

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

Volume 65-Number 10. Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
October, 2019



Comments & Conservation Notes

Last month I mentioned that our board was busy over the summer with a variety of items, including a rewrite of our chapter bylaws. I said that we would vote on those revised bylaws at our October meeting. However, in order to do that we needed to follow the protocols, which mandate that the changes be announced at the September meeting. Those in attendance that night, where we were all enthralled by Michael Brothers' presentation, will recall no mention of bylaws. That was an oversight on my part and now we'll have to announce the changes at our October meeting and vote on them in November.

President Trump has surrounded himself with some of the least qualified people in the country to advise him on issues like climate change, water quality issues, land management, you name it. If some groveling, ignorant bozo praises the President's ill informed opinions on an issue, his or her name is immediately moved to the top of the list for nomination to a regulatory agency so that destruction of that agency's mission can be fast tracked. Look no further than the Environmental Protection Agency. EPA Administrator, Andrew Wheeler, spent his entire adult life as a shill for extraction industries trying to subvert the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and common sense regulations designed to keep us all safe. He replaced Scott Pruitt, who arrived in Washington with the same agenda as Wheeler but was forced to resign in disgrace after lavishing millions of tax payer dollars on his office furnishings and travel expenses. Wheeler is now spearheading the reversal of regulations put in place by the Obama administration that strengthened the definition of waters covered by the Clean Water Act. Clean water, who needs that ?...

Another opportunity to do the right thing is blown away when those in power in the administration look northward. In spite of overwhelming evidence that we need to reduce, not expand, our dependence on fossil fuels, the administration is seeking to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas exploration. ANWR has long been on the wish list of those who see the world as a place to grab a quick buck at everyone else's expense. There's only about 18 month's worth of oil under that section of Alaska's North Slope. It's a pristine wonderland that birds, mammals and some of the world's most ferocious mosquitoes call home. Efforts by Congress to protect this treasure are about to be tanked by the Trump administration, which is racing to sell leases and lock in the path to destruction before any more objections can be made. In the 1987 movie, "Wall Street", Gordon Gecko proclaims, "Greed is good." That odious quote seems to be the mantra of the administration.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, October 21st, Program Meeting- Mangroves are trees that are adapted to salt/brackish water growth. Danny Young, environmental consultant and avid birder, will give a presentation on these very important trees and how they're critical to all kinds of wildlife. 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. Be there!

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Field Trips

Friday, October 11th, Washington Oaks State Park- Join Peggy Yokubonus for this trip to look for migrant warblers, tanagers, etc. Meet at the park, 6400 N Oceanshore Blvd, Palm Coast, at 8:00 am. Bring lunch. Questions ? Call Peggy, 386-316-4085.

Friday, October 18th, Marl Bed Flats- Join Joan Tague for a trip to this Central Florida jewel. Shorebirds, warblers, waders, this place has them all! You might want to bring an extra pair of shoes in case the first pair gets muddy. We'll meet at Target on Dunlawton, east of I-95, behind Panera. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Field Trips With Others

Wednesday, October 23rd, Sugar Mill Gardens- Join our friends from West Volusia Audubon as they search this great spot for migrant warblers and the resident Barred Owls. Meet them at the Gardens, 950 Old Sugar Mill Rd, Port Orange, FL at 8:15 am. Questions? Call Eli Shaperow, 407-314-7965.

Wednesday, October 9th, Spruce Creek Park hike- Join Trey Hannah, Volusia County Land Management, for this guided hike and learn about the value of an estuary. You'll have an opportunity to get out in Rose Bay and pull a seine net, learn about the plants and birds and have fun doing it. Please wear closed toed shoes that can get wet. You'll need to register for this hike by calling 386-736-5927. Meet at the park, 6250 S. Ridgewood Ave., Port Orange.

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This Month's Quote

"I would feel more optimistic about a bright future for man if he spent less time proving that he can outwit Nature and more time tasting her sweetness and respecting her seniority."

E. B. White 1899-1985

Piping Plovers, A Genuinely Rare Bird

Piping Plovers are an endangered species that nests on beaches from Cape Hatteras to Newfoundland and in other areas. Since some of those beaches must be shared with increasing numbers of people. The birds have come up with a way to evade the crowded conditions. Here's a [link](#) to a video. Thanks to Jennifer Winters of Volusia County Environmental Management for sending it.

Viewing it reminded me of a blog post by our late friend, Chuck Tague. Parts of it are posted here with permission. Ed.

Ponce Inlet Lighthouse Point Park, November 20, 2008

The sea air was warm yet crisp; the wind calm. A shadow appeared to float ahead of the waves as the surf rolled gently across the sand. With my binoculars I saw it was a Piping Plover, a shorebird that resembles a sand-colored tennis ball with short, orange legs and a pigeon's beak. A white collar circled its neck.

