

The Pelican

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

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February, 2017



The President's Message

Thoughts and Concepts

I don't think there is any single subject about birds that is more fascinating and complex than migration. Birds arriving in the spring or fall and departing months later on their predetermined schedule is a familiar pattern to birders and non-birders alike. Seasonal migration enables birds to avoid unfavorable climates and to utilize food supplies that are available for only limited periods each year. Many species can breed at high latitudes during the brief arctic summer, when insects abound, then fly south to more welcoming climates in the southern United States or even Central and South America.

Seasonal migration is thought to have evolved as a means of increasing lifetime reproductive output. Daylight periods in spring and summer are longer at higher altitudes resulting in more hours in which birds can gather food. Preparation for migrating often requires birds to accumulate fat which is then burned off on their long and arduous journeys. Passerines are known to lose up to one-half of their body weight during migration.

The majority of long-distance migrants fly at night. Some birds travel continuously while others land daily to forage and rest. Migrants that travel relatively short distances usually travel only in the daytime and spend a few hours in the mornings migrating then foraging and resting till the next morning. Aerial foragers, such as swifts and swallows, feed in flight and do not stop.

Migrating in North America is essentially north-south along four principal flyways. The Pacific, which is along the Pacific coast from Canada to Central and South America. The Central, which parallels the Rocky mountains. The Mississippi flyway is in-between the Central and the Atlantic flyways. It's the Atlantic flyway bringing us most of our winter visitors.

How birds find their way between breeding and wintering grounds has puzzled birders and scientists alike for generations. Birds must be able to orient, that is determine compass direction and to also navigate, that is judge their position while traveling. Birds use a variety of cues to accomplish their incredible feats. Scientists have determined the birds acquire directional information from five primary sources: topographic features, stars, the sun, the Earth's magnetic field and odors. It seems evident that ornithologists, while solving a number of parts of the puzzle, still have much to learn. One conclusion that appears evident is that birds do not rely on a single source of information to guide them on their travels. They possess the ability, to use a variety of clues from numerous sources. This complex system, shaped over evolutionary time, enables birds to find their way under most conditions.

I relied on the ***Birder's Handbook*** for much of the information in this article.

Jim O'Shaughnessy

Calendar & Events

Monday, February 20th, Program Meeting- David Baker, from Southeast Volusia Audubon and the Hudson River Valley, has birded all over the world. Arizona is one of the birding **hot spots** in the US. Many species from Central America and Mexico show up here and it's a hummingbird magnet, with 18 species on the state's checklist. David will take us on a trip to this birding Mecca via his photographs. 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, February 3rd- *Viera Scratched* Lake Apopka- Join David Hartgrove for our second trip to this outstanding birding location. Due to the closure off Viera for road maintenance. Bring a lunch and meet at 7:30 am at International Square, east of I-95 on International Speedway Boulevard behind Krystal, 2500 W International Speedway Boulevard Daytona Beach FL 32114 Questions? Call David at 386-235-1249.

Friday, February 10th- MINWR- Join Peggy Yokubonus for a trip to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, one of the premier winter birding sites in the country. Very little walking for this trip. Bring a lunch and meet at 7:30 am in the Target parking lot on Dunlawton Ave., east of I-95, behind Panera Bread. Questions? Call Peggy at 386-316-4085

Saturday, February 11th- MINWR- Every year we schedule back to back trips to this outstanding spot to facilitate participation by those unable to come on a week day. Join Ray Scory for our second trip to this section of birding paradise. Very little walking for this trip. Bring a lunch and meet at 7:30 am in the Target parking lot on Dunlawton Ave., east of I-95, behind Panera Bread. Questions? Call Ray at 386-763-4260.

