

# The Pelican

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

Volume 60-No.5 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon  
November, 2014



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Thoughts from on High*

The southern migration of “confusing fall warblers” continues into November. Early migrants like the Blackburnian Warbler and American Redstart were spotted in local parks in September and October. Birders in Ft. DeSoto reported as many as 20 species in a single day during early October. As of mid-October, when I’m writing this article, I still haven’t seen our most abundant winter warbler visitor, the Yellow-rumped Warbler, but we know they are on the way. A large number of the warbler species which migrate up and down the Atlantic Coast make stops in central Florida. Identifying tiny, quick-moving birds in fully-leaved trees is never easy, but in the fall when migrating warblers are sporting a more drab set of feathers, the task becomes even more difficult.

The male Black-throated Blue Warbler in spring is a distinctive, handsome warbler with a white breast and under belly, a black face and throat and beautiful dark blue back and wings, with a distinctive white “pocket square” on his wing. Even the drab olive colored spring female sports the signature white square. But the first-year Black-throated Blue Warbler migrating from the north in the fall is a plain, drab warbler with an unmarked upper wing, curved white supercilium, white lower eye-arc and often no white square on the wing. What is a birder to do??

Princeton University Press, publishers of The Warbler Guide by Tom Stephenson and Scott Whittle, has provided a series of Quick Finder guides available for free download and printing. These one-page full-color documents show side-by-side comparisons of just the head, just the under tail view, 45° angles and side views of both spring and fall plumage. Click [here](#) to visit the Princeton University Press website and the downloadable Quick Finders. Our thanks not only to PUP for providing this valuable reference tool, but to Chuck Tague for sharing the information. Chuck suggests printing the sheet, laminating them, and keeping them in your field backpack. My copies are already tucked into my favorite field guide in the warbler section.

*Paula Wehr*

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## Welcome To Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Bert & Betty Brown, Sharon Donohue, Clara Fowler, Patricia Gough, Robert Klenner, Katherine Martin, Ken Mitchell, Ann (Ayin) Moore, Christine Reinhart and John & Carol Woods. We hope to see you at our monthly meetings or on one of our excellent field trips soon.

## Calendar, Field Trips & Events

**Monday, Nov. 17th- Program Meeting:** “Research and Discovery in Florida’s Mangrove Forests: Unlocking the Secrets of the Mangrove Cuckoo.” Rachel Mullin, Research Biologist, Ecostudies Institute, will discuss our current understanding of the natural history of Mangrove Cuckoos in Florida, the mysteries that still surround it and how the Ecostudies Institute has been studying this elusive bird. 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.

### Field Trips

**Friday, Nov. 21st- Lake Apopka:** Join Field Trip Co-Chairs, Chuck & Joan Tague, on this trip to one of Florida’s best birding spots. We will meet at International Square, located on Int’l Speedway Blvd. just east of I-95 behind the Krystal Restaurant at 6:30 am. Bring lunch and plan on some walking. Questions? Call 386-253-1166.

### Field Trips With Others

**Saturday, Nov. 22nd- Lake Apopka:** West Volusia Audubon’s, Harry Robinson, literally wrote the book on birding Lake Apopka. Join Harry and the WVAS folks for their trip to this exciting spot. Meet them at the NE corner of the Deland Post Office parking lot on E New York Avenue. at 8:00 am to car pool and bring lunch. Questions? Call 386-801-4472.

**Friday, Nov. 14th- Otter Lake Trail:** Join our Southeast Volusia Audubon Society friends for this walk along the newest trail in our area. It’s a 2.2 mile, paved biking and hiking trail in New Smyrna Beach that includes a bridge over Turnbull Creek. Meet the group in Edgewater at Florida Shores Plaza parking lot at the corner of Ridgewood Ave and Indian River Blvd. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Gail Domroski, 386-428-0447.

**Saturday, Nov. 8th- Pelagic Trip:** Join Michael Brothers on this trip to see birds off our coast. Sponsored by The Friends of The Marine Science Center, the trip will leave the dock aboard the Pastime Princess in New Smyrna Beach at 6:00 am and return around 6:00 pm. Here’s a chance to see shearwaters, petrels, phalaropes, jaegers and others. Cost is 190.00 per person. Send your check to: Friends of the Marine Science Center (Pelagic Trip) 100 Lighthouse Drive, Ponce Inlet, FL 32127. Questions? Call Michael at 386-304-5543. Here’s a [link](#) to a map to the boat.

## Wings On The Wind Festival

**Saturday, Nov. 15th-** The Marine Science Center’s annual event will include live raptor programs, exhibitors, lectures, bird-related arts and crafts, nature-inspired artworks and kids activities. The fun begins at 10:00 am and they hope to release a bird from the rehab center at the end of the festivities at 3:00 pm.



