

The Pelican

We need to be the stewards of this world, not its destroyers
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The President's Ruminations

In January, I filed our Annual Report to National Audubon. It was quite eye-opening to see how many of the questions asked in the report related to local conservation efforts we had undertaken. It solidified my desire to learn about our members and why they choose to be part of Audubon, so last month I included a survey in my President's Letter to you. My hope was to learn about whether your involvement with Audubon is only about the birds or if you also care about wider environmental issues. My goal was and is to serve our members as best as I am able, while also fulfilling Audubon's mission.

Unfortunately, only six of our more than 400 members responded to the survey. That is not enough to be statistically reliable but looking on the bright side, 100 percent of the six respondents care about the environment and conservation! So I'm running with that.

It seems that the recession has finally lifted in Volusia County as evidenced by the increase in construction activity. No matter where you live in Halifax River Audubon's (HRA) footprint, you can see signs of building, none perhaps more eye-popping than the clear-cutting of some of the last old-growth forest in Ormond Beach along Granada Boulevard. Historic trees recommended for preservation were felled. They will be replaced by sterile landscape specimens, not by native trees that support birds and other wildlife. The flow of a natural wetland will be interrupted with consequences to man and nature. And there is more.

Speaking only for myself, I believe development is not inherently bad and can be good. I believe just as strongly that it has to be managed in a way that conserves quality of life, that seeks to keep some spaces wild or closer to nature for future generations of humans and for current flora and fauna to thrive. It seems that there may be a lack of awareness about how development can be mitigated to be more supportive of nature. That is where, now speaking as Chapter President, I believe we have a role to play. I am hoping that many of you will step forward and reach out to our Conservation Chair, David Hartgrove, to let him know your interest in helping create awareness about how we do less harm as we grow. I am confident that together, we can make a difference.

Melissa Lammers

Calendar & Events

Monday, March 19th, Program Meeting- The Oceans Are Changing. How Do We Keep Up? Join us for a discussion on this topic by our guest speaker, Cameron Jaggard. Mr. Jaggard is a Principal Associate with The Pew Charitable Trusts, U.S. Oceans, Southeast Team. During his more than eight years with Pew, Cameron has worked on a variety of campaigns to reduce bycatch in the U.S. pelagic longline fishery, protect forage fish, and otherwise advance an ecosystem-based approach to fishery management. He has degrees from both Rollins College and Florida Atlantic University and his talk promises to be informative and entertaining. We meet at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Ave, Daytona Beach, FL 32117. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. We hope to see you there!

Field Trips

Wednesday, March 7th, West Volusia Ramble- Join Joan Tague for this tour of some of her favorite hot spots on the west side of the county. We'll meet at 7:30 am at International Square, on US 92, east of I-95, behind Krystal to car pool. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Wednesday, March 14th, Blue Heron Boat Trip- *The Trip Is Now Sold Out. However, a waiting list is being compiled in case someone has to drop out.* Join Celine Sullivan for this exciting afternoon trip on the St Johns River. Contact Celine Sullivan 386-257-1980 or email at celinesul@aol.com. Be sure to include with the words "boat trip" in the subject line. Dinner at the Stockyard, in DeLand, will follow for those interested in joining us. Cost for the trip is 20.00, *cash only please*. For those meeting us at the boat, please arrive no later than 2:30 pm. The boat waits for no one! Questions? Call Celine at 386-523-4809.

Thursday, March 22nd, Ocala National Forest- Join John Roessler for this trip to look for the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Florida Scrub Jay, among many other species. Bring lunch and meet at 7:30 am at Ormond Town Square, Granda & Williamson Blvds., behind Chick-Fil-A. Questions? Call John at 386-212-6957

Field Trips With Others

Every month Trey Hanna, and Volusia County Land Management, offer a series of great field trips that involve hiking, biking, boating or riding the County's eco buggy. Here's a [link](#) to this month's offerings. Please be sure to call 386-736-5927 to register for the activities.

Conservation Notes

There are any number of assaults on our state's environment under way in the Florida Legislature right now. None holds more threat for potential damage than Senate Bill 1402 and its companion in the House, HB 7043. These bills provide for state assumption of Federal Section 404 Dredge and Fill Permitting Authority. Currently such authority is held by the Federal government under the Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency. While neither agency has a stellar record on protecting our waters, fresh or salt, the rules under which they operate guarantee us some level of protection from the rapacious greed of development interests that seek to squeeze every last nickel from every last acre of wetland or shoreline in sight.

Under these bills the Florida Department of Environmental Protection would write the dredge and fill rules and then enforce them. At least that's what is called for. In reality the agency will open the door to every kind of stupid, destructive scheme placed before them. We have only to look at their valiant efforts to protect the St Johns River from paper mill wastes in Putnam County some years ago. The paper company complained and instead of enforcing the rules the DEP ruled that the company would just have to extend the sewer pipe out into deeper water. Then they saw to it that the budget for water testing was cut so that we wouldn't have the evidence of their perfidy. Senate President, Joe Negron, was awarded Audubon Florida's "Champion of the Everglades" award last December. Please take 3 minutes to call his office, (850) 487-5025, and ask that he see to it that this terrible bill (SB 1402) is not scheduled for a vote on the Senate floor.

