

# The Pelican

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

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## The President's Message

### *Thoughts and Concepts*

Our last field trip of the season is now history. On Friday, May 13th, we headed for a boat trip to Dora Canal. On our way to Mt. Dora we stopped at Rock Springs Run State Reserve, a place I did not know existed. It is off of state road 46 east of Sorrento. It's always rewarding to discover new areas of our state. It's one aspect of the field trips that very much appeals to me. We all saw a pair of Summer Tanagers and were entertained by them for sometime. We visited the riding stable and came across a family of Wild Turkeys who were not pleased to see us. We then continued to Mt. Dora and boarded our boat for the trip across Lake Dora to the Dora Canal. We checked out a huge Bald Eagle nest but it appeared that no one was home. Prothonotary Warblers nest along the canal and we were hoping to see them but they did not cooperate. We did see Green Herons, numerous Tricolored Herons, and other wading birds. The canal itself is about five miles long and is partially man made and partially natural. It is a beautiful part of Florida and I recommend the boat trip to anyone who has not done it. We were advised by the crew that weekends are extremely busy so you may want to plan a weekend day tour if possible. Thanks to our own David Hartgrove of being our trip leader.

I'm pleased to tell you that board member Peggy Yokubonus has volunteered to be our field trip coordinator for our 2016-2017 year. A position she held with Sierra for a number of years. If you have any ideas or suggestions please let her know. Also, I am putting together the speaker list for the coming year. If there is someone who you think would be of interest to our group please let me know and I will move on it. Your input is valuable and appreciated.

Speaking of our monthly speakers, our last two (April and May) have been by members of the Audubon Florida team and both have provided a wealth of knowledge for us to digest. Julie Wraithmell coordinates the coastal stewardship program and provided us with ways to ensure beach goers do not enter fragile nesting areas for beach nesters such as terns and plovers. She brought us up to date of the potential impacts of global warming and resulting higher water levels. She told us of a new report summarizing the impacts of coastal engineering on the American Oystercatcher. The report includes recommendations for permit applications, and regulatory reviews to improve projects for the benefit of imperiled shorebirds. She coordinates the Bird Steward program and works with numerous conservation volunteers throughout the state. Her presentation was supported with terrific pictures to compliment her talk.

In May we were fortunate enough to have Dr. Marianne Korosy Florida's Jay Watch Coordinator. I did not know that Scrub- Jays are cooperative breeders!

*Continued below*

## Calendar & Events

**Monday, June 20th, Program Meeting:** Join us for an evening of stunning wildlife photos by our own Robert Wilson. Robert's presentation will include photos made using digiscoping, a technique that utilizes a digital camera and a spotting scope. 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. This will be our last meeting of the season. As usual we'll be on summer hiatus in July and August.

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## Summer Exploration Options

As you drive over our area's bridges across the Halifax or Indian Rivers, you may wonder what's hidden in those winding waterways among the mangrove islands. The Marine Discovery Center, in New Smyrna Beach, offers the answers with pontoon boat trips and wonderful kayaking opportunities for both the experienced kayaker and the beginner.

There are three boat tours. The "Dolphin Discovery Tour" goes south of the MDC into Calalisa Creek. The "Dolphin Lighthouse Cruise" goes north to Ponce Inlet. Both cost 28.00, or 25.00 for seniors and students. Click [here](#) for the schedule. The third option, the "Island Discovery Tour", runs only on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of the month, from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm and cost 35.00 for adults, 30.00 for seniors and students. This tour provides a more interactive experience where you get to use dip nets and a seine to capture, identify and release fish, conchs, sea stars, horseshoe crabs and other marine life.

For the more adventurous souls among us, try the kayak tours. There are two offered: the "Kayak Adventure Tour" and the "Guided Kayak Ecotour." Both cost 40.00 and include kayak, life vest and safety instruction. Lisa Mickey, a chapter member who many of you may know from her attendance at our monthly meetings, leads many of these outings. Under her skillful tutelage you'll learn to handle the kayak and about the birds, fish and general ecology of the area. She says now is the perfect time to go to see babies on the nest at the two rookery islands in the New Smyrna Beach marina area. The tours are offered most days at 10:00 am. If you want to go with Lisa, schedule your trip for Monday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday. Be sure to plan for your trip by wearing closed toed water shoes or an old pair of sneakers you don't mind getting wet. Bring water, sun screen, a hat, sunglasses, bug spray, a sealed plastic bag for all electronic devices and your binoculars.