As Eric Draper, Executive Director of Audubon Florida, has been saying over and over for the past two years, there is nothing more important that we can do to preserve and protect conservation land in Florida than to Vote YES on Amendment 1 in November. Amendment 1 will set aside 33% of Florida's existing excise tax on documents (also known as the documentary stamp tax which is paid when real estate is sold) and guarantee that these funds can be used only for conservation purposes, including keeping pollution out of our drinking water, rivers, lakes, springs and coastal waters as well as protecting natural areas and wildlife habitat. This amendment creates no new tax. It only stipulates that approximately one-third of this specialized tax already collected can only be used for that purpose. Please, if you haven't already voted by mail or at one of the early voting sites, remember to vote on Tuesday, November 4th and vote "YES" on Amendment 1. We need your vote. Visit [Vote YES on 1](#) for more information.

In a recent press release the Florida Parks Service had a lot to be proud of. Between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014 over 27.1 million people visited the various properties in the state park system. This generated a whopping 2.1 billion dollars in direct economic impact to the areas around these parks. They also won their third National Gold Medal of Excellence. "People come from around the world to visit Florida's award-winning state parks and state trails," said DEP Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. "Our parks offer the best in natural and cultural resources and contribute to the economy of Florida - supporting jobs and local businesses." How many jobs are dependent on our award winning parks system you might ask? The answer is 29,396!

The money that will be generated by approval of Amendment 1 will go toward making our park system even better. In addition, it could be used for a variety of water quality projects. One of which could be the removal of thousands of septic tanks. Septic tanks were a viable technology in the 1900's, when the state's population was 3/4 of a million people. Last year the estimated population here was 19.5 million. Is it any wonder that the Indian River Lagoon is dying or that our springs are often too polluted to swim in? Municipalities around the state could expand their sewage treatment facilities to allow homes now on septic tanks to connect to sewage systems. The problem is that after the sewer line is installed on your street it costs the average homeowner \$10,000.00 to connect to the system. That's why we continue having all of that pollution leaching into our water ways. Cities and towns see no point in extending sewer systems if the residents can't afford the connection costs. Senator Alan Hayes (R. Lake County) introduced a bill in the last legislative session to address this issue utilizing as a funding source the same 33% of documentary stamp tax revenue referenced in Amendment 1. He did so to confuse and conflict the possibility of passing Amendment 1 since he's opposed to it. It could just be that while he was trying to do something to obfuscate the issue he stumbled upon a way to accomplish a result that few thought possible just a few years ago. Amendment 1 offers a realm of possibilities for solving problems and leaving Florida an even better place for our offspring.

David Hartgrove

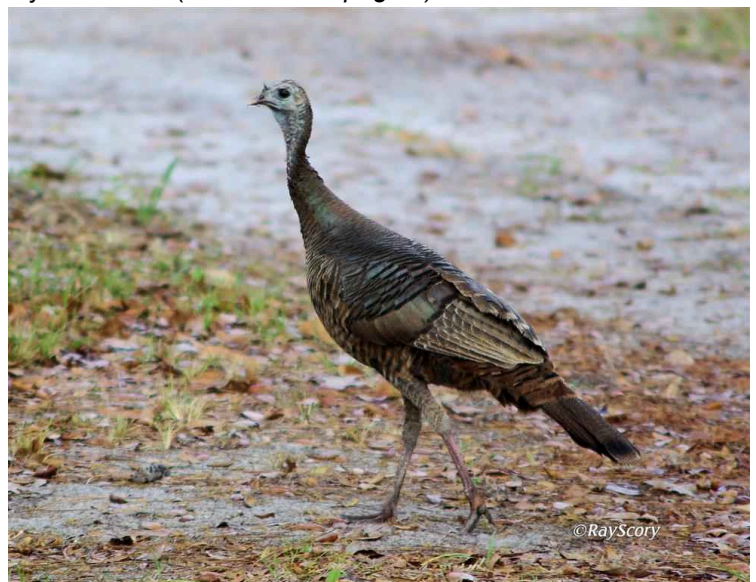
Black speeding missiles, breaking branches and thunderous crashes. My introduction to turkeys in the wild. Dramatic, exciting and a memory everlasting. I was on a Christmas Bird count in a deciduous forest in central Connecticut. This explosion of avian behavior was by far the event of the day. Certainly, not the slow, foraging behavior expected of a grounded eastern bird.

To this day, I cannot drive on Merritt Island NWR's Kennedy Parkway (SR 3) without looking up and down the adjoining, side dirt roads. Occasionally, I will see a flock of wild turkeys walking through, especially early in the morning. My favorite time is just before sunrise when the air is fresh and the sun is about to break above the horizon. The sky is red, orange, blue and slowly changing to an awakening day. It is quiet and I am there watching. I find the turkey to be extremely wary. However, I have observed a number of Florida wild turkeys in eastern central Florida at Tiger Bay State Forest, Gamble Place, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and numerous tracts of forested lands and pastures controlled by the St. John's River Water Management District.

The turkey didn't always grace our tables center stage on one particular day in November, nor did it expect to be such an iconic figure used to promote a national holiday. In fact, the wild turkey evolved upon this planet about 11 million years ago and has had quite a journey through evolution and travel to become what we see of it today.

