

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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Comments & Conservation Notes

There's so much nostalgia for "the good ole' days" that we often forget all of the bad things from back then. Some started way back before any of us were around, like the Swamp Act of 1850. Unfortunately the same line of thinking (if it can be called that) has reared its ugly head again. Back then the Swamp Act was passed by Congress to facilitate the draining of the Everglades and other tracts of "useless" wetlands. The Clean Water Act and the Wetlands Protection Act of the early 1970's reversed most the damage from the Swamp Act. Now, once again, we're seeing a resurgence of this view of wetlands and again it's based on ignorance and greed.

One of the many terrible ideas for state government we can thank our ex governor, Rick Scott, for is his idea to have the state of Florida assume regulatory authority over Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Though this is national legislation there is a provision in it that allows states to take back this authority from the Army Corps of Engineers. While the Corps has a less than stellar record on wetlands protection their scientists were bound by the law and most seemed to take their mandate seriously, until they were over ruled by higher government authorities. In 2018 the state Legislature passed a bill which Scott was quick to sign that provided for Florida to assume jurisdiction over the permitting of "wetlands destruction." That's not what it's called. It'll be couched in innocent and wholly misleading language that will sound like it's protection. It's really the dropping of the green flag in a race to again assist in the rape and pillage of our state's resources.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has now published two legal notices announcing their intent to go through with this idiotic scheme. Governor DeSantis has voiced his approval, in spite of his avowed transformation into an advocate for our state's water resources. There's a loop hole that could be available to us. The Environmental Protection Agency has the power to veto this action by the state. We can write to EPA Administrator, Andrew Wheeler, to ask that he do just that. However, since he was placed in that position by President Trump and he seems bent on overseeing the destruction of the Agency it appears that would be an exercise in futility. Decades of enlightened water policy are about to be trashed on the altar of quick profits for the big money contributors to our legislators.

Our state and the planet face daunting challenges as the climate changes and sea levels rise. Going back to doing things like they did in "the good ole' days" is a recipe for disaster. But hey, it's good for the development community's bottom line and that's a good thing, right?

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, March 16th, Program Meeting- Paul Rebmann, President of the Paw Paw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, will be our speaker and tell us about the wild flowers of Volusia County. His photos will amaze you, his commentary will enlighten you. It will be a real treat. 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, March 6th, Lake Woodruff NWR- This will be a bit different, from 3:00 to 6:00 pm We'll be doing a late afternoon hike with a possibility of meeting for dinner somewhere afterward. We will walk the man-made dikes that form the pools during the cooler evening hours, looking for water birds, otters and others. We'll meet at 3:00 pm at Int'l Square - East of I-95 on Int'l Speedway Blvd behind Krystal. Questions, call Joan Tague, 386-871-6049.

Friday, March 13th, Sweetwater Wetlands- Join Joan Tague for this trip to one of the state's newest and best birding locations. Due to the distance to Gainesville, we're meeting at 6:30 am at Ormond Town Square 1498 W Granada Boulevard Ormond Beach behind Chick-Fil-A. Bring lunch. This one has a lot of walking. Questions, call Joan Tague, 386-871-6049.

Wednesday, March 18th, Ocala National Forest- Join Joan Tague for this trip to look for Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Bachman's Sparrow and early spring migrants. We'll meet at 7:30 am to carpool from Ormond Town Square 1498 W Granada Boulevard Ormond Beach behind Chick-Fil-A. Bring lunch. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Our Next Out of Town Trip

Tuesday, April 21st thru Friday, April 24th, Fort DeSoto- Join us for this, our second out of town trip of the year. Fort DeSoto is one of the best places in the state to witness the wonder of Spring migration. On last year's trip we had 15 warbler species in an hour just after a storm. We have a block of rooms reserved under the Halifax River Audubon name at the [Holiday Inn, St Pete West](#), 727-322-0770. If you haven't done so already call to make your reservation now. We'll meet at the big flag (those of us who've been there know this spot) at 1:00 pm on Tuesday, April 21st. Questions, call David Hartgrove, 386-235-1249.

