

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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The President's Message

Another year draws to a close and people speak of goals reached (or not) in the outgoing year and of resolutions and vows for the new. Advertisements entice us to lose weight, learn a new language, open a savings account, etc. But far from being a hollow, commercial exercise, ringing in the New Year is an invitation to think about our own humanity. Am I the person I wish to be? Am I living my life according to my values? For me, this is always a humbling yet inspiring exercise. I fall short on any number of details (you know, where the devil is) yet I remain excited about what is for me, the proper path. My path includes opening my senses to the wonder of nature every day and finding ways to show my respect and awe for her, in perpetuity. It means becoming ever more educated about how we can reduce or mitigate the harms we commit on our environment and finding ways to share that knowledge with others. Sometimes that last part goes well. Sometimes it doesn't. It is often uncomfortable for me but that's no reason not to keep trying, is it? It's so easy to take nature for granted but we really cannot! Over my lifetime, we've done some pretty awful things, like continuing to allow agricultural and development practices that cause toxic algal blooms in the Indian River Lagoon and our springs. But we've also been successful in turning around some very bad situations --- think American Bald Eagle or Brown Pelican; think Lake Apopka. Audubon offers us so many opportunities to experience and learn about our environment and to educate and advocate for her. I hope you will join in all these activities in the coming year!

Now, I need to vent a bit and hopefully provide an illustration of how we can all help make the world a better place. While walking on the beach to open my senses to the wonder of nature, I've had two experiences of sharing knowledge with strangers feeding "people food" to birds. Here's how they went:

I spy a woman walking and throwing bread to shore birds and gulls.

Me: Y'all like the birds, don't you?

She: "Oh yes!"

Me: "Are you feeding them fish?"

She: "No. Bread. I'm trying to feed the plovers. I don't like the gulls."

Me: "Oh, well you know we (not the royal we but the long-time North Peninsula beach-goers "we") don't recommend feeding them bread. It's empty calories and they need good nutrition to fly really long distances. They're just migrating through here."

Continued on the next page

Calendar & Events

Tuesday, January 22nd, Program Meeting- Just a reminder that our January meeting day is changed due to the Martin Luther King Birthday holiday. Join us for a presentation on birding the Iberian Peninsula. The Iberian Peninsula, also known as Iberia, is located in the southwest corner of Europe. The peninsula is principally divided between Spain and Portugal, comprising most of their territory. João Jara was born in Lisbon and studied biology at the Faculdade de Ciências de Lisboa, from where he developed his professional career in the pharmaceutical industry, as senior manager and director of various multinational companies. With some 35 years of field experience, he has an intimate knowledge of the birds and birding in Portugal. He has travelled extensively in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas with birding as the main objective. His presentation will have you thinking about your passport and whether it's up to date. 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

Tuesday, January 8th to Friday, January 11th- Our overnight trip St Marks NWR. **This trip is filled.** Maybe next year?

Friday, January 18th, Hatbill Park/Riverbreeze Park- Hatbill is a stop on the North Brevard Hotspots trip offered by the Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival every year. The first part may be a bit muddy, depending on rainfall. So some shoes that can get muddy might be a good idea but the birding should be great. Then we'll stop in Oakhill at Riverbreeze to see what's there. Meet David Hartgrove at the Target in Port Orange, behind Panera Bread, at 7:30 am. Bring lunch. Questions? Call David, 386-235-1249.

Friday, February 1st, Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive- Join Peggy Yokubonus for this trip to one of Florida's best birding spots. A good trip if you're not into a lot of walking since we'll be driving this one with brief stops to get out for better looks at the birds. Meet Peggy at Int'l Square - East of I-95 on Int'l Speedway Blvd behind Krystal at 7:00 am. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Peggy, 386-316-4085

Friday, January 4th, Birding With Friends at Lake Woodruff

Join our friends from West Volusia Audubon Society for this easy walk to see the birds of Lake Woodruff. Meet in the Myacca Parking Lot at 8:00 am. That's the first parking lot inside the gate on Mud Lake Road. Questions? Call Eli Shaperow, 407-314-7965.

She: "I don't feed them enough to hurt them. I've been around birds."

Me: "Have a nice day."

Yes, I know I'm lucky I wasn't yelled at and told to mind my own business or worse but somebody has to speak up for the birds! How easy it is for us to place our own feelings above what is good for nature! Yes, it's fun to feed the birds. I did it as a kid now and then, but I learned how bad it is for them. Maybe she will, too. Like the man in my next story.

I see a man throwing Cheerios to sanderlings and ruddy turnstones.

Me: "Do you know about these birds?"

He: "No, I don't. What are they?"

