

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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The President's Column

Water

One of our first sensory experiences is of floating in our mother's womb. As adults, more than half our body is water. We may be able to survive several weeks without food but we cannot survive more than one week without water. We love to gaze upon water; to listen to the sound it makes as it falls from the sky; to move through it. We luxuriate in a bubble bath or wash our cares away in a warm shower. Water is part of us in every way. In Florida, water is everywhere --- salty waves lap and slap all three sides of our glorious peninsula; water runs beneath our porous karst limestone substrate; it bubbles up in springs and flows through creeks, streams and rivers giving life to us and the nature we hold so dear, including the water birds that grace our shores. But we are not taking good care of Florida's water. Not at all.

Last month, David Hartgrove and I attended Florida Audubon's annual assembly <http://fl.audubon.org/about-us/audubon-assembly> It was two wonderful days of great birding, intense learning from knowledgeable and inspiring speakers, and most of all, of sharing with State leadership and members from Audubon chapters all around Florida. We are part of a wonderful organization with committed and talented members. There were numerous opportunities to learn about Florida's water. The essential message about our fresh water, which was echoed at the Volusia Water Alliance [Fall Symposium](#) last week, is that we are using far too much of it (in Volusia County we are extracting 92% of our capacity); we are doing things that minimize replenishment of our aquifers by paving ever more surfaces and we are polluting the water we have through dependence on septic tanks, older wastewater treatment plants and through Florida UN-friendly landscaping practices. The encouraging news is that there are ways that our challenges can be addressed. However, I think what we, as people who love our environment, ask, "What can I do to make a difference?". Well here are a few things we can do that collectively will make a big difference

- * If you have a septic tank, get it inspected and if necessary, repaired
- * Install flow regulators on all your faucets
- * Install WaterSense toilets in your home
- * Take shorter showers
- * Turn off the faucet while you're brushing your teeth
- * Make sure storm drains on your street are clear of any and all debris

Calendar & Events

Monday, November 19th Program Meeting- Laurilee Thompson joins us this evening to share a story of hope in the Indian River Lagoon. The challenges existing in the Indian River Lagoon are well documented and create major challenges to the environment, the wildlife and the people of the area. Laurilee will tell a story this evening about a unique project organized by some unlikely partners that may hold one key to restoring this precious resource. She will also discuss the plans for the new visitor center at the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, to which our chapter recently made a donation. Laurilee is one of the owners of Dixie Crossroads Restaurant and a life long fisherman and resident of the Titusville area. We meet at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Ave, Holly Hill, FL 32117. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. We hope to see you there.

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Field Trips

Thursday, November 8th, T M Goodwin Marsh- Join David Hartgrove for a trip to south Brevard County to this FWC waterfowl management area. Access to this site is very restricted so Thursdays is the only day we can go. For lunch we'll stop at [Marsh Landing](#), an historic restaurant with very good and inexpensive food. It's a long drive so we'll meet at 7:00 am at Target in Port Orange behind Panera Bread. Questions, call David at 386-235-1249.

Wednesday, November 28th, Orlando Wetlands- Join Peggy Yokubonus for this trip to one of Central Florida's best birding spots. Crested Caracara, Purple Gallinule, Limpkin and others on visiting birder wish lists are possible here. Meet at 7:30 am at Target in Port Orange behind Panera Bread. Bring lunch. Questions, call Peggy, 386-316-4085.

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[The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival](#)

The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival is the largest birding festival in the country and it's headquartered in Titusville just 35 miles to our south. Opening on Wednesday, January 23rd and running through Monday, January 28th there are great field trips, photography workshops and lots of fun. [Registration](#) is open and some field trips are already filled and have waiting lists. And if you've been thinking about a new pair of binoculars or a scope, this is the place to try them out. Every optics manufacturer in the country will be represented and they're often offering discounts.. Don't miss this exciting event.

- * Make sure the gutters along your street are also clean
- * Install / maintain a rain gauge so that your irrigation system doesn't come on when it isn't needed
- * Water your lawn only on the assigned days and early in the morning, even if you have a well
- * Don't apply fertilizer from June 1st to September 30th –the nitrogen contributes to algal blooms
- * If you fertilize between October 1 and May 31, use fertilizer that contains no less than 50 percent slow-release nitrogen
- * If you use reclaimed water to irrigate your lawn and fertilize, adjust the amount of fertilizer because the reclaimed water has a higher load of nitrogen than potable or well water
- * Don't apply fertilizer within 15 feet of a body of water, ever
- * Never apply fertilizer with phosphorous, unless you have tested your soil and know you have a deficiency (Florida is naturally phosphorous heavy)
- * Keep your grass clippings out of the storm drain – blow them back on your lawn for mulch or bag and discard them
- * Install a rain barrel or cistern and use that for watering
- * Consider replacing your turf grass entirely or increase mulch circles around your trees and large shrubs to reduce the amount of turf grass in your yard
- * If you live along a river or creek, consider planting a buffer zone of native plants appropriate for the area
- * Follow Florida-friendly landscaping principles or even better, plant Florida native plants (the birds will thank you!)

