

The Pelican

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

Volume 61-No.1 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon July, 2015



President's Message

Thoughts and concepts

This is my first column as the newly elected President of the chapter. So I thought I'd write about a little adventure I had.

I was intrigued by the photo in the May 26th Daytona Beach News Journal of the Wilson's Plover chicks being spotted on Bethune Beach. The next morning I headed down there to see for myself. I have not been that far south in New Smyrna Beach for several years and was struck by the amount of development that has taken place. I drove to the only public parking area that I remembered from several years ago. I was certain that I would meet someone who would give me directions to the nesting area. I was wrong! There was not one person in sight. After waiting for a number of minutes I decided to head south because it appeared a little more isolated than the northern direction.

I walked at least 30 minutes before seeing anyone. Then I spotted three turtle volunteers hard at work. I asked about the plover nesting area and they immediately told me that I had walked in the wrong direction, that the nesting areas were north of the parking lot. I trudged back to where I had begun my beach walk and then headed north. Within minutes I came to a roped area in the dunes with a sign indicating "flightless chicks". An adult Wilson's Plover was within the roped area surveying the beach. I watched for a while and no other plovers were visible. I finally walked further north to the second roped area and was disappointed that no activity was evident. I then walked back south, past the first roped area that I had encountered and the lone adult was still checking things out. Shorebird network volunteers can erect signs and rope around nesting areas but once the chicks hatch the family becomes more mobile and can wander from the "protected" zone. Within seconds, a chick scampered out of the dunes, then another, then another. In all four chicks appeared followed by another adult. The six-pack family headed to the ocean for morning activities. The adults kept a careful eye on the chicks as they flirted with the incoming waves. The chicks would head too far north, or south on the beach only to be quickly herded back to the area where they were being carefully supervised.

Suddenly, another adult plover, I guess from the north roped area, appeared. The two parents immediately and unequivocally made it clear that he was not welcome. The interloper quickly disappeared. After 30 to 40 minutes observing this wonderful family outing, all by myself, the six quickly headed into the dunes and were gone out of sight. What a wonderful experience I had. Nature gives us little shows like this all the time. All we have to do is take the time to look for them.

I look forward to meeting many more of you when our chapter meetings resume in September. Have a safe, happy summer.

Jim O'Shaughnessy

Calendar & Events

While our chapter, like other Audubon chapters, takes its regular summer hiatus from field trips and meetings, other groups find summer a fine time to look for their special interests:

Saturday, July 11th, 9:00 am- Spruce Creek Paddle Join our friends from the Pawpaw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society for a fun outing on one of Florida's Outstanding Waterways. The July field trip will be a paddle along upper Spruce Creek with options afterwards for a tour of the Gamble Place. Participants can also enjoy their picnic lunch at Cracker Creek picnic pavilion. Meet at Cracker Creek, 1795 Taylor Road, Port Orange. Bring your own paddlecraft or rent a canoe or kayak at our departure point, [Cracker Creek](#). Two hour rental rates:

Single kayak - \$24

Double kayaks - \$36

Canoe - \$36;

Single Hydrobike - \$30

Tandem Hydrobike- \$40

After the paddle trip, Cracker Creek's owner will arrange a tour of the historic (late 1800's) Gamble Place and the charming "Snow White Cottage" built in 1938 to entertain young Gamble heirs. Tour fee: Adults \$6; Seniors \$5.

Field Trip Contact: Sonya Guidry

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Cell: (386) 690-1797

Monday, July 13th, 7:00 pm- The Pawpaw Chapter has their regular monthly meeting at the Piggotte Center, 504 Big Tree Road South Daytona. Kevin Bagwell of Full Moon Natives (& Pawpaw chapter member) will present "Natural and safe solutions for your yard & garden". Doors open 6:30 pm, Program at 7pm, followed by the business meeting.

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Saturday, July 20th, 9:00 am, MINWR Butterfly Survey- July may be too hot for much birding but the butterflies are out and about and here's your chance to participate in some citizen science and learn a bit more about these dainty and resilient flyers. Join volunteers & Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge staff in participating in a butterfly survey. No experience necessary. Bring water, snacks & insect repellent and wear closed shoes and long pants. Call 321-861-5601 to make reservations.

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Welcome To Our New Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Elaine Bohn, Patricia Lensmeyer, John McNeill, Jennifer Petruccianni, Susan Plimpton and Jeannie Young. We hope to see you in September when our meetings and field trips resume for the new season.

