

The Pelican

We need to be the stewards of this world, not its destroyers
Volume 64-Number 7. Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
July, 2018



The President's Column

"The conservation of our natural resources and their proper use constitute the fundamental problem which underlies almost every other problem of our national life..."

"I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us."

"...Natural resources must be used for the benefit of all our people, and not monopolized for the benefit of the few..."

These quotes are from the 26th President of the United States of America, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. Born in 1858, he served as President from 1901 to 1909. During his terms, he created 150 national forests, 51 bird reservations, 3 game preserves, 5 national parks and 18 national monuments. He protected the equivalent of 84,000 acres of public lands PER DAY for each day he served, for a total of more than 230 million acres preserved for future generations of Americans.

Right here in Florida, with encouragement from the Florida Audubon Society, President Roosevelt established Pelican Island in the Indian River Lagoon as the first federal bird reservation on March 14th, 1903, giving rise to the National Wildlife Refuge System. By the end of his presidency, Roosevelt had named 9 more reservations in Florida.

I was in New York on Long Island earlier this month and toured Sagamore Hill, Roosevelt's "Summer White House", which is fittingly managed by the National Park Service. The Park service invites us to tour the property and "...become inspired by the legacy of one of America's most popular presidents." I was inspired to shed tears of gratitude and to find effective ways to do my part to protect the environment for the children and living organisms of the future. While this is especially challenging today, Teddy would surely brook no excuses for shirking what I am sure we would agree is a duty. I urge us all to find ways, every day, to make a positive impact on the environment we share and to become educated and involved with our local government. Here in Volusia County, in addition to conservation-focused organizations like Halifax River Audubon, there are a number of citizens' groups that are forming to address the rapid development our area is both enjoying and suffering from. On June 26th, the Daytona Beach News Journal held a public forum to discuss "Smart Growth." It is a very good time to be part of the community in search of solutions. If we all join in, I believe we can find them.

Melissa Lammers

Calendar & Events

We're in the middle of our summer hiatus. No general meetings or field trips until September. The board will still meet monthly on the first Monday of the month at the Ormond Beach Regional Library, Meeting Room #4 at 1:30 pm. Members are invited to attend.

Field Trips With Others

Those of us willing to brave the heat of July can find a number of fun activities offered by Volusia County's Environmental Management Department. There are kayaking, bicycling, hiking and snorkeling programs spread across the month at a variety of locations. Click on this [link](#) and scroll down to the "Upcoming Events" section.

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Gopher Tortoise Halts MDC Construction, Prompts Relocation

The Marine Discovery Center got a little surprise from a burrowing reptile after starting construction this spring. In early April, executive director Chad Truxall noticed a hole at the base of what will be the seating area of the new amphitheater, currently under construction. "We knew we had a gopher tortoise onsite a while ago, but we had not seen it and we thought it was gone," said Truxall. "As soon as we saw that hole, we knew we had to do something about it."

Truxall said a survey on the property for endangered and threatened species was standard procedure before construction could begin. Unfortunately, an assumption was made that the survey had already taken place. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) informed MDC that it needed to determine if there was one tortoise or more than 10 on the property. Procedural requirements vary based on the number of animals present.

Truxall reached out to Joe Young, owner of Biological Consulting Services, who came to the center's campus in April and performed a gopher tortoise survey one week after construction had begun at the site. Young determined there was one tortoise in the burrow, prompting the halt of all construction within 15 feet of the area until the animal could be removed.

This story is continued on page 4

Conservation Notes

There's a song by New Orleans musician, Dr. John, titled "Right Place, Wrong Time." This is a story kind of that reverses that phrase. It's about being in the wrong place at the right time.



Across from the entrance to Tanger Outlets there's another "shopping destination" going up. Construction began early in 2017 and as site preparation continued intense rains created large, flat areas of bare ground with a mix of old shell and large muddy wet areas with standing water. That made for what looked like good shorebird habitat to Michael Brothers and he stopped by one afternoon in early May last year and discovered a thriving Least Tern colony. Least Terns are listed as a "Threatened" species due mostly to loss of nesting habitat. I monitor 15 rooftops across our county as a volunteer with FWC and the birds also nest on some islands in the river.



