

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

Volume 65-Number 5. Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
May, 2019



The President's Message

GOOD BYE AND HELLO

I've been struggling with my topic this month because it will be my last essay as president of Halifax River Audubon, a most privileged perch from which to speak of birds, nature and why they matter. Two themes keep pressing against my heart, yet refuse to knit together with the eloquence their emotional weight requires. The deadline looms, so I will do my best.

The first theme is service-- to something greater than one's self or even one's family or clan. For more than 100 years, Audubon has worked to protect birds and the wild places they call home. My great grandparents, my grandparents, my parents, I, my nieces and nephews, have all benefitted from the work of selfless volunteers and staffers who know how precious our natural resources are and how easily they slip forever from our grasp when we fail to pay attention to them. Those long-ago Audubon members worked tirelessly to preserve habitat for future generations, for people they would never know, and to educate and inspire others to do the same. Being president of Halifax River Audubon has been a great responsibility, to try to ensure we continue and build upon our work as we have since 1923. It has also been an immense joy. To continue, we need not just leadership, but volunteers who will step up once or repeatedly -- for a day or a year -- to research topics, find speakers, man tables at events, participate in citizen science projects, help us branch out to new groups of people, speak to elected officials about the topics that concern us, and more. The ways to serve are as varied as people willing to become involved. I hope you are willing and will find it in your heart to join us. So we can continue to protect birds and the places they call home. So that our children, our grandchildren and their children will know the joys of the natural world as we have.

My second theme is, what next? My first essay was about how Audubon's Plants for Birds program had compelled me to transform my yard to a haven of native plants that provide food, shelter and a safe place for birds to raise their chicks. The gardening practices involved in this transformation are far, far gentler to Florida's fragile water than the way so many Floridians manage their landscapes. Each day, we are assaulted with news of catastrophic environmental harms. It can be paralyzing for those who care, so I find it thrilling to know that there are things we CAN do in our own yards that will make a positive difference! That is why my next "job" with Halifax River Audubon will be to expand our outreach about Plants for Birds (please let me know if you have a group you would like us to speak to) and to tie this work to our delicate

Continued below

Calendar & Events

Monday, May 20th, Program Meeting- Join us for this final meeting before our summer hiatus and learn about efforts to restore Lake Apopka. In the 1930's Lake Apopka was the premier large mouth bass fishing spot in the world. After WWII agriculture came to the lake's north shore. By the 1980's the lake was all but dead due to runoff from the fields. The St Johns River Water Management District began an intensive restoration effort that goes on today. Jim Peterson, SJRWMD Biologist, will give us a presentation on the history of the lake and its cleanup efforts. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. The presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. A brief business meeting, during which we'll vote on new board members, follows. We hope to see you there.

Field Trips

Thursday, May 16th, Dunlawton Bridge- Join David Hartgrove for this last trip of the season. We'll meet below the bridge at 3:00 pm, which will be peak low tide. So the nearby sand bar should be full of birds, we may see some recently hatched American Oystercatchers and nestling pelicans and egrets will be visible on Rookery Island. We'll finish by 5:00 pm. Questions? Call David at 386-235-1249.

Field Trips With Others

Our sister chapters have completed their field trip schedules for the season but Volusia County Land Management has programs all year round. Here are a couple in which you might be interested:

Thursday, May 9th, Eco Buggy Tour at Longleaf Pine Preserve- Learn about Longleaf Pine Preserve's plant life and lands as you ride the county's eco-buggy. Bring lunch and a beverage. Participants will stop for lunch at the pavilion, where they will learn about local sustainability and its importance. Meet at the west entrance, 3637 E. New York Ave., DeLand. 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. Please register by calling 386-736-5927.

