

# The Pelican

*For wildlife & people since 1923*

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## Comments & Conservation Notes

The Florida Legislative session begins on March 2nd. Of course our elected representatives are already up there, hard at work trying to devise new ways to ignore the will of the voters. There are bills to make voting by mail harder and others that endanger funding for our public schools.

From an environmental perspective there are several that are particularly damaging. First, regional planning councils are about all that's left of the old Department of Community Affairs. Back when Rick Scott was governor, he and the "Lege" (as the inimitable Molly Ivins used to refer to that august body in Texas) saw no reason to plan for growth so they gutted that agency. About all that's left are regional planning councils. So along comes Senator Jennifer Bradley (R), Fanning Springs, with SB 62. It does away with the last vestiges of sensible planning for large developments. With our water and traffic problems multiplying daily why would any sensible person want to plan ahead for growth? All those pesky regulations they propose might mean that some enterprising developer would be prohibited from slipping a WaWa into your residential neighborhood, or tearing out that last stand of old growth oaks where you see a Pileated Woodpecker family when you walk your dog. Please, call your state senator and ask them to vote "No" on SB 62. Here's a link to the [League of Women Voters](#) website that makes finding your state and federal governmental officials easy. Use the phone numbers you find there. Generally, you won't be speaking to a person. It will take a few minutes to leave a voice mail and you'll have done your part to make life a bit better for us all.

Last year the "Lege" was concerned that locals had too much control over trees in their communities. So they passed legislation that made it all but impossible for local governments to protect the trees in their jurisdictions. The power rests with the home owner, whose interests may be more in the "I hate raking leaves so cut that 200 year old oak down." Yes, it's his or her property but the community should at least have the power to require a permit. Apparently the bill last year didn't go far enough for Senator Jason Brodeur (R), whose district extends into Volusia from Seminole County. His bill, SB 916, will further weaken what remains of local tree ordinances. Thankfully, riding to the rescue, comes Senator Linda Stewart (D), Orlando and Representative Anna Eskamani (D) Orange County, with companion bills SB 596 & HB 6023. These bills essentially reverse what the "Lege" did last year and restores the local tree ordinance authority to municipalities. Please, use the information above to contact your representative and senator. Ask them to vote for SB 596 and HB 6023.

*David Hartgrove*

## Calendar & Events

**Monday, March 15th, Program Meeting-** We had fun going to [Cuba](#) last month with Paul Rebmann for plants. So this month we'll go down for a birding trip. In December, 2014, our chapter sponsored a birding trip to Cuba. Fourteen people went and one afternoon Rachel Ramsey, who was treasurer at the time had an idea. Why not use the trip donations we collected to produce a coloring book for Cuban school kids about Cuban birds. You'll get the whole story and see great photos from the trip. This will be a Zoom meeting 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 chat. The presentation will start promptly at 7:00 pm. A brief business meeting will follow. Be sure to click on the Cuba link above.

## Field Trips

**Wednesday, March 10th, Lake Woodruff-** Join Joan Tague for a late afternoon walk around the impoundments. Target birds will be rails but also anything else we can find. The marsh at sundown can be a real treat. If weather permits, the evening may conclude with an exciting scientific experiment. You won't want to miss this. Meet in the Impoundments Parking Lot (the last one at the end of the road) at Lake Woodruff NWR at 3:00 pm. Questions, Call Joan, 386-871-6049.

**Thursday, March 19th, 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 Discovery boat will leave from the North Causeway dock in New Smyrna Beach at 9:00 am in route 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. 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 75 % capacity with a maximum of 30 passengers. All passengers are asked to wear masks.

Reservations can be made on the [website](#) or by calling 386-428-4828.

## NEWS FROM CENTRAL FLORIDA REGIONAL

### CONSERVATION COMMITTEE (RCC)

#### Borrow Pits – Wekiva Parkway

In December an editorial in the Orlando Sentinel and a strongly-worded letter from Lee Constantine, a Seminole County Commissioner, notified Gov. DeSantis of FDOT's use of un-permitted borrow pits in Lake County. Because of lack of communication between FDOT and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), Lake County and SJRWMD have pursued litigation. FDOT suspended accepting fill from 1 of 2 companies under litigation, so the outcome is moving in the right direction.

