

The Pelican

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

Volume 61 No.3 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
March, 2016



The President's Message

Thoughts and Concepts

My wife and I have enjoyed watching a pair of blue jays in our backyard for the last several weeks. Today I opened the latest edition of Bird Watcher's Digest and the cover article is all about Blue Jays. I learned a lot.

It is one of the most strikingly beautiful of America's birds. Its bright blue mantle contrasts with a grayish-white breast. Its wings are intricately woven in blue, black and white. The blue tail is crossed with black bars and has white outer corners. The white cheeks are set off from the nape by a broad black border. The expressive blue crest earned the Blue Jay its scientific species name, *cristata*, which means crested.

The adult Blue Jay weighs 2 to 3 ounces. Males and females look almost alike with the males slightly larger. Fledgling Blue Jays are less colorful. These beautiful birds are superficially blue and white, but actually are a remarkable variety of complex colors and patterns. Interestingly, if you hold a Blue Jay feather up so that the light streams through it, instead of reflecting off it, the feather appears gray with no hint of blue. To simplify a complicated explanation, the bird's feathers appear blue because the prismatic structure of their feathers reflects light in the blue segment of the color spectrum. Variations in those structures explain why some birds appear "bluer" than others.

Blue Jays have a reputation for robbing nests. Probably because John James Audubon first painted them doing so. In fact they do occasionally rob nests, to feed their young, but normally feed on acorns, insects, fruit and obviously enjoy bird seed from our feeders. Their movements are something of a mystery. Research indicates that the vast majority reside in one general location year round. Some move from season to season or year to year and remain within a radius of a few miles. Blue Jays that breed in Florida do not appear to migrate at all. In northern states as many as 20% migrate significant distances but don't seem to do so on an annual basis. Flocks of Blue Jays are seen flying in the fall but there is no evidence that they are flying to a warmer climate for the winter. They may be hunting for acorns and returning to their home after caching nuts. They bury their acorns and return to dig them up and eat them later. However they appear forget the location of the majority of their treasure and may be primarily responsible for advancing the growth of oaks in the eastern United States. So, these wonderfully beautiful creatures, weighing less than a quarter pound, may be responsible for many of our beautiful forests.

Spring is just around the corner and with it, migration. So clean your binoculars and sharpen your warbler identification skills for this amazing annual occurrence. And keep an eye and ear open for Blue Jays.

Jim O'Shaughnessy

Calendar & Events

Monday, March 21st, Regular Meeting Florida's Springs and Aquifers will be the subject of our program. Heather Culp, Assoc. Director of the Howard T Odum Florida Springs Institute, will be our speaker. Access to clean water will be a rising concern, especially as sea levels continue to rise too. This promises to be a fascinating program. 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.

Field Trips

Friday, March 4th, A1A North Run, Join Paula Wehr for this drive up A1A for both warblers and shorebirds. Meet at 8:00 am at Washington Oaks State Gardens, 6400 N Oceanshore Blvd., in Palm Coast. There we'll look for warblers and other passerines. Then we'll head north to Matanzas Inlet to look for migrant shorebirds. Bring lunch. Questions ? Call Paula at 386-299-6651.

Friday, March 18th, Ocala Nat'l Forest & Rodman Dam, Join John Roessler for this trip west to see Florida Scrub Jays, Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and others. Meet at 7:30 am at Ormond Town Square - Granada & Williamson Blvds behind Chick-fil-A. Bring lunch. Questions ? Call John, 386-212-6957.

Field Trips With Others

Saturday, March 5th, Princess Place Preserve, Join our friends from West Volusia Audubon for a trip to this wonderful destination. WVAS meets in DeLand at the Post Office to carpool. If you're driving from here you may want to rendezvous with the group at Princess Place, 2500 Princess Place Road, Palm Coast. Bring lunch. Questions ? Call Eli Schaperow, 407-314-7965.

Thursday, March 19th, Blue Heron River Cruise, Join the West Volusia Audubon folks for an outing on the St Johns River. Cost for this pontoon boat trip is 20.00 for seniors (60+), 22.00 for adults. RSVP as soon as possible by calling Eli Schaperow, 407-314-6957 and mailing your check (made out to West Volusia Audubon) to Eli at 902 Sweetbrier Dr. Deltona, FL 32725. You'll need to be at the Hontoon Landing Marina, 2317 River Ridge Road, Deland by 2:45 pm. The boat leaves at 3:00 pm and should return to the dock by 5:30 pm. Or a bit later if the birding is even better than expected.

