

# The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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## Comments & Conservation Notes

### ECHO VOLUSIA FOREVER

*Protect our quality of life*

By the time you read this some of you will have already voted by mail. I hope you voted for ECHO/Volusia Forever. If you're waiting for early voting, it begins on Monday, October 19th. The two initiatives are located on the second page of the ballot, along with all of those confusing amendments. One of which, number 4, was added by our ever helpful state legislators. It seeks to make it even harder for citizens to force state government to do what we plead with them to do. As my Dad used to say, "Some of these guys are so crooked they could slide through a barrel of fish hooks and never get a scratch." The take home message here is to be sure you vote for ECHO/Volusia Forever.

If you're willing to take a step further and volunteer a few hours of your time, we have a project you can help out with. In order to help guarantee a win for these two important initiatives I'm looking for some volunteers to hold signs at early voting sites. Our sister chapters, West Volusia Audubon and South-east Volusia Audubon will be doing this in their areas. Here in our area we have three early voting sites: City Island Library, Ormond Beach Library and the new site, Midtown Cultural Center. I'm not naive enough to think we can get all sites covered daily all 2 weeks that early voting is open. We'll do what we can. My idea is to have signs mounted on 7' handles. These can be rested on the ground so that volunteers have only to hold them upright to attract the attention of voters arriving to vote. The signs can be left at the voting sites by securing them to a tree or sign in the parking lot with a bungee cord. That way, when a volunteer arrives to fill their shift, they have only to retrieve their sign and display it. When their shift is over they can hand over the sign to their replacement, assuming we get enough volunteers to have replacements. Otherwise the sign can be secured to the tree or post with the bungee cord for the next volunteer. It's important that volunteers be able to discuss the merits of these two programs. So that if approached by a voter with questions the volunteer can give simple, cogent responses.

I know that volunteering several hours of your time for perhaps several days a week for two weeks is a big thing to ask. However, the personal rewards you'll receive from doing such an important volunteer effort will warm your heart long after the election is over.

*David Hartgrove*

## Calendar & Events

**Monday, October 19th, Program Meeting-** Due to the virus shutdown of meeting facilities and an abundance of caution on our part, we now hold our program meetings via Zoom. In some ways this offers a better experience since the photos our speakers show look so much better on your screen at home than when viewed from across a room at Sica Hall. We hope to be able to get back together in person when our new season begins in September, 2021. For now though we meet virtually using Zoom. Last month we marveled at the photos of terns presented by Michael Brothers. At this meeting we'll learn about Snail Kites. Tyler Beck, Snail Kite Conservation Coordinator with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will present a program on these fascinating birds and the challenges they've faced. Click on the link to learn how you can register and be assured of joining us for the [meeting](#). We begin at 6:30 and the program starts at 7:00 pm sharp. We hope to see you, in cyberspace if not in person.

## Field Trips

**Wednesday, October 7th, Hontoon Island State Park-** Join us for this first trip ever to this island paradise to look for migrating warblers. We'll meet at 8:00 am at the park headquarters and ferry, 2309 River Ridge Rd, DeLand, FL 32720. Here's a link to more [information](#). Be sure to look at this page. This trip will involve strenuous hiking on possibly wet trails so be prepared. Bring lunch. Questions, call Joan Tague, 386-871-6049.

**Friday, October 9th, Washington Oaks Gardens State Park-** This is a much more relaxed hike looking for migrating warblers, tanagers, etc. We'll meet at the park, 6400 N. Oceanshore Blvd. Palm Coast, FL 32137 and join Joan Tague for a day of birding fun. Bring lunch. Here's a link for more [information](#). Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

**Wednesday, October 21st, Princess Place Preserve-** Join Joan Tague for a trip to this Flagler County treasure. We'll meet at the park, 2500 Princess Place Road Palm Coast, FL at 8:00 am. Here's a link to more [information](#). Bring lunch. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

**Friday, October 23rd, Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive-** Join David Hartgrove for a trip to one of Florida's birding hot spots. We'll meet at 7:00 am at Int'l Square - East of I-95 on Int'l Speed-way Blvd behind Krystal, 2550 West International Speedway Blvd. Daytona Beach FL 32114. Then we'll drive to our destination. Here's a link to more [information](#). Bring lunch. Questions, call David, 386-235-1249.



The Okefenokee Fishing Spider, *Dolomedes okefenokensis*



An Okefenokee Fishing Spider with its recently captured prey. You can see how well it's camouflaged against the tree bark.

Photos by John Serrao

## A Spider That Eats Frogs!

This story first appeared in "The Hummer", the monthly newsletter of the West Volusia Audubon Society. It is reprinted here with permission.

