

The Pelican

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

Volume 63- Number 6 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
June, 2017



The President's Message

Thoughts and Concepts

THE JOURNEY OF GOING NATIVE

When my family moved into our brand-new Ormond-by-the-Sea home in 1965, it was one of the first houses built on a dune that had been clear-cut to make room for a new subdivision, soon to be home to many families and their many children. While awaiting the cement trucks, the surrounding vacant lots were undergoing recolonization by citron melon, lantana, blanket flowers, prickly pear and sand spurs. It was a scene I would become increasingly familiar with, right up to today. Back then, as now, the early-morning calls of the mourning doves seemed both hopeful and melancholy, perhaps signaling the complicated relationship between nature and man that I was learning about.

As a new homeowner, my Father enthusiastically embraced the challenge of landscaping on sand, close to the sea and its ceaseless misting of salt spray. Three ideas guided his gardening decisions: put the right plant in the right place, choose drought-tolerant specimens to minimize the need for water, and avoid herbicides, pesticides and broadcast fertilizers that would soak into our porous limestone substrate and pollute our ground water. Somehow, his ministrations produced a beautiful yard with little help from these modern day "garden essentials."

My parents are both gone now. Last summer, I returned to Ormond-by-the-Sea, to their home on the dune. The yard has been largely neglected for decades. There is virtually no turf grass but there are many volunteers, some desirable and some not. For months, I have sat on my patio and contemplated all the wonderful things I could do to my tangled yard while watching the lizards, the bees, the butterflies and the birds flitting around the cabbage palms, the spiderwort, the Spanish needles, the beach daisies, the cape honeysuckle, the four o'clocks, the laurel trees and the many other plants whose names I do not yet know. I've realized that as enlightened as my Father was, there was something missing from his gardening guidelines: the notion of providing habitat for the wildlife whose homes were (and still are) being replaced by ours. This realization made me amend my landscaping plans. In addition to no turf grass and no irrigation system, I have decided to plant mostly natives that are good for birds, butterflies and bees. Imagine my surprise when I first saw this [Audubon video](#) that sums it all up and this good, quick [Audubon tutorial](#). Although not adapted to our local setting, it references a wonderful resource, "Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants" by Doug Tallamy. Once I made my decision to "go native", the resources appeared. I have learned that we have an active Native Plant Society to help guide me. You will find lots of information and a link to our local Paw Paw chapter [here](#).

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Calendar & Events

It's time for our annual summer hiatus from meetings and field trips until September. But that doesn't mean there's nothing to do.

Volunteers needed: Least Terns are nesting on the roof at City Island Library and several other spots around town. We need folks who can check these locations for babies that fall off the roof. Then we can get them back up onto the roof safely. Call David Hartgrove at 386-788-2630 or 386-235-1249 if you can help out with this.

Volusia County Land Management has all kinds of activities from hiking to biking to snorkeling. Check out their [website](#) and scroll down to the "Upcoming Events" section.

The June Challenge- The 14th Annual June Challenge begins on Thursday, June 1st. Started by Alachua Audubon, originally it was limited to that county. It has now expanded to 23 other Florida counties and three other states. The idea is to see as many bird species as possible in your county between 12:00 am June 1st and 12:00 midnight June 30th. The easiest way to keep track of your sightings is this [website](#) set up by Miami birder, Trey Mitchell. Being on the coast we have an advantage over inland counties. If you have questions send me an [email](#) and I'll forward instructions from Alachua compiler, Rex Rowan.

Canaveral National Seashore Turtle Watch- Beginning June 7th Canaveral National Seashore will host their popular sea turtle watch program, Wednesday through Saturday. You'll have a very good chance of watching a sea turtle lay her nest and trundle off back into the ocean. Programs are limited to thirty (30) persons per night with a maximum of six (6) persons per reservation call. The fee for this program is \$14.00 per person ages 16 and above, 15 and under are free. Persons with Access or a Senior Pass receive a 50% discount for the cardholder only. **Children must be 8 years old to participate.** Call (386) 428-3384 ext. 223 to make your reservation. No cameras, flash or cell phone use is permitted. The programs for 2017 will be provided in both ends of the seashore, the Playalinda District in Titusville and the Apollo district in New Smyrna Beach. The programs will run from 8:00 p.m. until Midnight, weather permitting.

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Welcome To Our new & Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: John Agett, Carol Bernard, Curtis Canard, Pat Carey, Geraldine Clark, Kate Corbett, Linda England, Preston Garrison, Marie Harrison, Donna McLachlin, Bryan Lambert, Shirley Lieberman, Jacques McNett, Robert Neetz, Thaddeus Prydrozny, Alexis Robinson, Penny Scott, Louise Segner and Magna Stein. We hope to see you in September at our next general membership meeting or, as are all members, you're welcome to come to our board meetings the first Monday of each month at 1:30 PM in meeting room #1 at the Ormond Beach Regional Library.