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Reminder, Fort DeSoto in April

Wed.-Fri., 4/13-15 Fort DeSoto We're having another overnight trip to this incredible birding location. We have a block of rooms reserved at the [La Quinta](#) with a double room rate of 70.18 per night. Call 727-527-8421, ext.6 to make your reservation for the nights of April 13th & 14th and state that you're with Halifax River Audubon. PLEASE, if you're going on this trip, call David Hartgrove at 386-235-1249 or send an email to birdman9@earthlink.net to let me know you're going. Thanks!

Conservation Notes

It's hard to believe that the people who've been elected to our State Legislature have been living on the same planet as the rest of us. Time and again we've voted in overwhelming numbers to say how important conservation lands are to all of us. Our state park system in years past has received awards as the best park system in the nation. So why was it necessary for hundreds of protestors to gather at state parks across the state on the day before Valentine's Day?

HB1075, a bill filed by Rep. Matt Caldwell (R-Lehigh Acres) will, among other things, open our parks to hunting, timbering, cattle grazing and even the development of golf courses, RV parks or worse. The bill will also allow a private land owner whose property is adjacent to state lands or a park to apply for ownership of the state property without paying a cent. Audubon Florida has been working behind the scenes to try to amend this bill and its senate companion. Some amendments were made that in small ways improve the House bill. The Senate bill, 1290, filed by Senator Wilton Simpson (R-New Port Richey), is in committee and it's hoped that similar amendments can be made there before either bill reaches the floor for full votes. Even with the amendments these bills represent serious threats to our park system and to all of our conservation lands. It's as if these adults in the Legislature were behaving as petulant children. They're mad that we voted in Amendment 1 in 2014 so they're going to show us what they can do because they have the power. They'll show us just what they're capable of.

Those of us who've been involved in conservation issues for any length of time knew already just how out of touch these "children" are. That's why we mobilized and passed Amendment 1 in the first place. They refused to listen to our pleas for sound land management and conservation lands purchases. So we passed an amendment to the state Constitution that contains language directing them to do as we had asked nicely earlier. Audubon Florida representatives have been working hard in Tallahassee to get some common sense amendments added to these terrible bills since we can't seem to get them killed outright. We'll keep you posted on their efforts.

* * *

The Great Backyard Bird Count set new records for participation this year. In just one hour on February 14th 3,292 entries were made on the website. The highest number in one hour in the history of the GBBC. The following day more than 52,000 checklists were submitted. The highest number for a single day ever. And this is going on all over the world. Over half of the world's bird species have been reported with a species total of 5,491. Globally, a total of 156,534 checklists were submitted and nearly 18 million birds were counted. Because this information goes into the [e-Bird](#) database it can be accessed by researchers all over the world.

An example of just how valuable e-Bird is to researchers is shown on the [Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's](#) website. By studying data from the hundreds of thousands of entries and looking for specific species they were able to put together a map that shows the migration routes of 118 bird species that nest in North America. Birds like Bobolinks, Cape May Warblers and American Golden Plovers follow a somewhat circular route. In Fall they fly across a thousand miles or more of open ocean to take advantage of favorable winds. In Spring they fly inland to again take advantage of winds pushing them northward. Birds that avoid open ocean migration routes tend to migrate north and south along the same pathways. All of this information goes a long way in helping insure the birds' survival. Another example of the value of citizen science and you did your part. Thank you!

David Hartgrove

Upcoming Environmental Events

With the good weather of March and April comes events for you to enjoy:

Saturday, March 5th, Ponce Preserves The Planet,



Ponce Inlet's Earth Day Celebration 
Ponce Preserves the Planet

Saturday, March 5, 2016
10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Ponce Preserve 

Activities for the whole family with over 20 exhibitors focusing on their contribution to preserving the planet.

