

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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Comments & Conservation Notes

At our next board meeting we will be reviewing our bylaws. Last revised in 2012, it's time we look at them again to see if an update is called for.

Last month the new duck stamp for 2019/2020 went on sale. It features a handsome, male Wood Duck. There is simply no better way to contribute to bird and nature conservation than to annually purchase a duck stamp. Ninety-eight percent of funding for the nation's national wildlife refuges comes from duck stamp sales. They're available [online](#), at refuges, like Merritt Island and supposedly at post offices, though I've yet to find a post office that sold them. It's the best use of 25.00 I can think of.

The National Environmental Policy Act, NEPA, is one of the most important pieces of legislation to come out of the early rush to do something right at the end of the 60's. Scenes of the Cuyhoga River on fire in 1969 that flashed across TV screens, coupled with the huge reaction to the publication of Rachel Carson's book, "Silent Spring" helped serve as a catalyst to public opinion. Suddenly the terrible things that we'd been doing to our world in the name of profits and a "better life" were seen for what they were, destroying the things that make life worth living.

The greed heads who were working so hard to make a fast buck at the expense of our quality of life didn't suddenly turn into enlightened entrepreneurs when those laws, like NEPA, the Clean Water and Clean Air acts were passed in 1970. They started think tanks, like the Heritage Foundation. Founded in 1973 they, along with others of their ilk, are funded by the country's largest polluters. They spend a lot of time and tax exempt money writing position papers that whine about how NEPA and other environmental regulations are keeping the US at a competitive disadvantage in the world market. Anyone who's been to India or Brazil or China would quickly tell you how polluted and dirty the air, water and everything else is in those countries. This happens because they do not have laws to protect the environment. Or if they do they're so poorly enforced as to have no impact. That's the future we have if Trump and his henchmen are not held in check. One concern now is that the big infrastructure spending bill that's been a work in progress for over a year will contain language that weakens or does away entirely with NEPA. All legislation is a product of compromise. It's a cinch we need billions spent on road and bridge repair, our national parks and water quality projects. We should not be asked to sacrifice laws protecting our quality of life for those long ignored maintenance items.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

One more month until we're back to our field trips and meetings. Till then check out these offerings from Volusia County Land Management.

Monday, August 5th, HRA Board Meeting, 1:30 pm- We meet at the Ormond Library. Members are welcome to attend.

Tuesday, August 6th, 9:00 to 10:15 am- Hurricane of Knowledge at Doris Leeper Spruce Creek Preserve. As we are coming into the core of hurricane season, Florida Master Naturalist, Terry Bledsoe, will lead a discussion on the history and significance of these natural phenomenon. Terry will talk about local impacts and give information on hurricane preparedness. She will also incorporate historic information on Doris Leeper. Meet 2317 Creek Shore Trail, New Smyrna Beach, Florida.

Wednesday, August 14th, 8:00 to 10:00 am- Snorkel/Swim Adventure- Lighthouse Point Park. Bring your snorkeling gear and sense of adventure to learn about the wonders of this underwater ecosystem. Participants will learn about various marine species, while snorkeling the high slack tide near Ponce DeLeon Inlet. Participants must be able to swim, have their own equipment, and anyone under the age of 18 will be required to wear a Personal Floatation Device (PFD) and be accompanied by an adult guardian at all times. Meet at Light House Point Park 5000 S. Atlantic Ave., Ponce Inlet.

Tuesday, August 20th, 9:00 to 10:30 am- Sharks!- Indian River Lagoon Preserve Park. Sharks are one of the most fascinating creatures in our waters, from their importance at the top of the food chain, to their incredible abilities to detect changes in the geomagnetic field. Join us for a wonderful shark presentation by Marilyn Sullivan. Meet at 700 Sandpiper St. New Smyrna Beach.

