

The Pelican

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

Volume 62-Number 12 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
December, 2016



The President's Message

Thought and Concepts

The annual meeting of Audubon Florida was held at the Sirata Beach Resort in St. Petersburg Beach on October 28th and 29th. Field trips were offered on Friday morning just prior to the start of the conference. Most attendants went to Ft. De Soto Park as you would expect. My wife and I had been there last year so we decided to go to Boyd Hill Nature Preserve. It is a 300 acre preserve to the south end of Tampa Bay surrounded by residential neighborhoods on three sides and Tampa Bay is the northern border. It contains hard wood forests, wet lands, a lake and several small islands in Tampa Bay. We saw numerous birds, an interesting variety of flora and had two wonderfully informed guides who made everything come to life. I'd recommend this little gem of a park to anyone in the St. Pete area.

The theme of this years conference was "One Gulf". Before Deepwater Horizon the political boundaries seemed important. Florida, Texas and the other states bordering on the Gulf each saw it as their Gulf. But when disaster struck, those boundaries emerged as starkly artificial. The oil didn't pile up at state lines on the map as though it was running into a glass wall. Suddenly, all the different interests in the Gulf of Mexico realized the Gulf didn't recognize boundaries and neither did the tragedy. It will take many hands to make the Gulf ecosystem whole again. Audubon has applied itself in a number of ways to this task. A number of Audubon restoration projects are underway and others are being proposed. Audubon brings a unique blend of science, local knowledge, grassroots engagement, and policy acumen to what may be the biggest conservation opportunity of a generation.

Audubon coastal bird technicians have engaged hundreds to volunteers to protect beach nesting birds along the Gulf. Audubon chapter members are bringing local knowledge and accountability to update the process relative to Surface Water improvement and Management plan. Florida members are advocates for new protections for some of our most vulnerable bird habitats along our Gulf shoreline. Audubon's Everglades scientists are crafting restoration plans to staunch the accelerating erosion of southwest Florida's Cape Sable. Audubon staff and volunteers are continually working to turn our conservation vision into reality.

Audubon members were among the most active advocates in securing passage of the RESTORE Act and celebrated last year's historic settlement with BP. Now that implementation of Gulf Restoration from several funding streams is gearing up, Audubon voices will be needed to speak for the Gulf's natural resources.

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Calendar & Events

Monday, December 19th- Program Meeting. Dr. Harry Moulis is one of the best nature photographers around. His award winning photos have graced magazines, homes and offices alike. He will be our speaker for this meeting. 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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Saturday, December 3rd- Audubon Park. Join Betty Butcher for a trip to Audubon Park, in Deltona. Meet at the Target parking lot 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.

Friday, December 16th- Merritt Island NWR. Join John Roessler for a trip to one of the nation's premier winter birding destinations. We'll meet to carpool at the Target parking lot in Port Orange, 1771 Dunlawton Ave., behind Panera. Here's a [link](#) to the location. Bring lunch. Questions? Call John, 386-212-6957, or email: johnroessler@bellsouth.net.

Plan Now For Our Overnight Trip To St Marks NWR

Tuesday, January 10th thru Friday, January 13th. We will leave Tuesday January 10th, carpooling to St Marks, FL (approx. 260 miles). We will stay at [Shell Island Fish Camp](#), 850-925-6226. They have 1 and 2 bedroom cabins, motel rooms and RV sites (if you want to bring your RV). Dinners will be as a group at local seafood restaurants. Stay from 3, 4, or 5 nights, whichever is better for you. If interested, please contact Betty Butcher, 863-224-4922, for more information.

And Plan Now Too For January's Boat Trip

Wednesday, January 25th- Spruce Creek Boat Tour- Join Celine Sullivan at [Cracker Creek](#) for a 1 hour pontoon boat ride on this Outstanding Florida Waterway. Cracker Creek Concession is located at [1795 Taylor Rd., Port Orange](#). The tour is from 10-11 am with lunch following at the Olive Garden Restaurant located in the Pavillion Shopping Center, Port Orange. The fee for the boat trip is \$10.00 (please bring exact fee in cash). Limit 20 persons. The deadline for this trip is Mon., 1/23/17. Questions? Call Celine at 386-523-4809.