Gliding along the St. John's, Oklawaha, or Silver Rivers is one of the most relaxing and stimulating ways to look for birds in Florida. There are Limpkins, moorhens, kingfishers, Wood Ducks, Ibises, 10 kinds of herons and egrets, Ospreys, Bald Eagles, Swallow-tailed Kites (in summer) and maybe a Prothonotary Warbler. And there are alligators, a half-dozen species of turtles, brown and Florida water snakes, tree frogs and pig frogs. I've seen manatees, river otters, and even a black bear swimming in front of my kayak, and I've counted as many as 25 species of beautiful dragonflies and damselflies on a single outing.

There's one other secretive animal that isn't seen by most boaters, but it never fails to attract my attention and fascination. Pressed against the trunks of the big cypress trees, with legs stretched out to the size of a human hand, are the largest spiders in the eastern United States. The Okefenokee Fishing Spider (*Dolomedes okefenokensis*) is so well camouflaged in this resting position that few people ever notice it, but once you develop a "search image" for this impressive arachnid, you'll see many of them resting motionless waiting to ambush and snatch prey above and just below the water's surface.

There are a few other species of *Dolomedes*, or fishing spiders, in the eastern United States, but this one takes the prize for size. The body of an adult female may be 1 ½ inches, and the legs spread as much as 5 ½ inches across. It ranges from its namesake Okefenokee Swamp in Georgia through all of Florida. Some of the biggest ones I've seen are from Fisheating Creek in the northern Everglades. When you paddle too close to one of these spiders on a cypress trunk, it scurries with lightning speed to the other side of the tree, sounding almost like a squirrel! Or it may dash down the tree straight into the water to escape, but if it lets go of the tree it immediately bobs back up to the surface like a cork.

Okefenokee Fishing Spiders prey on insects, crayfish, small fish and even tree frogs, all of which are swiftly captured without a web. The venom is harmless to humans, and the only possible way to get bitten is by grabbing one in your fingers. Females are often seen holding their huge, round, white egg sacs in their jaws, each holding as many as 350 eggs. Before the eggs hatch, the female constructs a "nursery web" for her babies and stands guard outside this for a short time before they disperse to begin independent lives along the rivers and lakes of Florida.

John Serrao

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## Welcome to Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Gwen Bills, Mary Anne Bishop, Russell Boner, Debbie Bryant, Hildegard Carter, Betty Cunningham, Helen D'Antonio, Lisa Davids, William Gray, Katherine Hailey, Shravanti Halpern, Mary Kern, Susan Lund, Ray Massari, Harold Masson, Terry Mercer, Cheryl Miles, Candace Miller, Joan Myers, Helga Nelson, Frances Pettigrew, Bernice Pinter, John Roessler, Carol Rojas, Mary Shepard, Elizabeth Smith, Margaret Snyder, Sharon Sparacino, Elaine Stacy, Barbara Strickland, Leonora Tordini, Virginia Underwood, Laurie Van Dusen and David Walsh. We hope to see you on a field trip or at one of our Zoom meetings.

## The Mighty Blue Jay

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

It is difficult to fathom the mind-boggling examples related to the behavior of Nature. Is Nature our brethren not just to preserve, to conserve or admire, but to treat as an equal? To realize Nature is a friend not a thing, not to be used or controlled, but to love as a living, viable equal. Should not Nature nurture us, help us understand the workings of ourselves, to show us how to live in harmony? Is that what the screeching Blue Jay is trying to say to us, to understand?

I haven't experienced an overwhelming number of Blue Jay encounters, but the ones I have had have been memorable, explosive and profound. I rarely see them along a wooded trail or in a deep forest. Yet their preferred habitats include forests, farmlands, parks, groves and suburbs. They're a worthy backyard visitor. They're not seen along water edges, though Volusia County alone has over 300 miles of shoreline.

I have witnessed their raucous behavior since I was a little boy. I didn't know until I earned my Bird Study merit badge from the Boys Scouts of America that I, for a long time, had been an experienced "Bird Watcher." I couldn't identify many birds at that time. But I didn't care. I just liked to watch them and so did my mother. And we watched them together - the Robin, the Bluebird, the Jenny Wren, the Starlings, the Crows, the Gray Catbirds and , of course, the Blue Jay. All fun birds to watch around our small bungalow on a hill in Waterbury, Connecticut. It has been said many times before, "what goes around, comes around." So here I sit now at the window in my home in Port Orange and have fun looking at the birds visiting my yard. Guess I was meant to be a backyard Birder.

My first contact with the Blue Jay began in an eight foot high Red Cedar tree alongside the front porch of my childhood home. It was favorite place for medium sized songbirds to yearly make their nest and fledge their family under the watchful, fascinated eyes of that young, boy. Dad trimmed the tree just right so the birds felt concealed, yet opened enough for the boy to watch the maturation process. On the other side of the porch, Mom planted Honeysuckle vines and hummingbirds came to them. Thus began my entrance into the wonderful world of birding.

