

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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Comments & Conservation Notes

One of the big stories locally is the renewed effort on the part of a small but vocal group of ATV enthusiasts to have the roads and trails in Tiger Bay State Forest opened to them and their machines. Six years ago they prevailed on the City of Daytona Beach to write a letter to the state endorsing such an ill conceived plan. Then they tried to get the Volusia County Council to do so also. That effort failed when the environmental community turned out in force and offered overwhelming testimony outlining the many ways that this was a bad idea.

That was in 2013 and with an almost entirely new Council in place the ATV folks thought it was time to try again. So at the County Council meeting on June 4th, after a long day, former sheriff, Ben Johnson, made a motion to have the Council send a letter to the state endorsing opening TBSF to ATV's. The timing was not accidental. Nor was the fact that this wasn't an agenda item. The advocates knew this was a very controversial issue and it was hoped that the vote would slip through unnoticed until it was too late. It passed unanimously. Luckily, former Councilwoman, Joie Alexander, had been listening to the meeting online. Though the meeting had ended she immediately called several current Council members and former Councilwoman, Pat Northey. By late that night Councilwoman, Heather Post, had called Dan Eckert, the County Attorney, to have her name removed from the letter. The combined wrath of the environmental community fell on the Council and within 2 weeks the decision was reversed on a 4 to 3 vote to rescind the letter.

There's a rumor that the next step for the ATV folks will be to ask members of the Volusia legislative delegation to file a bill in next year's legislature to open Tiger Bay to their vehicles. We will be watching this issue closely. Stay tuned.

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Two more issues have arisen locally: a proposed landscape and tree advisory committee in Ormond Beach and the possibility of seeing the conversion of all those septic tanks in Ormond By The Sea to a sanitary sewer system. Ken and Julie Sipes have undertaken an effort to have the City of Ormond Beach reestablish a Landscaping and Tree Advisory Committee. Our chapter certainly supports this effort. Had such a committee been in place, perhaps the destruction of all those beautiful oak trees on Granada Blvd. for yet another gas station wouldn't have happened. The septic tank issue will be contentious and take a longer time to reach resolution. In the interest of finally doing something meaningful to address water quality issues we support the conversion.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

While we're in our summer hiatus and not having field trips there's still a full list of events sponsored by Volusia County.

Friday, July 12th, 9:00 to 11:00 am, Hike Doris Leeper Spruce Creek Preserve- Learn about the importance of estuaries while hiking through beautiful scenery. Participants will have the opportunity to pull a seine net and learn fish, plant and bird identification. Meet at 3251 N. Dixie Highway, NSB, FL 32168. Please wear closed toed shoes and be sure to register by calling 386-736-5927.

Tuesday, July 23rd, 9:00 to 11:00 am, Bike the Lake Beresford Trail- Ride the Lake Beresford Park trail and a segment of the spring to spring trail. Participants will learn about the local environment, and the importance of protecting the water quality of our springs. Emphasis will be on the connectivity of our local water bodies. Participants are required to wear a helmet and bring their own bicycle. Meet at Beresford Park, 2100 Fatio Rd; DeLand. Please be sure to register by calling 386-736-5927.

Saturday, July 27th, 10:00 to 11:00 am, Butterflies at Lyonia Environmental Learning Center- Laura Cash, 4-H Extension Agent at University of Florida IFAS Extension, will be presenting on Florida's native butterflies, their host plants and how to create a wildlife friendly yard. Laura will also have multiple butterfly framed displays for participants to view. The address is 2150 Eustace Ave. Deltona, FL 32725.

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Volunteer and Make a Difference

The Marine Discovery Center, 520 Barracuda Blvd. New Smyrna Beach, has a wide variety of volunteer opportunities. Do you have any experience running a drill press? Oyster shells, collected from restaurants across our area, need holes drilled in them to make oyster mats used in shoreline restoration. If you've never even seen a drill press a few short minutes of training will have you drilling like a pro in no time.

Interested in becoming an exhibit docent and helping guests explore the tanks, critters, and other exhibits? Join them for the next docent training session, Wednesday, July 17th. Docents introduce guests to the tanks and other displays in the exhibit area as well as assist guests in handling animals in the touch tanks. To sign up for this training and any other opportunities, Contact Logan Rohrbach at logan@marinediscoverycenter.org

Your life will be a lot better if you spend part of it volunteering!

Kite Watching, 2019

On February 23, Avian Research and Conservation Institute (ARCI) asked if I'd participate in a new official Kite Watch program because I had reported a nest in my sub-division in previous years. When I signed up I didn't realize how invested I'd get in these birds.

