

# The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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## Comments and Conservation Notes

The Volusia County Council will be hearing information from their staff study on an addition to the November ballot. Will voters, as they have done overwhelmingly in the past, vote again for the Volusia Forever and ECHO funding programs to be re-authorized? Looking at the new developments about to break ground and those to be approved in the very near future, it's clear we're going to need all the green space and wetlands we can purchase for use as parks and water recharge areas.

On Tuesday, June 2nd, the Volusia County Council will vote on two items. One, is a resolution calling for referendum election regarding continuation of the Volusia Forever millage levy and authority for the issuance of bonds. This is vital. The other is a resolution calling for referendum election regarding the continuation of the ECHO millage levy and authority for the issuance of bonds. ECHO, which is an acronym representing "environmental/ecological, cultural, historical/heritage, and outdoor recreational facilities" funds a lot of things around the county that we wouldn't otherwise have. We very much need this one too.

Time is very short. You're only getting one day's notice. But if you read this in time, please call or email the Council to express your support for these two vital programs to continue. Here's the contact information.

COUNCIL MEMBER	DISTRICT	CONTACT INFO
Ed Kelley	CHAIR	<a href="mailto:ekelley@volusia.org">ekelley@volusia.org</a> 386-943-7026 386-626-6557
Barbara Girtman	1	<a href="mailto:bgirtman@volusia.org">bgirtman@volusia.org</a> 386-740-5224 386-736-5344
Billie Wheeler	2	<a href="mailto:bwheeler@volusia.org">bwheeler@volusia.org</a> 386-740-5224 386-626-6557
Deborah Denys	3	<a href="mailto:ddenys@volusia.org">ddenys@volusia.org</a> 386-740-5224 386-626-6557
Heather Post	4	<a href="mailto:hpost@volusia.org">hpost@volusia.org</a> 386-943-7026 386-626-6557
Fred Lowry	5 (CO-CHAIR)	<a href="mailto:flowry@volusia.org">flowry@volusia.org</a> 386-943-7026 386-626-6557
Ben Johnson	AT LARGE	<a href="mailto:bjohnson@volusia.org">bjohnson@volusia.org</a> 386-943-7026 386-626-6557

## Calendar & Events

The shutdown due to the Coronavirus is still in place, with some gradual opening of the restrictions. And being now in our annual summer hiatus, there's not much to include in this section. Our board will be holding virtual meetings via Zoom until we get the word from the Ormond Beach Regional Library that we can have access to the meeting room.

In the meantime you can join a friend perhaps and check out the birding at [Sugar Mill Gardens](#), in Port Orange or the trails in [Ormond Beach Central Park](#). Nesting season is roaring right now and many smaller birds are fledging their young. So the birds are more out in the open and doing things that attract your attention.

The photo below shows that sometimes you don't even have to leave your yard. Susan Pulling, on the other side of the state, in Dunedin, has had this nest box up for several years. This is the first time she's seen 3 chicks.



Eastern Screech Owl chicks photo by Susan Pulling

Anyone who ever took a walk in the woods with Chuck Tague was in for a treat. Here's an entry from Chuck's blog from June, 2012.

## A Bird, a Bug and the Flowers They Love

Like most birders of my generation I discovered the hummingbird sphinx moths by thumbing through my new copy Peterson's Guide to the Birds. I thought the idea that someone might mistake an insect for a bird was far-fetched but the illustration of the moth between the Ruby-throated and the Rufous Hummingbirds stuck with me.

One day at Laurel Hill State Park I looked for the bright-red Cardinal Flowers and the equally brilliant florets of Bee Balm. If I stood patiently a Ruby-throated Hummingbird would thrill me at each patch. With head-spinning speed the tiny bundle of feathers and energy would dart in, hover effortlessly before a flower, insert its beak into the floret's long red tube as if it were putting on a perfectly fitted mask, retract suddenly then flit to the next nectar source. I marveled at how precisely the bird and the flower fit together.

With the image of the perfectly matched bird and flower fresh in my mind I climbed to a high, dry meadow. Scattered clumps of wildflowers glistened with the last of the morning dew. I remember golden Black-eyed Susans, Butterflyweed as orange as traffic cones and short, squat lilac globes of Pasture Thistle. The meadow buzzed from honeybees, bumblebees, wasps and flies. Suddenly another larger, bulkier shape shot into view. It abruptly halted and hovered as close as it could to the thistle bristle without actually touching it. Its wings were a blur, but I could see a long, slender projection from its head probe for nectar. It turned slightly and I caught a flash of pale orange.

The sphinx moth I saw that day, a Hummingbird Clearwing, taught me an invaluable lesson. Besides a little humility I learned that this moth was as fascinating as the bird it so closely resembles.