And most important, I have been helped by local experts in Florida native plants (I'm happy to share names).

I hope you'll join me in making some of your habitat hospitable to birds and other winged creatures. Let's all Go Native!

Melissa Lammers

As our new President, Melissa took office on June 1st

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Conservation Notes

In yet another amazingly stupid move our new EPA Administrator, Scott Pruitt, has voided a decision by the Obama administration to ban all use of the pesticide chlorpyrifos. It's proven to cause irreparable brain damage in children but the pesticide manufacturers were big donors to the Trump campaign. So it's pay back time. And just to make sure they get their money's worth, Congress rolled back regulations on pesticide run off into streams and lakes. We're making America great again, one brain damaged child at a time.

With things like that going on it's easy to be overwhelmed and think all is lost. But there are good things going on too. Like the nesting of American Oystercatchers down in the area around the Port Orange Bridge. American Oystercatchers were just upgraded to "Threatened" status here in Florida. Their numbers have dropped over 50% since 1970. One of the birds is banded with bright blue bands on each leg with the letters "DP". I sent this information in to the Banded Birds [website](#) run by the Pawtuxent Wildlife Research Center. I discovered the bird was banded near Charleston, SC on July 16th, 2011 just before it was able to fly. Based on its overall size relative to its mate and the length of its bill I think it's a female and she had three chicks hatch on or about the 18th of May. One of the chicks has gone missing. It was probably the victim of avian predation: a night heron, a Great Blue Heron or Fish Crows. The remaining chicks are growing fast and as I write this, on May 28th, they're still roaming around the north end of Rookery Island. You might have noticed the new signs and string marking off the nesting area. I assisted several FWC and Volusia County staffers installing those on May 4th.

There was also a nest on a small island across the river from Rookery Island. That island is best viewed from behind Our Deck Down Under restaurant. That nest produced two chicks and one of them has gone missing too. I was there May 23rd checking on the birds and saw a Great Blue Heron fly over to the south end of the tiny island. I had a bad feeling about this but hoped for the best. I went back the following day and saw neither adults nor the chick. A Great Blue Heron was standing on the south end of the island again. I thought surely the chick had been eaten and the parents had flown off. Then on the 26th I was at the bridge and looked across the water to see a much larger chick and one of the adults. I was thrilled. The chick is too young to fly so I don't know where it was but it had clearly not been eaten. There are a few small plants in which it could have hidden.

Another nest on a small island on the west side of the channel, north of the bridge failed early. I'm not sure why but several years ago a pair of birds nested there. Incubation time for oystercatchers is between 3 and 4 weeks. I'd been monitoring their progress from below the bridge with my spotting scope. One day I set it up and as I dialed in the focus I saw a Fish Crow snatch and swallow a little white puff ball. It was one of the chicks. Probably not more than 24 hours old. It's a hard life being a bird and though we hate to see a threatened species like the oystercatcher lose its offspring, the Fish Crows are part of the balance of nature and have their own chicks to feed. Life goes on and we watch the passing parade.

David Hartgrove



American Oystercatcher with a chick. *Photo by Dan Gribbin*

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A young girl in Cuba, *Photo by Diane Rickman-Buckalew*

Another Story About the Cuban Coloring Books

Diane took along 30 books on a paddling trip to Cuba in April

On the first 4 days of the tourist part of the trip, I was joined by a lady from Munich who spoke Spanish. She and I and my guide passed out the books, each with a small box of 12 crayons. We engaged not only the children, but the parents. Mylen, my guide, made a big issue of the fact that a Cuban ornithologist was involved in making the books. I watched the absolute PRIDE this caused. It immediately got the parents involved. She also told the parents that they needed to be involved in helping their children and to read it with them. She and Isabelle both showed the children the small colored pictures so that they would know how to color the birds. I know that your project is to educate the children of Cuba. A byproduct was the education of an American with a MS in education and a German lady. I can't tell you the joy we personally received.

Diane Rickman-Buckalew

Dunlawton Bridge Field Trip

I say "it" every time I take a group of bird watchers to the Dunlawton Bridge. And I tell "it" to anyone or everyone who wants to talk to me about birding at the bridge. I inform my inquisitive friends exactly what I mean by "it". I take pride knowing the bridge has not yet let me miss the mark of my "it" prediction and challenge my birding guests to help me keep the tradition of my "it" intact. The challenge of extending the truth of the "it" is a game of birding adventure, discovery, fun and takes place - close by.