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## And Don't Forget To Check Out Volusia County's Events

Volusia County's Environmental Management Team offers a number of activities, hikes, buggy tours, etc. Click on this [link](#) and scroll down the page to "Upcoming Events."

As a matter of fact, I never heard of such a thing. The federally threatened Florida Scrub-Jay is our state's only endemic bird species. Habitat loss and fire suppression of scrublands, the Scrub-Jay's prime habitat, have caused historical populations to plummet. She talked about the seven primary Scrub-Jay sites in the state, including Lyonia Preserve and Lake Monroe Conservation Area in our own Volusia County. Almost three hundred volunteers contributed over 3000 hours to protect these amazing creatures last year. Naturally, she is always on the lookout for additional volunteers. Her wonderful photos added greatly to her most informative program.

We are very fortunate to have such talented and dedicated folks working for Audubon Florida.

*Jim O'Shaughnessy*

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**Sea Watch Report From Tom Renick Park**

Hi folks, another month and the spring temperatures have given way to those of summer. Which means half as many species each day. This was shorebird month, with the heaviest passage in the first two weeks. There were still a few stragglers at the end of the month. For the month I saw 88 species over 19 visits and 98 hours. I have now seen 151 species this year and 155 overall.

There were four additions this month. There was an adult Reddish Egret over the Halifax River on the 4th, a Cliff Swallow on the 6th, a Blackpoll Warbler on the 4th and a Tufted Titmouse on the 8th. So what did I see for the rest of the month?

There were single Brown Boobies on the 6th and 18th there were also 1 to 2 Northern Gannets on occasions through the month. Herons were still moving, with 31 Snowy Egrets on the 8th, the Reddish Egret and up to two Yellow-crowned Night-Herons from the 15th. Two Roseate Spoonbills were seen on three dates over the river. The last Black Scoter was seen on the 1st whilst Red-breasted Mergansers (1 to 3) were seen regularly. There were 3 Swallow-tailed Kites on the 13th and a pair of Cooper's Hawks must be nesting in the immediate area. There were high counts of ten Black-bellied Plovers on the 7th, 13 Semipalmated Plovers on the 7th, 22 Willets on the 11th, 4 Spotted Sandpipers on the 18th, 8 Whimbrel on the 6th, 1 Red Knot on the 6th, 430 Sanderlings on the 5th, 161 Semipalmated Sandpipers on the 6th, 55 Least Sandpipers on the 11th, White-rumped Sandpipers on four dates from 5th to 8th with 3 on 6th and 8th. There were 7 Pectoral Sandpipers on the 6th with 8 on the 7th. There were 8 Dunlin on the 21st with 2 Short-billed Dowitchers on the 6th and 1 on the 30th.

Some last dates for the gulls: Ring-billed on the 14th, Herring on the 18th and Great Black-backed on the 14th. There were two Gull-billed Terns on the 7th with one on the 18th. There was one Common Tern on the 7th with five on the 18th. The Least Terns peaked at 47 on the 15th. There was a Common Nighthawk on the 8th and 11th with an Eastern Kingbird on the 7th. The last Tree Swallow(s) were seen on the 13th. Bank Swallows were seen to the 8th with 13 on the 6th. There was also a Cliff Swallow on the 6th. Barn Swallows peaked at 8,460 on the 6th with 5,700 on the 7th and 1,140 on the 8th. Passage continued to at least the 30th. Warblers were scarce there was a Palm Warbler on the 4th, single Blackpoll Warblers on the 4th and 14th with an American Redstart on the 14th. On the 30th a warbler flew in off the sea but I did not get a good enough look to identify it. A total of 65 Bobolinks flew to the north on the 8th.

The 6th was a special day I saw 9,623 birds and 59 species both are record high counts. Just when will I get to see the petrels and shearwaters?

*Harry Robinson*

"Oh, what a tangled web we weave...when first we practice to deceive." So said Sir Walter Scott in 1808. He could easily have been speaking of the current events in DeBary. With assistance from the supposed environmentalists in the St Johns River Water Management District, the city staff in DeBary thought they were about to pull a fast one on all of us. They forgot to take into consideration the investigative skills of Dinah Voyles-Pulver. Her revelations in the News-Journal of malfeasance by these people is worthy of the Pulitzer Prize she has long deserved.