Friday, February 17th- Oakland Nature Preserve- Join Betty Butcher for this, our first time trip. A nature preserve on the south shore of Lake Apopka, west of Orlando, just 30 minutes from the attractions and nestled between Winter Garden and Clermont in the beautiful Town of Oakland, lies a "hidden gem". A 128-acre preserve offering environmental education and ecotourism activities. Bring lunch and meet at International Square, east of I-95 on International Speedway Boulevard behind Krystal 2500 W International Speedway Boulevard Daytona Beach FL 32114 Questions? Call Betty, 863-224-4922.

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From The Quotable Birder

"For most bird watchers the coming of the warblers has the same effect as cat nip on a cat."

Arlene Thomas, in "Audubon's Birds"

Backyard Birding- One Winter Morning

It is here. A new year. A time of new hopes and dreams of good cheer. Refreshing. A new year to clear out the debris of the old.

But the birds in my yard. Where were they during the Fall and early Winter migration? They did not come. I waited and checked my past year's records to confirm their appointed arrival at the feeding station in my backyard. They should have been here. I waited and hoped and watched for the wave of migrating birds to pass. But they did not show.

Is it any wonder that they may not adhere to the whims and provocations of the human will or are they programmed to a different system that we may only be on the threshold of understanding? These answers may be revealed as we continue to research the wonderful lives of birds. However, the mystery of it all. The surprises. Isn't this, also, the wonder of it all. All so special.

And then they came. A flock of speeding Cedar Waxwings over the trees in my backyard, pointed South. On this second day of January, I estimated close to seventy-five birds flying. A cheer echoed through my mind, "Hallelujah".

The next day, Tuesday January 3, heralded in the granddaddy bird migration day of them all. On this day more birds flew over and came into my yard than any other day of this past migration season. Around mid-morning I looked out my back yard window and saw three Downy Woodpeckers at the feeder all at once (uncommon). Five Tufted Titmice, two Carolina Wrens and a Red-bellied Woodpecker jockeyed for position to the feeder trays (common) A Carolina Chickadee joined the foray at the feeder (quite uncommon - only twice in the last sixteen years). A few American Robins flitted among the backyard pine trees. I grabbed my binoculars and dashed outside. In time to catch a flock of 75 Cedar Waxwings whizzing by, again pointed South, just like the day before. A few more American Robins trickled into the yard, and then, an explosion of American Robins covered my yard and the yards around my house and across the pond. Over six hundred American Robins, active, frantic and excited raced to different trees, different yards, all noisily screaming out alarm notes (peek, peek, peek, tut, tut) and flight calls (zeeeeup, zeeeeup, zeeeeup) and mixed into this cacophony of excited calls was their familiar whinny.

After one and a half hours of this elevated rambunctiousness, I did spot a lone Common Grackle in the mix. I thought maybe - a scout. Eventually, the American Robins whooshed out of the neighborhood and in flew about two hundred Common Grackles. Only to repeat the incessant calling and wild antics of the American Robins. And then, they too, all flew out. To round out the excitement on this rarest of rare days, my favorite winter migrant, the diminutive Chipping Sparrow appeared at the feeder. Many of them - feeding, all so quietly. I would like to think that they came down from my former backyard in Connecticut to stay for the winter in my Florida backyard. They have been back every winter since for the past sixteen years.

I rejoice in the energy and determination of migrating birds. But when things quiet down, it's nice to be with good and familiar friends.

Ray Scory



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An American Robin and a pair of Chipping Sparrows

photos by Ray Scory

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Pinellas Birding Guide Revised

Long before he retired from the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, Ron Smith was one the county's premier birders. He has now completely revised his "Birds of Pinellas County" and offered it to St Pete Audubon free of charge as a fund raiser for their chapter. Judi Hopkins, St Pete Audubon President, writes that this book is essential if you're planning a birding trip to Pinellas County. The book contains a birding history of the county, lists of parks and birding sites, including extensive information on Ft DeSoto and of course a checklist of all 413 species reported in the county. The book is available from the chapter's [website](#) for 25.00 plus 4.75 shipping and handling. There's a lot more to bird there than just the Fort and this book will be your indispensable guide to locating spots you'd otherwise never find.

