

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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December, 2019



Comments & Conservation Notes

The sign below was installed in Port Orange Causeway Park on November 22nd, several weeks after I attended a meeting at nearby Seabird Island mobile home park. The meeting was



called by the homeowners association there so that they could hear from the developers of a proposed marina that would be crammed in between Seabird Island and what the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has named the Port Orange Colony. Our chapter has worked for 25 years or more to guarantee protection for the rookery on that island. Once again it's under threat from people who, while they mean

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Calendar & Events

Monday, December 16th, Program Meeting- Join us for our annual holiday meeting and bring a dish to share while we share bird stories. The stories can be from the past year or from years past. The chapter will provide beverages and we hope you'll bring a favorite cookie or dessert recipe, hors d'oeuvres or a fruit or vegetable tray. All of us have a story we can share. It might be a spark bird, that experience that started you on the road to enjoying birds; or it could be a memorable sighting of a species in your backyard or on a trip. An added treat, a signed, framed Painted Bunting print by Kevin Doxstater will be auctioned off. See Ray Scory's article on Painted Buntings on page 3 below. 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.

Field Trips

Friday, December 6th, Merritt Island NWR- Join us for a trip to one of the country's best winter birding spots. We should see lots of ducks, shorebirds and others. Bring lunch. We'll meet to carpool at Target, East of I-95 on Dunlawton Avenue behind Panera's in Port Orange. Questions? Call David Hartgrove, 386-235-1249.

Upcoming Out of Town Trips

We'll have two overnight trips this season: January 7th-10th to St Marks NWR and April 21st to the 24th to Fort DeSoto. We'll stay at [Shell Island Fish Camp](#), 850-925-6226, for the St Marks trip. For Fort DeSoto we have a block of rooms reserved under the Halifax River Audubon name at the [Holiday Inn, St Pete West](#), 727-322-0770. It's not too early to begin planning for these two exciting trips. Last year we had a fantastic time at both locations. We hope you'll join us.

Christmas Bird Counts

We have 4 CBC's in our area and all of them can use your help. If you're thinking, "I'm a novice, they couldn't use me." Au contraire. There is no better way to learn than spending time with more experienced people. Please, if you're an old hand or a beginner, do this. You'll be a part of the oldest citizen science project in the world and have a blast doing it. Here's the schedule: Friday, 12/20, Flagler CBC, contact John Maluski, jmaluski@att.net; Saturday, 12/21, West Volusia CBC, contact Eli Schaperow, birdnerd@earthlink.net; Friday, 12/27, Daytona Beach, contact David Hartgrove, birdman9@earthlink.net; Saturday, 12/28, Ponce Inlet, contact Gail Domroski, rdomroski@cfl.rr.com.

well and claim the wish to be good neighbors, are determined to build in spite of the caustic effects their plan would have on the birds and the residents of Seabird Island. In 2008 a similar plan was put before the City of Port Orange. It was abandoned when the required dredge and fill permits were denied by the Army Corps of Engineers. Let's hope that the same course of events will play out this time. We, along with the residents of Seabird Island, will be watching for opportunities to comment and object at every stage as this proposal begins the permitting process.

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Archie Carr NWR, which spans a 20 mile stretch of beach in Brevard and Indian River Counties, had a banner year for nesting sea turtles. A total of 30,848 nests were documented this year: 13,349 loggerhead nests, an amazing 17,445 green nests and 53 leatherbacks crawled ashore here at the northern edge of their nesting range. While these numbers sound impressive we need to remember that only 1% to 1.5 % of the turtles that hatch from those nests will survive to nest as adults.

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In the last legislative session Senate President Bill Galvano rammed through a bill to add 330 miles of new toll roads to our state. Most of it will open what are now rural and forested lands to new development. Known as the M-CORES Project (short for Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance) this massive give away to development interests is yet another example of how business is done in Florida. If you're sitting up in Chicago having just purchased 25,000 acres of Florida real estate that lacks roads, infrastructure or a desire by the locals to have more development in their neighborhood, just look for a politician who needs help getting reelected and start sending them fat checks. You'll have his or her attention when that first one arrives. Then you just arrange a fun trip or two for the candidate and his entourage that can be called a "fact finding mission", send along a few more big checks and the next thing you know the taxpayers of Florida are funding access to your investment. And it's all passed off as a boon to economic development.