I maintain that any day of the week, any week of the month, any month of the year whether the day is inclement or sunny, or in the morning or afternoon, or when the sun is rising or setting, an observant birder intent on discovery can list from 25 to 30 species of birds in an hour and a half to two hours of time at the Dunlawton Bridge. That my birding friends is the truth of the "it".

Harking back to my first memorable birding experience under the bridge begins with my drive down under the bridge just before sunrise in October. It was my first "The Big Sit" survey and my first year living in Florida. A new adventure and about to be a surprise and glorious sighting. As I slowly drove to the parking area by the pavilion, I faintly heard the repeated barking of two Great Horned Owls. In one determined motion I parked my pickup, grabbed my binoculars and quietly but rapidly exited. High in the trusses supporting the bridge, these two owls displayed a performance long ago ingrained into the very fabric of their eternal existence. The expression of their body language was beautiful and awesome. Beaks touching, shoulders touching, bodies intertwining and weaving into a lyrical tapestry of elegance and energy presented a moment in the thread of their life. Exposing the now and primordial behavior of time. There before sunrise, under the bridge, I made my first contact for "The Big Sit" but received so much more - a gift, a magnificent gift.

I have had the good fortune to observe Roseate Spoonbills and Magnificent Frigatebirds fly over the bridge and exhausted Black-throated Blue Warblers rest at my feet. I have watched with John Carr a Brown Booby fight through the penetrating winds and rain from the No-Name Hurricane. Diving terns and feeding gulls, probing sandpipers and roaming ospreys are always there at the bridge.

Our recent Halifax River Audubon field trip allowed no exceptions to the plethora of special sightings witnessed at the bridge. We welcomed back a flock of Least Terns, and observed a Common Loon stretching out the last few days of its winter visit to our Florida waters. Turkey Vultures and a Bald Eagle over head and American Oystercatchers down on the oyster bars complimented the ever-present Brown Pelicans.

Fifteen satisfied members of our chapter witnessed a wonderful afternoon at the bridge and my "It" prediction still stands and continues - 32 species of birds in a 1.5 hour period.

Ray Scory

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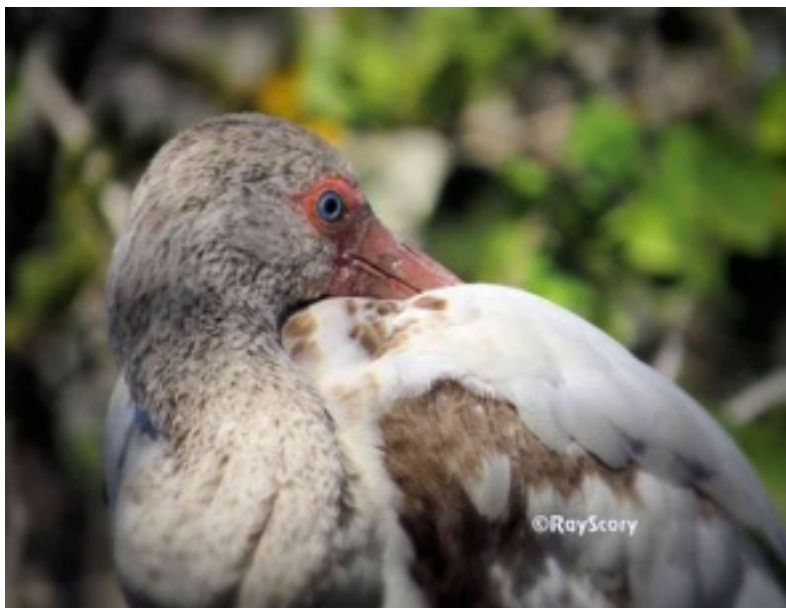
Bird Video Viewing Opportunity

If you were unable to attend our May meeting you missed an excellent presentation by chapter member, Steve Underwood. His photos and those taken by his wife, Marge, are set to music mostly supplied by his brother. The music and the photos are captivating and most of the photos were shot locally. So you might even see a location you recognize. Here's a [link](#) to the film.

Editor



Brown Pelicans on Rookery Island



Immature White Ibis

Photos by Ray Scory

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Neta Harris, Photo by Jim Eager

Neta was the long time Executive Director of the Brevard Nature Alliance and the force behind the Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival. She passed away early in May after a brief bout with cancer. She will be missed by all who knew her. Editor

A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors

**Florida Power & Light, Garden Club of the Halifax Country,
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and Colonial Colony**

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Our website is www.halifaxriveras.org For information on upcoming field trips, etc.

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