Wednesday, August 28th, 8:30 to 10:30 am- Snorkel Program- Blue Spring State Park "paid Entry". Bring your snorkel gear to explore the wonders of the spring habitat. Participants will get the opportunity to learn about the importance of springs while enjoying crystal clear "72°F" water. Participants must be able to swim, have their own equipment, and anyone under the age of 18 will be required to wear a Personal Floatation Device (PFD) and be accompanied by an adult guardian at all times. There will be a park entrance fee for admittance to the park (\$6 per vehicle. Limit 2-8 people in vehicle, \$4 for Single Occupant. Meet at the park, 2100 W. French Ave. Orange City.

| Check out this link to the [Volusia County](#) website for information on all of their offerings.

Time for another in our continuing series, "Everyday Birding"
by Ray Scory

Shoreline Greenway Walk

Wind, rain and sun, with a refreshing chill comforting a soft foggy morning set the tone for my daily walk into Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison Connecticut. Early June is the time.

My walk has begun. A short half mile of visual pleasure to the main gate through overhanging oak trees and a green/golden salt marsh brought me past the Yellow Warbler tree, where I am always welcomed by the delightful cadence of, "sweet, sweet, sweet, oh so sweet." A happy singing Yellow Warbler, bright as the sun in a child's painting, halts all my mental and physical endeavors. I just listen. Amazing therapy.



Yellow Warbler, Photo by Ray Scory

As I crossed the bridge leading over a the salt marsh enclave, a series of rapid gurgling outbursts and excited flute-like melodies greeted me. A House Wren is loading soft grasses into the hole of a woodpecker's abandoned nest anticipating security in a dead snag situated at the edge of a tidal salt marsh. Moving on, I waved to the friendly ranger at the main gate and crossed the narrow road to begin an exploratory walk along a string of active marshes.

As I walk there are Gray Catbirds, territorial Marsh Wrens bursting with song and Song Sparrows calling out three distinct notes then a jumble of sing-song trills, each bird different in melody except for the same first three notes. Red-winged Blackbirds bounding out from the tall salt marsh grasses and making themselves known but expertly hiding their nests. Always evident are Common Terns, Herring and Ring-billed Gulls and Osprey flying about their high towered, stick nests. The view along this section is randomly broken by salt marsh plants, raspberry bushes, pine, beech, beach oak trees and water trenches made long ago to control mosquitos. They don't. Half way along this walk a soft, light rain added glitter to the landscape with crystalline drops of water clinging delicately to lush green leaves. It doesn't get much better than this.

Continuing on I stumbled upon an active Killdeer nest with three eggs. The nest was in the middle of a manicured stretch of lawn between a busy, beach access road and a parking lot. No cover at all. Such is the nature of Killdeer nest location selection. How they survive is a wonder considering the many dangers ahead- marauding gulls, crows, various small ground

animals and thousands of cars and people that pass by. But some do.

I marched on along the beach trail under threat of heavier rain and it eventually came. But not until I reached Meig's Point. Meig's Point is the tip of a two mile beach that juts out from the shoreline into Long Island Sound. The glacier of 18,000 years ago stalled here for 5000 years, disappeared and left behind a half mile swath of glacier strewn boulders and impressive sand dunes. Out in the salt marshes, remnants of a melting glacier, Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrows live and hide. This particular area is a must stop for people who like looking at birds at any time of the year.

The rain came. I got back to cover at a pavilion near the Killdeer nest. My ride came. I look back on my six mile walk that day, to the gifts and expression provided by the land.



Willet in flight across the salt marsh, Photo by Ray Scory

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From Bird Studies Canada comes this welcome reminder

Three Ways You Can Help Birds This Summer

1. Watch birds while volunteering for a citizen science program. [Project Feederwatch](#) is a great way to get started. It's easy to sign up and every entry goes into a database that can be accessed by scientists and students doing papers on a variety of topics. They also have good information on cleaning and maintaining your feeders.

2. Garden for birds, using native plants. Our chapter has been encouraging the use of native plants as both water wise and bird friendly alternatives to the plants often sold in big box stores. Wax myrtle, fireweed, butterfly bush, beard tongue, trumpet creeper and others are guaranteed to bring birds to your yard. Here's a link to the [Florida Wildflower Foundation's](#) webpage.