Me: [I identify the birds] "Those little gray-white, hunchback ones are amazing! They fly all the way to the Arctic Circle to breed! They stop here to rest and fatten up for their journey (shout out to Michael Brothers here). That's why we shouldn't give them people food. It fills them up but doesn't nourish them. If you want to have a real blast, try getting fish bites at the bait shop (smiling)."

He: "I had no idea. That's really interesting! Do you live here?"

Me: "Yes. I've lived here off and on since (gulp) 1965---this same beach!"

He: "I've been here 14 years. It's beautiful. I love it!"

Me: "That's so nice to hear! Are you interested in knowing more about the birds we see here?"

He: "Yes, I am."

Me: "Why don't you come to one of our Audubon meetings. That's how I've been learning!"

The man might come to one of our meetings but even if he doesn't, his curiosity was stoked and I don't think he'll feed Cheerios to the birds again.

Best wishes for a beautiful 2019!

Melissa Lammers

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Local Birding Festivals Are Here

Early 2019 will be full of birding festivals. First up is The [North Shore Birding Festival](#) from Thursday, January 17th through Monday, January 21st. The North Shore refers to the North Shore of Lake Apopka and is sponsored by Orange Audubon Society. Come out to support Orange Audubon and its efforts to enhance this spectacular birding hot spot.

Then there's Granddaddy, the [Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival](#). It's the largest birding festival in the country and attracts some of the top nationally known names in birding. It will run from Wednesday, January 23rd through Monday, January 28th. Every binocular manufacturer in the country will be there to offer demonstrations. There will be great field trips, photography workshops and much more.

And finally in February there's the [Birds of a Feather Fest](#) in Palm Coast. Building from spartan beginnings several years ago, this festival is smaller but the experiences are great. So clean up your binoculars and get your hiking boots oiled. There's going to be a lot of fun out there.

Editor

Conservation Notes

First it was Scott Pruitt, the deeply conflicted Administrator at the EPA who resigned in disgrace. Now comes the announcement that Interior Secretary, Ryan Zinke, is leaving under the same cloud of disgrace. Suspicions abound that his decisions regarding the use and misuse of public lands, the opening of vast tracts of offshore areas and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling and any number of other environmental travesties were directly related to his connections to energy and mining companies.

Mr. Zinke came into office saying he was a "Teddy Roosevelt conservationist." A comment that in light of his record since taking office probably has old TR spinning in his grave like a whirling dervish. There are at least 10 investigations underway into this guy's actions. They range from the minor: Tweeting an image of himself wearing socks with an image of the President and his "Make America Great Again" slogan. He later deleted the photo and apologized after several groups pointed out that he likely violated the Hatch Act, which prohibits federal employees from using their government positions to engage in political activity. To the more serious: halting a study of the effects on human health of mountain removal mining. The coal companies didn't like the possibilities of where that study might go.

So now Trump will select another person to serve as Interior Secretary. The Teddy Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, an organization that fosters TR's authentic goals for our nation's public lands, has published a list of qualifications they believe are needed in the next person to fill this important post. Here they are:

- * A dedication to keeping public lands in public hands
- * A commitment to ensuring that public lands are well-managed and accessible, including to hunters and anglers
- * An unwavering fidelity to science-based management
- * An appreciation of public input in the policymaking process
- * An understanding of the importance of outdoor recreation, including hunting and fishing, to local economies and the national economy
- * A willingness to fight for strong budgets for the department and a respect for its employees, who have dedicated themselves to upholding and advancing America's conservation legacy
- * An eagerness to collaborate with the states, which hold primary management authority for managing fish and wildlife
- * The foresight to promote long-term stewardship over short-term economic gains

In light of the hopelessly conflicted clowns the President has put forth for other positions ruling over our national treasures it's doubtful any of the goals above will be on his mind as his team scans the list of applicants. With the market in free fall, the Pentagon in near revolt and his staff afraid to say anything unflattering to his highness, perhaps we'll get lucky and the post will go unfilled. Not having anyone there can't be any worse than having another shill for the mining and oil industry racing to gut any and all protections for our health and the welfare of our country's conservation heritage. The damage done in this first two years of the Trump administration will take decades to repair. Let's hope something distracts the folks up there who are working so hard to kill us all in the name of quick profits.

By Ray Scory



Bald Eagle, Lesser Yellowlegs, Common Ground-Dove, House Finch (female & male)

Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-throated Warbler & Palm Warbler, Spotted Sandpiper

Northern Cardinal (fledgling & Male), Red-tailed Hawk, Sandhill Crane (sexes similar)

Mallard (female & Male) Painted Bunting (female & male), Brown Thrasher

Our FL Backyard, American Goldfinch (non-breeding), Carolina Wren (two fledglings)

article and photos by Ray Scory

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And Now News From [The Birding Community E-Bulletin](#)

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species maintains a record of how close species may be to extinction. [BirdLife International](#) is responsible for annually measuring the health of the world of birds for this tally. Every year, BirdLife updates which birds are stable, which are in recovery, and which have slipped toward extinction.