We're supposed to be protected from chicanery by government officials by something called "The Sunshine Law." Contained in Chapter 286 of the Florida Statutes, "these laws provide that any records made or received by any public agency in the course of its official business are available for inspection..." So comments made by government officials when engaged in official business are not to be hidden from the public. Period. The members of the DeBary city government have been in contact with staff and board members of the SJRWMD and some undisclosed developer to scam the public out of conservation land. Their negotiations have been carried on in secret in clear violation of the law. In addition, none other than the Chairman of the SJRWMD Governing Board, one John Miklos, is also president of the consulting firm advising DeBary on how to secretly acquire the 102 acres of conservation land and being handsomely paid to do so. And the amazing thing is, he and the rest of these clowns seem to think they've done nothing wrong. Ask them, they'll tell you. However, they're also stonewalling any attempts to find out who came up with this scheme. If it's all so innocent, why are they so determined to conceal the facts ? The reason is obvious, they knew this was going to be controversial. They knew they were about to kick open a hornet's nest of public disapproval. If they could keep it under wraps until it was too late for the public to mobilize opposition, the plan would go through and the money would flow to the "right" people.

Ever since Governor Rick Scott took office he and his henchmen have done their best to reverse decades of progress in correcting the state's environmental problems. After the SJRWMD did away with a number of dedicated people who would have objected to the plan, some in DeBary's city hall felt the plan would go forward and eventually resemble Crane's Roost, in Seminole County. There's nothing wrong with Crane's Roost, such as it is. Trying to imagine turning the relaxed, tree shaded glory of the area in question into something resembling that sun drenched, over crowded and noisy venue would be like putting a bingo parlor and a Chuckee Cheese next to the Museum of Arts and Sciences.

Now that the state's attorney has executed a search warrant and collected thousands of emails and other evidence the truth should eventually come to light. The real problem here is not just the theft of land that has been set aside in conservation for us all. This deal, if it were allowed to go through, would set a dangerous precedent that could endanger all sorts of conservation lands, including state parks. Remember, the governor and his staff came into office with plans to add golf courses to several of our state parks. They still want to open them up to hunting, timber harvests and cattle grazing. The public's strong opposition to these plans put them on notice that they needed to be more discreet (as in sneaky) about what they're trying to do in DeBary.

Put people who subscribe to these ideas about parks into power at the national level and we'll see a sign above Mount Rushmore for Alka Seltzer. It wouldn't be Grand Canyon National Park. It would be Verizon presents Grand Canyon National Park. Fortunately, we still have a strong press here that alerted us to this travesty and we will hopefully prevent DeBary from ruining dedicated conservation land in the quest for quick profits.

*David Hartgrove*

## Wow! What A Pelagic Trip

*The Marine Science Center sponsors several pelagic trips each year. Sometimes the birds can be few and far between. And then there are days like Sunday, May 29th. Editor*

On May 29th, 42 stalwart individuals boarded the Pastime Princess in New Smyrna Beach and headed out of Ponce de Leon Inlet, Volusia County at 3:00 a.m. We traveled out to the Gulf Stream and began to find bird action shortly after dawn. With the crew chumming heavily we had an amazing day. By 8:00 a.m. we had already logged Sooty Terns, Pomarine Jaegers, Wilson's Storm-Petrels, Cory's Shearwaters, Black-capped Petrels, and to top it off a stunning White-tailed Tropicbird. The action continued for several hours virtually non-stop. We hit a slower period about lunch time when suddenly we had another White-tailed Tropicbird, Bridled Tern and Audubon's Shearwater. We made it out 62 miles offshore to the edge of a canyon over 2,400 feet deep.

We ended up with a fantastic day full of excellent birds, at least 10 Loggerhead Sea Turtles and we successfully released a Green Sea Turtle from the Marine Science Center sea turtle hospital back to the wild at a weed line in Gulf Stream.

*Michael Brothers*

## Here Are Some More Photos From The Pelagic Trip



—13TT



Top photo is of one of the Pomarine Jaegers we saw. Bottom photo is of one of the White-tailed Tropicbirds.

*Photos by Michael Brothers*



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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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