The nest has been located in tall pine trees near the sixth hole on our golf course for as long as I've lived here—15 years. Miraculously, when over 1,200 trees were damaged during Hurricane Matthew in 2016, the nest tree and a dozen or so surrounding pines were spared.



Mom and Junior in the nest tree. Photo by Paula Wehr

Sight lines to the nest are only available from the golf course, so I secured permission from a homeowner to walk across his property, and since I couldn't be on the course during play, I visited about an hour before dusk. Every visit showed mama on the nest. Weeks went by and still she sat on the nest. I was beginning to think this was the longest incubation in history.

Then one afternoon it rained and I decided to go earlier at 5:00 p.m. since the course would be empty. That's when I saw movement in the nest. Eureka! The chicks had hatched. A scope view gave me a surprise when two downy chicks about half the size of the adults sat up in the nest to receive a tasty lizard brought in by one of the parents. How could these chicks be so large?

Then I realized that by visiting the nest so late in the day, I was seeing mama after she tucked the chicks into the nest and put them to bed. Apparently, they had hatched at least a week earlier—maybe more. Lesson learned for the future.

Visits over the next few weeks showed the chicks growing every day and changing from fuzz-covered chicks into mottled juveniles with white patches on their black wings and buffy stripes on their white heads and necks. One chick was clearly

Continued in the next column

older than the other, showing feathers earlier and standing up and exercising his/her wings earlier.

On June 8 there was only one chick in the nest. An adult flew in with a meal and left again. I believe this was the younger chick. He/she perched on the branch above the nest and took long looks down toward the ground, but made no move. This same scene was repeated on June 10. Five adult kites were soaring around the nest tree, calling to each other. Or maybe they were calling to the chick to join them. Two adults, I assume the parents, flew into the nest tree near the chick and then flew off. Apparently the chick was not ready to leave the nest.

Storms took over the afternoons and evenings of the next few days. When I visited the nest on June 13, I found it empty. I scanned the nearby trees and didn't see any kites. I heard a kite calling and watched as the bird flew into the nest tree. I really thought it was the younger chick because there was a faint tinge of buffy yellow on the neck. He perched near the nest and flew off. The more labored flapping (as opposed to the effortless gliding of adult swallow-tailed kites) and the shorter tail with a shallower notch also gave the impression the bird was newly-fledged. Then I heard another kite calling and flying toward me. This bird, too, flapped rather than glided and had a somewhat bulkier profile than an adult. The two birds flew several circles above me and then flew off over the tree line.

It wasn't until I came home and was entering my last sighting into the Kite Watch website that I realized these were the two chicks who came to say good-bye to me. I know we should not anthropomorphize animals, but that's my story and I'm sticking to it.

Paula Wehr

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Volusia's First Spoonbill Chicks ?



Photo by Cade Cresap, FWC

The photo above was shot with an iPhone through a pair of binoculars. So while not the best quality it clearly shows a 2 Roseate Spoonbill chick with 2 White Ibis. We think these might be the first spoonbills ever to nest in the county and there's another nest in New Smyrna Beach! *Editor*



Photo montage by Ray Scory

Birds In My Pool

Can a bird and a pool be as one?

Of course, when the bird splashes in a newly found pool.

Sending traces of water up and about

into crystalline bursts of radiant cheer,

finally rising to the wonder of a high day's sun.

Doesn't it say, that we all can be one.

Birds come to my yard as a daily occurrence. The need for a bath seems paramount. One to three at a time, they appear at the birdbath. Infrequently, five at the most and then all about the same size. and same species. However, I have watched four different species in the water at the same time - A Yellow-throated Warbler, a Palm Warbler, a female Painted Bunting and a female Brown-headed Cowbird. They quickly disperse when a larger more raucous bird flies in. A few minutes in the bath and the intruder flies out and like an incoming tide the five return to continue their watery cascade. Patience is a virtue. Not only because it maintains good health but assures longer survival in the wild. Palm Warblers seem to like the bird bath above all others that frequent my yard. I have watched four Palm Warblers in the bath at the same time. Brown Thrashers and Northern Mockingbirds are next in line.

A study showed that starlings deprived of a bath had poorer feather conditioning than starlings that were able to take frequent bathes. The birds, able to bathe, had better flight mobility thus able the out maneuver advancing predators.

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A birdbath is a good thing to have in your yard, as important as a bird feeder, I believe. This comes from my observations over many years of having a birdbath in my yard and not from any scientific facts. I have placed the birdbath near a saw palmetto and a bushy lemon tree which offers good protection from marauding predators. It is interesting to see how clandestine a tiny bird can be entering and exiting my birdbath.