Last year I worked with FWC personnel to install signs and string to mark off the nesting area. While not happy about the delays to their construction schedule, the construction company was very cooperative in leaving the site undisturbed and the birds had a successful nesting that produced a number of fledged young.

This year the birds are back and again we've erected signs and string to delineate the nesting area. Over the past year construction has continued and what was an open field now has a divided road and concrete curbs. Paving would have

commenced already if not for the birds having nests in the unpaved road. As I said, wrong place, right time.



Both Joan Tague and I have been monitoring the site for FWC this year and it appears the birds may not fledge a single youngster. Though at one point we had at least 81 nests, a big female Red-tailed Hawk has been seen hanging out in the area and apparently she's been taking a lot of chicks. There may be other predators we haven't seen that have been active. The birds do the best they can with the limited tools they have to deter predation but the cards are stacked against them.



Adult Least Tern with its chick. *Photo by Michael Brothers*

You'll notice in the top photo that the bird on the left is just sitting back down on its egg. Some of the nests have 2 eggs. As you can imagine it gets very hot out there until an afternoon rain shower cools things off. The adults will fly over to one of the puddles, wet their breast feathers, and return to the nest to allow the moisture to cool the eggs. That's what was happening when I took the photo.

By this time next year the entire shopping area will be completed and the bare ground where the birds are now nesting will be covered in asphalt. This was one of those serendipitous moments when conditions were created that the birds could temporarily use for nesting. The rooftops they use must be tar and gravel. Since this is an antique technology and not in use any longer, as the existing roofs are replaced the birds lose yet another place to nest. Changes are taking place faster than they can adapt.

David Hartgrove

A Treasured Local Resource

Some of you may know Dr. Peter May, Biology Professor at Stetson University, or you may know of his reputation for incredible nature photography.

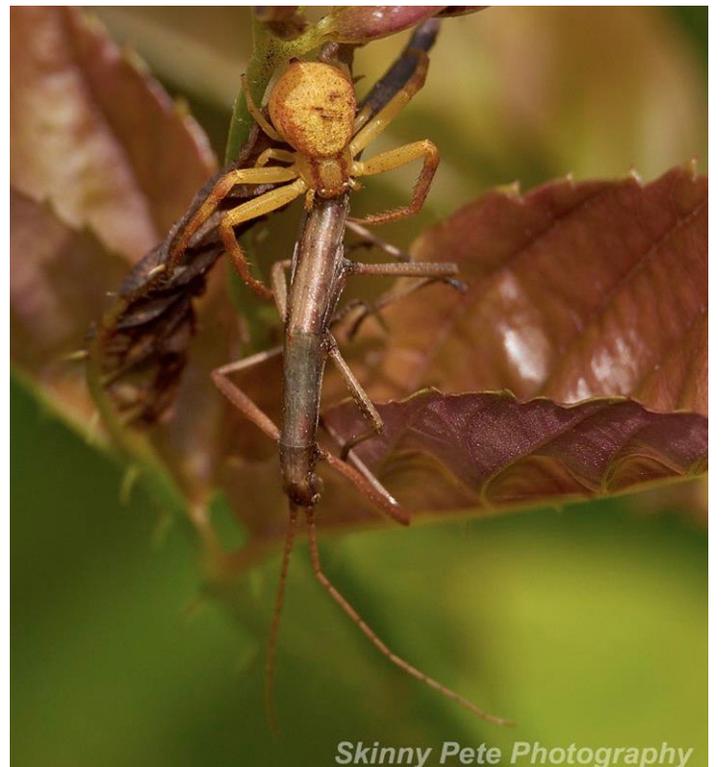
Peter's blog, <http://volusianaturalist.com>, is full of interesting articles that are illustrated by his photos. His posts to [Facebook](#) elicit ooohs and aaahs from commenters across the spectrum.