A few years later, when I was the Education Coordinator at the Pittsburgh Aviary, the lessons of the meadow served me well. Two or three people a day would call my office, curious about a strange visitor to their garden or hummingbird feeder. Most were polite and appreciative but occasionally a skeptic would refuse to believe the critter hovering over a hanging geranium was a day-flying moth. Some would argue relentlessly. My favorite call was a gruff, impatient voice that demanded "How many legs does a hummingbird have?" I could have saved myself some unnecessary aggravation if I said six and hung up.

Bee Balm produces much more nectar than flowers that attract butterflies because hummingbirds have such high metabolic needs. As I watched, a Hummingbird Clearwing darted to the Bee Balm. I moved closer. For several minutes the hummingbird look-alike moved from red floret to red floret until it sampled or rejected every one. The clearwing moved off and I moved back to the mixed patch of flowers. There was a clearwing there as well. However, this one only fed on the Purple Bergamot and avoided the red Bee Balm. Several more clearwings arrived. They too only chose the bergamot. They hovered before the florets with ease; their head and proboscis fit as perfect as the hummingbird's beak fit the Bee Balm.

A Ruby-throat flew into the glade. It sampled the Bee Balm but quickly moved to the orange jewelweed. The hummers were in migration mode and there were no Hummingbird Clearwings. When the flowers fade it's a sign that summer is winding down.

Chuck Tague

Here's a link to Chuck's [original story](#).

Editor

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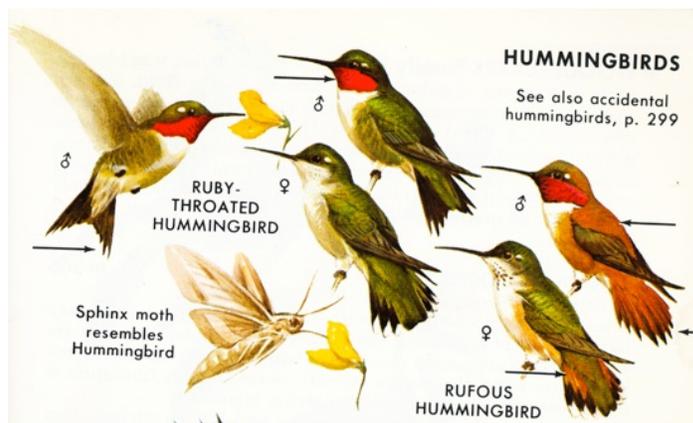
Ruby-throated Hummingbird hovering.

Photo by Chuck Tague



Hummingbird Clearwing moth feeding on Bergamot

Photo by Chuck Tague



The page from Peterson's that is referenced in the story.

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### From the Quotable Birder

No sadder sound salutes you than the clear wild laughter of the loon.

Celia Thaxter, "Seaward," Poems

by Ray Scory

## Nothing but a Bird

"There's nothing up there," shouted the bicyclist whizzing by me. I didn't jump when I heard his shout. I was locked into the song of a bird high in the thick canopy of a dark pine tree. I was mesmerized by the quality of the singing. Not jarring, ear crunching hurt but, melodic, exciting - so different, so soothing. Away I go, away from where I was. In a place so different, too. I was there looking for the bird with such a beautiful song. Standing on the edge of my cement sidewalk walking trail I looked high into the tree. Happy to be in this place to hear the song.

Now is the time to stop, look, see and if you are adventurous, to observe. Time before it all passes by.

Jane returned from shopping this morning and put the groceries on the kitchen table, the one with the backyard window. We put the groceries in their rightful places and sat down at the table and looked out the window at our backyard showing a few trees, water, two bird feeding stations, a green lawn and a few palmetto bushes. When the birds came, we watched. The Blue Jay, flashy colors and quick energy plus, difficult to photograph. Doesn't stay in one place long. Carolina Wrens, always moving, always inquisitive. acrobatic. One particular Carolina Wren liked to pick a chunk of suet and fly off. Never saw this behavior before. A Brown Thrasher muscled onto the feeder. But that's OK by me. I like their harmonious brown and black colorations and body shape - long, trim but strong. We watched a Northern Cardinal looking up at a Gray Squirrel bathing in our bird bath. Once the squirrel departed, the cardinal hopped up to the bird bath and began bathing. He knew, waiting pays off and he got his bath. And this morning patience and observation paid off. After 20 years, a Downy Woodpecker appeared in our backyard. First out of the corner of my eye a streak of flight from the bird feeder to the pine tree, then back to the feeder near the window then to the small lemon tree. On and on it flitted from spot to spot. Enough time to get my camera and make a photograph of the Downy Woodpecker, a welcomed, first time visitor. WOW!

My friend, Paul, and I walked the Appalachian Trail one week in October for over ten years. At times, the weather was cold and the rains came. The trail seems long and I fell in a stream on the rainiest, coldest day but these times were few. Most of all the experience was refreshing, new and adventurous. Our only concern was the care of our feet and where we could find water. No other concerns or problems. Eat, sleep, walk, look at stunning New England Autumn scenery as colorful as a Van Gogh painting. Sounds of birds, wind and rain. Time to enjoy the serenity of it all.

