

The Pelican

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

Volume 63-Number 12 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
December, 2017



The President's Ruminations

The upcoming holidays should be top-of-mind for me but recently I've become involved in a few local efforts to preserve valuable habitat and I confess it feels quite uncomfortable at times. So instead of wrapping presents and decorating my home, I have been thinking about Marjory Stoneman Douglas and taking comfort and inspiration from her. She didn't let anything – not even old age or angry County Commissioners – get in the way of her mission to save the Everglades and more.

Marjory was born in 1890 and moved to South Florida in 1915 to work as a reporter at what would eventually become "The Miami Herald". In 1928, she explored the Everglades with Ernest Coe, Horace Albright, National Park Service director, assistant director Arno Cammerer, Audubon Society President, Gilbert Pearson, Yellowstone National Park Superintendent Roger Toll, botanist David Fairchild, and U.S. Representative Ruth Owen. The expedition was to assess the feasibility of protecting the Everglades as a National Park. During their stay, a man told them that as soon as they left, all the egrets would be killed. They spoke directly to the hunters, but once the party left, the adult birds were killed and the young left to die in the heat. "I think that it was the death of those birds that most convinced the commission that this area must be protected as a national park," Douglas said.



Calendar & Events

Monday, December 18th, Program Meeting- Join us for our annual Christmas/holiday party. Bring a dish (appetizer or dessert) if you wish but the chapter is providing finger foods, beverages, etc. We'll see bird videos and maybe swap a few bird stories. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. The business portion of the meeting will be especially short.

Friday & Saturday, December 8th & 9th, MINWR- Once again we're having back to back trips to Merritt Island NWR. In winter it is one of the premier birding spots in North America and we want to make sure our members (including those of us still working) get a chance to go along and share the many scopes we'll have on hand. On Friday join Peggy Yokubonus and Joan Tague for the trip. On Saturday join David Hartgrove. This is a trip with minimal walking and lots of birds. Bring your lunch and meet either or both days at the Target on Dunlawton Ave. just east of I-95, behind Panera Bread. Questions, call Peggy, 386-316-4085 or David, 386-235-1249. More information is also on the [website](#).

Wednesday, December 20th, Maribed Flats- Join Joan Tague for a trip to wild Florida cow country and some great birding. This one does involve walking and you'll want to bring shoes or boots that can get wet. You'll walk through a nice oak hammock with warblers and other small birds. Then out onto a wet prairie with the promise of excellent shorebird activity. Bring a lunch and meet at the Target on Dunlawton Ave. just east of I-95, behind Panera Bread. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

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The Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 23rd- The Christmas Bird Count is the oldest citizen science project in the world. It's done in an established 15 mile in diameter circle. It's gone from just a few participants (27) on that first CBC on Christmas Day, 1900 to over 71,000 participants on the CBC done in 2012. The highest species count recorded in the US was 250, in Matagorda County, TX in 2005. The highest species count in the world was set in 2013 on the Cosanga-Narupa count in Ecuador, a whopping 529 species! Here on the Daytona Beach CBC we average around 105 species. We'll meet at 7:00 am at Ormond Town Square, Granada & Williamson Blvds., behind Chick-fil-A to break into teams. This is an all day event and will be followed by dinner at the Red Bowl Chinese Restaurant in that same shopping center where we'll collect the data from everyone. If you can't devote the whole day we can arrange to get you back to your car. If you plan to participate, **please call** David Hartgrove, 386-235-1249 so that I can begin assigning teams. And if one CBC isn't enough for you, we have 3 more: Flagler CBC, 12/15; West Volusia CBC, 12/16 and Ponce Inlet CBC, 12/30. If you're interested in participating in any of those contact David Hartgrove, 386-235-1249. for further information.

Marjory later wrote "The Everglades: River of Grass," published in 1947, the same year the Everglades became a National Park. The book came out in November and sold out by Christmas, catapulting Douglas into her new, and lifelong, role as a spokeswoman for the Everglades. In her lifetime, it went from a wilderness on the brink of irreparable development, to a National Park, a Wetland of International Significance, an International Biosphere Preserve, and a legislatively designated wilderness area.

How did she persevere? Here are some clues in her own words, which I hope inspire you as much as they do me:

"You can't conserve what you haven't got."

