

# The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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March, 2019



## The President's Message

How many ways have you been involved in your Halifax River Audubon? Have you enjoyed our educational programs? Did you go on a field trip and see something you hadn't seen before? Do you enjoy reading The Pelican? Have you turned to our website for information about birds in our community and more? Are you proud to know that we have placed Audubon Adventures in more than 40 classrooms in Volusia County and are expanding the program to other venues? Did you join us as a citizen scientist and help with a bird survey? Have you made a friend or two? Have you attended our special programs or booths at festivals? Have you heard of Project Ibis and our unwavering commitment to educating future conservationists? Have you represented us at community meetings as part of our conservation efforts?

### HAVE YOU VOLUNTEERED?

All these activities and more are part of our strategic plan in support of our mission. Your hard-working board members, who also serve as multiple committee chairs, often of committees of one, have accomplished a majority of the tasks we set for ourselves this year. I'm incredibly proud of them and more grateful than I can say! But now it's time to ask for YOUR help so that all these activities can continue!

### WILL YOU VOLUNTEER?

In May, we will hold elections. While I have loved leading Halifax River Audubon for the past two years, I'm stepping aside to give someone else the opportunity to take the helm. I will remain on the board as immediate past president. Peggy Yokobonus will step down as Recording Secretary. We have three open at-large positions, and as I've said at every meeting since September, we need your help on a committee (or two!), even if you are a snowbird to our shores!

### WILL YOU STEP UP?

"Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart."  
*Elizabeth Andrews*

We really do need volunteers to step up and help us keep this valuable organization moving forward. In these trying times your voice can and will make a difference. Thank you!

*Melissa Lammers*

## Calendar & Events

**Monday, March 18th, Program Meeting-** Join us for an evening of fascinating history when Laurilee Thompson returns to tell us of her experiences growing up on land that became part of Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. 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

**Wednesday, March 6th, Shiloh Marsh-** Join Joan Tague for this trip to a less visited section of Merritt Island NWR to look for sparrows, ducks and early migrants. We'll meet at 7:30 am at Target, East of I-95 on Dunlawton Avenue behind Panera's 1771 Dunlawton Avenue, Port Orange FL 32127. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Joan: 386-871-6049

**Wednesday, March 13th, St Johns River Boat Tour-** Join us for an afternoon boat tour on the Blue Heron, followed by an optional dinner at in DeLand. Reservations must be made by March 6th and fees (30.00 per person) must be paid in cash at the boat. We meet at 2:00 pm at the dock, St John's Marina 2999 West State Road 44, Deland, FL. **This trip is full but there is a wait list.** Call Celine: 386-523-4182

**Saturday, March 23rd, Ocala National Forest-** Join Peggy Yokobonus and John Roessler for this trip to look for the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker and other species. We'll meet at 7:30 am behind Chick-Fil-A at Ormond Town Square 1464 W Granada Avenue Ormond Beach FL 32174. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Peggy: 386-316-4085.

**Fort DeSoto 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. Please call David Hartgrove, 386-235-1249, if you're going. We'll be arranging a catered lunch on Thursday, April 18th, as we've done in the past. We have one of the picnic pavilions reserved for the 18th as well.

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"A bird does not sing because it has an answer. It sings because it has a song."

*A Chinese Proverb*

### On Any One Day

From a dark night a-wash in a solid gray sky; from a dark that is soon to pass by; from trees, bushes and artifacts that silhouette black against a creeping soft light, a singular morning takes shape. A special morning to be witnessed as one. This morning will usher in all manners of life. Some of it I never will see, but the goings-on of birds from my window I will see. A special morning in my backyard when I look out my window, and see a snapshot of what will never look that way again.

Two Northern Cardinals will certainly be there at my bird feeding station before the sun arises. They start things going. The male is cloaked in scarlet red of majestic importance wearing a mysterious black mask as a show of power. The female, garmented in queenly attire described in sheer, soft browns with tawny, elegant accessories and a rosy facial blush that leaves no doubt about her royal status.

The morning breakfast bell is early rung by two Carolina Wrens whose loud calls seem to say, "time can't wait." They sure are active, energy personified. Tiny birds that keep moving, dancing about the feeder, poking at the seeds, throwing some out, eating one, dropping to the ground, into the bushes, back to the feeder, off to the trees, never stopping. I tire just watching them from my window. I am impressed. Isn't it amazing that such a tiny brown bird flashing a prominent white supercilium (eyebrow) and using a slightly curved beak can be so fascinating.