Conservation Notes

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), at its meeting in Sarasota on June 24, 2015, voted to allow bear hunting in the state for the first time in 2+ decades. There have been increasing numbers of incidents between bears and people in neighborhoods over the past 5 years. This is in part due to our having allowed development in areas traditionally used by bears. It's also due to an increase in the number of bears in the state. The rationale put forth by the Commissioners was that opening a hunting season would reduce the excess bear population and reduce the numbers of unwanted incidents between bears and people. If the hunting was to be allowed in the neighborhoods where these incidents have taken place this rationale might have some validity. The idea that allowing bear hunts in Ocala National Forest will reduce these incidents is ludicrous. Reducing the population of bears that feed regularly on the natural foods they normally eat will not encourage bears that have acquired a taste for Oreos and Alpo to relocate. When people continue to roll their garbage laden cans out to the street the night before pickup day, cans that are simple for bears to eat from, the bears will remain in the area. The same goes for leaving dog food accessible. We need to employ a variety of methods for reducing incidents between bears and people in neighborhoods. There are tried and true methods out there but they aren't cheap. To simply slaughter bears in the misguided assumption that once there are fewer bears in the natural areas, the neighborhood bears will relocate is not the answer.

The Legislature has done its foul deeds for the year and gone home. Many of them were openly hostile to Amendment 1 before its passage. When they got to Tallahassee in early March to begin the session, one of the first things they did was to transfer the funding for all state parks and forests from the general fund to Amendment 1. Florida voters did not approve Amendment 1 just to reorganize bookkeeping on conservation spending. Then the Governor, just before signing the budget, used his power of line item veto to eliminate more than \$400 million. Among the vetoes were \$5 million for best management practices to protect springs and \$2.5 million for Regional Planning Councils. If your campaign contributors are just waiting to start bulldozing what's left of the state's environmental lands, you don't want those pesky Planning Councils around to get in the way.

And then there's the new Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Jon Steverson is a 4th generation Floridian but that apparently doesn't translate into a respect for the state's history of caring for its state parks system. Having organized the decimation of the state's 5 water management districts, the Governor thought this guy was perfect to replace his predecessor, Hershel Vineyard. Vineyard's term was remarkable for its scandals, like the firing of the DEP's top wetlands specialist after she refused to sign off on a contested development and an attempt to sell off park properties. One of Steverson's first moves was to order a study called "Optimized Land Management and Cost Recovery". Steverson, told state legislators he wants to make the park system pay for itself. To that end, he said, he wanted to rent out parts of the parks to ranchers to let their cattle graze there, and to timber companies to harvest trees from the forests. His "optimization" plan also calls for opening parks to hunting as a revenue generator. Our state park system has been recognized 3 times, more than any other state park system, for the beauty and excellence of our parks. They attract millions of visitors a year, both from in state and out of state. In my opinion this guy's not fit to hold the office he's been appointed to. Here's a [link](#) to the DEP's Customer Survey. Why not spend a few minutes to let them know what you think of this plan to "optimize" your park experience. You'll be doing the parks and yourself a favor.

David Hartgrove

Audubon Assembly in October

The Audubon Assembly is Florida's premiere conservation event. Join friends - old and new - for two days of informative workshops, exciting guest speakers, and unforgettable field trips. The keynote speaker will be Rafael Galvez, naturalist, artist and founder of the [Florida Keys Hawk Watch](#). One of his illustrations, "Wood Stork: Everglades" appears below. Dates for the



Assembly will be Friday and Saturday, October 23rd & 24th. The host hotel will be the Sheraton Orlando North, in Maitland. We'll have updated information as it becomes available.

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Pollinators Program at Tomoka State Park



Bird bander, Meret Wilson, gives a demonstration

photo by Aggie Armstrong

Our chapter was well represented at the Pollinators Program, held at Tomoka State Park on Saturday, June 20th. Meret had her banding station set up outside while Chuck Tague and I held down the fort in the air conditioned meeting hall. Also on hand were bee keeper, Jack Dunlop and the Pawpaw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society. One of their members, Paul Rebmann, (also an HRA member) lead a plant walk. Chuck gave presentations on both the importance of pollination and on butterflies. I had our information table set up and was able to answer some bird questions. It was an informative way to spend the last day of Spring.

David Hartgrove

Below is another installment of "Everyday Birding"

from Ray Scory

Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*)

They stay around my house. They are beautiful. Their behavior is energetic and explosive. They remain all year long whether at my home in Connecticut or my present home in Florida. I have observed them at my feeders in the most bitter cold of the year and during the sweltering heat of summer. They are there every day - feeding, colorful, impressive.

Impressive, yes. They are spectacular visitors to my yard and to my feeder. They even like the food I put out for them, which is store bought "no melt" suet cake and black oil sunflower seeds. How can I not like them. When they bring their fledglings to the feeder, it is icing on the cake. A very nice treat.