Featuring a Native American exhibit, demonstrations, and presentations throughout the day by Jim Sawgrass

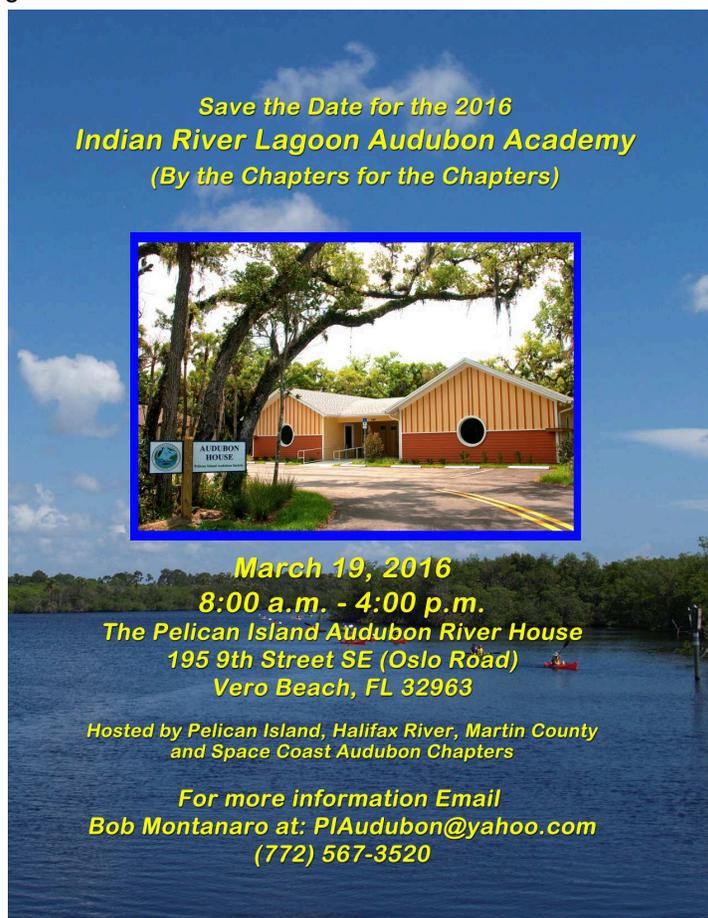
Parking & Shuttle available at Ponce Inlet Town Hall, 4300 S. Atlantic Ave

A designated TREE CITY USA for 22 years.

For more information please call Amy Z at (386) 236-2163

Our chapter will have a table at this event handing out fliers and giving information on birds, our chapter and its work and more.

Saturday, March 19th, Audubon Academy, This event will be held Vero Beach and is for all chapters in the Indian River Regional Conservation Committee.



Save the Date for the 2016
Indian River Lagoon Audubon Academy
(By the Chapters for the Chapters)



March 19, 2016
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
The Pelican Island Audubon River House
195 9th Street SE (Oslo Road)
Vero Beach, FL 32963

Hosted by Pelican Island, Halifax River, Martin County and Space Coast Audubon Chapters

For more information Email
Bob Montanaro at: PIAudubon@yahoo.com
(772) 567-3520

Those interested in attending this event should contact President, Jim O'Shaughnessy at 386-253-0335 or jebk75@gmail.com so we can arrange a carpool.

Editor

Time once again for another installment of *Everyday Birding*, by Ray Scory.

Backyard Birding and a Few Visitors

Silent is the Owl, yellow eyed stare

Great Horned Owl's cunning flair.

Sitting at our breakfast table early one morning, Jane said, "Every time I pull into the driveway I look up to see if the owls are in the trees." So do I. We both laughed, as it brought back a memory of two years ago when two young Great Horned Owls roosted for the Winter months in our backyard pine trees.

They became our neighbors, our friends. They accepted us. Not once did our presence frightened them. They just looked down at us and went about their daytime business - resting. At the coming of dusk, they would lift from their perch and silently fly to a tree across the pond. What an eerie sight it was to watch them turn and face our house and then fly off. Two ghostly silhouettes casting off at the close of another day to begin their nightly excursions. They left us, not yet to return, with a sacred memory of quiet peace, deliberate activity, exquisite beauty and the regal poise of two birds of special character.

The Great Horned Owl female is slightly larger than the male, but they look similar. A large, rich brown body with splashes of mottled gray. Well-defined ear tufts (which have nothing to do with their ears) and a rufous facial mask with penetrating yellow eyes distinguish this amazing owl. Dark brown barring against a white upper breast rounds out the tell tale features of the Great Horned Owl.

