pay for "cheap" gas?

Of course it isn't cheap. The real costs of oil and gas production aren't included in the price we pay. There are other ways to pass those costs onto tax payers. Fracking does irreparable harm to ground water supplies and takes millions of gallons of precious water that could be used for agriculture and converts it into hazardous wastes. The natural gas produced by fracking is driving the conversion of coal fired power plants to far cleaner gas powered units. Yet, while we reduce the soot and other damaging particles from coal as we power our electrical based society, we still pump lots of CO2 into our atmosphere instead of increasing our use of solar, wind and other renewables.

Neil deGrasse Tyson put it best, "We just can't seem to stop burning up all those buried trees from way back in the carboniferous age, in the form of coal, and the remains of ancient plankton, in the form of oil and gas. If we could, we'd be home free climate wise. Instead, we're dumping carbon dioxide into the atmosphere at a rate the Earth hasn't seen since the great climate catastrophes of the past, the ones that led to mass extinctions. We just can't seem to break our addiction to the kinds of fuel that will bring back a climate last seen by the dinosaurs, a climate that will drown our coastal cities and wreak havoc on the environment and our ability to feed ourselves. All the while, the glorious sun pours immaculate free energy down upon us, more than we will ever need. Why can't we summon the ingenuity and courage of the generations that came before us? The dinosaurs never saw that asteroid coming. What's our excuse?"

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. 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!

We're Having A Birding Workshop

Birding is a fast-growing, enjoyable hobby and central Florida is the ideal place to learn its techniques. Join experts from Halifax River Audubon and experience the wonders of fall migration while developing your skills. No experience is necessary. The workshop includes three classroom sessions and three outdoor workshops. This is ideal for beginners but more experienced birders will gain valuable knowledge too.

Indoor workshops will be held on Tuesday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. October 28, November 4 and November 11.

Field workshops will be held on Saturday mornings:

November 1 – 8:00 a.m. at Tomoka State Park*

November 8– 8:30 a.m. at Port Orange Bridge*

November 15 – 7:00 a.m. at Merritt Island NWR*

* Field workshop details are subject to change.

Place: Prince of Peace Church Hall, 600 S. Nova Rd., Ormond Beach

Bring your binoculars to all classes and field workshops.

Donation: \$25.00 check, payable to Halifax River Audubon.

Mail to: Halifax River Audubon c/o Joan Tague

22 Creek Bluff Way, Ormond Beach, FL 32174

Contact the instructors @ 386-253-1166. Or email: Joan Tague at babyowl@mac.com or Chuck Tague at kingrail@mac.com.

Class size is limited, so sign up early. Children are encouraged. Minors and a parent/guardian pay only one \$25 donation. Check with instructors to determine if your child's age is appropriate.

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Welcome To Our New Members

We welcome our new and returning members: Karen Collins, Karen Feller, Eileen Pazos and Marilyn Putnam. We hope to see you at our next meeting in September or on an upcoming field trip.

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Joe Misiaszek is a birder and photographer who divides his time between Lakeland and Sturbridge, Ma. He recently captured photos of a female Ruby-throated Hummingbird feeding a youngster. Here's one. Another is on a following page.



Ruby-throated Hummingbirds photo by Joe Misiaszek

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

a feature of Everyday Birding

by Ray Scory

...in defense of the very singular House Sparrow.

Finding itself

on cement, wood, grass or rot

building a nest is such an art.

Little brown bird strutting about

adding life to an unmoveable thing.

It doesn't matter you cannot sing

that you don't have a melodious voice

like other birds of your sing song race.

Little brown bird regal in brown

gray in contrast and black to match

ready to go out and occupy a new land

ready to raise your industrious clan.

Released in Brooklyn, New York, USA in 1851. The ubiquitous House Sparrow rapidly spread across the nation, reaching the Rocky Mountains by 1900. Known for its chatty and aggressive behavior, it has adapted well to both cities and farms, as well as Mall garden centers. In fact, in years past when I wanted to round out a Christmas Count list with a House Sparrow at the end of the day, a garden center was the place to visit. Never a miss at the Mall. This little brown ball of energy is an experienced city dweller. However, if they find seeds at a farm, they will become farmers. They adapt quite well to living among people - not intimidated. They build their nests where they find open space: behind a store sign, at a garden center, under a bridge, in a traffic light or a bird house whether occupied or not. Very flexible.

Dressed in a gray, brown suit of various shades with impressive accessories of a gray cap, formal black bib and handsome black stripes on the back of its coat completes the House Sparrow's dressy attire. If my appreciation for the appearance of the House Sparrow surprised anyone. I can only reply, "I like the color brown and all its variations." I like the white, green or bluish eggs marked with gray or brown splashes. The House Sparrow's appearance reaches a subtle level of beauty. The color brown is a natural color that evokes a sense of strength and reliability, note the UPS theme color. Brown expresses a feeling of warmth and comfort. It represents wholesomeness, earthiness, steadfastness, simplicity, friendliness, dependability and health. Needless to say, the House sparrow fits many of these qualities.