The year the Blue Jays came to the porch I watched the construction of the nest, saw the brown spotted eggs and watched the adorable featherless chicks turn into the four most beautiful, tiny blue and white creatures I had ever seen. I was hooked. I felt the stirring of bird watching and knew it was for me. And so did Mom.

The Blue Jay is a noisy, incredibly designed blue/white bird with a sharp black barred tail, featuring blue/gray upper parts and soft, light gray under parts. A distinct black necklace and a bold, blue head crest rounds out its flashy appearance. Yes, it is noisy and bold and pushy and does raid small bird nests.

But then, I look out the window and watch a Blue Jay land on my feeder with an explosion of energy, as if slamming open a door and yelling, "Hello, I'm here."

The Blue Jay needs to be noticed. Is that so bad?

Ray Scory

*"Thank you, Thank you, Thank you" Jane is home and recovering nicely. She is happy to be home and I am happy. Your thoughts and prayers sent her way are sincerely and deeply appreciated. They Worked. Ray*



Blue Jay Photo by Ray Scory

Blue Jays aren't really blue. The color we see is due to the prismatic structure of their feathers reflecting light in the blue range of the color spectrum. The same is true of Bluebirds, Indigo Buntings, etc. Actual blue pigment is extremely rare in nature.

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### I Vote Because

The League of Women Voters of Volusia County (LWVVC) is proud to announce its release of the video, "I Vote Because." ["I Vote Because"](#) is a non-partisan campaign to register voters and get people to vote in 2020.

Social Justice and Diversity Chair, Vickie Presley, indicates, "This collaboration effort fits with the LWVVC goal for 2020-21 to promote collaboration and build positive relationships with diverse groups." League President, Nicki Junkins, states, "One of the purposes of LWVVC is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government. COVID-19 has forced us to pivot and revamp our ground game. We now are relying on social and digital media platforms. This video effort does that and showcases why our residents consider voting to be important."

The last date to register to vote in this year's November 3 presidential election is October 5th. You can register at <https://www.vote411.org/>

Please help us share this video to help promote voting in this election! ThankYou!

Carla Christianson, Voter Service Chair,  
League of Women Voters of Volusia County

Reports of micro-plastics in our water, in fish and in us are enough to make even skeptics take notice. Here's information on an easy, inexpensive way we can each reduce the amounts of plastic pollution we all generate. This piece was published in the newsletter of the Flagler Audubon Society. It appears here with permission.

## EDITOR'S CONSERVATION CORNER

Following our September educational program, I felt ready to begin the slow process of reducing the use of plastics in my home, beginning in the kitchen. This was a bold move as my hubby is the dishwasher in the family and likes sponges. We were both quite surprised with how much we liked the items I ordered, and how easily we made the transition. It's a small start on this journey.

If you're interested, I ordered cotton napkins and [Wettex Swedish Dishcloths](#) to reduce my use of paper towels and napkins. To replace sponges and scrubbies, I ordered a [kitchen loofah](#) set, natural hemp sponges, and a [coconut bristle brush](#) set. And, yes, I have a close, personal relationship with Amazon:-)

For more ideas to get started, check out this [list](#) from the Green Education Foundation and this [article](#) from Audubon.org.

Priscilla Reed

One more note, if you order from Amazon be sure to sign up for Amazon Smile. This free service from the retail giant makes a 0.5% donation to the charity of your choice. It can be our Audubon chapter, the Red Cross, whatever you choose. That amount, though small, can add up quickly. Editor.

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## You Really Should Buy A Duck Stamp

The Black-bellied Whistling Duck on this year's Duck Stamp is a gorgeous bird in real life. Ninety-eight cents of every dollar spent on Duck Stamps goes to preserve and maintain our national wildlife refuges. As birders we use the refuge system often when we go on field trips. Buying a Duck Stamp grants you access to every national wildlife refuge in the system. The website says that they're available at post offices but I've never found one there yet. They are available at refuges with visitor centers but due to the virus, they're closed. So here's a [place](#) to order them online. You'll be glad you did.

David Hartgrove

## No Goodbyes, Just Good Memories

It is with a deep sense of loss that we report that Fran Carr, our long time newsletter editor and board member, passed away on April 14th. Due to a break in communication I only learned of this last week. Fran's rapier like wit and gentle manner will be sorely missed in this world. Our condolences to her family.

Editor

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## From The Quotable Birder

"An election is coming. Universal peace is declared, and the foxes have a sincere interest in prolonging the lives of the poultry."

George Eliot, Felix Holt, *The Radical*

George Eliot was the pen name of Mary Ann Evers. Felix Holt was published in 1866.

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## THE PELICAN

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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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