

The Pelican

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

Volume 60-No.4 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
October, 2014



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Thoughts from on High

Based on the number of fishing trips taken per year, the number of residents and visitors involved and the number of record holding catches, the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission named Florida, "The Fishing Capital of the World." While the big five species – sailfish, tarpon, red drum, spotted trout and snook – are prize catches, all the fish in the food chain are critical to sustainability. Perhaps most critical are the forage fish at the bottom of the food chain. Many are spawned in our estuaries and supply food for larger fish, marine mammals, sea birds and waders, as well as being ground into fish oil for humans and fish meal for plant fertilizer. Saltwater fishing has a \$7.1 billion impact on our economy with 2.4 million visitors and residents actively fishing in Florida waters in 2011. Over 65,000 jobs were attributed to the fishing industry in 2012. Florida's economy is heavily dependent on sustaining a balance in our fresh and salt water habitats. Being at the bottom of the food chain, small fish live in tightly-packed schools which provide protection from predation. But this very closeness also makes them vulnerable to having an entire community caught in one net.

At our September meeting Cameron Jaggard, Sr. Associate, US Oceans, The Pew Charitable Trusts, outlined growing concerns about protecting forage fish. At present forage fish comprise 20 percent of commercial take, but only two species have a management plan. Recent research, led in part by Ellen Pikitch, PhD, of Stony Brook University underscored the critical link played by forage fish in ocean food chains. They feed on plankton which produce energy from the sun. Then these fish transfer this energy to seabirds, marine mammals and larger fish. Dr. Pikitch eloquently stated, "Pilchards turn sunshine into snook." That same statement could be revised to "Forage fish turn sunshine into Roseate Spoonbills (or whatever water bird one likes best.) Because forage fish are so important to the health of birds, The Pew Charitable Trust and Audubon Florida partnered to create the report, "Fins and Feathers: Why Little Fish Are a Big Deal to Florida's Coastal Waterbirds." Click on this [link](#) to view or download this 48-page pdf document which includes stunning illustrations as well as summaries and details of all the research.

Paula Wehr

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Welcome To Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Betty Delanoy, Thomas & Susan Jarosik, Christiane McCarthy, Lani Van Petten, Marcia Varga, Adam Winnie and Liliane Yates. We hope to see you at at meeting or on a field trip soon.

Calendar & Events

Monday, October 20th, Program Meeting: "Oyster Reef Restoration Project". We've all read about the water quality issues in the Indian River Lagoon and some of the recommendations for improvements. One important project is restoration of oyster beds. A single oyster filters 40 to 50 gallons of water per day. The Marine Discovery Center in New Smyrna Beach has an ongoing initiative, in partnership with several seafood restaurants, to build a base for oysters to use as habitat. Annie Morgan, Shoreline Restoration Coordinator at MDC will provide details on this topic. The doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. Our speaker begins at 7:00 p.m. A brief business meeting follows.

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Field Trips

Wednesday, October 1st, Buschman Park. This field trip meets at the park, 4575 Spruce Creek Road, Port Orange. This will be coming into peak Fall migration. So we'll be looking for warblers, vireos and some of the flycatchers that are seen in our area only during migration. We'll be finished by noon, so no need for a lunch this trip. Meet trip leaders, Chuck & Joan Tague, in the parking lot at 8:00 am. Questions, call them at 386-253-1166.

Friday, October 10th, GTM Estuary Preserve. Join Chuck & Joan Tague on this trip north of St Augustine to this great spot. The trails host migrant warblers. The shoreline has gulls, terns and shorebirds. Plan on a hike of over a mile and perhaps an extra pair of shoes that can get wet. Bring lunch and meet at Ormond Town Square, corner of Granada & Williamson Blvds., behind Chick-fil-A. Questions, call 386-253-1166.

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Field Trips With Others

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society: SEVAS has two trips in October: Friday, Oct. 10th, 7:00 am, to Washington Oaks State Gardens and Sat., Oct. 25th, 8:00 am to Spruce Creek Park. Meet at Market Square, corner of US 1 & Indian River Blvd., Edgewater. Questions, call Gail Domroski, 386-453-1211.

West Volusia Audubon Society: Has three trips in October: Sat., 10/4, is their Fall Migration Count. Call Harry Robinson to get on a team: 386-943-8342. On Tues., 10/14, join them on a trip to Washington Oaks State Gardens. Meet us at the NE corner of the Deland Post Office parking lot on E New York Avenue (SR44) at 7:45 am. On Friday, 10/17, join them for a trip to Audubon Park in Deltona. Meet at the NW corner of Courtland Blvd. and Doyle Rd., Deltona, in the middle of the Shopping Center parking lot at 7:45 am. Questions, call Eli Schaperow: 407-314-7965.