The plover's legs scissored frantically to stay ahead of the water. When the surf retreated, the plover stopped and waited as a wet, glass-like film formed across the beach. The bird skiddled onto the wet sand then stopped abruptly. It extended its right foot, tapped rapidly on the beach, tilted its head slightly, hopped forward three steps and tapped again.

Piping Plovers are only in Florida during the non-breeding season. They are beach birds that blend perfectly with the dry strip between the high tide line and the dunes. Their upper plumage precisely mimics dirty sand. Their countershaded light underside deadens any telltale shadows so thoroughly that they disappear in plain sight. Piping Plovers feed on invertebrates above the tide line but they also forage in the intertidal zone as the tide recedes. The foot tapping causes sea worms, clams and other buried animals to move and give away their position.



Piping Plover foraging, *Photo by Chuck Tague*

I watched the plover for five or six minutes. It pecked the sand a dozen times or so, but if it caught anything it was too small for me to see. Something spooked the gulls and terns loafing a short distance away. They circled and when they landed the plover was gone.

There are three distinct breeding populations of Piping Plovers. Those that nest on the Atlantic coast from North Carolina to Newfoundland are listed as threatened, as are the plovers that breed in the midwestern prairies. The endangered

population around the Great Lakes declined drastically during the Twentieth Century. Historically Piping Plovers bred in all the Great Lake states and provinces. Several pairs nested on Presque Isle in Erie County through the late nineteen-fifties. Their breeding range is now limited to northern Lake Michigan. The plover's main threats are habitats lost to coastal development and disturbance by beach-loving humans. In 1986 there were only 17 breeding pairs in the Great Lakes region. By 2011 there were 54 pairs.

October 27, 2012

Hurricane Sandy passed far off central Florida's shore the night before. Volusia County felt the storm's immense power but the destruction was minimal compared to the damage that would occur farther north. Although we were still under a hurricane warning I met my friends Patsy and Ken Hunter at Ponce Inlet to scan for seabirds. Huge waves broke high over the rock jetty; the northeasterly winds were brutal. The full moon had just set so the tide was already at its monthly high. The surf crashed over the dunes and forced the small shorebirds to take shelter in the sea oats. We had to wait for the tide to recede to walk the beach.



Piping Plover with colored leg bands, *Photo by Chuck Tague*

Several hundred shorebirds foraged in the fresh canyons, sheltered from the wind. There were three Piping Plovers among the Sanderlings and turnstones. One had colored bands and a red flag on its leg. Later I obtained this band information from my photos and sent it to the [Bird Banding Laboratory](#) in Patuxent, MD

They forwarded the information to the bander, Alice Van Zoeren. She sent this reply:

"Thank you for taking the time to report your sighting of a Piping Plover from the Great Lakes population."

The plover you saw and photographed was hatched in 2009 on North Manitou Island in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore and banded as an adult last summer (2012) at Gulliver, MI along the north shore of Lake Michigan in the upper peninsula."

It was from one of the Great Lakes plovers on its fourth journey to Florida -- a rare bird indeed.

Chuck Tague

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

Walk With Me

I love to walk in the woods. Where my world closes behind me and an atmosphere of change drifts down upon me. Sounds of silence prevail and whispers of other things enter me. Time slows down and other measures float by sealing a cocoon of difference. A walk is an experience of Nature - my Nature, your Nature. Who we are, what we do, what matters will show. When we allow it to. No matter the physical effort of the walk, relaxation and a sense of peace seems to surface and becomes all encompassing.

A mind-drifting walk and then a tiny brown bird appears on the metamorphic stones at the side of a trap rock ridge of the Sleeping Giant State Park. I watch the bird scurrying among the stones. In and out of crevices, hopping up onto a low hanging branch - always moving. This is where the Worm-Eating Warbler nests and I am all in for this wondrous moment.

I first heard the deep guttural "cuk-ruk" sound of the Common Raven on their first nesting expansion into Connecticut. My cousin, Jim, once asked me to walk with him in this park during a brief troubled time. A walk is great therapy. Takes your mind off everyday noise.

I remember walking through the woods near my home when I was a boy, especially when I was looking for birds in pursuit of the Bird Study merit badge from the Boy Scouts of America. My prescribed walk began through a small swamp, along side a wooded hill, onto an open field, and ended at a roadside marsh. Here I observed my first Song Sparrow. He of the, "black spot on a light breast streaked with dark brown stripes", fame. I covered this exciting discovery with my mom's 2.5 power opera glasses and a Roger Tory Peterson early field guide. This young boy found heaven.

My friend and I hiked the Appalachian Trail one week every year for ten years in an October cloaked in Autumn colors. I cannot forget how special it was to watch millions of blackbirds migrating south, speeding though the valley below us. This daybreak sighting was mesmerizing, breathtaking! The memory continued long after we put our packs on our backs and continued on. While the racket of their boisterous, incessant chirping carried for miles.

