

The Pelican

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

Volume 61-No.5 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
November, 2015



The President's Message

Thoughts and Concepts

This is the first of a two part report on the Audubon Assembly.

The Audubon Assembly, 2015, was held in Maitland this past week. Several members from our chapter attended and I'd like to describe a little about the Assembly and more particularly tell you about the policy priorities established for the coming year. Before getting into the details I have two wonderful items to report. Our immediate Past President, Paula Wehr, was unanimously elected to the Audubon Florida Board of Directors. This honor is the result of her dedication and effective work not only for our chapter but and at the state level. Executive Director Eric Draper told me how excited he was to have her joining the state board. So Bravo! Actually, I guess that should be Brava!

Saturday morning's breakfast meeting was dedicated to recognizing various chapters throughout the state. The first chapter to be called was - you guessed it - Halifax River Audubon! It was for the "Small Chapter Outstanding Education Program Award" for our 20 years of cooperation with teacher, Louise Chapman, and the Volusia County Schools. Accepting the award, and making some wonderful comments about the importance of teaching young people about conservation was our own David Hartgrove. David has worked tirelessly with students throughout the years and has had the assistance of many of our members. Peggy Yokobonus and Ray Scory are two who have made significant contributions. Peggy was on hand to share the award with David. It was a proud moment for Halifax River Audubon.

Each year at the Audubon Assembly, the regional conservation conferences (made up of representatives from individual chapters) present their lists of conservation priorities in the form of documents presented to Audubon Florida. These priorities are broadly framed problem solution statements that are presented to the membership in the form of resolutions. The conservation action agenda is approved by vote at the annual Assembly and subsequently is ratified by the Audubon Florida Board of Directors. Five policies were adopted for the coming year. The first, Important Bird Areas (IBA's) and Waterways Conservation seeks guidance from chapters and partners on the most appropriate places to focus resources. Also, to engage Audubon Chapters and other user groups to protect specific natural areas. Working with private landowners to achieve good stewardship by supporting incentives for landowners to commit property to conservation, including government purchase of conservation easement and "Payment for Environmental Services" programs to compensate for improved water management, water storage and pollution cleanup. We recognize that the Florida Legislature cut funds for conservation lands in spite of 75% voter approval of the Water and Land Conservation Amendment.

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Calendar & Events

Monday, November 16th, Join us for a presentation by our own, Dan Gribbin, entitled "Breeding Islands: The Young and the Restless." Doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. The presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. A brief business meeting follows.

Monday, November 2nd, Join our friends from West Volusia Audubon for their "Fall 'Fun' Fund Raiser at the Elusive Grape, 133 N. Woodland Blvd., in downtown DeLand from 5:00 to 7:00 pm. Tickets are 25.00 and may be purchased at the door. This includes two beverages of your choice, beer, wine, or soft drink Plus light hors d'oeuvres. There will also be a Silent Auction of select items.

Friday, November 6th, Daytona State College, the Marine Discovery Center and the Florida Chapter of the American Water Resources Association presents the first annual "ShORE" (SHaring Our Resources with Everyone) Symposium on the Indian River Lagoon. This will be held at the News-Journal Center in downtown Daytona Beach. Public registration will begin at 8:30 am for this full day of presentations by students, scientists and agency representatives and community members on the health of the Lagoon, its future and our part in its road to restored health. Here's a [link](#) to more information.

Saturday, November 14th, The Marine Science Center in Ponce Inlet will host its annual "Wings On The Wind Festival" from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. Attendees can meet glove-trained birds of prey, learn about bird migration, and visit booths staffed by nature groups and crafters. There will also be music, children's activities, food vendors and the release of rehabbed birds at Lighthouse Point Park a 5 minute walk away.

Field Trips

Friday, November 13th, HRA trip to Ocala National Forest/Rodman Dam. John Roessler will lead this trip to look for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Scrub Jays and what should be excellent wading bird viewing. SJRWMD is conducting a draw down of the reservoir at the dam and the lowered water levels make for a wind-fall for feeding birds. Meet at 7:30 am at Ormond Town Square - Granada & Williamson Blvds behind Chick-fil-A. Bring lunch. Questions, call John at 386-212-6957.

