

# The Pelican

*For wildlife & people since 1923*

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## Comments and Conservation Notes

Anxious to do as much damage as possible before being shown the door by the incoming Biden administration, the deranged Trumpsters at the EPA went overboard in their waning few days in power.

Citrus greening is a serious problem for Florida's multi-billion dollar citrus industry. It's transmitted to the trees by a tiny insect that first showed up in Florida around 2000. It would be great if an effective solution to the problem could be found. The EPA, showing a complete lack of understanding of the consequences of its proposed solution, has suddenly and with no comment period, authorized the use of a pesticide that's so damaging to the environment that it's banned in more than 100 countries. Aldicarb is sprinkled around trees on the ground, where it's certain to contaminate ground water. It's also a serious threat to the farm workers who would be spreading it. The EPA also authorized the use of streptomycin on the trees. At best this might allow a tree a few more years of reduced fruit output before the disease kills the tree. Saturating the trees with streptomycin contributes to gross overuse of antibiotics in agriculture that have contributed to the rise of so called superbugs, antibiotic resistant microbes like pneumonia, listeria and others. Maybe another Executive Order will fix this?

They also saw fit to give a little present to paving contractors and the phosphate industry. The Sierra Club and several other environmental groups are suing the EPA for authorizing the use of phosphogypsum — a radioactive waste that's left over from creating chemicals used for fertilizer. It gives off radon gas, a hazardous air pollutant. It also includes lead, arsenic, and other metals that have been found to have health consequences for people and the environment. A petition to the EPA to reconsider this decision was submitted in December. Again, the incoming administration has a chance to reverse this idiotic decision before it does too much damage.

The Loop, that scenic stretch of road in northeast Volusia County that includes Walter Boardman Lane, named for our chapter's one time conservation chair, is again under assault by developers. This time the issue is 36 acres along the west side of Old Dixie Highway between the established buffer and Plantation Oaks. The developer has said he's willing to sell the property for 1.3 million, provided he can build the homes that would have been built on the 36 acres elsewhere on his property. The question is, does the county use ECHO funds or look elsewhere for funding. Suzanne Scheiber, founder of [Dream Green Volusia](#), has said she'll apply for transportation grants from the feds. Her offer was ignored for some reason. There's no easy answer here. A compromise is much needed.

*David Hartgrove*

## Calendar & Events

**Monday, February 15th, Program Meeting-** Join us for a virtual trip to our island neighbor to the south, Cuba. Paul Rebmann is the President of the [Paw Paw Chapter](#) of the Florida Native Plant Society. This program will be a brief look at Cuba from Paul's early 2019 trip to our southern neighbor. This photo tour will look at some of the flora and fauna of the island country and sights from both the countryside and the cities of Matanzas and Havana, including commentary on the people and how they live. This will be a Zoom meeting and of course and pre-registration is required. Send a note to [Joan Tague](#) with "Meeting Registration" in the subject line. Then watch your email for a link to the meeting. We open the meeting at 6:30 for everyone to get logged in and the presentation will start promptly at 7:00 pm. A brief business meeting will follow.

### Field Trips

**Friday, February 19th, Lake Apopka-** Join David Hartgrove for a trip to one of Florida's birding hot spots. A good trip if you're not into a lot of walking since we'll be driving this one with brief stops to get out for better looks at the birds. We'll meet at Int'l Square – East of I-95 on Int'l Speedway Blvd behind Krystal at 7:30 am. Bring lunch. Questions, call David at 386-235-1249.

**Thursday, February 11th, MDC's 2021 Winter Birding Tour** The Marine Discovery Center continues their winter birding tours to Disappearing Island. MDC's Winter Birding Tours give guests opportunities to learn more about these species from naturalists and local Audubon chapter members. The tours offer avid birders transportation to the island onboard MDC's Discovery boat.

The Discovery boat will leave from the North Causeway dock in New Smyrna Beach to Disappearing Island, where guests disembark onto the spoil island at Ponce Inlet. Guests on these trips walk the shoreline to explore and view such species as Red Knots, Black Skimmers and a variety of plovers and sandpipers, many only seen in this area during the winter months. This three-hour trip will give guests time to explore on their own or with small groups of experienced birders, like Joan and David. 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. Children must be supervised at all times by adults. Discovery is a 40-passenger boat, but under current Covid guidelines, will operate at 50 percent capacity with a maximum of 20 passengers. All passengers are asked to wear masks. Reservations can be made on the [website](#) or by calling 386-428-4828.