Many times I walked the trails of the Sleeping Giant during a cold, blustery Winter day, sat on a 250,000 year old metamorphic stone and listened to the snow fall on undisturbed, fallen leaves.

Spruce Creek Park, close to my home in Port Orange Florida, offers the same peace of mind. The same release of everyday problems. Along the trails, bordering a long brackish marsh, I experience the energy from the vegetation and the presence of wildlife. Throughout the year, a variety of bird species are seen. Ducks, raptors, waterbirds roosting in trees, Great Horned Owls, Clapper Rails and migrating songbirds visit and live here. This is a good place to start a Life List of birds or begin observing birds for a Bird Study merit badge.

Take a walk with me. If I can't be with you. I might be.

Ray Scory



Meig's Point, Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison CT

The tip of this recessional moraine juts two miles into Long Island Sound. It was created when a glacier eighteen thousand years ago stalled for five thousand years. When the glacier disappeared, debris, called "till", consisting of boulders, sand, mixed clay, and stones caused by the moving glacier remain. Today a historic and scenic, walking trail is a memorable and exciting experience along this ancient landscape.



Spruce Creek Park, Port Orange, Florida

Palm trees, various southern fauna, an abundance of various bird species and life producing wetlands all describe this remarkable slice of early Florida landscape. Clapper Rails are heard and seen here. Migrating birds find this area a welcomed stopover and ocean going fish begin their lives in surrounding Spruce Creek wetlands. A walk here is not only a visual argument for continued land preservation but a soothing, adventurous treat for those who walk its land.

Photos by Ray Scory

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Good News For PIPL's

More news on the Piping Plover front from Bird Studies Canada: the Great Lakes breeding population has increased from 67 pairs in 2018 to 71 pairs in 2019! In Chuck Tague's article above he mentioned that in 1986 there were just 17 pairs. That's a 400% increase in 33 years but it's still an Endangered species.

Editor

KIRTLAND'S WARBLER DE-LISTING

Here, at least, is a positive ESA story, a success story involving a highly threatened migratory songbird, the Kirtland's Warbler. If anything, this is proof that when the FWS can document that a population of a species is healthy and exists in adequate numbers, delisting should not be onerous.

Kirtland's Warbler nests almost exclusively in central Michigan in young jack-pine forests that are about 80 acres or larger in size, and include a multitude of small, grassy openings. The impact of habitat reduction and Brown-headed Cowbird parasitism originally led the FWS to list the Kirtland's Warbler when the Endangered Species Act was passed into law in 1973. In actuality, the estimated population had already plummeted to about 400 birds in 1971.

The goal of the conservation plan between the FWS and the state of Michigan's Department of Natural Resources was to eventually reach 1,000 pairs of nesting warblers per year, but that number has now been surpassed. Currently, about 2,000 pairs of this species highlight the success of this species' recovery. The FWS more than a year ago proposed to remove the Kirtland's Warbler from the ESA list, and the final decision is expected any day now.

The future of the Kirtland's Warbler still will depend on continued and regular hands-on management. Indeed, while the species awaits a de-listing, the FWS says that without continued human involvement, the birds' numbers would once again plunge. A specific designation - conservation reliant - indicates as much.

Right now, there many creative plans being implemented - including even arrangements with private forests and golf courses - across the warbler's breeding range to provide the specific on-the-ground habitat mix that these birds will need into the future. Of course, this will also have to include some creative and long-term funding.

Fortunately, the forces behind the Kirtland's recovery insist that the ESA works and that the Kirtland's Warbler federal/state and public/private model can serve as an example to help other fragile species.

IBA NEWS: BACK TO SANTA ANA AGAIN?

For more than a year we have assumed that Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, a vital Important Bird Area (IBA) in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas was excluded from border-wall construction by a specific Congressional prohibition against such construction. But alas, Santa Ana NWR may not be quite as safe as we thought.

According to supporters and advocates on the ground, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol are seeking creative ways to circumvent the intent of the prohibition. CBP may be splitting hairs, citing non-FWS ownership of the land directly under the levee going through the refuge (on which the wall would be built) and essentially thwarting the will of Congress.

When Congress gave Trump funds for border wall construction in the Rio Grande Valley in 2018 and 2019, they stipulated that the funds could not be used for border walls in Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge.

For readers wishing to access all the past E-bulletins on the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) website, click on this [link](#).



[Registration](#) is now open for the Festival of Flight and Flowers weekend of hikes, field trips, workshops, presentations, and a fabulous keynote dinner. Sponsored by Oklawaha Valley Audubon Society the weekend event runs from Friday, October 11th through Sunday, October 13th. There will be birding trips, boat rides, full moon migration observations, educational presentations, hands-on workshops and more. Festival headquarters will be located in the Eustis Community Center, 601 Northshore Dr, Eustis, FL 32726. Grab your binoculars. It'll be a fun weekend for sure.

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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.

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