I have included in my bird bathing photo-montage three images of waterbirds that have not used my back yard birdbath. The Great Egret, Snowy Egret and Green Heron were photographed under the Dunlawton Bridge. While the small pond at the Dunlawton Bridge is not in my backyard, I call it my pool. I have visited the bridge so many times in the last twenty-one years that it has become one of my favorite spots to bird near my home. One of my spots. A very familiar spot. My close to home birdbath.

I am fascinated by avian behavior outside of their typical environment . I am fascinated by the behavior of birds coming to my birdbath. I like watching what they do while at a bird bath. I like to personalize their expressions. To see their expressions to feel what I think they are feeling - to interpret. To see more into the mystery of birds by watching them at my birdbath.

Ray Scory

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Some St Marks History

Since our trips to St Marks NWR have become an annual event we thought it was time for some history of the place. Our thanks to Melissa's brother, Jonathan, for this well written and concise article. Thankfully malaria isn't a problem for us.

What is today the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge was originally established in 1931 as the St. Marks Migratory Waterfowl Refuge. In the summer of 1933, Civilian Conservation Corps Camp BF-1 was established near Newport to begin work on various improvements to the refuge. It was one of the few all African American camps in the CCC. The camp was briefly closed in 1934 due to a malaria outbreak, and then relocated near Woodville, Florida. Between 1934 and 1942, camp workers made a number of improvements at the refuge, including constructing Lighthouse Road, building earthen levees to create large water impoundments for waterfowl, and clearing more than 20 miles of firebreaks. They also constructed a diversion dam, two lookout towers, dwellings and other camp buildings, and strung dozens of miles of telephone and electrical wires on poles cut on the refuge. From the camp's base in Woodville, the workers also assisted private owners in fire control and forestry replanting.

Jonathan Lammers

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From the Quotable Birder

"The very idea of a bird is a symbol and a suggestion to the poet. A bird seems to be at the top of the scale, so vehement and intense his life... The beautiful vagabonds, endowed with every grace, masters of all climes, and knowing no bounds-how many human aspirations are released in their free, holiday- lives- and how many suggestions to the poet their flight and song."

John Burroughs, Birds and Poets

Can the New Solar Farm Help Birds?



Before construction began on Florida Power & Light's new solar farm on SR 44 they reached out to Audubon and the Native Plant Society to see if there were ways to enhance the facility for wildlife. Representatives from the Paw Paw Chapter made suggestions for plantings that wouldn't grow too high and block the panels and I suggested a gravel area to attract nesting Common Nighthawks. This is a species that has seen precipitous drop in population over the past 25 years. Once a common sight at twilight and just before dawn, they're all but impossible to find in our area now. The average Common Nighthawk will eat 900+ mosquitoes a night. So we need them



almost as much as they need the correct nesting habitat. The sub-station yard above, which is adjacent the solar farm, provides perfect habitat for the birds, which nest on the ground. While I didn't see any native plants from the road, other than dog fennel and Spanish needles, there were Mourning Doves, Red-winged Blackbirds and a Red-shouldered Hawk feeding or trying to feed inside the fence. So the solar farm, in addition to providing clean, cheap, renewable energy (something we've been begging for for decades) is also providing habitat for birds and other wildlife.

And yes, FPL is our biggest contributor and has been for a long time.

Photos by David Hartgrove

Welcome to Our New & Returning Members

We haven't been able to acknowledge our new and returning members for a couple of months due to problems Audubon was having with their database. Those have now been corrected. So we extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Suzanne Allen, Helen Anderson, Ursula Battaglia, Charles Bell, Jonathan Booraem, Elizabeth Brown, Rosemary Capocci, Candace Curtis, Janet Damiano, Vince Decapite, Carleen Eberhardt, John Erickson, Irene Fennell, Angelo Fiore, Timothy Gudukas, Josette Halin, James Henson, Susan Higgins, Delores Jackson, Carolyn Keene, Daniel Kerr, Virginia & Anthony Knull, Diane Lapham, Debra Larson, Rowland McDowell, Paul McKennon, Shiela McKay, Dale Meagley, Raymond Mercer, Debbie Powell, Kim Ramos, Rachel Ramsey, Paul Rebmann, Bette Rutan, Stewart Spar, Alyce Switzer, Ellen Tate, Jon Troup, James Welcher, Connie Wilson and Joanne Wright. We hope to see you in September at our first meeting or on one of our excellent field trips.

Editor

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