Here are a couple of photos that show some of the things that have been happening around our area as we wait for a chance to get a vaccine shot.



Dan Gribbin was out one day and caught this young Red-shouldered Hawk with its lunch, a snake.



This Bald Eagle nest (VO100) is located on the west side of Town Homes West, west of Clyde Morris, north of Reed Canal Road. The chicks are about 2 weeks old. That's Mom on the left and Dad had just flown in with a second fish.

Photo by David Hartgrove

## Plant a Tree For MLK Day

The [Climate Reality Project, Daytona Beach Chapter](#), has been around a short time but they're motivated. They were able to get Port Orange to authorize the planting of a number of trees on some city property on the east side of Spruce Creek Road just south of Nova Road. Fourteen people showed up, wearing their masks, to dig holes, haul



Photo by Kat Paro

water and help make this little corner of the neighborhood a bit more green. There were slash pine, red cedar, bald cypress and live oaks planted, trees that will help stabilize the soil, clean the air and replenish the oxygen. Derek LaMontagne, a member who lives nearby and is the founder of "[Save Port Orange](#)", enabled this project by having the trees dropped off at his home and is coordinating the ongoing efforts to make sure the trees are watered while they're getting established. This was an example of what can happen when a few dedicated people get together to help solve a big problem.

David Hartgrove

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### We Welcome Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Jaqueline Beckley, Jennifer Benson, Frank Bruno, Susan Bucek, Carol Chapin, Eric Datz, Carol Eiberger, Joan Flamm, Dana Jacobsen, Lorin Love, Richard McCracken, John Palser, Sybil Picchetti, Sandra Roberson, Noyes Rogers, Martin Roll, and Maria Summerlin. We hope to see you in 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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### From the Quotable Birder

"The birds are molting. If only man could molt also- his mind once a year of its errors, his heart once a year of its useless passions."

James Allen, *A Kentucky Cardinal*

## Carolina Wrens, Sensational !

Carolina Wrens are just so beautiful. I welcome them into my backyard every day and they favor my feeding station with dedicated regularity. A bundle of nonstop energy all packed into a body weighing less than an ounce (0.7oz). They fly across my backyard not more than 4 feet off the ground and quickly disappear into two brushy, palmetto islands bordering my property. With short rapid wing beats they make the journey, stopping at the centrally located feeding station to peck away at the suet or bird seed.

I haven't yet seen them bathing in my bird bath, but they do come to it. Gripping the edge they will take a sip or two. Always alert, bobbing up and down always looking up, looking down. Then dropping down to the ground. A tasty snack, a tiny ant, maybe. But always moving. Then up to the feeder and here the show gets better - riveting. They check out my feeder like it's an abandoned castle. "What's around the corner? What will I find there?" Every hidden space is an adventure. Every elevation is a platform for viewing. Looking out to the horizon seems important. They do it frequently. In all directions.

They put on quite a performance when they appear at my feeder station. Climbing up and into my narrow suet cage, a trick that always brings a smile to my heart. They do not hang on the outside of the wire cage like all other birds. They climb right inside the cage where all the good stuff is. Up close and personal. That's the Carolina Wren, quite the individual. Cute to us, survival to them.

Their nest is made of sticks, leaves, feathers, snake skins and other soft materials and, at times, is built in the most unseemly places - in a beat-up work shoe on a bench in a garage, in a wicker mailbox basket hanging from the front door of a house in a residential neighborhood, or in the confines of a coiled garden hose attached to the outside wall of my house. What a thrill it is to look down into the nest and witness the maturation of this beautiful little brown bird. It is easier when the nest is in a shoe, not so easy when in a nest box or hanging from a front door. My neighbors did not disturb the wren family occupying a nest in a wreath on their front door. Instead they entered the back door during the length of the wren family's occupancy (24 to 28 days). The key phrase in this paragraph is "did not disturb" If you come upon an active nest, peek in, and move on. Respect their privacy. They can be skittish during this period.