Wait! Two small birds are slowly moving below my pole feeder, seemingly intent on feeding, yet with trepidation. They appear in no hurry and occasionally fly up into the bird feeder and may drop down to look at the birdbath. However, I mostly see them blending coyly with the ground cover. This small ground feeding bird is distinguished by a darkly streaked back with gray underparts. It carries on its head a brown cap in the winter season. The prominent black eye stripe and rufous cap are diagnostic in spring. The Chipping sparrow is one of my favorite back yard birds and is a regular winter visitor to my feeders.

Looking out my window at my backyard feeding station over many years has been a pleasurable treat. Not only am I happy to see the same winter birds returning, I equally cherish the daily appearances of my year round regulars. An unexpected visit from one time travelers is always welcomed. A Carolina chickadee, a White-winged dove, an Eastern towhee, a Sandhill Crane and four Canada geese have been a few that have stopped by to say , "Hello".

From changing weather patterns and the spinning cycles of night to day and to back again, from ever changing flora, to the qualities of light, to the caresses of the winds and to the passing of things - to the company of the birds. I look through my window. I am happy.

*"It has long been an axiom of mine that the little things are infinitely the most important."*

*Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes*

*Ray Scory*



Northern cardinals are daily all-year visitors to my backyard feeding stations. A welcomed guest.



The larger White-winged Dove visited my backyard feeder only for two weeks during the last twenty year period. A rare treat. While the smaller Mourning Dove is an everyday visitor.

*Photos by Ray Scory*

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### Welcome To Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Renita Bethell, David Billmeier, June & William Campbell, Teresa Downey, Gary Dymesich, Eric Dzuiban, Billie Krueger, Marsha Leftwich, Carol McDonough, Lisa Mickey, Mary Nilsson, Betty Rutan, Nancy Saum, Rick Seiler, Ken Sipes, John Thompson, Margaret Venzke, Jeff Wedge and Bernard Yvon. We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting or on one of our excellent field trips.

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### From Cells To A Salamander

Board member, Steve Underwood, has been surfing the Internet again and sent us this link to this [video](#) from National Geographic. It's amazing!

# The Ballad of Chesterina

## A Lesson In How Nature Compensates For Loss

In 2016 Jim Meyer and Eileen Riccio arrived at her home in Inverness and discovered a Sandhill Crane in the backyard with an injured foot. Since the bird was capable of flight they were advised that there wasn't much that could be done and that they should adopt a "wait and see" attitude. The foot eventually dropped off and the bird, named Chesterina by them, continued to return to the backyard over the next two years. The name came about in reference to the character in the old TV series, "Gunsmoke." When Jim and Eileen realized that the bird was a female the name was feminized.

Florida Sandhill Cranes (*Grus canadensis pratensis*) are also known as Lesser Sandhill Cranes, to distinguish them from their larger cousins, the Greater Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis tabidas*) that arrives in November from up north to winter in the state. Up to 25,000 of these big birds spend much of their time in Florida at Payne's Prairie, where their loud calls can be heard all day. Perhaps the reason the calls can be heard over such a great distance is that the syrinx (the organ birds use to make sounds) in a Sandhill Crane is 24 feet long! It's a coiled, fleshy tube that's wound around and around and the birds push air through it while on the ground and in flight. It's kind of like they have a french horn in their chests. Florida Sandhill Cranes are listed as a threatened species by the state and protected under both state and federal laws. The population is estimated at around 5,000 birds and they do not migrate, though they wander over the most of the state.

Monogamous, they begin nesting in late winter, building nests in shallow, fresh water wetlands. Both birds work constructing the nest and share incubation, which takes about 30 days. Usually 2 eggs are laid and the young are precocial, meaning they leave the nest and follow their parents in search of food within 24 hours of hatching. Cranes are omnivores, feeding on a variety of things, from seeds and roots to frogs, snakes, crayfish and even smaller birds.

Seasonal residents, Jim and Eileen returned this past September and saw no sign of Chesterina. They wondered if her damaged leg had maybe been the cause of her being taken by a coyote or some other predator. They spent some time in Brevard County and returned to their Inverness digs 2 weeks ago. They looked out back and there was Chesterina, now moving much better since it appeared that the upper portion of her left leg had grown longer in response to the loss of her foot. She has been seen in the company of other birds but so far she has not been seen engaging in the "dance" all cranes engage in as a courtship ritual. And they don't have to be out in the wilds to do this. Here's a link to a [You Tube video](#) showing the birds engaged in their dance at the Sarasota National Cemetery.