In the early 1500's, the Spanish explorers traveled through North America bringing back native wild turkeys to Mexico and later European traders brought these birds back to Europe. The turkeys then were shipped to eastern Mediterranean countries, then to Spain and onto England, where the British associated them with the country, Turkey. Thus, the name "turkey", which has stuck to this day. The turkey successfully established some flocks in a few European countries, notably as far back into Europe as Germany. To complete their wayward journey the Pilgrims brought them back to the Atlantic Coast of America. Some were released into the wild where they mixed with the native species. Eventually other turkey subspecies evolved into six separate subspecies.

The most popular, abundant and most hunted subspecies is the Eastern Wild Turkey, estimated today at 5.1 - 5.3 million birds. We do have a much smaller flock of turkeys, numbering about 30,000, in Florida. The Florida Wild Turkey, also called the Ocala Wild Turkey is smaller, darker with wing feathers having smaller amounts of white feathers than other subspecies. The Florida Wild Turkey can also be distinguished by its overall green iridescent body feathers. *(continued on page 3)*



At our October meeting Annie Morgan, of the Marine Discovery Center, gave us a program about oyster restoration. That stirred a memory for our Chapter Historian and Membership Chair, John Carr.

## Oysters, Pennies and Terrapins

When I was a kid in North Carolina, we would drive to the coast during oyster season and get our fill. Oyster shells at that time were as large as my hand. The oysters were wonderful. Up state, there was a restaurant out from town that during the season would bring two large truck loads of oysters in the shell to be steamed. We would go and sit at the shucking tables and a shucker would shuck oysters as fast as he could. He would hand you half a shell with a fresh steamed oyster on it. If you know some one now on the NC coast, you can still get large oysters, not as large as I remember, but large enough to make Florida oysters look like they should be thrown back to mature.

When I was a teenager, the US Federal Fisheries had a research station on Piver's Island at Beaufort NC trying to discover what caused the oyster spats to attach so they could mature. There were several nursery beds about 12 feet long and 4 feet wide and about a foot deep in their laboratory. Being a typical teenager, I threw a copper penny into one of the vats and thought nothing of it. The next year they published a report stating that spat attachment was enhanced by copper ions. They mentioned at a meeting that they had found a penny in one of the vats and determined that copper was necessary for spat attachment. I never owned up to having pitched a penny in the vat. Subsequently I think they have discovered other factors that enhance spat attachment.

Also at Piver's Island the government was conducting research into the decline of Diamondback Terrapins. They had a large pen that extended into the brackish water. My mother and I were watching a large Diamondback on the shore start digging a hole with her back feet and she laid around 15 eggs. We told the people in the laboratory what we had witnessed and they got excited. No one had ever seen a Diamond Back Terrapin lay eggs (we were told) They took our names but we never knew what they did with that information. I was about 11 years old and had just learned what a Forster's Tern looked like. You never know when a little bit of new information will stir up memories of long forgotten events.

John Carr



Diamondback Terrapin photo by David Hartgrove

Terrapins are brackish water creatures. Turtles (depending on the species) can be found in fresh or salt water habitats. Ed.

The turkey ranges over vast lands of lower Canada, most of America and on through central Mexico. It is most successful where forest and open fields exist. In Florida they also range near marshes where amphibians are plentiful. The turkey forages for acorns, nuts and seeds and will eat insects, small fish, reptiles and animals. I have also watched them feeding on spilled seeds from bird feeders in Connecticut yards. This is a handsome bird to see in the wild, both for its impressive behavior and stunning appearance, much deserving your patience to locate and observe them.

Ray Scory

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Members Steve & Mary Blackledge spent the summer touring the Pacific Northwest. The photo below was captured by Steve in one of those lucky moments when everything just came together. Ed.



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## BIRD STEWARDS NEEDED

For a short time during the summer of 2014 a colony of Least Terns and some solitary Wilson's Plover nests were found on Disappearing Island. You may remember that almost all of the nests were destroyed by a couple who allowed their dogs to run freely in the nesting area. In anticipation of nesting taking place again in 2015, Volusia County Shorebird Partnership Coordinator, Jennifer Winters, wants to be prepared with trained volunteers to help educate people to keep dogs and people away from the nesting area. County officials are looking for interested individuals to call when training is scheduled in February or March 2015.

Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission is the official volunteer organization, but Jennifer is the local coordinator. For more information on what stewarding entails, please visit the guideline link at [http://flshorebirdalliance.org/media/5939/bird\\_steward\\_manual-final\\_2012.pdf](http://flshorebirdalliance.org/media/5939/bird_steward_manual-final_2012.pdf). If, after reading the volunteer requirements, you'd like to get involved, click on Volunteer Agreement and Volunteer Application, fill them out and submit the forms to Jess Rodriguez, [Jess.Rodriguez@MyFWC.com](mailto:Jess.Rodriguez@MyFWC.com). In addition, let Jennifer, [jwinters@volusia.org](mailto:jwinters@volusia.org), know that you have volunteered.

Note that volunteers at Disappearing Island may have to provide their own transportation to the island; i.e.: your own boat, kayak or canoe. Also, remember that depending upon shorebird nesting activity, there may be stewarding opportunities at other locations in the County.

Paula Wehr

*A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors*

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

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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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