Many memorable bird watching experiences have been framed by the back and front yard windows set in our home in a residential neighborhood. I sometimes feel that I miss so much avian behavior when I fail to look out the window as I pass by. It seems every time that I do pass by, I get to see some bird activity that is interesting and at times exciting. Looking out a window is a good way to build a birding life list.

Getting back to our breakfast backyard window, a spectacular morning sunrise peaked my interest. Day time was fast moving in and the rising sun was coloring the cloud splattered sky with a rich, orange glow. Across the pond in a leafless tree perched together were two robin sized birds silhouetted against the glowing sky. I went for my binoculars and returned to the window. My view of two birds was instantly shattered by a wave of frantically excited Cedar Waxwings. They were bent on stripping the remaining fruit from the tree in one passing encounter. They then moved to a nearby pine tree. The two robin sized birds were pushed from their perch and quickly flew overhead, confirming my first morning sighting as two Common Grackles. I have been looking for migrating Cedar Waxwings coming through our yard for the past few months. If I hadn't gone to the window to enjoy the sunrise I would have missed them.

Jane said, "You never know what you'll see when you look out the window."

Ray Scory

Ray's Doing A Presentation Next Month

On Friday, April 8, at 2:00 PM, Ray will be presenting his show "Everyday Birding - Close By". The presentation will be at the Port Orange Regional Library, 1005 City Center Circle. It will be an excellent show. We look forward to seeing you there.

Editor



Young Great Horned Owls in the backyard. *photo by Ray Scory*



Cedar Waxwings, *photo by Ray Scory*

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Audubon Adventures Needs Your Help

Yes, that means we need your money. Supplying Volusia County schools classrooms with [Audubon Adventures](#) is a major HRA project. The cost to supply one classroom with this exceptional educational material is \$46.00. Please donate what you can to this special project. We are currently serving forty five teachers in sixteen schools. Make your generous check payable to HRA and designate it's for Audubon Adventures. And Thank You!

Chapter Education Co-Chair, Marion Monaghan

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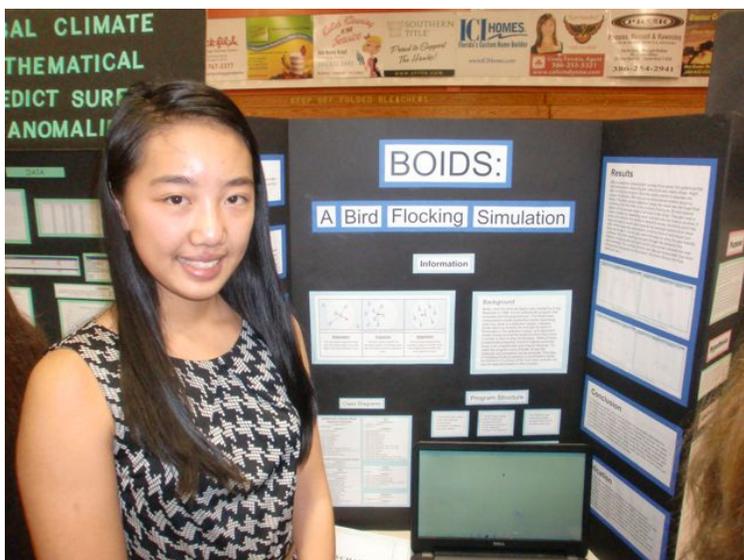
We Welcome Our New Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Anita Deckard, George French, Marie Harrison, Carolyn Keene, Raymond Lilly, Kathryn Morris, Cledith Oakley, Cheri O'Donnell, Robert Oxley, Sang Roberson, Patty Stout and Laurie White. We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting or on one of our excellent filed trips.