Friday, November 20th, HRA trip to Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive. Paula Wehr will lead this trip to one of best new birding spots in the state. Meet at 7:30 am at Int'l Square - East of I-95 on Int'l Speedway Blvd behind Krystal. Bring lunch. Questions, call Paula, 386-299-6651.

Saturday, November 7th, The Marine Science Center in Ponce Inlet is sponsoring another pelagic birding trip on the Pastime Princess, a 100' aluminum fishing boat sailing out of New Smyrna Beach. Cost is 195.00 per person. Contact Michael Brothers, 386-304-5543 or by email: mbrothers@volusia.org .

Lawmakers have also failed to strengthen laws to protect springs and estuaries.

The second state policy concerns coastal conservation and stewardship. Coastal habitats are jeopardized by a range of human activities including beach management and grooming, coastal armoring, dredging and filling, human disturbances and rising sea levels. Because of both the extraordinary value and tremendous vulnerability of these resources, ranks coastal conservation among it's highest priorities. National Audubon has also elevated coastal habitats as a national priority under the auspices of its Atlantic Flyway Initiative and "Share the Seas and Shores" program. Employing sound science to guide conservation of our coasts and advocating for wise land and recreation management to conserve habitat now as well as in a future of higher sea levels.

Jim O'Shaughnessy



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Doing An International Big Year

Noah Stryker is a 28 year old self described "bird nerd". He's spent over 2 years of his life sleeping in tents, has worked on 6 continents while engaged in avian research projects and has written books about his adventures that have received good reviews.



Noah Stryker photo by Corey Arnold

His goal is to see 5,000 species in a year. He began by thinking about how some birders are committed listers in counties, states or countries. Birds recognize no boundaries and fly anywhere.

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Last month I wrote about the efforts of some extremist members of Congress to prevent the reauthorization of the Land & Water Conservation Fund. Funded by fees levied on oil and energy companies, it used to take in 2.5 million a day. Money to buy land for parks, wildlife refuges, etc. Not a penny of tax payer funds was used. It turns out to have been the power wielded by one man, Congressman Rob Bishop. A Republican from Utah, he's the Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee and House rules give this one man the power to wreck a program that's benefitted the entire country for decades. It's hard to imagine the thought process the House Republicans went through that put this angry ideologue in charge of the funding mechanism for our national parks. It's like the wacky days of the first Reagan administration when James Watt was placed in charge of the Interior Department. Here's a man who once complained that he grew bored by the 2nd day of a raft trip down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. How could it be that President Reagan thought it a good idea to put this guy in charge of our national park system? Thankfully, there were safe guards in place in the form of rational members of the Republican Congress that prevented Watt from doing any more damage than he did before he left the office. Unfortunately, we don't enjoy those safe guards now. There's a bipartisan coalition of rational thinkers who are hoping to reauthorize the LWCF at some point in the future. It will have to be after Congressman Bishop is no longer in office since he's vowed to kill any attempts to reauthorize the LWCF. He wants to give the fees collected back to the oil companies. Any bets on who's sending his reelection committee generous donations?

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Back in the 1990's, when Bruce Babbitt was Secretary of the Interior, he proposed an excise tax on some camping and outdoor gear to help fund operations of national parks and refuges. The theory was that since hunters were funding the vast majority of those operations (even though hunting isn't permitted in national parks) through an existing excise tax on hunting equipment and ammunition, non hunting and fishing users of these facilities ought to pony up their fair share. The idea got some support but failed when some members of Congress saw a chance to demagogue against a new tax. The existing excise tax system dates back to the 1930's when the Pittman-Robertson Act was passed at the behest of hunters to benefit wildlife conservation. Unrestricted hunting had done so much damage to wildlife and habitat that they were afraid that if something wasn't done, there would soon be nothing left to hunt. Currently, hunters and fishermen pay the cost for all of us who use parks, refuges, etc. Birders, mountain bikers and other "non consumptive" users essentially pay nothing. Yes, there are some parks and refuges that have instituted a modest fee system. It's frequently administered on the honor system and a lot of dishonorable people drive right past the pay station on their way in. Knowing that there's little chance of being caught.