Beyond these significant things you can do on your own, think about getting involved as an advocate for Florida's water. Let your Audubon chapter board know if you are interested!

Melissa Lammers

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Conservation Notes

Rick Scott has been the worst thing to happen to Florida's environment since Hurricane Andrew. So it's no surprise that when he staged a photo op at the opening of a new section of the elevated Tamiami Trail project, he made sure that no members of the Everglades Coalition (Audubon, Sierra, the Conservancy of SW Florida, etc.) were invited. No sense letting facts get in the way of a story from only his perspective.

So in this political season let's switch to something far more pleasant. Like the habit of female Common Yellowthroats to show up in the least expected planes.

On our recent field trip to Lake Apopka we met in our usual meeting place behind Krystal on ISB. Barbara Loomis rode in my car and as she got in the car she said she thought there was a large moth in the car too. We looked but saw no sign of it. A few minutes later as we're headed west on I-4 she said, "Oh my gosh, it's a bird!" I looked in the rear view mirror and sure enough I could see a female Common Yellowthroat hopping along the edge of the back window. I alerted the rest of the caravan via radio that we had a bird in the car and would be pulling off at the SR 44 exit. I found a safe place for us all to pull over and stopped. I opened the back of the car and the bird appeared to be too stressed to get out on her own. I reached in and carefully took her out. I carried her to a nearby small cypress tree and placed her on a branch. After she sat there for a minute getting her bearings she flew off.



Saturday's bird on my hand, *photo by Paul Rebmann*

This is not my first experience seeing one of these birds in an unexpected place. On May 30th, 2016 we were on a pelagic trip sponsored by the Friends of the Marine Science Center. At 10:00 am that morning we were 35 miles offshore when a female Common Yellowthroat flew onto the boat and rested for about 2 hours before flying out and continuing her journey. Was she headed north or south? She flew west as she exited the boat. So who knows?



The bird from May 30th, 2016 with the Gulf Stream in the background. *Photo by David Hartgrove*

On a pelagic trip some years earlier that went out 100 miles we had another female COYE fly onto the boat about 11:00 in the morning when we were 60 miles out. She stayed on board the rest of the day. Off and on she could be seen hopping around under benches and tables in the cabin feeding on tiny insects. Later, around 8:30 pm, as we passed beneath the north New Smyrna Beach Bridge, I saw her fly out into the night. She'd hitched a ride to shore and rested and fed along the way. Common Yellowthroats weigh less than half an ounce. Granted, these two took advantage of a rest and a ride. Others make these amazing migratory journeys unaided. It's part of why we get hooked on birding.

David Hartgrove

Welcome To Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Robert Auth, Gloria Barreto, Beth Bartholomew, Elizabeth Burns, Betty Butcher, Lucy Christman, James Cundari, Deborah Devolder, Camille Esposito, Victoria Green, Dan Gribbin, Virginia Groh, Charlotte Hall, Francis Heredeen, Nancy Herring, Nancy Jones, Lee Kimball, Richard Lester, Marion Monaghan, Patricia Monaghan, Tom Moran, Bob North, Ron & Mary Carol Ochipa, Andrea Pair, Mary Parks, Carol Roberts, Deborah SanFilippo, Karen Seiler, Celine Sullivan, Dee Townsend, David Walsh, Carolyn West, Anette Wilson, Michael Wolfe, Rosa Zidelis and Holly Zwart-Duryea. We hope to see you all at an upcoming meeting or on one of our excellent field trips.

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Here's a field trip report from the Washington Oaks trip.

Serendipity

The fall field trip to Washington Oaks Gardens State Park is a staple of our annual schedule. Over the years we have had some very good days at the park, but we have also had those days that leave us flat and off searching for smoked meat at Captain's Barbecue on A-1A. Such is birding.

Then there are the miracle days, when the stars and fates and luck and weather fronts line up and dump birds at the very place you have planned to visit for months. There are reliable places where this happens seasonally, like fallouts in Texas and along the shores of Lake Erie in the spring and the Autumn parade of migrating hawks over mountain ridges and in the Florida Keys. The lure of birding, the thing that keeps one hooked, however, is that this phenomena can happen at any time, anywhere. Friday, October 12 was that day.