Sheryan Epperly (Oklawaha Valley Audubon Society) spoke to the Lake County Board of County Commissioners on February 9 and followed up with a letter thanking them for doing the right thing.

#### EPA Grants Florida Sole Authority on Fill Material Permits

[Section 404](#) grants sole authority to the State. Audubon Florida and most other environmental organizations do not support this decision for reasons below:

1. The State of Florida (and the Water Management Districts) don't have the capacity due to budget and personnel cuts under the Scott administration.

2. The Corp of Engineers has been a check/balance for pressure on FL to allow bad permits. With sole responsibility, there is no oversight on State decisions.

Note: Section 404 is not universal. Permits for dredging and filling in and adjacent to navigable waters (bays, rivers, estuaries and major lakes) will remain under the control of the Corps of Engineers and EPA.

#### M-Cores

Recommendations from the task forces for all 3 roads were nearly identical:

- \* there is no demonstrated need for new roadways; if/when needed, existing roads should be expanded rather than new roads built
- \* roads shouldn't invade environmentally sensitive lands
- \* environmental study must be done for all property within 10-mile radius of proposed new site. \*\*\*

Stay informed about AF activities during the Florida legislative session by signing up to receive [The Advocate](#).

#### AF Climate Work

[Olivia Sciandra](#), AF Climate Team Organizer, has a variety of ideas regarding how chapters can advocate for climate change with local governing bodies. Or visit Audubon Florida's Climate Change Advocacy [web page](#) for more information. [Sign up](#) here to receive Audubon Climate Updates.

**Paula Wehr**

**Central Florida Chapters Representative**

**Audubon Florida Board of Directors**

\*\*\* There are some environmental groups advocating for a bill to kill M-Cores entirely. Audubon Florida strongly believes this would be a mistake. Once killed the bill could be revived easily and this time minus the strong environmental safeguards that were negotiated in the existing, though dormant, bill.

*Editor*

## The Great Backyard Bird Count

The Great Backyard Bird Count was a roaring success. All across the globe people looked in their backyards, the park down the street or went for a hike in a favorite spot. 6,387 species were counted on nearly 320,000 checklists. Among those who entered their totals were Constance Clark, from Tuscarawas County, Ohio, who counted 3 Black-capped Chickadees and 2 Hairy Woodpeckers, among others. Down in New Zealand, Sharon Roberts counted 8 [Plipipi](#), an endemic species there. Caroline Cicero was counting at Trancas Canyon Creek, near Los Angeles, CA and had 4 Marbled Godwits and a California Scrub Jay among her 19 species reported. Karen Falls, counting in her backyard in Springfield, MO had 20 species, including a [Harris' Sparrow](#). Finally, Sonia Agustini, counting down in Santa Fe, Argentina had an American Kestrel and 2 [Campo Flickers](#) among the 19 species she saw.

Here in Volusia County we had 308 checklists entered totaling 162 species. Joan Tague produced several videos about the GBBC, in cooperation with the [Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center](#). Paula Wehr and I, along with Ken and Margo Wenzel, helped out with the production. The videos are now posted to our [website](#) and I hope you'll check them out. There are 5 of them. They're well done and full of useful information.

*David Hartgrove*



2 Top photo, Paula and David; above, Ken, Margo and Joan.

*Photos by Joan Tague*

by Ray Scory

## A Migratory Moment

January 8, 2021 - Far from the deep Northwest sweeps a cold hard wind across a tender southerly landscape on course to push away a brilliant ocean sunrise on the beaches of Port Orange, Florida. One benefactor of this expected clash of Nature's power will be birds and they will react with energy and excitement. I suspect similar natural events created by this meeting of stormy winds and oncoming sunrise were igniting in some form or other - up and down our coastal communities. But I was there, on my walk between two special trees, at the right time to witness a natural phenomena beyond comprehension.

