

The Pelican

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

Volume 63- Number 8 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
August, 2017



The President's Ruminations

THE FIRST BIRD – A LOVE STORY THAT ALMOST WASN'T

When I was a little girl, I was first enchanted by Brown Pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) flying in a V formation overhead as I played in the surf. Their broad wings and long bills looked prehistoric. I imagined they were pterodactyls, brought back to life by some benevolent mad scientist who found this to be the perfect place for them and we were the chosen ones to appreciate their odd magnificence. I would watch them for long stretches of time as they skimmed the waves, always staying just above the curling lips of the whitecaps. At times they reminded me of pairs of figure-skaters, gliding along in perfect synchronicity. I was fascinated as they dived from on-high straight into the sea, magically re-appearing perfectly composed, to float on the surface. They were part of the traffic flowing north and south along SR A1A. Stately and dignified, they flew single-file above the cars, trucks and motorcycles, adding an elevated third lane to the two-lane thoroughfare. They were fast but never rushed. They were purposeful and serene. They quickly became my favorite bird. I fell in love.

It's heart-wrenching to think we came close to losing them in my lifetime. Brown Pelicans are found along the Atlantic, Pacific and Gulf Coasts of North and South America, and in some inland areas, including lakes here in Florida. They breed in a number of different environments. In Florida, they primarily use mangrove islets. Males gather materials while females build the nests. Pelican parents incubate their eggs with their feet, standing on them to transmit the warmth from their skin. This parental attention almost killed them off.

In the mid-twentieth century, the pesticide DDT got into the pelicans' food chain and caused them (and other birds, like the Bald Eagle) to lay thinner shelled eggs that cracked under the weight of the nesting adults. They almost disappeared before we took action. In 1970, Brown Pelicans were federally listed as endangered and in 1972, because of the impact on pelicans and other species, DDT was banned. Pesticide bans and controls, conservation and reintroduction efforts all have allowed Brown Pelican populations to recover. By 1985, Brown Pelicans along the Atlantic and eastern Gulf coasts had come back enough to delist them. In Louisiana, they were finally delisted in 2009, less than a year before the Deepwater Horizon oil spill threatened their habitat again. On our own shores, fishing line left behind continues to take a toll on brown pelicans and other sea creatures. Because of some careless fishermen, I had my one very close encounter with a wild Brown Pelican. Fishing line was wrapped around its bill. I held the ensnared bird while another person quickly untangled the line. As I raised it aloft, I could feel its power. I released it to fly away over the ocean, taking my heart along with it. Here's a [link](#) to more information.

Melissa Lammers

Calendar & Events

While we're still in our summer hiatus as far as chapter events, there's plenty to do to keep you active...

The Marine Discovery Center- [The Marine Discovery Center](#), in New Smyrna Beach, has a full schedule of activities that are both fun and educational. Guided kayak tours of Brown's Bay and the Indian River Lagoon, full moon boat rides on their 40' pontoon boat as well as day trips around Ponce Inlet and the surrounding area are all available to fit anyone's schedule. Click on the link above and then navigate around the site for all of the information.

Tomoka State Park- [Tomoka State Park](#), in Ormond Beach, is a local treasure with lots to do, even in the heat of summer. Its location on a small peninsula in the Halifax River means it has cool breezes year round. While summer camping in Florida is only for the most adventurous among us, a day hike or picnic under the shade of centuries old oaks is sure to rejuvenate the soul of anyone.

Volusia County Environmental Management- Our County's commitment to the environment runs deep and having spent funds to save portions of it for posterity, they're rightfully proud of what's there and look for ways to engage the public on these lands. Click on this [link](#) and scroll down to the "Upcoming Events" section for all of the details.

* * * * *

Though our complete field trip schedule hasn't been finalized we thought you'd want to know about this opportunity as soon as possible so you can begin planning.