During an early morning walk to our favorite Verdant Creek, we watched a male and female Wood Duck casually navigated down the winding stream. A first time sighting at our "Verdant Creek." Sitting at the breakfast table shortly after, We observed two juvenile Northern Cardinal gleaming miniature food stuff from the edge of our lawn. The adult pair were not paying attention to them. The juveniles were feeding on their own, another one step forward. "All kinds of Nature going on" Jane said.

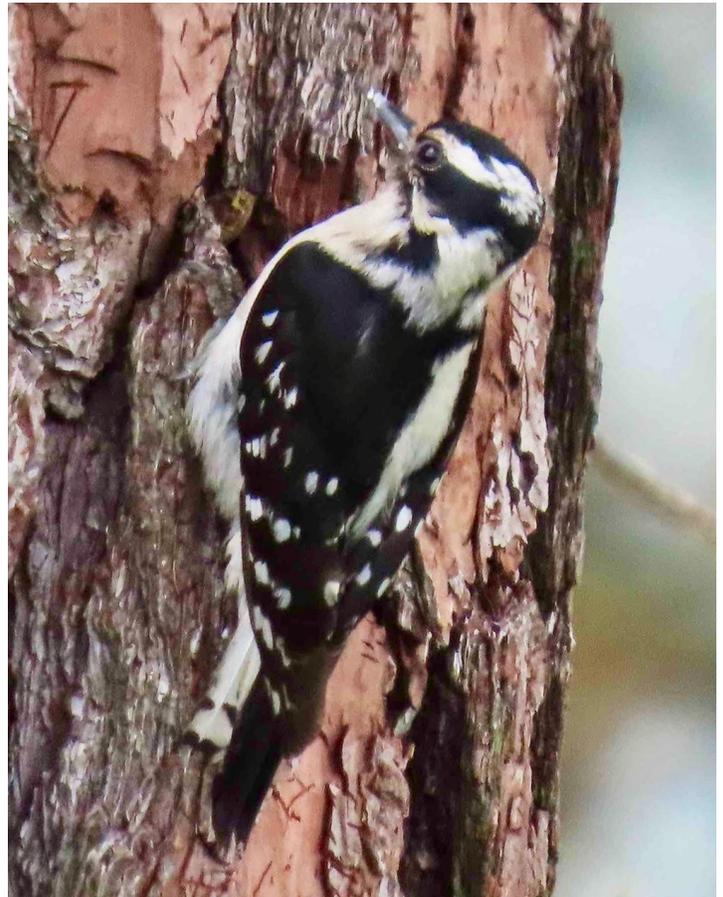
To listen to a bird singing in a tree. To look at a Rain Lily flower growing out from under a front yard rain spout.

*Continued in the next column*

Why not? It doesn't take much time and things slow down. Good Therapy.

*"You can see a lot by observing" supposedly attributed to Yogi Berra.*

Ray Scory



This female Downy Woodpecker, the first in the yard in 20 years, stayed long enough for a photo.

Photo by Ray Scory



This Rain Lily grew, unexpectedly, from under the down spout along the sidewalk in front of my house.

Photo by Ray Scory



**We Say Goodbye To A Dear Friend**

Marion Monaghan served on our board as an At Large member and as Education Committee Chair and Co-Chair. She was an avid birder, seldom missing one of our field trips and birding in several South American countries after her retirement from teaching. She was with us on our most recent trip to Merritt Island last January where she was thrilled to watch American White Pelicans feeding. She lost her battle with cancer on February 20th. Our thoughts are with her family and friends.

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Common Nighthawk, Photo by Alice Horst

This is a species that is seeing huge declines in population." These birds feed almost exclusively on flying insects. As insect populations decline too is it any wonder we're seeing fewer of them ?  
*Editor*

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PO Box 166  
 Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166

Email: [editor@halifaxriveras.org](mailto:editor@halifaxriveras.org)

Web: <http://www.halifaxriveras.org>

**Halifax River Audubon**

[forbirds@halifaxriveras.org](mailto:forbirds@halifaxriveras.org)

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Least Terns on oyster shell island in Canaveral Nat'l Seashore  
 Photo by Jean Olbert, FWC

**Bird Sitters Needed**

Look closely in the photo above and you'll see the Least Tern chick who's about 24 hours old. This photo was taken in the Indian River, south of Edgewater. If you have a boat or kayak and would be interested in volunteering several hours of your time to protect these little fellows, contact FDEP representative Irene Arpayoglou [irene.Arpayoglou@dep.state.fl.us](mailto:irene.Arpayoglou@dep.state.fl.us), or David Hartgrove, [birdman9@earthlink.net](mailto:birdman9@earthlink.net).  
*Editor*

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