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Welcome to Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Ann Atkinson, Michelle Bartel, Carol Kline, Elizabeth Fernekess, Barbara Hermann, Theresa Hutt, John LaForte, Stephen Lang, Janice Lowry, Judy Ludwin, Susie O'Neill, Joann Schurman, Dyanne Strange, Randall Whitney, and Juli Wight. We hope to see you at a meeting or on one of our field trips.

Conservation Notes

Our new President has some rather strange ideas about how to "Make America Great Again." His choices for leadership positions at the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of the Interior, which oversees our national parks and refuges, seem to signal a desire to sell off our national treasures and to return to the days of robber baron capitalism that lead to our air and water being a source of death for wildlife and humans alike.

Tapping Scott Pruitt for EPA Administrator is like asking Mr. Fox to take over security duties at the nation's largest henhouse. As Attorney General of Oklahoma he has sent letters to the EPA that were written by lobbyists for energy companies and signed them as if they were his own words when writing in support of proposals to weaken standards under the Clean Air Act. On the issue of climate change, the website for his 2014 campaign for the position of Attorney General of Oklahoma claimed "flawed science" is used to "promote a dangerous no-growth agenda, which has the potential for disastrous consequences domestically and with respect to our national security." This flies in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary and mimics the position of the Koch Brothers and other oil and coal industry lobbyists. How returning the country to the days of polluted air and water will make it "great again" have not been explained by the President.

The President's choice for Interior Secretary offers a small ray of hope in this otherwise bleak picture. Montana Congressman, Ryan Zinke, has voted against the Republican Party's agenda when it included turning over millions of acres of federal forest lands across the west to states for use as they see fit. The House Natural Resources Chairman, Rob Bishop, (R-Utah) has tried in the past to transfer millions of acres of public land from the U.S. Forest Service to the state. This policy is written into the Republican Party's platform. It's doubtful that as Interior Secretary, should he be confirmed, Zinke will be able to stop this assault on our nation's parks and refuge system. Besides, he's been rumored to be a top contender for a Senate seat in Montana in 2016. So he may not be in office long enough to have much of an effect one way or the other.

We in the environmental movement face a long four years. We face a bleak prospect where what we all thought were inviolable treasures are sacrificed on the block of quick profits for industry. Could anyone watch the Ken Burns series, "The National Parks: America's Best Idea" and agree with these destructive proposals. I don't see how. Perhaps if we sent a DVD set to the President...

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The latest news on the shorebird nesting and migration front is not encouraging. Since 1973 some species of shorebirds have seen a 70% drop in their numbers. Red Knots, several species of plovers and others have moved steadily down a path toward extinction. Now from Bird Studies Canada comes news that one issue effecting shorebird nesting success is the sudden increase in the population of Snow Geese. Their population has gone from about 1.6 million in the 1960's to near 20 million today. The feeding habits of the geese can turn acres of productive habitat into ruined space not much good for vegetation or birds alike. Researchers are using new improvements in monitoring technology to track shorebirds, both as they migrate and as they move about the nesting range. Here's a link to an interesting article in [Nature](#) that was linked from the Bird Studies Canada site. It contains links to even more articles on birds and migration that are sure to improve your understanding of this complex and fascinating subject.

David Hartgrove



Smooth-billed Ani, *photo by Tom Ford*

We're hoping to see the Smooth-billed Ani on our trip to Lake Apopka. This one was found at Viera Wetlands and seen by chapter Membership Chair, John Carr and his daughter, Becky, on January 15th. Once fairly common in Florida it's now a rare event when one is found. Fortunately there have been several reports of the birds here in the state this winter. Join us on our field trip to Lake Apopka on February 3rd where another one has been found.