We're Going To Gainesville In November

Several years ago our chapter took an overnight birding trip to Gainesville. Alachua County has a number of excellent birding hot spots and we had a great time. We got a behind the scenes tour of the avian collection at the Museum of Natural History. We also watched the nightly flight of the thousands of bats from the University's huge bat house as a Red-tailed hawk tried to make his dinner of one. We're happy to report that we're doing this trip again on **Wednesday and Thursday, November 8th and 9th**. We have a block of rooms reserved at the La Quinta Inn. Each is a double room for our discounted rate of just 62.10 per night. More information regarding the itinerary will be forthcoming. To make your hotel reservation, call the La Quinta Group Reservations number: 1-866-527-1498 and tell them your group reservation number is: **0669 GRSIMO 767**, Halifax River Audubon. The cut off date for this trip is October 15th. You must have made your reservation by then. Contact David Hartgrove by phone, 386-235-1249 or [email](#) to add your name to the list of those going. In addition to Paynes Prairie and the Museum's avian collection, we'll be going to the new Sweetwater Wetlands where we'll have a catered picnic lunch. You don't want to miss this one.

Conservation Notes

When my wife and I visited the Santa Ana NWR some years ago, we were greeted in the parking lot by a flock of raucous [Plain Chachalacas](#). It's a jewel in the crown of our national wildlife refuge system. It's also in the sights of our myopic commander in chief and his long touted border wall. Established in 1943, the Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge is one of the top birding destinations in North America, home to at least 400 bird species and 450 species of plants. The refuge is located on the Texas-Mexico border about 10 miles southeast of McAllen in the Rio Grande Valley. Construction plans from Customs and Border Protection call for an 18 foot levee topped by a solid steel fence. Soil testing by the contractor has already begun and construction could begin as early as January. If built, this monstrosity will essentially destroy the refuge. Yet another piece of our natural heritage sacrificed to the paranoid ravings from the White House. Congressman Filemon Vela (Dem. from Brownsville) is working with other House members to try to head off this outrage. Let's hope he's successful.

* * *

Last month EPA Administrator, Scott Pruitt, testified before Congress that the EPA is not authorized to regulate carbon pollution from factories, power plants and oil refineries. The Supreme Court has ruled otherwise three times, in 2007, 2011 and 2014. But hey, why let the facts get in the way when you're doing the boss's bidding. Trump and Mr. Pruitt have called for cutting the agency's budget by about one-third, reducing funding to 1990 levels while slashing agency staff by nearly 3,800. That's a 25 percent reduction in the scientists and experts we depend on to protect us from toxic pollution, contamination, and environmental harm that threatens the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat. Apparently these clowns believe that "Making America Great Again" involves dragging us back to the days of the robber barons while we choke on their pollution.

* * *

Kelli McGee, former Director of Volusia County Growth Management and now President of [Natua Strategies](#), reports that at their July 20th meeting, the Volusia County Council voted to support [Project H2O](#) and its mission of securing clean water for us all. A partnership involving The Marine Discovery Center, Audubon, most of our area's colleges, and state and local government entities, Project H2O works to promote clean waters in both salt and fresh water bodies. As a non profit they can apply for grant funding not available to government bodies to fund studies that will point the way a cleaner Indian River Lagoon, our troubled springs and the entire Volusia watershed.

One of those partners is the [Institute for Water and Environmental Resilience](#) at Stetson University. Headed by long time environmental activist, former County Councilman and state legislator, Clay Henderson, the Institute offers a yet another platform for making the general public aware of the magnitude of the problems facing our community with regards to threats to our waters and the environment. We have all kinds of tools and organizations to lobby for us in Washington, Tallahassee and with local governments. Now we just need to get the politicians to listen to us instead of the folks paying for their re-elections.

David Hartgrove

* * * * *

From The Quotable Birder

"There is nothing in which birds differ more from man than in the way in which they can build and yet leave the landscape as it was before."

Robert Lynd, American Sociologist

A Report From Cuba

Gary Markowski, President of [Caribbean Conservation Trust](#), just returned from Cuba and penned this report on his efforts to distribute the Cuban Coloring Book our chapter produced.

I wanted to let you know that I just returned from the Birds Caribbean Ornithological conference in Cuba. I donated my last load of coloring books to an urban Havana program. We will be bringing crayons and Cornell Bird Sleuth curriculum materials in November to support the educational program that the students will experience.