3. Keep birds safe and healthy. One of the biggest causes of avian mortality is crashes into glass. Large windows and glass doors take the lives of many birds when they fail to see the obstacle there. An easy and inexpensive solution is a product called [Feather Friendly](#). It's a tape you can install on your windows and doors that doesn't interfere with your vision but makes the glass visible to a bird fleeing a predator so that it doesn't crash into it. And there's a coupon code to use if you decide to order some. Type in BSC2019 when prompted and ² Feather Friendly will donate 1.00 per roll to Bird Studies Canada. It's a win win for everyone.

Paul Rebmann is a long time chapter member and current President of the Paw Paw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society. Here's part of a recent article he posted on his blog.

Backpacking Hopkins Prairie

I have backpacked different parts of the Florida Trail from the Rodman Dam to Clearwater Lake in the Ocala National Forest on several occasions, but there was a section between Salt Springs and Juniper Springs that I had never done. This March I closed this gap during a three day backpacking outing. Some of this hike covered parts of the Florida Trail in the Juniper Wilderness that I had done on two separate day hikes 22 years earlier. Another part of this year's hike was around Hopkins Prairie, which I had not visited before this.

After a relaxing pre-hike car-camp night at Juniper Springs campground with Virginia, I parked my car and she dropped me off where the trail crosses Salt Springs Highway(314). Unlike the time when I started from there hiking north to the Rodman Dam, I instead headed southbound. The trail here passes through several different habitats, one of which was some really pretty sandhills.



Trail In the Sandhills

One of the things I like about sandhills is the wide spacing of trees and the forest floor of mostly grasses and wildflowers. After about four hours of hiking with many pauses to photograph various subjects, I reached the prairie just in time to see a Northern Harrier cruising above the grasses and occasionally swooping down after something to eat. I set up camp in a small peninsula between the trail and the prairie under some slash pines.

While I ate my dinner I enjoyed a serenade of Sandhill Crane calls across the prairie. As dusk approached a soft buzzing sound slowly increased in volume and a dense layer of mosquitoes appeared above my head. When they started landing on the tent and my gear I quickly prepared camp for the night and ducked into my tent, where the constant buzzing reminded me of sleeping in a canoe in the everglades years ago. I went to sleep to a chorus of what sounded like bullfrogs, although I could not be sure that they were not alligators grunting, which made me think of William Bartram's story of camping on Dexter Point along the St. Johns River in 1774.

As the lightening sky signaled the approach of dawn, I emerged from the tent with my camera to see what sights the morning would bring. One of these was the mist rising from the little pond by the trail where I got my water.

Not an ideal source since the 'frog water' - as one passing hiker called it - required filtering through a cloth before treating.

Hopkins Prairie is about three miles long and varies from about one quarter to a half mile wide with the Florida Trail following the north and east edges of the prairie for about five miles. Despite the name, this natural community is probably more like a basin marsh than a typical wet prairie. On one side of the trail is the prairie and on the other side the habitats varied between hardwood hammocks, various mixed wooded areas and scrub. As I was hiking past one of these scrub areas a family of Florida Scrub-Jays were moving through the trees along the trail and dropping down to the ground to forage. A pair of Brown Thrashers and a male cardinal were also here and seemed to be hanging out with the scrub-jays.

For much of this day's hike small lizards would run from just ahead of me on the trail into the undergrowth. I finally captured photos of several of these. Some of them were the Florida scrub lizard, a state endemic.



Florida scrub lizard

After passing the big bat house and the Hopkins Prairie Recreation Area campground, where I topped off my water bottles at the hand pump, I came to a live oak hammock that appeared to have been used as a campsite. I walked down towards a dry depression and found a flatter spot with a ground cover of pine needles surrounded by small sand pines. Deciding that this would make a nice campsite, I then set down my pack and photographed some [jester lichen](#) and [deer moss](#).