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Field Trips With Others

Monday, December 12th- Merritt Island NWR. Another option for those wanting to see one of the nation's best winter birding hot spots is to go with our sister chapter, the West Volusia Audubon Society. If you want to join them for this trip, contact Eli Schaperow at 407-314-7965. You may be able to rendezvous with the group near the Refuge rather than driving to DeLand first.

The comprehensive plan that guides RESTORE is being revised and Audubon has had input into this critically important document. Natural resources damage funding and the Gulf Environment Benefit Fund will need local knowledge from Audubon chapter members to evaluate proposed priorities and projects. To receive notification from Audubon when opportunities to comment are advertised sign up for the electronic newsletter at this [link](#). Your voice is needed and makes a difference.

Dr. Harry Moulis, a wonderful nature photographer, will be our speaker at our December 19 meeting. You will not want to miss this special presentation.

Jim O'Shaughnessy

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Conservation Notes

As many of you may have seen in the Sunday, November 27th [News-Journal editorial](#), Rookery Island was removed from the list of new Critical Wildlife Area designates at the last minute. I wrote about the CWA program in the September edition of the Pelican. The island also has the somewhat less descriptive name of "Island #V-7." Whatever it's called it's one of the most important nesting areas in the state and the northern most Brown Pelican colony on Florida's Atlantic coast. In addition to the pelicans, herons, egrets, cormorants and American Oystercatchers nest on the island. It's clearly in need of extra protection.

Its proximity to Port Orange Causeway Park and its boat ramps, along with the attendant boat traffic, have the potential to cause serious disturbance to the nesting birds. However, the birds pay little attention to the boats as they launch and cluster at the end of the day to reload onto trailers for the ride back home. Boaters are able to remain a respectful distance away from the island and nearly all do. It's the fishermen who decide the nearby fishing dock doesn't suit their fancy. Who land on the island and are oblivious to the disturbance their presence causes as they cast fishing lines or nets into the water. It's the kayakers who bring their dogs along and land on the large sandbar that's exposed at low tide on the west end of the island. The dogs are turned loose to chase birds and again, the owners are oblivious to the damage being done. And now, thanks to new technology, there's [another threat](#). This one from above via drone. Hopefully none of these bozos has any idea of the threats their activities cause to the birds. Surely they wouldn't purposely harass the birds and clearly the island needs the protection a CWA designation extends.

The reason the island was pulled off the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission's CWA list was a last minute objection by the Volusia County representative to the Florida Inland Navigation District. FIND owns the island through an agreement with the state. The island was created back when the Intra Coastal Waterway was dredged in the 1940's. FIND's mission is to maintain navigable waterways, among other things. However the island's only value to FIND is as a spoil dump site from dredging operations. Since there's been a thriving bird colony on the island for over 40 years, and since FIND has a long history of being a very good partner at other nesting sites, it's a puzzle as to what their objection could be. The public relations nightmare created if they suddenly decided to pump thousands of gallons of dredge spoil into the middle of a long time bird colony make that possibility non existent.

