

# The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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## Comments & Conservation Notes

As we start the new year, with several vaccines for the virus and new administration in Washington, our outlook is, to paraphrase the verse from a song, "So bright I gotta wear shades."

I want to thank all of the folks who came out to do our Christmas Bird Count. We had all sectors covered and Joan Tague even found an Ash-throated Flycatcher. A new species for our count circle.

Our own Steve Underwood was surfing the Internet and came across this bit of encouraging [information](#). Dr. David Vaughn, of the Mote Marine Laboratory, has made an accidental discovery that could offer a chance for recovery of the world's coral reefs. The Great Barrier Reef, off the east coast of Australia, has been dying at a rapid rate due to several factors related to climate change. In the Florida Keys the reefs are dying from climate change and pollution related to increased nutrient loading from septic tanks and sewage outfalls.. Dr. Vaughn has apparently discovered a way to grow coral polyps 40 times faster than happens in nature. He's also able to engineer the polyps to be accepting of the more acidic and warm water conditions we can expect to see in our seas in the future.

While doing the CBC I was out in Plantation Pines looking for Brown-headed Nuthatches. I found some and added them to the list. Now, while looking at [Flight Calls](#), the online newsletter of the American Birding Association, I came across an article on [Pygmy Nuthatches](#). They almost look like twins of the Brown-headed Nuthatch. The Brown-headed lacks the buffy under-parts of a Pygmy Nuthatch and the Pygmy's head isn't as brown. They are both specialists of pine forests. In Ted Floyd's article you'll learn that the Pygmy Nuthatch is facing threats related to climate change. The Brown-headed Nuthatch is a southeastern species, limited to parts of Virginia and Maryland, the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and east Texas. The Pygmy Nuthatch is a bird of the Rockies and the Sierras. If you haven't heard the Brown-headed Nuthatch's "squeaky toy" call, here's a [link](#) to a short YouTube video. They personify "cute."

We're just two years away from our 100th anniversary as a chapter. Our board has big plans for making it a real celebration. And by then we won't have the virus to complicate things. Stay tuned. We have a exciting chapter full of dedicated and experienced people. As I said, "The future's so bright I gotta wear shades!"

David Hartgrove

## Calendar & Events

**Monday, January 18th, Program Meeting-** Join us for this Zoom meeting where Maia McGuire, UF/IFAS Extension Sea Grant Agent, will give a program on micro-plastics in our environment. The meeting will be announced on [Meet-up](#) and you can register for the meeting by clicking on the link in that email notification. The meeting begins at 6:30 while we gather. Maia's presentation begins at 7:00 sharp and a brief business meeting will follow.

## Field Trips

**Friday & Saturday, January 15th & 16th Merritt Island-** Join David Hartgrove on Friday and Joan Tague on Saturday to this hottest of hot spots. Winter birding in Florida doesn't get any better than Merritt Island in January. We'll meet at the Target in Port Orange, near Panera Bread at 7:30 am both days. Bring lunch, we can socially distance at the picnic tables. Questions, call David, 386-235-1249 or Joan, 386-871-6049.

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## MDC's 2021 Winter Birding Tours Begin in January

Avian enthusiasts eager to observe migratory birds passing through Central Florida en route to Argentina and points south can catch a ride with the Marine Discovery Center to an active spoil island, starting on January 14.

MDC's Winter Birding Tours give guests opportunities to learn more about these species from naturalists and local Audubon chapter members. The tours also offer avid birders transportation to Disappearing Island onboard MDC's Discovery boat, leaving from the North Causeway dock in New Smyrna Beach to Disappearing Island. Guests will disembark at Disappearing Island at Ponce Inlet and walk the shoreline to explore and view such species as Red Knots, Black Skimmers and a variety of plovers, sandpipers, gulls and terns only seen in this area during the winter months.

The Thursday morning tours will be offered once a month with tours set for Jan. 14, Feb. 11, March 11 and April 15. Cost per person for the three-hour tours will be \$40 for adults; \$37 for seniors (62+) and students; and \$22 for children under 12. Trips will leave MDC's dock on the North Causeway at 9 a.m., and return at noon. Guests are encouraged to bring binoculars, viewing scopes and to wear comfortable, water-tolerant shoes to walk along the shoreline.