Thursday, May 23rd, Guided Hike at Hickory Bluff Preserve- Meet at 9:00 am for this 2 hour guided hike to explore and compare habitat characteristics on an upland and swamp hike of the St. Johns River watershed. Meet at 9:00 am at Hickory Bluff Preserve, 598 Guise Road, Osteen. Please register by calling 386-736-5927.

water supply. As I wrote above, Audubon offers and supports so many ways to make a difference right where you are, and I have found my way! I hope you'll come and find yours, too.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as president these past two years.

Melissa Lammers

POST SCRIPT

In case you were unable to attend our April 15th General Meeting, here is the list we shared of the things that Halifax River Audubon does on a regular basis.

- Field Trips
- Monthly Educational Programs
- Citizen Science Projects
- Birding classes
- On-site education tables at festivals
- Work with other environmental groups and with Park systems
- Provide speakers to other organizations
- "Audubon Adventures", a science-based scholastic program for 4th and 5th graders in Volusia County
- Project Ibis, where we work with Volusia County Schools
- Regional Conservation Committees (Central Florida and Indian River Lagoon)
- Review land management plans at parks
- Support bird rehabbers
- Provide judges and monetary awards to the Volusia County Science Fair
- Promote Plants for Birds, part of Audubon's Bird Friendly Communities.

* * * *



A male Summer Tanager on the fountain at Fort DeSoto. If the bird's eye looks a bit weird it's because the bird has closed its nictitating membrane to shield its eyes from the water spray. These clear membranes can be closed to protect the eye in flight or from possible damage. *Photo by Don Chalfant*

Conservation Notes

By the time you read this the legislative session will have ended and we'll know how our legislators voted on a variety of issues that will affect us all. I doubt anyone reading this is in favor of 3 new toll roads through the heart of the state. The only reason to build the roads is to open up new areas for wholesale destruction disguised as new developments. That, and as payback for the generous campaign donations to our legislators from road builders and developers. As I write this the bill sailed through the Senate with only one dissenting vote from Senator Jose Javier Rodriguez (D) Miami. Ignoring all of the negative comments from their constituents I have no doubt the House will vote in a similar fashion.

* * * *

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) dates back to 1970. Among other things it requires environmental impact statements from all government agencies whose mission or actions could affect the environment. This is also true for large corporations and developers. Trump and his evil minions have ignored the Act when it suited them but have not tried to amend it. If he's reelected to a second term they've already been working on ways to gut NEPA and we'll see a return to the days of polluted rivers catching fire and air so dirty you can't breathe it. All part of making America great again.

* * * *

Facebook and the News-Journal's editorial pages have been filled with angry comments about the ongoing restoration of the salt marshes in south Flagler County. In the 1950's and 60's a large dragline was brought in to dig mosquito control canals. This ham fisted approach was thought to be best management practices at the time. In the process of digging the ditches there were islands created that allowed the growth of trees, including invasive exotics like Brazilian pepper. The ditches also became favored fishing spots because they were deeper than the surrounding areas. So when the restoration plan was announced people from all sides of the political spectrum were up in arms about what they saw as destruction of their environment.

That's because the vast majority of them weren't here before man decided to intervene in nature with his well intentioned but destructive plan. One guy who's been a very vocal critic says, "I've lived in Florida a long time and part of that is that I expect to see cabbage palms." Well that's fine. It is after all the state tree. But they have no place in a salt marsh. As for the fishermen who stand to lose their favorite fishing spots, a restored salt marsh is the active nursery for both fresh and salt water species. That means more fish for all. And we're going to need all the salt marsh we can restore if we're to keep up with the expanding demand. Seafood is a multi billion dollar industry in Florida and we're in the process of vacuuming the oceans clear of just about every species in our quest to fill demand.

Recently I took a boat ride with Paul Haydt (who gave the chapter a report on this issue several months ago) to see the progress being made in the restoration. Twenty-two acres were removed from the project in response to complaints from nearby property owners. So they'll still have their Brazilian pepper to look at. The people doing the work are monitoring turbidity and other indicators of progress. Yes, it looks messy. In five years it will be a vibrant, restored salt marsh that will nurture burgeoning fish populations and offer storm surge protection. With rising sea levels that's going to be a lot more important than a few cabbage palms.