I saw Liz Gordon* there, and talked at length with her about our structured plans to use the books as a important component of a community education program that is one of our strategies to try and change perceptions towards the caged bird trade in Cuba, which has become a growing problem. I had mentioned to Liz some time ago that we were starting a community education program to inform kids about the value of birds & the detriment of capturing wild birds. We were a [Birder's Exchange](#) partner for many years, and have dedicated this education component to Betty Peterson, who passed away 3 years ago. During the ABA's relocation from Colorado to Delaware, that program was dormant. It looks like it is making a comeback finally, so I will be in touch with Liz to try and include BEX with our efforts in Cuba, which will likely be popular among donors. Since the coloring books were printed, CCT groups have facilitated the delivery of more than 50 pairs of binoculars, 800 coloring books, a couple of cases of crayons, and more than 70 field guides, including 30 Spanish edition Kaufman guides (North American birds).

At the conference I presented a workshop on the growing caged bird trade. As a result we formed an International Working Group of more than 20 people, the majority of whom are Cuban. This team includes several scientists and a few key government officials who are advocates of birds in Cuba. My presentation featured the coloring books as a key resource in changing the perception of youth, who are often the first link in the caged bird business. Hopefully, we will begin to have an impact. In short, my belief is that there may be a need for a second printing of the original book. We may end up with more Cuban endorsements, although I don't think that will be needed. I will tell you that the book was very popular at the conference. I was able to send a few to Eastern Cuba as well with 3 biologists who work at Humboldt National Park. This is a very important park biologically, where Cuba's bio diversity is broadest, and where the rate of endemism in both flora & fauna peaks. It is also quite remote in terms of location and overall resources, especially following the devastating blow that Hurricane Matthew left in it's wake a little less than a year ago. I would love to get this program going at that end of the island.

One idea I had was to solicit crowd funding among past CCT participants specifically for this purpose. I am interested in your thoughts and on HRA's interest in expanding this project. Thanks to the members of HRA for their support.

Gary Markowski

**Liz Gordon is the new Director of the Birder's Exchange program of the American Birding Association. Betty Peterson was the program's Director from its inception until her passing.*

* * * * *

Welcome to Our New Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new members: Lauren Herzog, Brenda Levine, R Turner Ragsdale, Amy Swenson and Barbara Townsend. We hope to see you at our next meeting or on one of our field trips. These both resume in September. Check our [website](#) or this newsletter for all the information.

**NEWS FROM THE CENTRAL FLORIDA REGIONAL
CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

Audubon Florida and the Central Florida Regional Conservation Committee (RCC) believe that advocating for land acquisition in 2017-2018 may best be achieved by identifying specific properties to showcase to legislators rather than asking for approval for a pot of money. Chapter leaders in the CFL RCC are now identifying important properties from the Florida Forever and the Rural and Family Lands priority lists. Legislators and decision-makers will be invited to visit these properties and see first-hand why they are special places and have economic, ecological and recreational value to their constituents. We believe they will then be more apt to say, "We need to purchase this land (or conservation easement) because it is important to my district's residents and to my priorities."

As you may remember from previous newsletters, Audubon Florida is defending Little Estero Island Critical Wildlife Area (west coast near Ft. Myers) from a proposal to erect a private boardwalk across a state-owned mangrove lagoon and into the heart of nesting and wintering habitat for declining coastal birds, including Least Terns and Snowy and Wilson's Plovers. The case is progressing and we are hopeful for a good outcome, but legal fees may exceed \$40,000. Two members of the AF Board of Directors have been instrumental in raising nearly \$14,000. Click [here](#) to read more about the background of this issue and how you can help.

Charles Lee and chapter leaders from Orange and Kissimmee Valley Audubon have been advocating alternate expressway routes for the SR 408 extension, Osceola Parkway Extension, and the Southport Expressway. In each case, the objective is to steer proposed expressways away from important conservation lands. At risk are conservation lands along the Econlockhatchee River, the Split Oak Mitigation Preserve, and the Disney Wilderness Preserve.