10 HRA members met at the park as it opened and for the next 7 hours birded almost non-stop in the gardens. We may have covered less than 1/2 square mile. Some of the birds were easy to identify, while others were young birds facing their first winter in drab, confusing plumages. Others were in seasonal eclipse feathers. The only recognizable call from the migrants was the weepy call of the Eastern Wood-Pewee. Occasional chips and calls hinted at birds hiding in the trees and shrubs. A Wood Thrush here, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks in the trees, vireos whining in the pines.

Why did this happen? The fury and disruption of Hurricane Michael probably had an effect, sweeping birds towards the coast along the back side of the storm after holding them back for days. Then the humidity dropped from 99% to something very comfortable. Just speculation.....

We found 51 species. That is an average morning list in our neighborhood, but the number of species does not tell the whole story. It's the species on this list that are special. 15 of the species found were Wood Warblers. 4 vireo species, 2 Thrushes, 2 tanagers, and Baltimore Orioles for good measure. Most of these birds are only seen in the short period of migration. They were here in big numbers, all moving constantly above us. We could not tear ourselves from them. Ephemeral, transient, precious.

Birding with friends and future friends adds to the experience. More observers equals more birds found. The discussions over the migrants, listing field marks, observing behavior and drawing on a wealth of experience enriched the day. All of us grew a little as birders, drawing lessons from both birds and fellow watchers.

The bird list is available on our [web site](#). While there you can download a list of our [field trips](#) for the 2018/2019 season. More adventures await.

Joan Tague

We were too overwhelmed to even try to photograph the birds, but here are a two photos of representative species from the archives of Chuck Tague.



Blackburnian Warbler



Blue-winged Warbler

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Are You An eBirder ?

[eBird](#) is a free application that allows you to keep track of the birds you see when out in the field. Developed by Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and Audubon this valuable app not only allows you to enter your data from the field as you're looking for birds it can be your personal life list. It also has all kinds of features like how to find for the best place to see a bird you've been looking for. Now Cornell Lab has a [free tutorial](#) so you can easily learn how to get the most out of this great product. Click on the link above and start to learn and enjoy.

David Hartgrove

Bobolink Dream

The Bobolink - (Dolichonyx oryzivorus): dolichonyx translate from ancient Greek as "long claw". Translation of oryzivorus comes the Latin orza, "rice", and vorare, "to devour". A colloquial name for this bird is "ricebird".

Thus will begin the story of my crusade to photograph the "Bobolink".

For a dream to come true, diligence and effort must flawlessly merge into an energy of relentless pursuit. However in no other endeavor does luck play such an extraordinary role. Combining these attributes can foster rewards beyond a thrilling experience. Yet, at times the journey can be uncomfortable, maybe even painful. However, when the pieces begin to take shape and the goal is in sight. Wow, no better feeling. For me it came with the click of my camera's shutter, began many years ago and played out in Durham Meadows.

What is locally known as Durham Meadows is actually large open hay fields edged with stands of brush, oak and maple trees set within a 556 acre tract of land called Durham Meadows WMA. It is a popular birding spot because of its various habitats, including marsh, old hardwood growth, patches of open water and flowing fields of golden hay. The narrow Cogenchaug River weaves its leisurely course through the property. In June, Durham Meadows becomes the nesting grounds for the Bobolink. They build their nests on the ground camouflaged by the thick, knee high, hay fields. The female Bobolink blends in well to this healthy warm-colored environment tastefully dressed in her rich, soft array of stripes and colors of browns, both light and dark. Three black stripes on her head differ in contrast to her over all elegant appearance. The male Bobolink is the only American bird that is white on the back and black underneath with a large patch of yellow on the back of its head. This unique coloration only last until after the breeding season when it changes to a darker version of the female color for the rest of the year. I was fortunate to see an off season colored Bobolink for four years in a row at the same spot when I was conducting a waterbird survey for Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. They breed across lower Canada and the upper USA and migrate through to central South America.

I became aware of the Bobolinks at Durham Meadows in the early 1980's and listened to their repertoire of warbling, scratchy, gurgling sounds coming from a perch high in the trees. It reminds me of the shorter song but less active singing of the White-eyed vireo. From that year to this year I never again got close enough to photograph the Bobolinks. For years I tried, either I went at the wrong time of year or day or I didn't own a lens long enough to pull in that flittering, speeding black speck in the sky to make a decent photograph.

When I retired and moved to Florida eighteen years ago I resumed my quest. This time with a long focus lens (1200mm). Each year for the past seven, Jane and I return to Connecticut for vacation. I would stop at Durham Meadows just after landing at Bradley International Airport. This year when I went back, I met a lady who asked me if I'd seen any good birds. I said, "No, but can you tell where to find a good bird - the Bobolink." She enthusiastically led me through a cut of waist high hay to an area where she said I should see Bobolinks but, said, " get there just before daybreak."