HRA Does The GBBC At OBEDC



Education Chair, Holly Zwart-Duryea, shows some new birders their checklists and explains the rules.



Chapter President, David Hartgrove, does an interview with Larry Whitler for the podcast.

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Swallow-tailed Kite

Photo by Joyce Stefanic

They're Back!

Swallow-tailed Kites have returned from their wintering grounds in South America. Here's a [link](#) to a fascinating story about them and the people working to save them.

Our chapter's tent and table was set up at the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center on Saturday, February 15th, for the Great Backyard Bird Count. Joan Tague again took charge of preparations for this family friendly event and it could not have been better organized. Thanks to all of the chapter's volunteers for their help. It made a greater event for everyone.

And we made it into national media, sort of. A couple on bikes approached Becky and Ellen Tate, who were out on a trail site with their scopes set up. The couple were Robin MacBlane and Larry Whitler, who have a national podcast for kids called "[Robin and The Giant](#)", of which [Storybook Railroad](#) is a part. Click on this [link](#) to hear the podcast of this episode featuring interviews with several members.

Twenty plus families took part in the festivities and the kids had fun picking out their "duckies**", having collected all of their stickers at the stations and games. It was a fun learning experience for all and we have even bigger plans for next year.

David Hartgrove, Photos by Luis Villalon

** The "duckies" are in a class all their own. Three years ago when Joan was planning for the first GBBC she found these multicolored, "multi-personalities" rubber duckies. There are Holstein duckies, giraffe duckies, extra popular with the kids, "World of War Craft" duckies, biker duckies; the selection seems endless and the kids get to pick their own prize duckie.

by Ray Scory

My Wood Stork Saga

Wood Storks are fun. More so, they are becoming more fascinating. I don't remember seeing Wood Storks in New England. However, here in Florida, over time, I began to watch them more closely. Maybe to find out why they are playing with my mind and that is a good thing.

More specifically, I am impressed by their stoic demeanor. Like most waterbirds here in Florida, patience is their most visible and obvious behavior. How do they stand in one spot so long with out moving, without even moving their eyes? I wish I had a piece of the patience of a Wood Stork. Their absolute rigid, vertical posture complemented by a long, gray, slightly curve beak running the length of its chest presents the impression of a wise, confident, able bird. "Preacher" is one of its collective names. Standing in its cloak of white feathers highlighted by a dark featherless head and black legs we get a look of solemn understanding. No wonder many call this bird, "Preacher" and a flock is called a muster of Wood Storks.

Of all the birds that I have watched over a life time, and that is a long time, a few birds and my experiences with them remain vivid. While I may not remember the all names of places and people, the impact of these special experiences are everlasting.

Especially one, the Wood Stork who waits patiently in front of a sun porch across the pond from my home.



Wood Stork on my patio with bands visible. Please note the color band with large number on the left leg.

For many years our neighbor has fed Wood Storks everyday and I have seen up to six routinely marching up to the porch at supper time. For the past eight months, one still visits, forlornly waiting for a meal. It is not to happen. The house is vacant - up for sale. The women have moved. It is sad to watch. The Wood Stork looks sad. Is it only a condition of its posture or our quickness to attribute human traits to wild birds or animals? Or is a power as yet undefined?

One evening the lone Wood Stork flew across the pond to my screen porch door and looked in at me. Sad and lonely, I would say. I felt the pain. I wanted to hug it. To comfort it. To say, " please don't be so sad, everything will be OK." Crazy, huh? It's only a bird. But a wonderful experience. At this one time visit I photographed the bird up close and was able to read the band - black with white #102 on the left leg and a silver band on the right leg. This bird was banded at the St Augustine Alligator Farm as a fledgling three years ago.