When you mark your ballot on Election Day, the most important action you can take for the environment is to vote yes on Amendment One. The Chamber of Commerce and other big business mouthpieces are starting their campaigns against this amendment. The hyperbole will be designed to scare the uninformed voter into thinking that this is a new tax to be levied on them. Another group, catering to the truly delusional among us, has been screaming about this amendment being part of some clandestine plan by the United Nations to take over the country and place us all in reeducation camps. In the back of my mind I hear the theme from Twilight Zone being whistled by some guy with an aluminum foil beanie.

The reason we need to pass this amendment is that our state Legislature several years ago decided that they were free to ignore the wishes of their constituents. The state's budget plan had gone down the tubes when the banks wrecked the economy through all kinds of mortgage fraud and greed. The Legislature already had a plan to give tax breaks to big corporations, regardless of the problems this might cause in formulating a budget. In order to fund these they quit funding Preservation 2000 and Florida Forever. Both of these programs had been approved by an overwhelming majority of Florida voters. But the voters can't afford to write those big checks to the legislator's reelection campaigns like corporate donors. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know what happened next. Our programs were gutted and the big guys skipped off to the bank with bigger profits. Which allows them to write bigger campaign donation checks.

Amendment One will simply enshrine in the state's Constitution a dedicated funding source for environmental programs that benefit all Floridians. Some of our biggest challenges, like fresh water recharge, endangered lands acquisition and state park upgrades will have guaranteed funding that will be harder for the Legislature to get their sticky fingers on. And this is not a new tax. The funding mechanism is already in there and was the source of funds for both programs. Every time a piece of property is sold a small fee is charged and stamps are issued and affixed to the document to indicate that the purchase is legal and documented. This is the meaning of the term, "doc stamps." The amendment guarantees that one third of the funds collected from these stamps will be used for environmental programs like clean water, parks, beaches, etc. Please, vote yes for this important amendment.

David Hartgrove

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Audubon Adventures

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. Recent changes to offer digital versions of the course have significantly lowered its cost. Any amount is deeply appreciated and just 16.00 will fund the cost for a classroom for a year. Send your donation to Halifax River Audubon, P.O. Box 166, Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166. Be sure to note on your check that it's a donation to Audubon Adventures. Thank you!

Bonnie Cary, Naturalist with Volusia County's Land Management Department, has some exciting events planned for October. Here's a chance to see some of the environmental jewels our county has purchased with Volusia Forever funds and learn at the same time.

Friday, October 3rd- If you have a canoe or kayak, join Bonnie for a paddle along the St Johns River. Meet at 9:00 am at the Lemon Bluff Boat Ramp, 907 Lemon Bluff Road, Osteen. Paddlers will set out from Lemon Bluff Boat Ramp and take a leisurely 2 hour paddle on the St. Johns River and observe shoreline flora and fauna along the way. Life jackets and whistle are required.

Saturday, October 11th- Join Bonnie for a guided hike at Wire Grass Prairie Preserve, 1751 Lopez Road (off Pell Road) Osteen. Take a 3 mile guided hike on Wiregrass Prairie Preserve to see and experience this Volusia County Conservation Lands property and learn about the plants and animals that call it home. Wear comfortable clothes that match the weather, hiking or walking shoes. Bring water to drink. Meet at 9:00 am for this 2 hour event. Be prepared for rough roads in this area.

Friday, October 17th- Star Tour of the Night Sky at Wire Grass Prairie Preserve. Dr. Hugh Ward, astronomy educator for over 40 years, will lead a celestial tour of the night sky above Wiregrass Prairie Preserve and answer relevant questions. Adults and families will observe via their eyes and telescopes: constellations, bright stars, planets, star clusters, Messier objects, and maybe a Comet! Bring: Folding chair, insect spray, flashlight and your own telescope, if you have one. Arrive before sunset. The Preserve is located at 1751 Lopez Road (off Pell Road) in Osteen. Be prepared for rough roads in this area. Please register for this event by calling 386-736-5927, ext.21263 or her cell, 386-804-0437.

Tuesday, October 28th- Longleaf Pine Preserve Eco-buggy Tour. Meet at the east entrance to the Preserve, 4551 Pioneer Trail New Smyrna Beach at 9:00 am. Take an eco-buggy tour of Longleaf Pine Preserve. Participants will experience pine flatwoods, cypress domes and swamps on a riding tour with exploratory stops along the way to discuss wetlands and their importance in natural habitats. Space is limited to 27. Please register by calling Bonnie at 386-736-5927, ext. 21263 or her cell, 386-804-0437.

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Environmental Videos

One of our members, Captain Jim Boyle, forwarded this link a few weeks ago. It's only about 4.5 minutes and it has stunning views of Yellowstone. It describes how the reintroduction of wolves to the Park was a benefit to all sorts of other animals and even the Park's future. Enjoy!

Mark Vance is a photographer and film maker residing in Sarasota. Earlier this year he spent a lot of time documenting a Sandhill Crane family's exploits. Below are links to the brief films he's posted on You Tube.

Number One shows the eggs and the birds' location in a retention pond in a residential area.

Number Two shows the first chick's initial experiences with his new world just after hatching.

Number Three shows the arrival of the second chick. As it opens, notice how alert the parents are at the sound of Laughing Gulls calling off camera.