For two separate mornings I went back and one half hour after sunrise they burst forth in all their glory from their fields of hay and my dream finally became a reality.

Ray Scory



Bobolink (female) - Once the female Bobolink accepted the nesting site she aggressively chased away all threatening and inquiring birds.



Bobolink (male) - Three male Bobolinks posture at a possible nesting site. Plenty of attacking, squawking, short burst flying and chasing going on. Farmers are very cooperative and sympathetic to the Bobolinks during the brief time the birds are nesting in their fields. *Photos by Ray Scory*

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From the Quotable Birder

"Perfect as the wing of a bird may be, it will never enable the bird to fly if unsupported by the air. Facts are the air of science. Without them a man of science can never rise."

Ivan Pavlov

Due to a number of factors we seldom get to run a column by Harry Robinson on time. Not so this month.

TOM RENICK COUNTY PARK BIRD COUNTS

OCTOBER, 2018

This was a better month. There were even two additions to the list. I did 31 surveys over 130 hours. I saw 118 species (there were 129 in October last year) it was still the fifth best month since the survey started. So far this year I have noted 208 species and 247 overall – I am still hoping to reach 250 by the end of the year. Not easy but possible. Now to the birds.

There were single Common Loons on the 28th and 30th and a Pied-billed Grebe was on the sea on the 14th. There were some shearwaters: there was a Cory's Shearwater on the 1st with single Scolopi's on the 1st and 2nd. There were two Greater Shearwaters on the 1st with singles on the 2nd, 3rd and 6th. On a calm day a Manx Shearwater flew to the south on the 23rd. The only Brown Booby was on the 25th and Northern Gannets were seen from the 22nd. Finally for this group there were single Magnificent Frigatebirds on the 2nd and 16th.

There was a Reddish Egret on the 30th with a late Yellow-crowned Night-Heron on the 14th. There were 24 Roseate Spoonbills on the 12th with 28 on the 20th, nine on the 26th and 14 on the 31st. Perhaps one day I will see one over the sea! The 28th was GOOSE DAY a cold front had gone through and they were flying back to the north. I said they first there was a party of four Greater White-fronted Geese (a new species for the park) followed 15 minutes later by a Brant (second record for the park). That was a crazy few minutes. There was a Greater Scaup on the 25th and Lesser Scaup were seen from the 17th. There was a Surf Scoter on the 30th with two on the 31st. Black Scoters were seen from the 23rd. There was also a Red-breasted Merganser on the 29th.

There was a Northern Harrier on the 20th with three on the 27th and two on the 28th. The first Sharp-shinned Hawk was seen on the 20th. There was a light morph Short-tailed Hawk on the 4th. During the month 15 Merlins and 13 Peregrine Falcons were recorded. There was an American Oystercatcher on the 5th with three on the 14th. Marbled Godwits seem to have been around forever but the last (two) were seen on the 25th. There were two Red-necked Phalaropes on the 3rd with one on the 10th. Much more unexpected there was a flock of 14 Red Phalaropes on the 3rd.

There was a party of five Pomarine Jaegers on the 26th and 23 Parasitic Jaegers were seen during the month. There was a passage of Lesser Black-backed Gulls with 16 counted through to the 23rd. There was a single Great Black-backed Gull on the 19th. An adult Black-legged Kittiwake flew to the south on the 19th. Common Terns were seen to the 21st. There was a single Bridled Tern on the 8th with a single Black Tern on the 3rd.

There were single White-winged Doves on the 18th and 29th with a Yellow-billed Cuckoo on the 19th. The last Chimney Swift was on the 12th and on that date there was also a Ruby-throated Hummingbird. There was a Northern Flicker on the 18th, a major rarity. There was an Eastern Phoebe on the 28th. American Crows were seen again. There were singles on the 18th and 24th with a party of three on the 31st. There was a Ruby-crowned Kinglet on the 17th with a Gray Catbird on the 18th. On the 25th just after a heavy shower there was a swarm of European Starlings on the utility wires I estimated 1,400.

Now to the second addition to the list there was a male Magnolia Warbler in the Sea Grapes on the 12th. Yellow-rumped Warblers were seen from the 27th and Palm Warblers from the 5th. There was surprisingly a Blackpoll Warbler on the 16th. American Redstarts were seen on the 12th and 18th. Finally for the warblers there was a Hooded Warbler on the 12th. There was a Savannah Sparrow on the 16th with two Bobolinks on the 4th. Finally there was a male Shiny Cowbird on the 24th.

There seems to have been a lot more to record this month, hopefully the trend will continue.

Harry Robinson

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