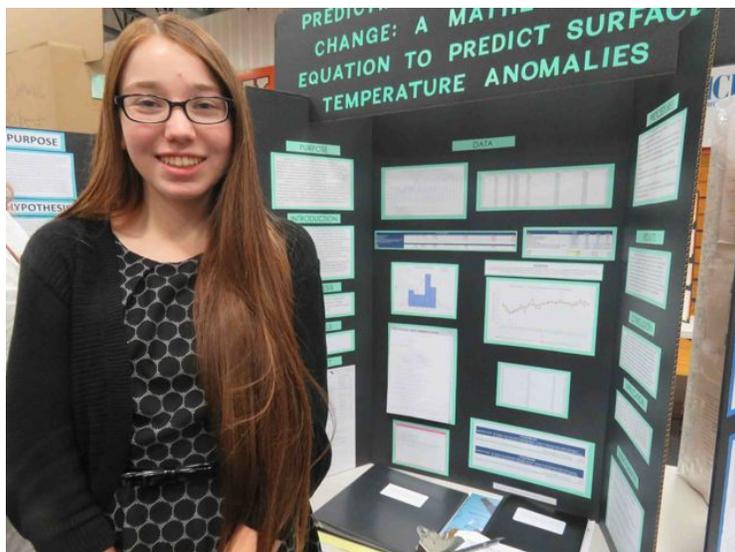
Volusia County Science Fair Awards

The Volusia County Science and Engineering Fair is an annual event, held in January. Our chapter, along with West Volusia Audubon and Southeast Volusia Audubon, pool resources and present cash awards to students whose projects involve environmental conservation themes. The three chapters each provided a judge to select the award winners. The 2016 Volusia County fair had 121 projects in the Junior division and 39 projects in the Senior division.

In the Senior division, the 1st place \$100 award was presented to Julia Yu from Spruce Creek High School for her project “Boids: A Bird Flocking Simulation” in the Mathematics and Computational Sciences category. She wrote a Java program which started with birds flying in random directions. If a bird came close to another bird, they would adjust their flight so that they would fly in the average direction of the group. The flocking would avoid obstacles while gathering other birds into the flock.



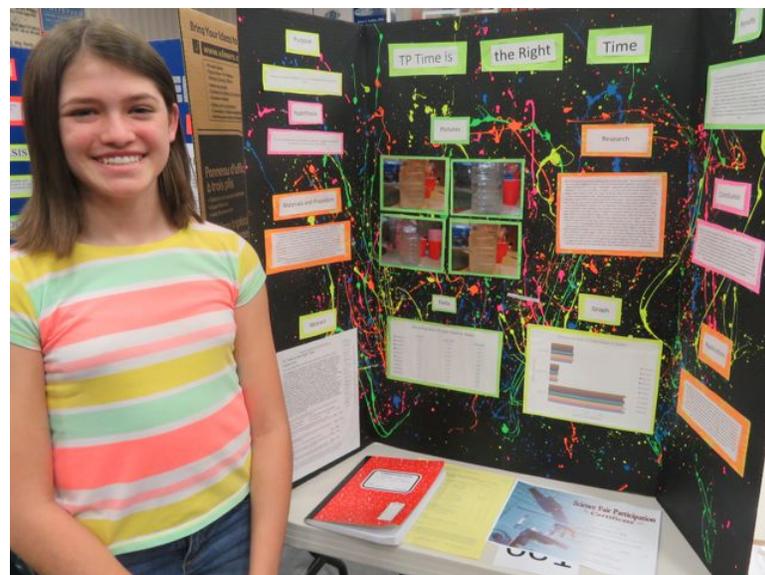
In the Senior division, the 2nd place \$50 award was presented to Gabriella Chehaitli from Spruce Creek High School for her project “Predicting Global Climate Change” also in the Mathematics and Computational Sciences category. For her project she did a correlation analysis of six social and economic factors and temperature changes. She then used her equations to predict historic changes in global temperatures.



In the Junior division the 1st place \$100 award was presented to Isabella Truxall of Silver Sands Middle School for her project “Dangers Lurking in Our Waters: Microplastics”, in the Environmental Engineering category. She used a micro-filter to extract minute pieces of plastic from water. She found 30 pieces of plastic per liter in Rose Bay salt water. The freshwater pond near her house had 8 pieces of plastic per liter.



In the Junior division, the 2nd place \$50 award was presented to Faythe Corr from the New Smyrna Beach Middle School for the project “TP Time is the Right Time” in the Earth and Environmental Sciences category. The project studied how quickly toilet paper decomposed.



Our congratulations to these outstanding students. Their embrace of science and its ability to address the problems their generation will face in the future will stand them in good stead as they move forward in their education.

Fred Mosher

photos by Fred Mosher and Eli Schaperow

A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors

**Florida Power & Light, Garden Club of the Halifax Country,
The Ormond Beach Garden Club, Spruce Creek Garden & Nature 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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