"There must be progress, certainly. But we must ask ourselves what kind of progress we want, and what price we want to pay for it. If, in the name of progress, we want to destroy everything beautiful in our world, and contaminate the air we breathe, and the water we drink, then we are in trouble."

At this time in our national history, it seems our valuable shared patrimony, our natural places, are under assault as never before. If you are so inclined, please consider rising to their defense. As Marjory said before she died at 108:

"I would be very sad if I had not fought. I'd have a guilty conscience if I had been here and watched all this happen to the environment and not been on the right side."

"Be a nuisance where it counts, but don't be a bore at any time....Do your part to inform and stimulate the public to join your action....Be depressed, discouraged, and disappointed at failure and the disheartening effects of ignorance, greed, corruption and bad politics-but never give up."

Melissa Lammers

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Welcome To Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Betty Butcher, Becky Carr, Fran Carr, Rod Eaton, Maureen Fitzpatrick, H L Funkhouser, Betty Kelly, Marita Kelly, Pauline Kurpinsky, Marion Monaghan, Harriet Nolan, Nancy Robinson, John Strawn, William Sweeters, Mary Vinson, Ken & Margo Wenzel, Robert White, Greg Wilson and Ted Yeatts. We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting or on one of our excellent field trips.

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Audubon Adventures

Audubon Adventures, is a wonderful program that helps engage kids in the natural world around them. Ranked as one of the most popular environmental education curricula in the country, our chapter has been donating to provide this valuable program to Volusia County school kids since its inception. Donations from members fund this program. Send your donation to Halifax River Audubon, P.O. Box 166, Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166. Please specify on your check check that your donation is for Audubon Adventures. And thank you!

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The [Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival](#) is coming next month, from January 24th through the 29th. Headquartered at the East Florida State College campus in Titusville, it's the largest birding festival in the country. Photography workshops, field trips and exhibits to please any birder. It's the best place around to buy binoculars and scopes since all of the manufacturers are represented there. Don't miss it!

Conservation Notes

One of the best ways to promote bird and habitat conservation that I know of is to purchase a Federal Duck Stamp. The new edition goes on sale each July 1st and competition for whose art goes on a stamp is fierce. The current stamp features 3 Canada Geese in flight and costs 25.00.

The Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act was signed into law by President Roosevelt in 1934. It was guided through Congress by its founder, J N "Ding" Darling. Darling was a political cartoonist whose work appeared daily in over 100 newspapers. He was also the chief of the U.S. Biological Survey (forerunner of the US Fish & Wildlife Service) and an excellent wildlife artist. His art work for the first stamp depicted a pair of Mallards about to land in a marsh. It sold for 1.00. Today, if you could find one in good condition, it sells for about 2,000.00.

So why should birders be supporting something called the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp? That's its new name. The answer is easy. Ninety-Eight cents of every dollar spent on Duck Stamps goes to the purchase of wetland habitat for use as part of the national wildlife refuge system and for maintenance of those refuges. The stamp also grants entrance to all national wildlife refuges across the country. In short, it's the best 25.00 you'll spend all year.

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Rookery Island, the little bird covered island just off the south side of the Dunlawton Bridge, will soon become the state's newest Critical Wildlife Area. Its designation is scheduled to be voted on by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at its board meeting in Gainesville on December 6th. This long overdue protection was supposed to have been granted last year but a last minute objection caused a postponement until now.

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Over the past year our chapter was asked to send comments to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission requesting a new, more aggressive management plan for menhaden. Menhaden are a small fish that swim in huge groups and are a key species providing food for a number of sport fish, like cobia, stripped bass and red drum. They're also on the menu of a lot of sea birds. The problem is that they're also harvested by commercial fishermen and sold for fertilizer and pet food. Currently there are no limits on this harvest. Ninety-Nine percent of the of the over 150,000 comments sent in to the Commission by anglers and conservationists, like us, were ignored and the Commission voted to maintain the status quo. Will we see a collapse of the menhaden population altogether? The chance to prevent it has just passed us by.

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There's good news from the Constitutional Revision Commission. Commission member, Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch, introduced an amendment that would mandate a "right to a clean environment." When and if it appears on the ballot it will pass by 75% or more. The problem then becomes will the Legislature honor it? Like they have Amendment 1.