Harry Robinson's surveys at Tom Rennick Park and the Dunlawton Bridge offer fascinating looks at what's flying by when most of us aren't watching. Here's his report from June.

Well the quietest month of the year is now over. As expected there were no additions to the list. This year, as in 2016 and 2018, just 71 species were seen. There were 77 species in 2017. There were 30 surveys over 120 hours i.e. just four hours a day. On most days even that seemed too long. A total of 37 species were seen on the 19th and there were 476 birds on the 14th. For the year to date 186 species were seen with an overall list of 256 species.

Unexpectedly, there was a Cory's Shearwater on the 28th (east wind at 3 mph). There were single Brown Boobies on the 6th and 10th, both were immatures. There were single Northern Gannets on the 2nd, 3rd and 15th. Switching to the herons there were single Reddish Egrets on the 8th, 15th and 30th. There was a Green Heron on the 7th. Roseate Spoonbills were seen on seven dates with 16 on the 4th, ten on the 13th and 16 again on the 25th. On the 23rd a flock of six Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks flew to the north OVER the park; this is just the third record for the park. There were two Swallow-tailed Kites on the 1st with one on the 2nd and two again on the 7th.

Out at sea Black-necked Stilts were seen flying to the south on three dates, five on the 7th, seven on the 12th and five on the 19th. There was a Greater Yellowlegs on the 26th. Willets were seen from the 3rd with 14 on the 27th and 13 on the 29th. There were three Semipalmated Sandpipers on the beach on the 4th. There were two Gull-billed Terns on the 15th. Common Terns were seen on four dates with one on the 10th, two on the 19th, two on the 21st and seven on 24th. Another rarity was three Arctic Terns on the 17th. This is a joint high count. There was a first summer Black Tern on the 9th and Black Skimmers were seen to the 8th.

There were single White-winged Doves on the 11th and 28th. Single Downy Woodpeckers were noted on the 19th and 21st. There were single Great Crested Flycatchers on the 26th and an Eastern Kingbird on the 11th. There was a Loggerhead Shrike on the 30th. Single American Crows were seen on the 6th and 30th. There was a Northern Rough-winged Swallow on the 19th. Finally House Finches peaked at 24 on the 25th.

Highlights from Dunlawton Bridge include a high count of 360 Brown Pelicans, 43 Great Egrets, 4 American Oystercatchers, 187 Laughing Gulls, 5 Chimney Swifts, 1 Gray Kingbird.

Harry Robinson

Harry's data from all of his observations at both locations is stored on our website. Check out this [link](#) to learn more

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Marine Discovery Center Lecture Series

Sea Squirts And Heart Disease

Sea squirts and their role in treating heart disease will be the featured topic at the Marine Discovery Center's August monthly lecture.

Dr. Heather Evans Anderson, assistant professor of health science at Stetson University, will be the guest speaker.

The lecture will be held Thursday, August 15, starting at 6 p.m., and will be hosted by the Marine Discovery Center, located at 520 Barracuda Boulevard in New Smyrna Beach. MDC's August lecture is open to the public at no charge and no reservations are required. Seating in the center's Learning Lab is limited and early arrival is recommended.

sinkhole nearby. As I was returning to what I thought was going to be my campsite for the night I heard someone whistling loudly and calling out. I found the attendant from the campground standing by my backpack. He kindly explained that I can't camp there as it was still in the recreation area boundary, and also there was a concern that the only road exiting the campground would be blocked if a wildfire got started. I did not bother to explain that I was unlikely to have a campfire in 80 degree weather and was only using a little whisper-lite stove.

Glad that I had not unpacked very much, I reloaded my backpack and continued on the trail, passing the swimming hole and soon crossing the next forest road to leave the recreation area. I hiked about a half mile to where I found a tiny clearing off to the side of the trail with a spot where a campfire had been and just enough room for a one man tent. This was my home for the night. The next day's hike took me into and through the Juniper Prairie Wilderness, a subject for a future post.

Article and photos by Paul Rebmann

Paul will be giving a presentation at our March meeting next year.

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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: David Hartgrove

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