

The Pelican

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

Volume 62-Number 11 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
November, 2016



The President's Message

Thought and Concepts

Last week my wife and I were fortunate enough to watch a PBS Nature show devoted to the hummingbird. It was beautifully photographed and full of interesting and informative facts about these incredible creatures.

Subsequently, I did a little research on these birds and I thought I'd share a few facts with you. Did you know that hummingbirds are the only creatures able to remain in the same place in still air for as long as they wish. A hovering hummer keeps its body at a 45 degree angle to the ground and moves its wings in a sort-of figure-eight pattern. Their shoulder joints permit them to twist their wings in such a way as to generate lift off both the backward and forward strokes. The front edge of the wings leads on both strokes, and on the backstroke it is the underside of the feathers that face upward. The shoulder rotation causes the wing to be inside down! I do not suggest you attempt this at home. The direction of thrust changes between the forward and backward strokes so that they cancel each other out. Their wings, beating between 20 and 80 times a second, hold their bodies stationary. This amazing system permits hummers to hover while they extract nectar from flowers that might be inaccessible.

Metabolism is the physical and chemical processes that maintain a bird's life. The sun is the basic energy source that provides basic energy for all birds. Hummingbirds, with their tiny bodies and incredible high levels of activity, have the highest metabolic rate of any animal. To maintain these rates, they have to consume about their weight in nectar on a daily basis. When hovering, they are using about eight times the energy as when they are resting. I am sure you have noticed that hummers seem to forage in bouts- they feed somewhere around 14 to 18 times an hour and then rest in between. They do this to permit the nectar to be absorbed before foraging again since they have little ability to store excess energy. There is so much more to learn about these truly special birds. Here's a [link](#) to a Wikipedia article that is full of good information.

Check our field trip schedule and please join us on some of these fun trips. Next month I'll report on the annual Audubon Assembly, Audubon Florida's state conference.

Jim O'Shaughnessy

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We Welcome Our New & Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Betty Cook, Teresa Downey, Todd Erhart, Lynn Gartley, Patty Godwin, Selena Guardino, Diane Hermann, Jolene Rau, Frances Smith and Lorene Wartick. We look forward to seeing you at a meeting or on one of our excellent field trips.

Calendar & Events

Monday, November 21st- Program Meeting: Join us and learn about a bird that's been described as, 'wearing a tuxedo and smoking a carrot.' Chris Farrell is the Audubon Florida Policy Associate of Northeast Florida. His presentation will be on the American Oystercatcher and Audubon's efforts to save it and other shorebirds from further population declines. 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.

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Field Trips

Friday, November 18th- Lake Apopa Wildlife Drive- Join Peggy Yokubonus for an easy trip to this new and very productive birding hot spot. Meet at 7:30 am at Int'l Square - East of I-95 on Int'l Speedway Blvd behind Krystal. Here's a [link](#) to the location. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Peggy, 386-316-4085 or by email pyokubonus@cfl.rr.com.

Saturday, December 3rd- Audubon Park- Join Betty Butcher for a trip to Audubon Park, in Deltona. Meet at the Target parking in Port Orange, 1771 Dunlawton Ave., behind Panera. Here's a [link](#) to the location. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Betty, 385-224-4922 or email: bbutcher6@cfl.rr.com.

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Field Trips With Others

Sunday, November 6th-Orlando Wetlands Park Join West Volusia Audubon for a bike ride around Orlando Wetlands Park. Information on their website is currently undergoing upgrades. For information, contact Eli Schaperow, 407-314-7965 or by email: birdnerd@earthlink.net.

Saturday, November 19th- Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive- If your schedule prevents you from joining us at this great location the day before, join the folks from West Volusia Audubon for their trip there. Again, for information, contact Eli Schaperow, 407-314-7965 or by email: birdnerd@earthlink.net.

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Spend 2 Minutes, Save A National Wildlife Refuge

The state of Florida has a plan to bulldoze a national wildlife refuge and sell off the land to developers. I know, it sounds preposterous but through a careful manipulation of the data and a rigorous adherence to contract language that's what they have in mind. The Arthur Marshall Loxahatchee NWR, in Palm Beach County, is one of the state's most popular. But they have an invasive plant problem and no where near enough funding to control it. So the state wants to exercise a clause in the contract to evict the refuge. Read all about it and take action [here](#). Many Thanks!

Conservation Notes

I was under the impression that the road to Everglades restoration was well under way and would include the construction of a large reservoir south of Lake Okeechobee. For far too long polluted water from the lake has been dumped into the Caloosahatchee and St Lucie Rivers, where that water then flows into estuaries on both sides of the state. The discharge of this polluted water was principally responsible for the degraded condition of the Indian River south of Melbourne two years ago.