A number of us buy Duck Stamps each year. These were established as a way to fund hunting activities and maintenance at refuges by the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act of 1934. Many birders rail against purchasing these since, in their view, the money goes to facilitate the slaughter of wildlife. This myopic view has prevented many from supporting the system we all use. "Pay to play" is an idea whose time has come. Arizona is currently discussing the idea of a wildlife viewing stamp. Hunting is declining in popularity. So revenues from the aforementioned excise tax are declining. At a time when we need more funds for research and operations, not less. I already buy a Duck Stamp every year. I'll be glad to switch over to a wildlife viewing stamp if it helps guarantee that my grand daughters get to see Sandhill Cranes and Scrub Jays. My thanks to Ray Scory for bring this issue to my attention again.

David Hartgrove

By no means a wealthy man, he's funding this year long journey by soliciting sponsorships from optics companies and an advance on the book he's contracted to write for Houghton-Mifflin about his adventure. He's also traveling light, very light. Everything he carries needs to fit into a small backpack and his bulkiest item is a small Leica spotting scope.

He began his quest in January of this year spending several days in Antarctica. He then moved on to South America, where he spent 3 1/2 months. Next he moved north to Central and North America for 2 months. Then hopped across the Atlantic for about 10 days in Europe before heading south to Africa to spend another 2 1/2 months. Then he was off to Asia and several of the islands in the South Pacific for 3 months. He will end the trip with several weeks in Australia.

On October 26th, day 299, with over 2 months to go, while hiking up a mountain trail on Mindanao in the Philippines, he saw bird number 5,000. It was a Flame-crowned Flowerpecker.



Flame-crowned Flowerpecker *photo by Noah Stryker*

Along the way to this goal he's had a lot of adventures. In Thailand he discovered why long socks are popular with forest hikers. They help keep leeches off your legs. Before he began a friend told him it might be interesting if he could contract some strange disease, like dengue fever. Fortunately, this hasn't happened yet.

You can follow Noah's adventures on his daily blog. Here's a [link](#) to it. As I write this his total is 5,051 species and he still hasn't been to Australia or New Zealand. He will be a guest speaker at the Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival in January.

David Hartgrove

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Welcome To Our New Members

A regular feature in the Pelican is the listing of our new and returning members. Due to circumstances beyond our control, there won't be such a list this month. Apparently the national office is switching locations of membership central. So next month's list should be quite long. Look for it then.

The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival

It's time to be thinking about the next Festival. It'll be held again at Eastern Florida State College in Titusville, just a short drive south of us. The [website](#) and online registration will be active soon. This is the largest birding festival in the country and this year the emphasis will be on birding photography with some of the best photographers and digiscopers in the world. More information in next month's Pelican. Plan now to attend.

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Coming Soon To A Waterbody Near You



Red-breasted Mergansers *photo by David Hartgrove*

Red-breasted Mergansers are crested, fish eating ducks that winter in Florida. They nest from extreme northern Canada down to a few northern counties in Maine. Unlike their close relative, the Common Merganser (which is rarely seen in Florida) they nest on the ground. Common Mergansers are cavity nesters. They eat mostly fish which they catch by swimming underwater. The young feed mainly on insects until they're flight ready about 2 months after hatching. As with most ground nesting birds, nest loss due to predation is a concern. Foxes, skunks, minks, weasels and other mammals are all nest predators. Since Red-breasted Mergansers nest so far north Lynx, a wild cat in serious trouble itself, is a source of predation on both eggs and flightless young. Watch for long lines of Red-breasted Mergansers on the Halifax River beginning in November.

David Hartgrove

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A Request From The Editor

Once again I write to ask that readers send in articles, photos etc. for inclusion in the Pelican. Many of you have great photos on your hard drives or have had interesting experiences while on vacation or just working in your yard. Write them down to share with the rest of us. The white morph Reddish Egret below was



standing on the side of the road along Black Point in Jan., 2014.

Please consider sending your material, either written or photos to me at birdman9@earthlink.net.

Thanks!

David Hartgrove

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 For information on upcoming field trips, etc.

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