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From the [Eco-Voice Moderator](#) comes a bit of good news. Septic tanks are one of the largest sources of pollution in our state's waterways. Based on research from Florida Atlantic University's Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute we know that every year more than 4.4 million pounds of nitrogen leach into the Indian River lagoon and its tributaries from over 600,000 septic tanks. Now Representative Gayle Harrell, (R-Stuart) and Senator Debbie Mayfield, (R-Vero Beach) have teamed with the Florida Chamber of Commerce to push for passage of what they're calling Legacy Florida 2.0. The first Legacy Florida bill provided 135 million dollars for springs restoration. The new bill would provide a dedicated funding source of up to 50 million dollars to provide matching funds for septic to sewer conversion. The money would come from Amendment 1 funds. We're not happy about this part of the deal but it's a compromise we may be forced to live with if we want to see a cleaner Indian River Lagoon.

The fact that funds come from Amendment 1 are probably a reason for the Chamber of Commerce to come onboard in support of the bill. They fought tooth and nail against any pollution control measures for years. Then the south end of the Lagoon began seeing massive algae blooms and those million dollar water front homes suddenly had putrid, foul smelling green goo where fish used to jump. Faced with a drop in home prices and a clamor from their wealthy constituents, the Chamber suddenly discovered an environmental conscience and had an epiphany. Hallelujah! They were dead set against Amendment 1 and poured millions into its defeat. 73% of Floridians ignored the reams of negative advertising they put out urging against passage and voted it in anyway. Now, if we could just get the Legislature to act responsibly...

David Hartgrove

Welcome to Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Beth Bartholomew, Mary Blackledge, Douglas Brown, Karen Collins, Lenore Cowan, Darryl Deets, John DiCesare, Richard Goudey, Dan Gribbin, David Hess, Lisa Hiatt, Marion Jacobsen, Anna Johnson, Wayne Johnson, Ed Kocis, Michael Krayewsky, Margaret Leone, Janet Mills, Debra Moulis, Mary Nelson, Andrea Pair, Kim Ramos, Deanna Schaeffer, Lauren Rae Schroeder, Ronald Schultz, Ellen Sherman, Frances Smith, Ralph Smith, Richard Smith, Earl Stutzman-Miller, Nicelette Triantatelli, Jeffery Ware, Robert White, Rosemarie Zukas. We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting or on one of our excellent field trips.

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Making a Difference

There are so many issues that we as environmentalists need to stay abreast of if we're going to help make a difference. **The Advocate** is Audubon Florida's monthly newsletter featuring up-to-the-minute developments on environmental issues. Read previous editions below and [sign up to receive the Advocate](#) for yourself.

<http://fl.audubon.org/about-us/audubon-advocate-newsletter>

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Photo by Steve Underwood

Here's an Identification Challenge

Young birds can often present a problem with identification. The field marks to look at on this bird to help you make the identification are its yellowish legs, the shape of its bill and the indistinct streaking on its chest. Any thoughts? Look for the answer at the bottom of the next page.

by Ray Scory

Dunlawton Bridge Magic

Eleven hardy Halifax River Audubon birdwatchers braved an early morning wakeup to scout the Dunlawton bridge before 8:00AM. A spectacular day it was - a cool breeze softened the bright Florida sunshine, exposing plenty of birds to study and embrace as Florida's own.

Oyster bars and sandbars jutted from the calm of quiet river waters, influenced by the morning low tide. This was an opportune time to showcase the variety of our favorite shorebirds and waterbirds. Hundreds of Laughing gulls in all phases of plumage development, with lesser numbers of Ring-billed and immature Herring Gulls graced our viewing panorama. We had a nice variety of Great Blue Heron, Little Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, White ibis and Brown Pelicans, along with our familiar northern visitors, a Red-breasted Merganser and many Yellow-rumped Warblers.

We, the eleven birdwatchers, experienced a show the goes on every day of the year at the Dunlawton Bridge and we were privileged to witness two and half hours of it that day. I have often mentioned to the birdwatchers that have come to the bridge with me that on any day of the week, any week of the month, any month of the year, in any kind of weather, in one and a half hours we can count at least twenty-five species of birds. For the past eighteen years that I have been coming to the bridge to watch the birds, the record remains intact. On this particular morning we observed twenty-eight species.

The marvel of this location, at the Dunlawton Bridge in Port Orange, is that the birds are there all throughout the year. At different seasons of the year, yes, different birds stop by - depending upon their calling to this location. A location graced with Common Loons in their winter gray and whites with thick, pointed bills, Black-throated Blue Warblers resting flat on the ground after a long migratory journey, Roseate Spoonbills in their pointed flight patterns zipping down the Halifax River, a Brown Booby thrashing through the winds of the "Hurricane with No Name" and ,of course, the ever present Brown Pelicans. What is incredible about this location is that all this great bird watching takes place amongst the hubbub of moving boats, active people, barking dogs, automobiles coming and going, necessary construction and changing weather patterns. What a spot to see birds!