Now comes news that the state, in yet another incidence of foot dragging, will not even begin to study the issue until 2020. This was supposed to have been settled back when Charlie Crist was governor. He devised a plan to buy US Sugar's land, south of Clewiston, for a fair price. Then had to watch as the Legislature, ever anxious to serve those making king sized campaign donations, dawdled around and let the deal expire. The state still has an option until 2020 to purchase the land. Now however, US Sugar has been able to renegotiate the deal and the asking price is just over 1 billion dollars. Meanwhile a handful of US Sugar shareholders count their government subsidized profits and we once again are left to deal with their pollution.

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Key Deer, the small and very much endangered white-tailed deer of extreme South Florida now face yet another threat. Screw worm is actually the larval stage of *Cochliomyia hominivorax*, also know as a blowfly. These voracious little maggots attack otherwise healthy animals and the result is often a long, painful, lingering death. FWC researchers are said to be looking into methods of dealing with the disease but for now luck, in the form of not being a host to these destructive pests, is the best we can hope for.

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From Bird Studies Canada comes news of yet another hybridization in the world of warblers. This one is the first ever record of a Magnolia x Chestnut-sided. The bird was captured in a mist net at Long Point Bird Observatory during Spring migration in 2014. Here's a [link](#) to an article in the Wilson Journal of Ornithology.



Magnolia x Chestnut-sided Hybrid, *photo by Ken Burrell*

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Thanks to chapter member, Lisa Mickey, for sending along a note about this [article](#) on the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's "All About Birds" website. It's fascinating information on Florida's only endemic species, the Florida Scrub Jay.

David Hartgrove

Time for another report from Harry Robinson's sea watch.

October Sea Watch At Tom Renick Park

I had expected October to be a special month. Well it was for all the wrong reasons. Hurricane Matthew paid a visit on the 7th and the hurricane appears to have pushed all the pelagic birds out ahead of it. After the hurricane there have been strong easterly winds and these produced a Magnificent Frigatebird. That was it.

Just 80 species noted this month, on 17 surveys and 84 hours of watching. So far this year I have done 185 surveys over 936 hours. The highest number of species (45) was on the 25th and the highest number of birds (1,730) was on the 28th. I have seen 178 species this year with an overall total of 181.

Common Loons were seen on the 28th and 30th. Most were in breeding plumage. A new species was a Pied-billed Grebe, that I saw on the 23rd and 25th. There was a Brown Booby on the 5th. Northern Gannets were seen from the 28th with 5 on the 30th all but one were adults. Over the Halifax River there were 7 American White Pelicans on the 26th. That was the day of the Magnificent Frigatebird. There were 6 Roseate Spoonbills on the 1st with 21 on the 22nd the latter were all adults. On the 30th there was a single Ring-necked Duck and a single Surf Scoter, together with a flock of 7 Black Scoters.

There were 12 Peregrine Falcons on the 12th and unexpectedly there were two Sandhill Cranes over the river on the 2nd. Red Knots were seen from the 23rd with 42 on the 25th. Another new bird was a Wilson's Snipe that flew to the south on the 11th. Single Parasitic Jaegers were seen on four dates. There were 720 Royal Terns on the 28th with 111 Sandwich Terns on the 30th. The last Common Tern was seen on the 29th. There was an Eastern Phoebe on the 25th. On the 25th a party of three American Crows flew to the south calling. Finally another new bird was a Sedge Wren seen on the 22nd.

There were a number of high counts: there were 165 Great Blue Herons on the 1st, 33 Great Egrets on the 2nd, 127 Cattle Egrets on the 1st, 354 White Ibis on the 1st and 357 Black Vultures. All were flying to the south. There were also 8 Ospreys on the 29th, 4 Northern Harriers on the 1st and five Merlins on the 12th. Even a very poor month had some interesting birds.

Harry Robinson

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Here's another chapter in Ray Scory's ongoing feature:

Everyday Birding

What is this little gray bird doing in my backyard? Will it come to my feeder? Will it come back to my yard? Why did it appear at four o'clock in the afternoon? What can I do but wait and keep looking out in my backyard. So becomes the joy and mystery of birding. The patience of the wait and the art of observation, coupled with the skill of identification, all will crash together upon the moment of a split-second sighting.

A split-second sighting because this is how the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher acts - darting in and out of leafy branches in the trees and bushes of deciduous and in pine forest. Appearing briefly on the outer edges of trees kindly giving us a quick look at its tiny, gray shape. How wonderfully they move from our view to the inner recesses of the tree, only allowing us the time to exclaim, "Where, Where is it?"