Number Four shows the colts' (young Sandhills are called colts) first forays into the world they'll grow up in on their first day out of the nest.

Our thanks to Mark for his permission to use these. Visit Mark's website for views of his stunning photography.

We're Looking For Content

Publishing a monthly newsletter often means finding enough information to fill the pages. You can help with this. If you've written a piece you're proud of or if you're a photographer and have some photos with accompanying text, send them along electronically to this [address](#). Submissions should be no longer than 500 words. Photos should be under 150 kb please. Thanks!

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Pelagic Trip Report

On Sunday, September 28th, The Friends of The Marine Science Center hosted another of their pelagic birding trips aboard the Pastime Princess. We left the dock in New Smyrna Beach at 4:00 am and headed out into the early morning darkness. By sunrise we were 20 miles offshore and began seeing Black Terns. Soon we were seeing scattered Bridled Terns, a few Common Terns and Sooty Terns. The first Cory's Shearwater was seen off the port side of the boat about 30 yards out going away from us. The seas were running about 3 to 4 feet and the trip was pretty smooth as the captain steered around the numerous rain squalls. By 11:00 am we were out about 60 miles when a migrating female Common Yellow-throat flew aboard and landed on the deck. It was clear that she was exhausted. Soon however she was hopping around on the deck and disappeared under the large chest freezer. With so many other things to draw our attention we soon forgot about the little bird.



Female Common Yellow-throat, *photo by David Hartgrove*

About 4:30 pm the little bird showed up again, having flown out long enough to realize that perhaps this wasn't such a good idea. She circled the boat and landed again several times. She was last seen when we were about a mile out from the mouth of Ponce Inlet. About 10 years ago another female Common Yellow-throat flew aboard the boat when we were far out at sea. She spent the rest of the day hopping around in the cabin under the benches and tables looking for tiny insects and spiders. It was dark as we sailed in under the North Causeway Bridge on our way back in. I happened to look up in time to see her fly out into the darkness. She'd hitch hiked to a place where food was easier to find and her south bound journey could continue.

David Hartgrove

The Murderous Gourmet

Last month was the 100th anniversary of the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon. A bird that was hunted out of existence for the tables of diners in the late 19th century. Perhaps with this anniversary in mind, [Birdlife International](#) has been putting pressure on France to live up to its commitments to protect the Ortolan Bunting.

This small member of the Emberizidae family is protected under both European Union and French law. Over the past 30 years the European population has declined by over 80%. In France, the species is especially threatened because its population has dropped 42% over the past 11 years. Prior to the extension of protection to the birds in the mid 1990's, as many as 50,000 were caught annually.

In France the law has been routinely ignored because the eating of Ortolan is considered a rite of passage for budding gourmets. It's also seen as a cultural heritage icon and it's a significant pocketbook issue for the poachers. Somewhere between 10,000 and 30,000 Ortolan Buntings are poached and sold for up 150 Euros, about 119.00, a piece. Unfortunately for the poor birds this high price is the result of what happens after they're captured. Capture is done by having caged birds sing to attract wild birds. Once caught the birds are placed in either dark boxes or blinded. Their reaction to the lack of visual stimuli is to eat constantly. This causes the birds to double or triple their regular weight in a few short weeks. They are then plunged into a vat of Armagnac and drowned.

The rest of this sordid tale is enough to make civilized people shake their heads in wonder. The birds are plucked, roasted whole and are ready for the table. The eating of Ortolan is a truly bizarre event. The diner places a large napkin over his or her head. Then the entire bird is placed in the mouth with only the head protruding through the lips. The diner bites down, the bird's head drops onto the plate or into the napkin and the diner continues to chew. The tiny bones and inner organs are part of the meal. In fact, when the stomach and lungs are broken by the chewing action, the remains of the Armagnac the bird was drowned in are released into the mouth of the diner and this is thought to be the crowning moment. The practice of covering one's head with the napkin or towel is explained as being necessary to fully capture all of the volatile aromas of the dish. However, the first person rumored to have done this was a priest, Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin. His explanation was that he did so to cover his shame and gluttony from God's eyes.

On September 4th French environmental activists launched raids on known poaching locations, releasing the caged birds and retaining any that had been mutilated by blinding. These were then turned over to French authorities as proof that the practice was going on. In 2013 the French wing of Bird Life International had filed a formal complaint with the European Commission protesting that both the EU and the French government were doing nothing to protect the birds. The Commission responded by issuing a stern letter to the French government that if the law wasn't enforced, heavy sanctions would be placed on France by the other EU members. Perhaps this murderous meal will now cease to be served and the Ortolan Bunting can begin an uncertain climb back to sustainable numbers.

David Hartgrove

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Birding the Dry Tortugas

Being in the Dry Tortugas during Spring Migration is something that should be on any birder's bucket list. [Florida Nature Tours](#) has been taking birders to the Tortugas longer than anyone else. Check out the site and make your plans to be there next April.

A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors

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

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