Due to COVID trips will be limited to 20 persons and you're asked to wear a mask on the boat. To make reservations, call 386-428-4828 or visit the [website](#).

by Ray Scory

## High in the Sky

*Two Common ravens in the sky  
an Orange-crowned warbler in the brushes near by.  
A new camera with a 1400mm lens  
making photographs beyond my expectations at best  
Last Christmas week began at my home most happily,  
whereby my new camera began its task making history.  
And with my new camera I carried some sensibilities,  
that got me through some days of difficulties.*

I try to carry my camera where ever I go, especially on my Verdant Creek Walks. When I don't have it with me is when the unexpected happens and I miss the photograph of a lifetime. However, those wonderful misses are burned into my memory. And, while only lasting mere seconds, remain a lasting and dramatic visual image.

One of my most mind shaking misses happened as I nonchalantly wandered about my Florida backyard. I heard the rolling cr-r-r-ruck of the Common Raven. I automatically looked up into the clear blue sky. High, high in the sky, two black specks caterwauled northeast toward the Florida coastline tumbling and circling and spiraling upward. I hesitated to identify them at first, trying to see the wedge shaped tail and the wide wings - difficult. However, I knew they were not American or Fish crows. Their calls were distinctively Common Ravens and range maps don't show them here in east central Florida. But they were overhead - high in the sky.

I was birding at the Sleeping Giant State Park, a Connecticut coastal, trap-rock mountain landmark for ancient seafarers, when the Common Raven first appeared after many years absence. I witnessed their antics flying up and down the hard stone ridges and I relaxed under the calls of their songs. For many years after I listened to their call from Connecticut's glacier shaped landscape - from coastal Long Island sound, to the northwest with the rolling Appalachian Mountains, to the central Connecticut valley. I heard ravens and that one morning two flew over my house situated in east central Florida and I identified them.

Two other noteworthy sightings occurred when I birded without my trusty camera and its 1400mm lens. One episode in my Florida backyard. The other at Hammonasset Beach State Park on the central Connecticut coast.

At Hammonasset I watched a Bald Eagle using a mid-morning thermal soar high into the sky. Spiraling up without a flap from its wings, it reach miles high to the apex of the thermal, stopped, pointed west, and then shot out over Long Island Sound like a strike of lightning. A lasting memory high in the sky. My third lasting bird memory is closer to the ground but just as significant.

As I rustled along the bushes, palmettos, weedy plants and vines bordering my backyard a light brown, tiny bird with no outstanding markings had found a restful haven. Who was I to disturb this bird? I had no answer, so I just stood there in place and shared the time with an Orange-crowned Warbler. Time passed without a sense of movement. A first and only time visitor to my backyard. Not high in the sky, but high in my vast collection of lasting memories.

I write this article to realize that in the worst of times, sometimes it is a pleasant memory that carries you through. Birding, photography and good friends work for me.

*Jane has been home since the middle of October and has improved remarkably. She is on her way to full recovery. We wish you all a healthy and joyous New Year. Ray and Jane Scory*



Sleeping Giant State Park, Connecticut

A favorite Connecticut State Park and a popular birding destination. Common Ravens, Scarlet Tanagers, Worm-eating Warblers, Wood Thrush, Winter Wrens and a variety of songbirds and raptors nest here. A great place to walk or look for birds with or without a camera. Situated in Hamden, Connecticut.



American White Pelicans

Squadrons of American White Pelicans lift off, propelled by 9 foot long wings, from their breeding grounds located in south central Canada, the Rockies and the Great Plains. Flying in formation high in the sky, they follow an ancient trail south into Florida, Texas and Louisiana. Some will stop off at their wintering grounds in Spruce Creek County Park, Merritt Island NWR and other places across Florida.

*Photos by Ray Scory*

Chapter member and naturalist at the Marine Discovery Center, Lisa Mickey, recently wrote the following article. As our population here grows, recycling becomes more important by the day. Some of the tallest points in Florida's landscape are landfills. They're also a source of methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Recycling keeps items out of the landfill.