Well I'm quite inquisitive about this tiny, gray bird that can bring such joy into my life, especially in such fleeting instances. My research reveals that it has a Summer range over most of the United States, with a global population of 57,000,000.

Continued below on page 3.

Tripod & Scope For Sale

Board member, Celine Sullivan, has a deal for you. She's selling an Eagle Optics Raven, 60 power scope, with its valid lifetime warranty. It's in perfect condition with case and lens covers, AND a new tripod, an ABEO 243AT,,,, all for only \$200.00. Call her at 386-257-1980 or email: celinesul@aol.com.



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, photo by Ray Scory

This bundle of stealth and activity migrates into Central America, down to Cuba, the Bahamas, the Cayman Islands and Mexico.

The Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher resides in a number of habitats including pine forests, deciduous woodlands, stream side thickets, live oaks and chaparral. It is propelled along its journeys with a wing span of six inches and a body weight around 6 grams (2.1 oz). It finds its way around various habitats using shallow wing beats and a fluttering flight. Just watch one as it drops from a high tree level down to a lower one. Very entertaining and challenging to see.

I can count on one hand the number of times the Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher has entered my life. With three occasions remaining quite vivid. The nest that Chuck Tague discovered on a Halifax River Audubon walk at Lake Monroe revealed a tiny nest that could fit in the cup of my hand. Tiny bark and leafy particles, fine grassy pieces were neatly wrapped in a cocoon of lichen. Inside the cup resided two diminutive, recent hatchlings, with bulging, covered eyes and no feathers. The nest reminded me of the Ruby-throated Hummingbird nest, only this one was about three times larger. The Ruby-throated Hummingbird's nest looked about the size of a marshmallow.

After a dormant time of birding, due to a forty year career in professional photography, I redirected my activities back to a better understanding of the art. My first move was to get back to birding at Hammonasset Beach State Park, in Connecticut. This two mile moraine juts out into Long Island Sound. Standing on a wind swept, rocky peninsula overlooking the churning sea, I was yanked back into a more active state of birding. This particular chilly morning I was with a wise, experienced birder looking out in to the Sound for seabirds. However, his focus was not one hundred percent upon the sea, but also behind us. He pointed out a tiny, gray bird dancing about a prickly thicket of Multi-flora Rose bushes. He called it a Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher. I learned a good lesson that day, don't just look, observe your surroundings and you will see birds.

A few days ago, while reading, I glanced out between my Venetian blinds and spotted a gray shape with rear white streaks flash by into a leafy shrub. Closer investigation revealed a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. The second in my backyard in sixteen years.

From the sea, to the forest, to my backyard. A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher is very exciting.

Ray Scory



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Time to Start Thinking About The Festival

[The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival](#) is the largest of its kind in the country. And all the fun takes place just 35 miles to our, south in Titusville. Headquartered at Eastern Florida State College, this is the 20th anniversary edition and it promises to be a doozy! Online registration should be open by the time you read this and the incredible field trips will fill up fast. Birders from as far away as the Yukon, England, Germany and all over the US will be here for the excitement. Scheduled from January 25th thru January 30th, it will be 5 days of field trips, work shops, keynote addresses and a gym full of all things birding and nature. Don't miss it.

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Christmas Bird Counts Coming Soon

One of the best ways to improve your birding skills is to take part in a Christmas Bird Count. This will be the 117th CBC and it's the longest running citizen science project anywhere. Begun in 1900, just 27 birders participated in the first counts, that were done in both the US and Canada. Originally done only on Christmas Day, they are now conducted in a window that runs from December 14th through January 5th. They're conducted all over globe and there are 4 here in Volusia and Flagler. We try to schedule them so that members from the 4 chapters in our area can participate in more than one. Due to Christmas and New Years falling on Sunday this year, scheduling hasn't been as easy as other years. The Flagler CBC starts things off on Friday, December 16th. The following day, December 17th, will be the West Volusia Count. Sunday, December 18th, will be the Ponce Inlet Count. Some of us are going to have a very busy weekend. Our Daytona Beach Count will be on Friday, December 23rd. If you're interested in participating in any or all of these Counts, contact me: by phone, 386-788-2630 or email: birdman9@earthlink.net. I guarantee you a great time.

David Hartgrove

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From the Quotable Birder

"I once had a sparrow alight upon my shoulder for a moment, while I was hoeing in a village garden, and I felt that I was more distinguished by that circumstance that I should have been by any epaulet I could have worn."

Henry David Thoreau, Walden

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