As I was leaving, I was alerted to a small flight of Dunlin whirling down upon the sandbar. I had already packed my spotting scope away. Through my binoculars I noticed a lighter and smaller bird on the fringe of the flight of Dunlin. I quickly photographed the group on the sandbar with my 1200mm lens. Shortly after the birds flew off and I went home. Once there I brought up onto my computer the image I had made. I zoomed in to reveal a large, black breast band on this small, light colored bird. This singular bird with the flight of Dunlin was a Wilson's Plover. The photo was good enough for diagnostic purposes but not for publication.

Not a bad half morning at the bridge.

Ray Scory

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Answer to the Identification Challenge

The bird is a young Black-crowned Night-Heron. The yellow legs are indicative of a heron and its bill shape is diagnostic.



Brown Pelican in flight over the Dunlawton Bridge

Photo by Ray Scory



Three Dunlin, with the head of a Sanderling showing in back.

Photo by Ray Scory

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Bird-a-thon Results

Our Bird-a-thon, held on Saturday, February 24th, turned out finding a total of 87 species. There were some glaring misses. We saw Florida Scrub-Jays but no Blue Jays. We also recorded no sparrows and no swallows. We found Eastern Screech Owls at Timucuan Preserve, in Ponce Inlet and while listening to a pair of them, off in the distance we heard the basso profundo sounds of a Great Horned Owl. With all of the pledges totaled up we should receive \$442.05. Our thanks to all who pledged and participated.

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From The Quotable Birder

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

Robert Lynd, American Sociologist

Sea Watch Report From Tom Rennick Park

Harry Robinson, Kim Ramos and others are at the park 4 or 5 days a week beginning around sunrise. Stop by and get a lesson in long distance bird identification from one of the best birders in the state.

This was a quiet month perhaps the quietest so far even so there was an addition to the list. Fog was a common problem this month with the fog often lingering over the sea. In all 88 species were seen there were 91 in February, 2017. I carried out surveys on all 28 days for a total of 131 hours. For this year 110 species have been seen with 239 for the survey as a whole. The highest species count was 48 on the 2nd and the most birds were 3,089 on the 7th.

Now to the birds there was a Horned Grebe on the 6th and American White Pelicans peaked at 31 on the 16th. Single Reddish Egrets were seen on three dates the 6th, 17th and 26th. There were four Glossy Ibis on the 4th this is always an uncommon species here. For the ducks there were four Blue-winged Teal on the 19th with a Ring-necked Duck on the 12th. There were two Surf Scoters on the 3rd with two more on the 19th. Finally for this group there was a Hooded Merganser on the 17th.

There was a Merlin on the 12th with a Peregrine Falcon on the 2nd there were two more peregrines on the 13th. Whilst Willets continued moving to the north the first signs of spring passage were at the end of the month. On the 27th two American Oystercatchers flew to the north and a Greater Yellowlegs did likewise on the 28th.

A total of 14 Pomarine Jaegers were seen up to the 17th with six on the 12th. There were 76 Parasitic Jaegers this month with 39 on the 12th and ten on the 17th (the last was on the 27th). Most unexpectedly a first-winter Long-tailed Jaeger (pale morph) flew to the south on the 14th. The only gull of note was a first-winter Iceland Gull that flew to the south on the 26th. Royal Terns moved to the north for most of the month there were 520 on the 27th. On the 12th a total of 786 Forster's Terns flew to the south. The highest count of Black Skimmers was that of 36 on the 1st.

There was a White-winged Dove on the 6th with a Pileated Woodpecker on the 25th that remains a local rarity. There were six American Crows on the 1st this species rarely crosses over the river. The last American Robin was on the 21st. Now to the addition to the list there was a female Eastern Bluebird on the 9th. Cedar Waxwings peaked at 375 on the 2nd the last were on the 18th. The 5th seems to have been a special day as there was a Louisiana Waterthrush, a Savannah Sparrow and a very high 105 American Goldfinches. There was another Savannah Sparrow on the 21st.

Hopefully March will be much better.

Harry Robinson

Spring Migration In The Dry Tortugas

Imagine looking out across a grassy field and seeing 100+ Blue Grosbeaks feeding, or a bird bath with Blackpoll, Black-and-White, Northern Parula, Prairie and Palm Warblers all crowded in at once. The Dry Tortugas are the first landfall trans Gulf migrants see after leaving the Yucatan on their northward migration. In April and early May it's a birder's paradise. [Florida Nature Tours](#) has been leading trips there since 1966. The price is just 1295.00 and they donate 100.00 of that back to the Audubon chapter of your choice. You get 4 days of birding, including a day in Key West and the surrounding area. Mangrove Cuckoo, Black-whiskered Vireo and White-crowned Pigeon are some of the target birds on this part of the trip. Once while there we saw, 50 feet apart, a Gray-cheeked Thrush, a Bicknell's Thrush and a Verry. There's not another place on Earth you can see those 3 species so close together. Check out the website linked above. Then pack your bags and head south.

David Hartgrove

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