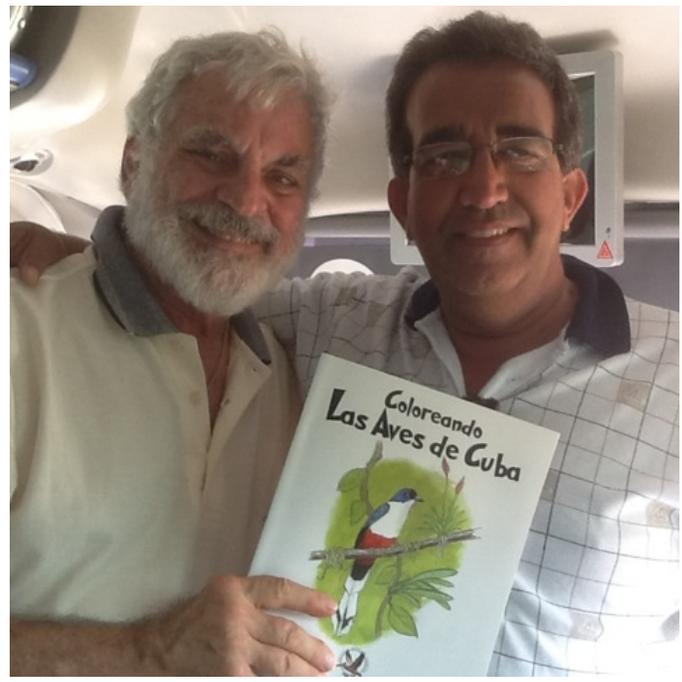
So what's their complaint? We hope to find out in a meeting with the FIND staff here in Port Orange on December 13th. As I was told when I drove to the FWC meeting in St Petersburg on November 16th, this issue is still up for debate and could make it to the list after all. Stay tuned.

David Hartgrove

Coloring Book Project Off And Running

In December, 2014 our chapter organized a birding trip to Cuba. Built into the cost of the trip was a donation to our chapter. That donation funded a project to design and publish a coloring book of Cuban birds for Cuban school aged children. Our donation allowed for the printing of 2,000 copies of the book in Spanish. At last month's Audubon Assembly I was contacted by Dr. Norman Capra who put me in touch with Dr. Robert Lerer, who among his many titles lists Associate Clinical Professor of Pediatrics at The University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.

For a number of years now he has organized a medical missions program to hospitals and clinics in Cuba. He asked for 30 copies of the book for distribution on the latest trip. All of the books were shared with children (some of whom suffer from autism) and their doctors. Below Dr. Lerer (left) gives a copy to professor of Speech Pathology and Audiology, Dr. Hector Perez Galban, for use with



his class of deaf students. Our profound thanks to Dr. Lerer for his assistance in getting the books distributed to the children of Cuba. For more photos and and information, visit our chapter's [Facebook](#) page.

David Hartgrove

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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 \$45.00. 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!

Marion Monaghan, Education Co-Chair

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From the Quotable Birder

"The bird a nest, the spider a web, man friendship."

William Blake

Tree Down (A Story of Birds and a Fallen Tree)

A tree down is a loss. Never to be again. Gone. When it happens in your backyard. It is personal. It carried with it memories. My memories. I will not be able to look at it anymore. I will miss its majesty , its beauty, its call for memories.

This wonderful slash pine now lays down in my yard, half on the lawn, the other half partly submerged in our retention pond. Forlornly, it awaits the buzz of the chain saw, decked in the memories of years past. Before the time we came to live here, long before this subdivision was a dream. It was one tree in a vital forest protecting plants, flowers and wildlife, keeping the land intact from the ageless changes of weather. It began its life forty-two years ago and shut down bending to the inevitable progress of aging and a hurricane called, "Matthew." The tree became a remnant from times past. It can be proud. It did its job well and served its purpose.

I fondly remembered the two Great Horned Owls that roosted in the tree during one long winter season. Every morning they were there, looking down at us as we peered out our kitchen window to see if they were still there. Friends they became - two big brown birds with rounded faces and piercing yellow eyes. Stoic and alive they were. At dusk, we watched them fly off to a tree across the pond, look back at our tree and then on off to create their own memories but still return to us the next morning.

Years ago, a Common Nighthawk flew over our house, I grabbed my camera, charged out to the backyard and photographed the bird tightly resting on a branch of our tree. The first and last time I have seen a Common Nighthawk in our yard. Semi-annually, migrating warblers, American Robins, Cedar Waxwings and other avian travelers have used this tree as a welcoming stopover. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker winters on it. All wonderful lasting memories.