In the most recent release, there were a few surprises for us in North America. First the troubling stories:

Common Grackle populations have been dropping. With numbers plummeting by more than 50 percent between 1970 and 2014, the species has now been classed as Near Threatened by IUCN. Pest-control measures may have contributed to this decline.

Eastern Whip-poor-will data have revealed that the species population fell by over 60% between 1970 and 2014. With a dependence on flying insects for food, the species may be declining due to pesticides, intensive agriculture, and other factors reducing insect availability. The species has been up-listed to Near Threatened this year

Rufous Hummingbird could be sliding to extinction in plain sight, and the species has also been up-listed to Near Threatened this year. Its reliance on nectar and on insects during the breeding season may combine to put the species in jeopardy. This hummer may become a victim of climate change as early-blooming flowers in some locations could mean that hummingbirds arrive from migration too late to take advantage of this vital food source. Forest fires and changes in post-fire habitat conditions could also be contributing to the species' decline.

There's also some good news. Red-headed Woodpecker, with formerly declining populations, may have stabilized. Now placed in a "Least Concern" category, the species' population is considered healthy and stable enough that it is unlikely to face extinction anytime soon.

Henslow's Sparrow has stabilized, thanks in part to habitat management. In particular, the species has benefited from the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), where farmers are paid to remove land from cultivation and instead plant species that will improve the health and quality of the habitat.

The Birding Community E-Bulletin is published monthly by Mass Audubon and the National Wildlife Refuge Association. You can sign up for it [here](#).

Amazing Backyard Birding

"You never know what you will see when you look out the window." This very observant remark came from my wife, Jane. She had responded to my excitement, "Look a Carolina Chickadee at the feeder. I haven't observed one here in over ten years."

Amazingly Good Luck. I live in a residential neighborhood harboring no claims for the support of rare or exotic birds. However, for the past nineteen years I have looked out our backyard window and witnessed the most sensational behaviors and eye-catching colors. The color compositions of birds has long been a favorite interest of mine. Truly the work of a Master Artist. A seat by a window, while birding a backyard, can foster an awe inspiring moment and profoundly lead to a richer comfort of peace.

All the birds in this photo-montage have been photographed in my backyard. Their visits are most welcomed. They bring an amazing array of startling colors and incredulous behavior. So look out your window and enjoy the rewards of birding close by. The beginning of a new year is a good time to start.

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From The Quotable Birder

"Penguins mate for life. Which doesn't exactly surprise me that much 'cause they all look alike- it's not like they're gonna meet a better looking penguin someday."

Ellen DeGeneres

HRA board member, Steve Underwood, has a friend in Connecticut who's been out west recently. Chris Fisher has some great photos of the birds he's seen in desert southwest. Below are two of them.



Here's a Verdin, perched on cactus spines. Primarily feeding on insects, this tiny bird (4.5") is seen in dry, brushy areas from the Texas panhandle south to Central Mexico and west to the California desert areas.



This handsome devil is the male Pyrrhuloxia. It's diet consists of insects, seeds and fruit. Its crest is longer than that of a Northern Cardinal, even the ones in the desert southwest, where they tend to somewhat higher and bushier than their eastern brethren. Pyrrhuloxia range from Mexico into southern Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. A striking bird anywhere.

Photos by Chris Fisher.

Our Fort DeSoto Trip in April

Our second overnight field trip for the season is to Fort DeSoto, in Pinellas County. Spring birding at Fort DeSoto is an excellent opportunity to see migrants headed north. We'll be there from Wednesday, April 17th through Friday, April 19th. We have a block of rooms reserved at a new [Holiday Inn](#) in St. Petersburg. Call them at 727-322-0770 and request the discounted rate for Halifax River Audubon. Questions? call David Hartgrove, 386-235-1249.

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Governor Elect DeSantis Names 40 Member Environmental Transition Team

Governor elect, Ron DeSantis, named a 40 member team to advise him on pressing environmental issues. Considering the wrecked environment his predecessor is leaving behind the team has its work cut out. "Water is the lifeblood of our environment and the lifeblood of our economy," said U.S. Rep. Brian Mast, R., Palm City and head of the advisory panel. "In my opinion, this is the most important conversation we can be having." A good start and let's hope they follow through. However, looking at the 40 team members, the vast majority of them come from real estate development, fertilizer companies, agri-business, etc. These are groups that must be engaged in any cleanup since they're the ones largely responsible for where we are today. *Editor*

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