"Chesterina" should live a normal Sandhill Crane life now that her left leg has lengthened to compensate for the loss of her foot and she may yet mate and produce young. Let's hope that when Jim and Eileen return next year they witness Chesterina with a couple of "colts", which is what young cranes are called. It will be a happy ending to what could have been a tragic story.

David Hartgrove

Thanks to Jim Meyer, Eileen Riccio and Bev Hansen for posting information and photos on [BRDBRAIN](#).



2016, the injured foot is withered and about to drop off.



2016, Chesterina inspects the damage



2019, Notice how much longer the upper section (the tibia) of her left leg has grown to compensate for the loss of her foot.

Photos by Jim Meyer & Eileen Riccio

## Conservation Notes

### FROM CENTRAL FLORIDA REGIONAL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE (RCC)

On Sunday, January 27, members of the Central Florida RCC met to discuss issues of regional concern and to report on progress toward our two regional conservation goals adopted at Audubon Assembly in October 2018. Representatives from five of our ten member chapters were able to attend. We encourage a representative from every chapter to attend our next meeting scheduled for Sunday, April 7th, at [Audubon's Center for Birds of Prey](#), 1101 Audubon Way, Maitland, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. The center has recently been renovated. Bring a bag lunch and stay to tour the grounds and bird aviaries and see raptors up close and personal.

Charles Lee, Audubon Florida staff advisor to our RCC, alerted us to a new issue – the Northeast Connector Expressway Extension – a proposed toll road from US 192 in Osceola County to State Road 50 in Orange County. The Central Florida Expressway Authority has undertaken a concept, feasibility and mobility study, raising issues regarding the future of the eastern part of the county which now consists largely of rural farmlands, natural areas and scattered rural homesteads and settlements. This proposal is in the beginning stages. Detailed plans are needed for each segment and all the land will be subject to wetlands testing. Our RCC action plan is for chapter leaders in Orange, Seminole and Osceola Counties to form a committee to meet with Charles Lee to create a comprehensive plan on how to advocate.

In preparation for the upcoming legislative session – March 5 through May 3, 2019 – Audubon Florida has selected bills to be watched and worked on with legislators. In general, AF's legislative activity will follow water quality, water quantity/supply, climate change, Indian River Lagoon, septic tank issues and conservation program funding. Governor DeSantis has requested larger amounts of money for environmental and conservation issues than previously recommended by the Scott administration. Follow all 2019 bills at [Welcome: Online Sunshine](#).

Contact your chapter president or conservation chairperson if you'd like to be involved in either of these initiatives. "The Advocate" is a weekly e-mail update distributed when the FL legislature is in session. Sign up [here](#) to ensure you receive legislative updates and action alerts in a timely fashion.

The following action has been taken on our regional goal to promote Lake Apopka Restoration, Visitor Access & New Audubon Nature Center: The 70-acre former nursery site adjacent to the Wildlife Drive entrance was transferred from St. Johns River Water Management District to the City of Apopka with deed restrictions. A Memorandum of Understanding between the City and Orange Audubon Society crafted over two years ago and signed in June 2017 is the working document and is referenced in the deed restrictions.

And late breaking news: Charles Lee announced that one of our "target" conservation properties in Central Florida, the "Lake X" or Lake Conlin tract in Osceola County, has come under the administration of Mitigation Marketing as a mitigation bank. This means that this environmental treasure will continue to host wildlife and enhance water quality in the region for future generations.

*Paula Wehr, Central Florida Chapters Representative  
Audubon Florida Board of Directors*

## Sea Watch With Harry Robinson

Harry has been doing a sea watch at [Tom Renick Park](#) for some years now and recently expanded the checklist to 252 species. You should have a scope to see what Harry sees but it's not required. Your binoculars might give you a look at what the's recording. He's there in the mornings nearly every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. From Common Loons to Common Eiders; Reddish Egrets to Roseate Spoonbills and all kinds of other birds flying by our coast, Harry logs them all. Join him one morning for an education in sea birding.

*Editor*

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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 that your donation is for Audubon Adventures. And thank you!

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## THE PELICAN

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## Halifax River Audubon

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Meets monthly September through May

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Corresponding Sec: Vacant

Historian: Holly Zwart-Duryea

At-Large: Betty Butcher, Pam Pinella, Steve Underwood

## Committee Members

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Education: Holly Zwart-Duryea

Field Trips: Peggy Yokubonus

David Hartgrove

Newsletter Editor: David Hartgrove

Welcome: Pam Pinella

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