My description above for this quality bird does not come with color, size, body shape or shape of the bill. However, for me, it describes the Red-bellied Woodpecker. I like tagging some of my favorite birds with personal characterizations so I might reach deeper into my admiration for their unique occurrence in our worldly landscape.

I have heard them called Red-headed Woodpeckers, which is quite understandable. However, the Red-headed Woodpecker's head is completely covered in brilliant red. While the Red-bellied Woodpecker has a strip of fiery red extending from its nape up and over its crown down to its bill. This is the male. With the female, the red does not extend down to the bill. Both male and female have no red on their faces. Their faces are a soft gray/buff color, while the Redheaded Woodpecker's face is entirely colored red.

Watching the adult birds feed seeds to their same size juvenile is eye-stopping. The difference in looks is no more than the gray head of the juvenile versus the red swatch over the adults' head. However their drumming behavior is equally as fascinating. In Florida, when the sound of "rat-a-tat-tat-tat" cascades down my metal capped chimney, I know that the Redbellied Woodpecker's breeding season is about begin. In all its repetitive glory, this behavior will last for one to two weeks. Delightful music it is. At my Connecticut home they had the habit of drumming on the side of my house. Other birders said they have experienced the same pounding on their homes. I have heard it said the woodpeckers are searching for and getting bugs from the wood. In my experience I never found any bugs in the wood. I suspect the birds have found another fun sounding board to usher in a magnificent time of their lives.

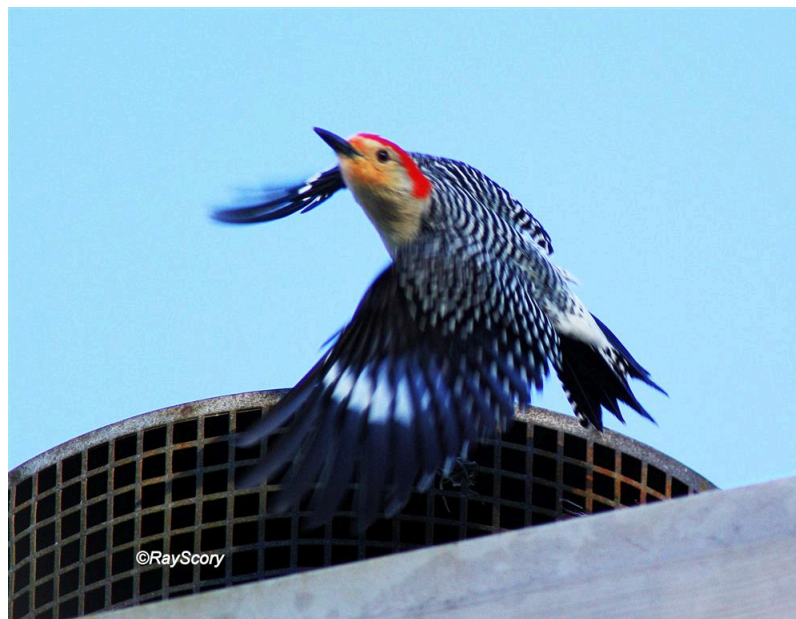
Watching birds is a never ending experience in astonishment. Last week I was working out on the treadmill on the third floor of the cardio rehab unit at Halifax Health. As I looked out the window, I observed a Red-bellied Woodpecker fly up to the window and cling with its zygodactylous feet (two toes pointing forward, two pointing backward) to the corner of the stone block casement. It began to peck away at the stone, remained for sometime and then flew off, leaving me dumfounded. "What was that all about", I thought?

They are called Red-bellied Woodpeckers. But unless they are clinging to glass, you will probably not see the belly, which normally is flat against some opaque structure. However, to see the soft reddish wash located on a sea of soft, buff colored breast feathers again continues the awesome show offered by the Red-bellied Woodpecker.

Ray Scory



Red-bellied Woodpecker on a feeder



Flying away after a drumming session on the chimney

photos by Ray Scory

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Good Things Happening To Good People

Many of you may know Maia McGuire, Florida Sea Grant agent for UF/IFAS Extension in Flagler and St. Johns counties, and the chair of the National Sea Grant Education Network. She has been named the Florida Wildlife Federation's 2015 Conservation Educator of the Year. She has given programs at our chapter meetings, developed course materials for school students and taught high school science for two years. When asked about her experience she said, "As a scientist who has been a classroom teacher, I felt that I could help teachers by providing them with educational resources, based on the marine environment, that addressed science standards along with standards for reading, writing and math," she said. "The feedback that I have received from teachers has been that I have achieved this goal. The students enjoy learning about 'charismatic megafauna' like manatees or whales, and they are eager to complete the lessons even if they require reading, writing, math or science skills." We send our congratulations to Maia for receiving an award so richly deserved.

Ed.

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

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