## Recycling, Dispelling the Myths

There is a wide range of misinformation circulating on social media and in conversation when it comes to recycling here in Volusia County. One belief is that everything – trash and recycling – is dumped into the same truck and taken to the county landfill. Another belief is that New Smyrna is no longer recycling at all. Here's the news flash: Both of these popular notions are wrong.

Ken DeForest, division manager of Waste Pro in Volusia County, was more than happy recently to debunk misconceptions and provide clear information about how our curbside recycling works.

"We have spent a lot of money to continue recycling, so yes, we are still recycling," said DeForest. "We have about 35 people working full time in recycling in this area." DeForest said Waste Pro's recycling plant originally cost about \$8 million, but it had to be upgraded "to make a cleaner material" that would be bought around the world. The plant's daily



processing capacity was lowered by about 20 percent, while staffing increased by 10 percent. These steps were taken to make sure locally recycled materials were "cleaner" and "there was a place to go with the material," he added.

Still, the rumors persisted that recycling was dead and Ken thought he knew why. In New Smyrna Beach in particular the rumors seemed to be due to a change in the types of trucks that did the pick ups. Earlier pick ups were done with what's called curb-sort trucks. Workers in the curb-sort trucks would separate all recycling containers — such as glass, metal and plastic — from the fiber materials — such as cardboard and paper — into separate compartments of the truck as they emptied residential recycling bins. "Those trucks look very different from the trucks that pick up the large garbage bins," DeForest noted.

When Waste Pro took over the contract, it converted recycling collection to what is called single-stream collection — designed to make recycling more convenient for residential customers. The process did not require residents to sort

recycled items. "With the single-stream process, residents can put all the material – the fiber, the cardboard, newspapers, magazines – and mix them with all the plastic, glass bottles and metal containers," he explained. "That allows us to use a compaction truck."

DeForest says Waste Pro starts each day with an empty truck and they only pick up recycling in those trucks. The recycled material is then hauled to a different place. While garbage and yard waste are transported to the county landfill, the recycling is taken to Waste Pro's transfer station in Ormond Beach. Some 14 tons of recycled material is then reloaded into tractor trailer trucks in Ormond Beach for the long haul up to a recycling plant in Ocala. Recycled items from local households go from trucks to conveyor belts to sorting stations. Some of the sorting is completed by automation and some is done by hand.

"We are spending a lot of resources to collect recycling separately from solid waste," said DeForest. "In New Smyrna Beach and all our cities where we recycle, we are collecting the material and transporting it to Ormond Beach, then up to Ocala, where the recycling plant pulls it all apart." Three years ago China stopped accepting recycle materials. When that happened, DeForest said companies like Waste Pro became more limited where they could ship recycled product. "That drove down the commodity value of all the recyclables and it just made recycling a whole lot harder," he said. "It would certainly be easier to take everything to the landfill, but we are committed to recycling."

The market for recycled glass also has become more limited in recent years. While glass is still being collected in local recycling bins and taken for processing, DeForest admitted that sometimes it does end up in the county landfill.

"Glass is a commodity that doesn't always have a place to go," he said. "We haul it, but right now, there's really no reuse of glass. The glass goes through our system and we crush it, but most of the time, it's going back to the landfill and is used for daily cover."

When asked what citizens can do to help to help improve the local recycling process, DeForest said citizens could help by learning to look for the recycle symbol with numbers on products they throw into their recycling bins. For plastic items, look for the numbers 1-5 stamped inside a small triangle on the packaging. If there is no number or no recycling symbol on the item, consider it as trash. Items that are not stamped for recycling have to be hand sorted during processing to avoid contaminating usable recycled plastics.

"Sometimes, people 'wish recycle,' which means not all plastics can be recycled, but they recycle them anyway," DeForest said. "The processing system is not set up to recycle these items." This causes extra work for recycling employees, who have to hand sort and throw away what should have been done by the homeowner.