David Hartgrove

April At Fort DeSoto

Sixteen of us met at the big flag on Wednesday, April 17th. It was the beginning of several days of fun birding, good food and great conversations. When I say we met at the big flag I'm referring to a landmark visible from just about anywhere in the park. On Friday afternoon the flag was about to be blown off the pole as a cold front came sweeping across the Gulf. That made for an exceptional day on Saturday. Though it was still a blustery day the park was awash in birders and photographers. At the Ranger's house we had 4 Dickcissels clinging to the swaying branches of a sea grape tree. A Merlin flew over and perched on a snag giving the photographers fits of excitement.

By Saturday we were down to just 5 of us left. Most of the group left just ahead of the storm on Friday. We searched the Arrowhead Picnic Area and other spots without much luck. Then I got a report from a friend of lots of activity along the road to the east beach turnaround. As we approached we could see a whole line of cars parked along the road. On the other side of the road, sheltered from the winds, was a long wall of sea grape trees in bloom. The long flower spikes were attracting tiny insects and this meant warblers, lots and lots of warblers. Tennessee Warblers outnumbered just about everything else. There were Scarlet and Summer Tanagers, Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, Rose-breasted and Blue Grosbeaks, Indigo and Painted Buntings, Prairie and Prothonotary, Yellow and Yellow-rumped Warblers and others. We saw 103 species in all, including 17 species of warbler.



Indigo Bunting feeding on lantana berries, *photo by Don Chalfant*



Rose-breasted Grosbeak, *photo by Don Chalfant*

We had a great time, saw some excellent birds, shared good food (especially at Billy's Stone Crab) and we'll be looking forward to another trip to this exciting spot in years to come.

David Hartgrove



Swainson's Warbler with a tasty morsel, *photo by David Baker*



Tennessee Warbler, *photo by Joan Tague*

Some More Fort DeSoto Photos

Here are a few more photos from our trip. Enjoy!



Not seen in Florida often, this Dickcissel had everyone oohing and aaahing at the Ranger's house. Photo by *David Baker*



Hooded Warbler, Photo by *Joan Tague*

The Wonders of Pollination

Board Member, Steve Underwood, sent this link to an amazing [four minute video](#). In slow motion you can see the intricate flight of hummingbirds (one doing barrel rolls chasing a bee), butterflies and bats. Don't miss the female bat feeding at a cactus flower while carrying her youngster about half way in. Enjoy!

From The Quotable Birder

"Cranes carry this heavy mystical baggage. They're icons of fidelity and happiness. The Vietnamese believe cranes cart our souls up to heaven on their wings." *Northern Exposure*, 1992



And of course we're not just into birds, here's a mangrove skipper. Photo by *Don Chalfant*

* * * * *

THE PELICAN

is published monthly by Halifax River Audubon, a chapter of the National Audubon Society and a member of Audubon Florida serving eastern Volusia County.

PO Box 166
Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166

Email: editor@halifaxriveras.org

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

Halifax River Audubon

forbirds@halifaxriveras.org

Meets monthly September through May

President: Melissa Lammers

Vice President: David Hartgrove

Past President: Jim O'Shaughnessy

Treasurer: Ellen Tate

Recording Sec.: Peggy Yokubonus

Membership Sec.: Joan Tague

Corresponding Sec: Vacant

Historian: Holly Zwart-Duryea

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

Committee Members

Conservation: David Hartgrove

Education: Holly Zwart-Duryea

Field Trips: Peggy Yokubonus

David Hartgrove

Newsletter Editor: David Hartgrove

Welcome: Pam Pinella

Webmaster: Joan Tague

* * * * *

We wish to thank our sponsors, whose contributions play a vital part of allowing us to continue our work:
4 Florida Power & Light, Colonial Colony and the Spruce Creek Garden and Nature Club.