Paula Wehr

CFL RCC Representative on AF Board of Directors

* * * * *

Blackpoll Warblers, Another Master of Migration

A research team, led by the University of Guelph and Bird Studies Canada, recaptured 27 Blackpoll Warblers that had been fitted with geolocators to track their migration routes. These tiny birds, weighing less than half an ounce, have now been shown to fly non stop over 1,700 miles of open ocean on their way from the northeastern US to the Antilles and northern South America. Here's a [link](#) to this fascinating article.



Blackpoll Warbler, *photo by Christian Artuso*

Solar Co-op Coming to Volusia County!

The non-profit Florida Solar United Neighborhoods (FL-SUN), in partnership with the League of Women Voters of Florida are coming together as a community service to create a solar co-op in Volusia County. A solar co-op is a group of homeowners in a defined geographic area who use their combined bulk buying power to save on the cost of going solar. The Volusia County Solar Co-op will be the 14th co-op initiated in Florida.

A solar co-op is a completely voluntary program that helps homeowners understand the benefits of solar photo voltaic cells and the process of going solar. Installation of solar PV saves homeowners money, promotes economic development of alternative energy companies and installers, and reduces use of fossil fuels which can improve air and water quality. Volusia County's Sustainability Action Plan has a goal of promoting the development and use of alternative energy, with action steps like educating residents about renewable energy opportunities.

FL-SUN is launching the Volusia County Co-op with a press conference on August 30th in downtown Deland and then hosting four informational sessions around the county. Stayed tuned for more information!

*Nancy Vaughn, Co-chair, Solar and Water Action Team,
League of Women Voters Volusia County*

*Nancy will be making a short presentation to us about the co-op
and photo voltaic cells at our meeting in October.*

* * * * *



Osprey with a redfish, *photo by David Hartgrove*

The photo above was taken from the observation tower at Spruce Creek Park while teaching a group of kids from Spruce Creek High School about birds at the Biology Kickoff camp. For a look at some truly great photos of birds, here's a link to the top 100 entries in this year's [Audubon photo contest](#). When the page opens click on the tab at the right or left sides of the photo to advance to the next one. Enjoy!

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.

Contact Our Board Members

Office	Name	Home Phone	E-Mail
President	Melissa Lammers	386-441-4036	melissalammers@gmail.com
Vice President	David Hartgrove	386-788-2630	birdman9@earthlink.net
Treasurer	Betty Butcher	386-310-8039	bbutcher6@cfl.rr.com
Recording Sec.	Peggy Yokubonus	386-673-7619	pyokubonus@cfl.rr.com
Corresponding Sec.	Christine Dann		welcome.hras@gmail.com
Membership Sec.	Joan Tague	386- 871-6049	babyowl@mac.com
Historian	John Carr	386-255-9360	jcarr14@gmail.com
Past President	Jim O'Shaughnessy	386-253-0335	jebk75@gmail.com
At Large 2020	Ellen Tate	386-677-7668	totefish@gmail.com
At Large 2020	Marion Monaghan	7386-60-2747	nautilus411@aol.com
At Large 2019	Joan Tague	386-253-1166	babyowl@mac.com
At Large 2019	Dan Gribbin	386- 956-1813	bluzeman1@hotmail.com
At Large 2018	Holly Zwart-Duryea	386-672-8788	hollis1000@aol.com
At Large 2018	Steven Underwood		thebioguy@icloud.com

Committee Members

Committee	Name	Home Phone	E-Mail
Conservation	David Hartgrove	386-788-2630	birdman9@earthlink.net
Education	Marion Monaghan	386-760-2747	nautilus411@aol.com
	Holly Zwart-Duryea	386-672-8788	hollis1000@aol.com
Field Trips	Peggy Yokubonus	386-673-7619	pyokubonus@cfl.rr.com
	David Hartgrove	386-788-2630	birdman9@earthlink.net
Newsletter Editor	David Hartgrove	386-788-2630	birdman9@earthlink.net or hrapelican11@earthlink.net
Welcome	Christine Dann		welcome.hras@gmail.com
Webmaster	Joan Tague	386- 871-6049	babyowl@mac.com