A few of his shots are somewhat comical, like this one of a soaking wet Brown Thrasher. His interests range from birds to plants and the myriad insect species that inhabit our state and in particular, Volusia County. His haunts include Tiger Bay State Forest, Heart Island Conservation Area, Lake George State Forest, Ocala National Forest, Emeralda Marsh and just about anywhere else there's an opportunity to view the plants and creatures that make living here so interesting.



Here's a female Ebony Jewelwing



3 The White-eyed Vireo eating the moth and the crab spider eating the walking stick were seen in Tiger Bay State Forest.

Continued on the below

Gopher Tortoise story continues below

Then MDC was given two options: 1.) Install a silt fence around the entire construction project, remove the tortoise from the burrow and place it outside the silt fencing; or 2.) extract the tortoise in its burrow and move the animal offsite to a state-approved location. "Once you decide on an option, you apply for a permit and let the state know your plans," said Truxall, who took the second option. On the day of the tortoise extraction, Truxall watched while Young and Weaver Construction executed a precise extraction using a backhoe. The burrow was approximately 20 feet deep and the procedure rendered a large female tortoise.

"This is far better than entombment, which they used to do," Truxall said. "For a long time, construction companies could pay a fee – in what's called a 'take' – and just fill in a burrow, not knowing whether it was active or not. They buried tortoises alive and maybe even crushed them with their bulldozers while only paying a fine."

FWC banned the practice of entombment in 2007, ending a state policy that allowed construction companies to bulldoze burrows for paid permits. The Humane Society took action in halting the statewide practice, which reportedly entombed anywhere from nearly 100,000 to 900,000 gopher tortoises in Florida from 1991-2007. "When people realized what was going on with the entombment practices, they were really upset," said Truxall. "I'm glad the laws were changed."

Truxall noted that gopher tortoises are a keystone species, sharing their burrows with many animals, ranging from mammals and reptiles, amphibians, insects and birds. More than 350 other species have been identified as communally residing in gopher tortoise burrows. Certain endangered species, such as indigo snakes, the gopher frog and the beach mouse, all share gopher tortoise burrows – sometimes taking refuge in the burrows during fires.

While humans may sometimes be inconvenienced that the presence of a threatened animal can hold up an entire construction project, Truxall said state laws are now in place for a reason to protect gopher tortoises. "When it comes to gopher tortoises, we certainly have come a long way," he added.

Lisa D. Mickey

Our thanks to Lisa for this informative article. Editor

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From The Quotable Birder

Then he felt quite ashamed, and hid his head under his wings, for he did not know what to do; he was so happy, and yet not at all proud. He thought how he had been persecuted and despised; and now he heard them saying that he was the most beautiful of all birds. Even the elder tree bent its branches straight down into the water before him, and the sun shone warm and mild. Then his wings rustled, and he lifted his slender neck, and cried rejoicingly from the depths of his heart, - "I never dreamed of so much happiness when I was the Ugly Duckling!"

Hans Christian Andersen

I urge you to click on the link to Peter's blog. Scroll down and click on the article from August, 2016 to learn about Pygmy Rattlesnakes. Or the article from February, 2016 to see his knockout photos of Cedar Waxwings learn about what they're up to while in our area. The writing is sure to inspire you to learn more and has a sense of humor that should appeal to all.

David Hartgrove

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Welcome to Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Thomas Arbogast, Wanda Bankston, Rob Bird, Larry Davis, Gary Froehlich, Francis Heredeem, Chris Higgs, J Moore, Trudy Shoemaker, David Vedder, Marilyn Ward and Jeff Wedge. We hope to see you all at our next meeting in September or on one of our field trips. Watch the [website](#) for updates on the field trip schedule.

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THE PELICAN

is published monthly by the Halifax River Audubon, a chapter of the National Audubon Society and a member of Audubon Florida serving eastern Volusia County. We meet monthly, September through May at Sica Hall in Holly Hill.

PO Box 166
Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166

Email: editor@halifaxriveras.org

Web: <http://www.halifaxriveras.org>

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