If you see a tiny 5 to 6 inch bird dressed exquisitely in shades of brown with a short barred tail pointed straight up and seems to always be looking for something, here in Florida, you are probably looking at a Carolina Wren. When you hear a bird singing "chooo-wee, chooo-wee, chooo-wee or tea-kettle, tea-kettle, tea-kettle and you look for a large bird, "Don't." Should you find, instead, a little brown bird singing very loudly, you have found a [Carolina Wren](#). The volume of their singing is surprising.

They range in a variety of habitats and climates. The family is spread out over approximately 1.2 million square miles from Connecticut to the backyard of my Florida home to Honduras out to Nebraska and Texas. To watch them go through their daily routine is worthy as watching the "greatest show on earth." When the Carolina Wren enters my yard, I smile.

Ray Scory



This Carolina Wren checks out Ray's suet feeder.



These two fledglings have just exited the nest box for the first time and landed in Ray's backyard. They're surrounded by a whole new world. They stayed this close together for about 15 minutes, then moved on.

Photos by Ray Scory

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## Check Out The Nesting Bald Eagles

Steve Underwood sent out this [link](#) to the Northeast Florida Bald Eagle nest cam. It's high def and has sound quality good enough that you can hear a Mourning Dove calling in the background. As I write this on Saturday afternoon, 1/30, the female was incubating 2 eggs, which she turned once as I was watching. The nest is called the "Hamlet" for some reason and the players are "Gabrielle and Samson." Be sure to check out the running commentary to the right of the camera view.

Editor

The following article is from the January, 2021 issue of *Kite Tales*, the monthly newsletter of the Great Florida Birding & Wildlife Trail.

### Science Spotlight: Spice is Nice

Have you ever heard the tip that hot sauce or cayenne pepper will keep squirrels off your bird feeders and wondered whether this was a myth?

It turns out that it is true! Birds are not sensitive to capsaicin (the chemical that makes peppers taste hot) in the same way mammals are. They can consume even the spiciest peppers without tasting a thing. There may also be an evolutionary explanation for this – studies have shown that pepper seeds germinate much better after passing through the digestive tract of a bird than that of a mammal, meaning that birds are more effective at dispersing seeds that will grow into more pepper plants. It is in the plants' best interest to ward off mammals and leave the seed dispersal to the birds.

So, yes, hot sauce can potentially help ward off unwanted feeder visitors, but we wouldn't necessarily recommend it (would you want to be surprised by a mouthful of hot sauce when you were expecting a tasty sunflower seed?) There is a better way to avoid battling with squirrels on your bird feeder altogether – turning your yard into a habitat for wildlife with native plants, shelter, and water will ensure that there is plenty to go around! Learn more and order your copy of our *Planting a Refuge for Wildlife* booklet today at this [link](#).

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### Hatching Wood Ducks Video

Chapter member and documentary film maker, George Sibley (that's George's film you see at the beginning of the tour at the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse), sent along a link to a YouTube [video](#) that was very well filmed and edited. It's just over 16 minutes long and if you've ever wondered what's going on inside a Wood Duck nest box this short film will answer your questions. Thanks George!

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Bachman's Sparrow, Photo by Peter May

### Bird Note And Questions From The Past

Last year board member, Steve Underwood, was scanning back issues of the Pelican so that these old paper copies can be more easily archived. One of the columns that ran in the Pelican in March, 1964, was "Question and Answer." One of the questions was, "Do some birds hibernate rather than migrate?" The answer, based on the state of bird biology 57 years ago, was that some birds do enter what's called "torpor." Searching the web I came across [Bird Note](#).

In 2004, Chris Petersen, then Executive Director of Seattle Audubon, had an idea: [Star Date](#) for birds. Eventually Bird Note became a separate entity and is now a non profit with brief shows on some NPR stations and a daily podcast. Now, getting back to the question of hibernating birds. In the desert southwest there is a cousin of the Whippoorwill, the Common Poorwill. Here's a [link](#) to the fascinating podcast that will answer that question about hibernating birds.

Steve suggested that maybe we should run the Question and Answer column in the Pelican again. Fifty-seven years later we have the answers to our questions at our finger tips online.

Editor

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