While I started on a formidable email/telephone journey to record my banded Wood Stork, I shall leave out the tedious details and alert you to some important information. Foremost, record the color, number and placement of bands on the bird's legs or wings. The large number band is the color band (B&W or Color), the silver band contains the serial number and is unreadable unless hand held. The [Patuxent Wildlife Center Bird Banding Laboratory](#) is where you report your sighting of a banded bird. Its questionnaire is very thorough so be ready with details like GPS location, weather, etc.

However, if this gets messy, contact a very nice lady, Chelsea Steinbrecher-Hoffmann, General Biologist, at (301)497-5795 or [email](#) her. She gave me permission to publish her address information. Tell her you know the Florida birder who emailed her the nice photographs of the Wood Storks.

This was a wonderful birding experience - from the Wood Stork waiting at the sun porch window to the thank you from Chelsea for the Wood Stork photos.



A muster of Wood Storks photographed at Spruce Creek Park in Port Orange. Notice how they hold their bills open when feeding. Wood Storks are tactile feeders and though they can see quite well use very sensitive receptors along that big bill to detect prey.

Text and photos by Ray Scory

Plants For Birds Project Up and Running

Southeast Volusia Audubon Society has partnered with the Marine Discovery Center to design a Plants for Birds project there that will offer area residents a view of what they can do to enhance their yards and turn their neighborhoods into meccas for wildlife. SEVAS volunteers, Joyce Riddel and Ed Carlson, took on heading up the effort and contacted Danny Young, owner of [Young Bear Environmental](#) and a long time Volusia resident, to help. Funding for the project was obtained through grants from Audubon Florida and Florida Power & Light Co.

Since 1970 we've seen a huge decline in the numbers of birds we see here. Not only are our nesting birds disappearing but the migrants we see twice a year have seen even bigger declines. The primary reasons are habitat loss and the use of pesticides. Residential turf grass requires huge amounts of water and applications of fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and the other compounds that are helping turn our waterways into algae filled dead zones.

In a quote from an article that appeared in the Daytona Beach News-Journal, Joyce Riddel said, "Birds are losing their food and their nesting grounds. The use of non-native grasses and plants in our landscapes that are treated with chemicals, creating a uniform tidy 'same look' space, thwart the attraction of insects and pollinators that would be found in native habitats, no bugs, no birds." A phrase we heard at our recent meeting when our own Melissa Lammers gave a presentation on this subject.



Photo by Cindy Casey

Pictured above, left to right: Bill Cox, SEVAS Co-President; Jacqui Sulek, Audubon Florida Chapters Representative; Ed Carlson; Joyce Riddel; Marsha Cox, SEVAS Co-President; Katherine Rein and Danny Young of Young Bear Env. and sign holder, Charlie Peacock.

This is a great project that will provide an example to visitors of how they can turn their yards into inviting habitat for birds and contribute to being a part of the solution to a bigger problem. This month they will be looking for volunteers to help plant the garden. If you have a pair of gardening gloves and like to get outside in the cool air of March, they would be happy to have you join them. Check out the [SEVAS website](#) for information or call Joyce Riddel at 386-314-6543. You can also [email](#) her.

David Hartgrove

In Memoriam

It is with deep sadness that we write of the passing of Marion Monaghan. Marion was a long time board member and co-chair of our Education Committee. A retired teacher she worked to promote Audubon Adventures and was a regular on most of our field trips for years. She will be missed.

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Photo Contest Non Winners

Each year there are thousands of entries in Audubon's annual photo contest. Not all can be winners but the ones that aren't are often so stunning and show such interesting behaviors that they merit a showing too. Check [these](#) out.

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Winter Birding Tours Continue

The Marine Discovery Center has two more of its popular [Winter Bird Tours](#) aboard their pontoon boat scheduled for March 19th and April 9th. To reserve a spot, click the link and scroll down to Winter Bird Tour.

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THE PELICAN

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Meets monthly September through May

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