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Finally, our recent overnight field trip to Gainesville was a success, if you discount the trouble we had finding the building with the avian collection. As trip leader I was more than embarrassed by the snafu but it all turned out okay. We had an excellent behind the scenes tour conducted by Avian Collections Manager, Dr. Andrew Kratter. We also saw lots of good birds at both Paynes Prairie and Sweetwater Wetlands and watched 400,000 bats fly out at dusk from the 3 large bat houses on campus. They eat 1.5 tons of insects per night, mostly mosquitoes.

David Hartgrove

The Big Sit Feeling



The sunrise glow at Dunlawton Bridge. Photo by Ray Scory

Peacefully dark, the night light held, offering another morning framed by the graceful dimensions of the Dunlawton Bridge. Shadowed by the backdrop of a fiery sunrise sky, the ambiance of that moment was quietly electrifying.

Screeching, whistling birds rise from their nighttime roosts covering the sky like rippling sheets of white designed lace. Awakening land and coastal waters signal the start of a new day and announce that an annual event, "The Big Sit", is again about to begin - a signature moment for many birders in the bird watching community.

I have sat The Big Sit under the Dunlawton Bridge for the past seventeen years sharing the experience with many birding friends, relatives and bridge visitors. John Carr, from Halifax River Audubon, has been a loyal partner for many years. We have shared many wonderful moments watching waterbirds, shorebirds, gulls, terns, raptors and songbirds that visit and live at this noted birding hotspot.

This day, the second Sunday in October, was not much different from any past Big Sit days. Some birds are always at the bridge, some pass through and others stop occasionally. This was not a day of record numbers, (a total of 36 different species were recorded), but a day of record joy. It was a day to witness the beauty of avian life and to wonder about the mysteries of their very being - to enjoy the pleasure of just being there, unlocking age-old memories and creating new ones - with the birds from around the Dunlawton Bridge. So much beauty, so many memories popping with each flashing moment. Openness was the personality of the day.

A Franklin's Gull was spotted among a small flock of Laughing gulls with the estimated number of Laughing Gulls for the day listed at three hundred and fifty. White gulls silhouetted high against a striking blue sky - always there. The Halifax River drifted slowly by - always there. Mangrove islands and river edge growth - always there. The birds - always there. Let it be. Once in a while, we need a big sit day.

I now look at my bird checklist for this day and see a sheet of folded paper with my penmanship in the English language and check marked bird names. But it is more than a written account to forget.

It is a story of this day on October 8, 2017 at the bridge - listing birds, feeling the wind, seeing the land, hearing the birds call and sounds of the ocean - forming lasting memories. Beginning in the dark with active Yellow-crowned Night-herons and an evening ending sighting of a lone Franklin's Gull. In between - Bale eagles, Rudy turnstones, Caspian terns, Black-bellied plovers, Rock Pigeons, a Reddish egret and twenty-eight other species of birds graced our attention.

Can any day be better than when the spirit of a day meets the reality of an experience? That day - The Big Sit was the day.

Ray Scory



A study in the size and shape comparison of a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron and a White Ibis in early morning back-lighting at the bridge.
Photo by Ray Scory

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Apologies for the short notice but this should be a great trip.

North Florida Birding and Botany Field Trips and North American Wolf Encounter

December 7-10, 2017 Orange Audubon is hosting this adventure to Tall Timbers Research Station (TTRS), Tallahassee and St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. This one is coming up quickly but there are still spaces available. Orange Audubon would love you to join us on a weekend trip to the Florida Panhandle's Red Hills area, called one of America's "last great places" by The Nature Conservancy, hosted by TTRS' vertebrate ecology program director (and weekend birding guide) Jim Cox. The weekend includes 4 birding/botany field trips, other natural history pursuits and a private, hands-on tour at Seacrest Wolf Preserve near Chipley. Early Bird Registration for the entire weekend including guides, admission to Seacrest, 3 lunches and a cookout dinner at TTRS is just \$80 for Audubon members/\$95 non-members. You can also pay a partial fee for the Seacrest-only or the birding/botany-only portions. Participants are responsible for lodging, other meals, transportation and incidentals. A full description of the events can be found on [Meetup](#), in the Orange Audubon Society November [newsletter](#), or by contacting Teresa Williams for more information, including lodging options, and to reserve field trip spots: (407) 718-1977 or mwilliams@cfl.rr.com.

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Speaking of field trips, next month's overnight trip to St Marks (January 9-11) is now full and registration is closed.

A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors

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