For six weeks after the hurricane, the tree rested in the water providing a cover for the wildlife in our back yard. Fish swam up among the submerged branches right to the edge of the pond. Schools of small fingerlings and larger bass welcomed the covering shade of the tree. They never came this close to the shore before. Egrets and herons used the out-of-water branches as perching sites, majestically establishing a position of priority and adding a touch of beauty to their new found environment. Every day just before dusk an Anhinga came to the same spot under the cover of the branches to spread its wings. Mallards seem to enjoy weaving in and our of the branches that penetrate down into the water. They liked to rest on shore up close to the fallen tree. Quite a sight to see, all those ducks huddled in the protection of the tree. A good feeling I had, warm and peaceful. Wood storks stood by this fallen tree.

A few days ago the chain saws came and the tree was carried away. The birds fly by and the waterbirds perch in other places. The ducks sit across the pond and face where they once played. A wood stork just stands there.

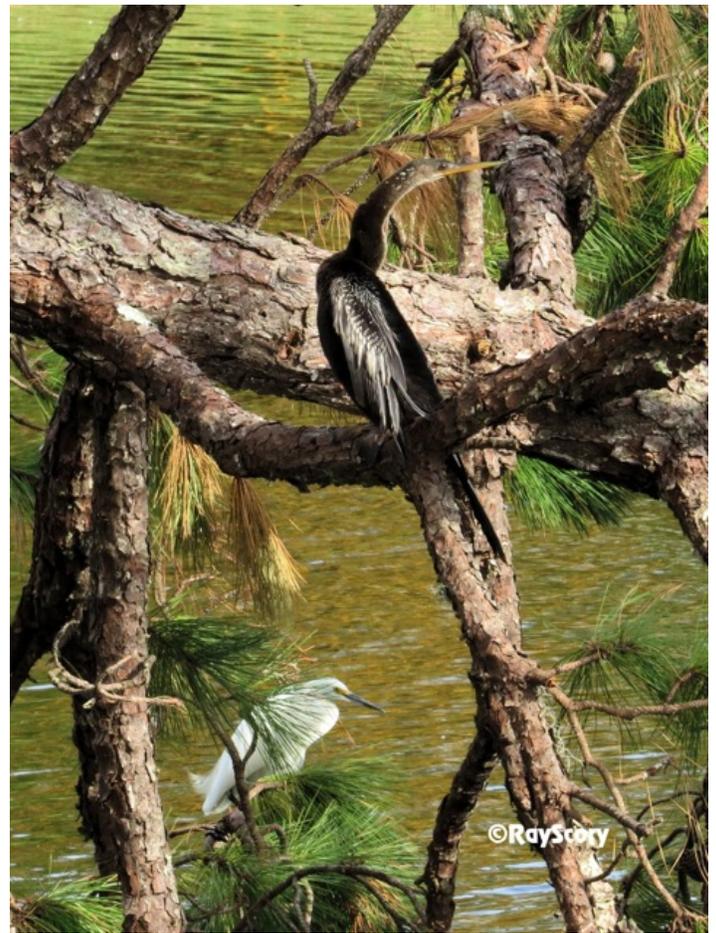
I will miss this tree but take satisfaction realizing that... This tree did its job. This tree was there to help and this tree did.

This tree was OK.

Ray Scory



The slash pine taken down by the winds of Matthew.



A Snowy Egret and a male Anhinga take refuge on the tree's branches. No doubt the branches made good platforms for the birds to search for a meal of fish.

Photos by Ray Scory

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Welcome To Our New & Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Joanne Axelrod, Wayland Bennett, Lorene Cook, Mary Downey, Gezina Ehrhart, Daniel Eubank, Todd Fox, Jessie Gaby, Barbara Gallant, Tina Garber, Diane Giles, Selina Goeman, Carol Koenke, Melissa Lammers, Josephine LeGrand, Patti Musette, Frances Myers, Michael Piers, Chuck & Helga Nelson, Nancy Robinson, Linda Soden, David Thorp and Lynn Van Tassel. We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting or on one of fabulous field trips.

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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