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Walks With Don

Don Chalfant moves in some pretty rarified company. As a birder whose life list stands at 770 species, he's listed as one of the top one hundred birders in North America. On Tuesday mornings he leads a bird walk as part of the partnership between our sister chapter, the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society and The Marine Discovery Center. The walks are from 8:00 to 10:00 am and begin at the [Indian River Lagoon Reserve Park](#). Weather permitting you're guaranteed a good time and a chance to learn from one of the best in the business.

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Winners of the Great Backyard Bird Count Photo Contest

There are some stunning photos of birds and their behavior from the 2016 Great Backyard Bird Count Photo Contest. From courting Trumpeter Swans to a bathing Herring Gull to a Common Gallinule photographed here in Florida the photos are sure to delight you. See them all [here](#).

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"1001 Secrets Every Birder Should Know"

Sharon "Birdchick" Stiteler has a book by that title and from it we learn that the highest flying bird in the world is the Bar-headed Goose. Reliably reported at an altitude of 27,800 feet flying over Mount Makalu there's even an unconfirmed report of a flock flying over Mount Everest, at just over 29,000 feet! Sharon has been a speaker and trip leader at birding festivals around the country. Her ["Birdchick"](#) blog has many followers.

St Marks Trip Was As Good As Could Be

Fourteen members of HRA and their guests travelled to St Marks National Wildlife Refuge from January 10th through January 14th. The weather could not have been better. Betty Butcher was hostess and guide for the trip to this beautiful refuge on the Gulf Coast. The troops gathered the first afternoon at the visitor center to check the bird lists, gather maps and information and get a feel for the park. Making their way quickly to the cars, the group was anxious to see what was down the road. For the next 3 days, they were not disappointed.

The first afternoon yielded Bufflehead, American Bittern, Black-crowned Night-Herons, Brown-headed Nuthatches and Sedge Wren just to name a few. After 4 hours of exploring, the birders checked in at the Shell Island Fish Camp. For our first evening, we were hosted for dinner by Mary and Steve Blackledge for pulled pork barbecue and all of the fixin's right at the camp. The group gathered in their camper and at the picnic tables along the water and watched hundreds of Double-crested Cormorants pass by on their way to evening roosts.

The next day the birding continued in earnest through Thursday where all efforts were focused on the refuge. Starting at the lighthouse at the southern most point of the road. Here the first Common Goldeneye were seen, along with Common Loons, Black and Surf Scoters in the bay. The pond at the same parking lot held Redheads and Canvasbacks, Greater Scaup and others. The ducks were out in force and that morning saw most of the 19 duck species that were tallied.

Other outstanding sightings were Vermillion Flycatcher, Henslow's and Clay-colored Sparrows and a very entertaining and animated American Bittern pursuing frogs right below the observation overlook at the Headquarters Pond. A Whip-poor-will almost eluded us overhead on the return from one of our fruitless hikes out to catch a glimpse of a reported American Black Duck. John Roessler spotted the bird sunning high in an oak tree.

Our final morning, after check out, the group drove to Wakulla Springs State Park and took a boat ride from the springs down and back on the river. Other than the tour boats, there are no other boats on that section of the river. This resulted in some very close views of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons and other species that are not threatened by the passive tourists. Photographers had some great opportunities.

Thanks to Betty Butcher for a trip that provided life birds for many, lots of good company and great pancakes. And a special thanks too to Mary & Steve Blackledge. The hosts with the most. Who opened their RV to the whole group for meals. We are ready to go back!

Final species count for the trip - 118. Check "News" link on our [website](#) for the full list.

Joan Tague

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The Birds of a Feather Fest

Flagler's birding festival, "[The Birds of a Feather Fest](#)" starts on Friday, February 10th and runs through Sunday, February 12th. Field trips, photography workshops and family friendly activities abound. There's no charge for registration and there are free bird walks daily. Click the link above for all the information.



Top photo, a sleeping Whip-poor-will. Above is a rare to Florida, Vermillion Flycatcher. Photos by David Hartgrove

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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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