DeForest encourages citizens to wash out items like peanut butter jars and jelly containers before placing them in recycling bins. Failure to do so can "gum up the system," he said. Caps should also be left on bottles, he added. Optical scanners at the processing centers can recognize bottles and sort them into appropriate lots. If caps are removed and bottles are crushed, the item must be hand-sorted, which is less efficient.

Citizens also don't have to remove labels from glass or plastic bottles. When the items are processed, the items are chipped into small pieces and the paper is eliminated. And

## We Welcome Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Dorothy Berkowitz, Betty Cook, Marjorie Giuffre, Stuart Goodman, Kathryn Hood, Truddie Johnson, Frieda Landsman, Kay Martinovic, Natalie Nachtigal, Eleni Papadopoulou, Chris Peters, Thomas Scott, Jean Snyder and Meret Wilson. We hope to see you at one of our Zoom meetings or on one of our field trips. We're hoping that by September we can again have in person meetings.

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## 2020 Sea Turtle Nesting Season Roundup

A report from the Marine Science Center says that we had the following totals of nesting sea turtles along Volusia County's beaches this past year. North of Ponce Inlet there were 452 Loggerhead nests, 16 Green nests and 3 Leatherback nests. South of the Inlet there were 390 Loggerhead nests, 37 Green nests, 3 Leatherback nests and 1 Kemp's Ridley nest. These totals do not include the 12 miles of Volusia County beach inside Canaveral National Seashore. Kemp's Ridley is the rarest and smallest of the sea turtle species, Leatherbacks are the largest of all sea turtles. They can reach up to 7 feet in length and weigh 1500 pounds.

At Canaveral National Seashore they had an average year, a total of 7,926 nests along its 24 miles of beach. In 2019 they had 13,302 nests. In 2018 just 4,634. The north half of the Seashore, which lies within the boundaries of Volusia County, is called the Apollo section. The south end, in Brevard County, is called the Playa Linda section. The Apollo section had 1,758 Loggerhead nests, 1,339 Green nests and 11 Leatherback nests. The Playa Linda section had 2,429 Loggerhead nests, 2,4369 Green nests, 15 Leatherback nests and 5 Kemp's Ridley.

The average Loggerhead nest contains 100 eggs. A Green nest can have almost 200. Leatherback turtles lay eggs the size of billiard balls and their nests average around 90 eggs. While these seem like big numbers (1,758 Loggerhead nests x 100 eggs) it must be remembered that only about 1 in a hundred survives to adulthood and returns to nest.

In our recent program with, Jim Huffstodt portraying Frank Chapman, it was mentioned that one of Mr. Chapman's acquaintances here in Florida had to chase a bear off the beach that was digging up and eating sea turtle eggs. Bears aren't much of a threat to sea turtle eggs any more but raccoons, coyotes and bob cats are. Beginning in 1985 nests at Canaveral National Seashore were screened, using 4' x 4' pieces of wire mesh with openings 4" x 2". These openings allow the baby turtles to crawl out but prevent predators like raccoons and coyotes from digging into the nest. Prior to 1985 85% of nests at Canaveral suffered predation. At the end of 1985 that number had been reversed. Only 15% of the nests were predated and 85% survived. The screening program continues now every nesting season and this explains why we're seeing higher numbers of nests than back in the 1970's.

*David Hartgrove*

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## From the Quotable Birder

"One swallow does not a summer make, but one skein of geese, cleaving the murk of March thaw, is the Spring."

*Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac*

while cardboard and paper are acceptable items for recycling, pizza boxes are considered trash. Once again, DeForest noted, the grease in pizza boxes can impact and slow processing.

"When you look at the system's cost, the extra items that can't be recycled end up costing extra fuel, labor, time sorting and electricity at the plant, only to be thrown away after all of that," said DeForest. "If somebody puts something in recycling that can't be recycled, there's just a lot of hauling and handling that ultimately ends at the landfill." So it's important that we all do our part in making sure recycling is a success

*Lisa Mickey*

*Photo by WastePro*

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## Photos of Interesting Bird Behavior

Here's a link to some Audubon [photos](#) of interesting bird behavior. Enjoy!

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