When Amendment 1 passed by a 75% majority it mandated that the Legislature properly fund Florida Forever and other programs that preserve our land and water. The politicians in Tallahassee hate being told by the people who elected them how to properly do their jobs. So they've ignored the will of the voters for the past several years by not following the law. They're happy to open the state treasury to fund developer's dreams though.

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Audubon's report, *Survival by Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink*, released last month has now been added to with a new webpage called "[Audubon's Climate Visualizer](#)." Click on the link, then enter your zip code and email address and you'll see that Volusia County stands to lose some iconic birds. Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Indigo Bunting, Piping Plover, Yellow-throated Vireo and even Boat-tailed Grackles are all on the list of birds that will disappear from our area by the end of this century. At every meet and greet by politicians, local, state and federal, we need to be pressuring them to enact concrete measures to deal with climate change and its effects. Many pretend it doesn't exist and are cow towing to powerful special interests with deep pockets for campaign donations. It's a recipe for disaster.

David Hartgrove



Board members, Joan Tague and Pam Pennella at the Marine Science Center's Wildlife Festival on Saturday, 11/9

Photo by David Hartgrove

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Rookery Island Clean Up

On Friday, November 22nd, a group of us went out to Rookery Island to remove monofilament and other debris from the mangroves. It's not easy moving through the trees and often we're under them in the mud and shells. We removed over 150 pounds of debris, much of it fishing line and other junk brought in by the birds as they construct their nests. Seen above are people from FWC, Volusia County Environmental Management and yours truly. Pictured from left to right behind the bags of trash we collected: Jean Olbert, Tyler Turner, Samatha McCorkle, Michele Vandeventer, Debbie Wright, David Hartgrove and Jennifer Winters. We do this every year after the birds have completed nesting. *Photo by Jean Olbert*

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A Victory For Common Sense

Down in Lee County, near Fort Myers Beach, lies Little Estero Island. A designated Critical Wildlife Area, the island was the target of a misguided plan to install a boardwalk. Our chapter contributed to a legal fund set up by Audubon Florida to block the plan. Here's a [link](#) to its outcome.

by Ray Scory

The Day The Painted Bunting Departed

Here today. Gone tomorrow. Splashes of brilliant sun beams flash into space. Touching the sky, announcing a point of beauty. The colors of rainbows and then some. Extraordinary. A female counterpart. Vastly different in color but subtly beautiful in her cloak of greens. A myriad of greens softly spread over a small five inch body. Truly a pair of welcomed sunlight sparkling radiances in a suburban setting.

For the past five years I have awaited expectantly for their first appearance in late autumn at my feeding station. The females appear first. Then more green Painted Buntings appeared throughout the following week. Eventually the explosively colored male appears, not with the fanfare of a riotous brass band. But as the whisper of a soft feather floating on a quiet autumn breeze.

I observed my very first green Painted Bunting in my yard twenty years ago. It was my first Painting Bunting observed in Florida after many previous visits. I was excited. I expected to see Painted Buntings in my new backyard for years to come. It did not happen. Fifteen years later a few mysteriously appeared and stayed for the winter. I kept my emotions in check and my bird feeders clean and filled. Each year more came and stayed longer.

During this five year period between October and April, at least one visited my yard. The two years between 2017 and 2019 drew in the most Painted Buntings. April 16, 2019 was the date that the last Painted Bunting yard visitor departed. I was content and satisfied. Because this period was a banner stay with many buntings going to different feeders and visiting multiple times throughout the day- and using the bird bath.

However, the migratory behavior of Painted Buntings is changing, at least in my yard and the yards of my neighbors: Wilma, Rose, Toni and Ed. Twenty years ago local birders told me that the Painted Bunting's northern most Florida boundary for its winter territory was Titusville. Today, fifteen years later, it has reached my backyard in Port Orange. And that's confirmed too by Wilma, Rose, Toni and Ed.

I have read reports that within their lower east coast range during a period of thirty years, they have experienced a 55% drop in population and have been listed as "near threatened." Alarming, yes but they do have a global population of around 3.6 million individual birds. So there is still time to observe one of the most beautiful birds in America. Just clean out your feeder add some seeds, like millet, safflower, niger and grass seeds. Yes, grass seed. I haven't tried it yet but it might be interesting.