While the description of the House Sparrow so far fits the male of the species. I would be grossly neglectful if I did not include my admiration for the female attire of the species. This bird is dressed in light to medium shades of brown with no distinguishable markings. David Hartgrove, longtime Conservation Chair of Halifax River Audubon says, "photos of the female House Sparrow are one of the most frequently posted images on birding list serves seeking identification help." However, I personally say that she is a most subtle thing of beauty waiting to be discovered. Look to the House Sparrow for its rich variations of brown, soft grays and strong blacks.

Bird Calls - House Sparrow: a stay at home bird - doesn't migrate; certain studies indicate that the House Sparrow can reach altitudes of 18,000 feet; weights about 0.85 - 1.39 ounces, measures 5.5 inches.



Male House Sparrow photo by Ray Scory



Female House Sparrow photo by Ray Scory

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Call or Write Your Congress Person

At the recommendation of Julie Hill-Gabriel, Audubon Florida, the HRA Board agreed to support House Bill HR 996, the Invasive Fish and Wildlife Prevention Act of 2013 (and its Senate companion bill, S 1153). Florida is ground zero in the fight against invasive, exotic species. While Burmese pythons get all of the headlines, it's the smaller reptiles that will do far more damage to our native species. South Florida is over run with all manner of bearded dragons, monitors and iguanas. They climb trees and eat birds and their eggs. It's time to do something about this invasion before it gets any worse. And reptiles aren't the only exotic we need to be watchful for. Florida will soon have no more red bay trees thanks to a tiny beetle that entered the US through the port of Savannah. The National Environmental Coalition on Invasive Species is heading up the fight to get this legislation passed. You can learn more about them [here](#). Phone calls are good. A hand written letter really does get results. Follow the links below to get the contact information for our legislators.

[The US House of Representatives](#)

[The US Senate](#)

David Hartgrove



Carolina Wren photo by Chuck Tague



The Nest In The Geranium Pot photo by Paula Wehr

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Below is the other photo of the Ruby-throated Hummingbird feeding her youngster.



Ruby-throated Hummingbirds photo by Joe Misiaszek

HRA member, Eileen Pazos, wrote this for the Pelican

The Very Persistent Carolina Wren

Today I cheerfully sent off a special donation to the National Audubon Society. I did this not only because I want to aid in the preservation and protection of all birds and wildlife, but because of the personal relationship I've developed recently with the Carolina Wrens on our property. For the past two months or so the pair has been trying diligently to build a nest and start up a family. But these tiny birds have been having a very hard time of it lately and it's been frustrating for both the birds and me.

The first nest they built this spring was a lovely masterpiece sheltered on a window ledge in our tool shed. It was my bathroom window as well, so I had an excellent view for watching the nest building and forthcoming hatchlings. How exciting, since I had never observed this at close hand! But the plans and hopes were to no avail. Either the men working around the property -- or my occasional raising of the frosted window to get a better peek -- scared them away.

Their second pick for a nest site -- on a small ledge under a hose caddy fixture on a wall -- was not a very smart choice. I hate to say it, but I guess the Carolina Wren can also be uncommonly dumb at times. Even though they have an intelligent-sounding scientific name: "*Thryothorus ludovicianus*" My sister and I had to thwart this nest building by placing a stuffed animal toy in the open space.

Their third choice turned out to be the best --but only with a helping human hand. We had noticed a lot of fluttering activity around our garden under the banana trees. Upon further inspection I found the beginnings of another nest in a geranium flower pot. I understand (from Aunt Florence's bird guide) that this is not an uncommon practice for these birds. The pot was situated on a decorative 3 ft high (doric) column, which might have been safe from some predators like snakes. But I guess the wrens hadn't noticed that this location was right opposite the cat door! Although I am proud to tell all the ornithophiles out there that neither of our two stray adopted cats have caught birds while living with us -- only squirrels, anoles and moles --such an easy catch of hatchlings would be just too tempting.

Obviously something had to be done. The column was a pretty good idea (I don't think snakes can navigate this sort of thing) so I looked around for a safer place to put it. I found one in a sheltered alcove where two sections of the house meet. Here the nest would be protected from the hot sun, rain and wind. To further protect the site from jumping-type predators (perhaps the cats) I placed a plastic zig-zag fence around the column. It took about two days for the wrens to realize that the nest site had been relocated, but when they did discover it, they continued with their nest building, tunneling into the dirt in the pot and lining the nest with dried leaves and such.

Well, there's sad news coming, but then a bit of renewed hope. The two lovely speckled eggs that were soon laid, disappeared after five days. We have no idea who or what was responsible. But then - over a period of 10 days perhaps -- I found one egg-- then two-- then three-- in the same nest. The wrens were trying again! What courage and perseverance! What a will to survive and propagate! I was happy again. Happier still when I got a close look at mother wren sitting on her eggs, and this time she didn't fly away as before. Instead she looked me straight in the eye, and appeared to say, "I'm okay with you now." She had the most bright, beautiful-- and huge eyes for her size. We established an instant rapport, on my part at least. Perhaps I'm guilty of anthropomorphizing. I was in fact, "smitten" by this tiny, brave creature. That's how the situation now stands at the homestead with our Carolina Wren family, and I'm praying for a very happy ending.

Eileen Pazos

A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors

**Florida Power & Light, Garden Club of the Halifax Country,
The Ormond Beach Garden Club and Colonial Colony**

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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