It is mid-November now and in September a female Painted Bunting appeared and another female in October. A male appeared at the end of October. All three stayed one day each and then departed. However, we are in the right place and now is the right time. Start looking for Painted Buntings at your feeders and when you see them, the first thing you are going to say is, "WOW!"

Ray Scory

Our only native true green bird, female Painted Buntings have been seen feeding on the seed heads of sea oats. So Ray's suggestion to stock your feeder with grass seed is good advice. Editor



This photograph illustrates the subtle beauty of the female Painted Bunting. While its impact is an indirect contrast to the stunning color display of the male, the female Painted Bunting is far from a drab little green bird. The varied shades of green have been carefully put in place to create an outstanding thing of beauty.



Three buntings at the feeder. During the past five winters, Painted Buntings have been regular visitors to my backyard feeders. The females have appeared first and have been the dominate buntings at this particular feeder, luckily this male bunting found a vacant perch to occupy.

Photos by Ray Scory

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Audubon Adventures

The Audubon Adventures program is aimed at third, fourth and fifth grade classrooms. Each sponsored class receives four sets of a newsletter with materials for 32 students in each set. They are filled with information and learning activities. There is also a teacher's manual with support ideas, activities, and evaluations. They are specifically designed to mesh with the science curriculum offered by our local schools and help the students prepare for their end of class exams.

Please send your donation to Halifax River Audubon, P.O. Box 166, Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166. Any donation is welcome; \$45 will supply a classroom. Please specify on your check that your donation is for Audubon Adventures. And thank you for thinking of our future leaders.

Traveling West ?

If you're thinking of traveling west next year, April will be a good time to be on the Olympic Peninsula. Our sister chapter, the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society, in partnership with the Dungeness River Audubon Center is sponsoring a birding festival. Click on this [link](#) for all of the information.

Olympic Peninsula April 17-19, 2020

BirdFest

Come bird with us!



- San Juan Island Cruise
- Neah Bay Birding Excursion
- Guided Birding Trips
- Bird Art Classes
- Photography Workshop
- NAS Photography Exhibit
- Auction & Raffle
- Gala Banquet with Speaker: Scott Pearson

Located in Sequim, WA
For more information:
www.olympicbirdfest.org
info@olympicbirdfest.org
or 360-681-4076



FUNDRAISER

Looking For Something Closer To Home ?

Florida Nature Tours has been running birding trips to the Dry Tortugas longer than anyone else. Imagine walking into Fort Jefferson's 5.5 acre parade ground and seeing 300 Blue Grosbeaks all feeding while in the gumbo limbo tree outside Dr. Mudd's cell Black-whiskered Vireos and Scarlet Tanagers feed. In the burbling fountain are 5 species of warbler, just steps away from you and your camera. It's 4 days in birding paradise at the best price anywhere. Click on this [link](#) for all the information.

From The Birding Community E-Bulletin

From the [E-Bulletin](#), published by the National Wildlife Refuge Association and Massachusetts Audubon comes news of a young Snail Kite that was a one day wonder in Pennsylvania. Yes, it really lit up the rare bird alert. This was the first time one was ever seen this far north. Hopefully he or she made it back home to Florida.

Restoration of jack pine habitat and Brown-headed Cowbird control have allowed the Kirtland's Warbler to be removed from the Endangered Species List. These birds usually winter in the Bahamas but with the damage from Hurricane Dorian there we may see more of them in Florida this year.

Things To Do In January

There are three birding festivals vying for your attention in January. First is the [Everglades Birding Festival](#), January 16th to the 20th. At the same time, closer to home, is the [North Shore Birding Festival](#), sponsored by Orange Audubon Society and taking place around Lake Apopka. Then there's the biggest one, the [Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival](#) from January 22nd to the 27th down in Titusville. All of these offer great birding opportunities plus chances to learn from some of the best birders and photographers around.

Pelican Island Audubon Society is sponsoring its 3rd annual "[Transforming Landscapes](#)" workshop on January 25th. This all day event costs 25.00 and includes a box lunch. It's held down in Vero Beach and offers a native plant sale and learning sessions with experts that will help you turn your yard into a mecca for wildlife.

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Meets monthly September through May

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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.