I was taking my daily early morning walk to my Verdant Creek and stopped to witness a rush of American Robins and Cedar Waxwings charge back and forth between two trees on opposite sides of my neighborhood road. I was in the middle of a deafening ruckus of American Robins and Cedar Waxwings frantically feeding and then resting after a night of migratory flight. I felt like I was whirling about in a dichotomy of avian behavior, another way of life. I wanted to fly wildly about with the birds and in another way, at the same time, I wanted to stay still and absorb the wildness surrounding me.

I have experienced this profound "another form of life" position a few times in my birding life, both personally and listening to stories from others. I find it works best for me when I stop thinking. I ease away from my mind and just feel. All around me becomes one, no attachments.

One morning I stood back and watched Kevin Karlson, a noted international Birding Advocate/Teacher stand silently and still under a singular tree, bare of leaves but covered in Florida's white, wintery frost. It was cold this morning and the darkness could not hide the frost blanketed landscape. Kevin was the leader of a field trip for the "Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival" and I followed to photograph the event. Our destination was a rural piece of property with varied habitat - pastures, high grass fields, wooded forests and a slow moving river. We were to arrive before daybreak and watch the majesty and offerings of the coming day. The sun had not yet appeared, yet Kevin stood motionless looking to the top of the tree. He was alone. As the sun rose above the horizon, it clipped the top of the tree in a blaze of yellow/orange and birds exploded from the tree as if shot from a cannon. An awe-inspiring sight. Kevin knew. He was there at that moment with the birds.

For many years my friend, Paul, and I spent a week in October hiking different sections of the Appalachian Trail. One particular night we pitched our tent high on the side of Bear Mountain in New York State. Long before daybreak we awoke to the harsh sounds of screeching and loud traveling birds. Daybreak exposed to us the sight of millions of blackbirds speeding through the chiseled valley on a southerly route below. We broke camp at 8:00AM and could still hear them when we hiked onto and over a distant mountain. As I looked down upon this thick black mass of iridescence gushing through the valley I wanted to jump in and go for the ride.

Light bulbs switching on and off against a picturesque Florida sky display American White Pelicans beginning their lazy, smooth spiral from high, high above to their wintering grounds in Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Titusville, Florida. As they drop down after traveling from their breeding ground in upper central USA, they create an amazingly electric thing to

thing to see. A mesmerizing sight at best.

My wife, Jane, once told me that when she was a teenager, she would dream of flapping her arms like wings and lift off into the air and fly above her house and look down upon her yard. She said it looked so real and yet she had never been that high when she was awake.

Sometimes it feels good to jump out of this world for a bit and join in with the birds.



Kevin Karlson in a frost covered field.



American White Pelicans at Merritt Island NWR

Photos by Ray Scory



Coral Honeysuckle grows with or without a trellis



A closeup of those tubular flowers so irresistible to hummers

*Photos by Leslie Nixon*

\* \* \* \*

### Guided Hike - Longleaf Preserve

Join Trey Hannah, Specialist with Volusia County Environmental Management, and take a walk through Longleaf Pine Preserve's pine flat woods, cypress domes and swamps. Participants will learn about the connections between soils and the plant and animal communities of the wetlands. Meet at 9:00 am, on Friday, March 12th for this 1.5 hour hike. Meet at the west entrance, 3637 E. New York Ave, DeLand, FL 32724. Registration is required. Call 386-736-5927.

Here's a new column to the Pelican, "Plants For Birds", Leslie Nixon is a Master Gardener and FNPS member.

### Coral Honeysuckle, Hummingbird Magnet

If you want to feed hummingbirds without the trouble of maintaining a specialized feeder, then you need a coral honeysuckle vine (*Lonicera sempervirens*). Before you say you don't have a trellis or fence to support a vine, you should know that this adaptable native can be planted as a shrub. Without a support it will grow to about 3-4' tall in an informal, somewhat sprawling but delightful manner.

Whichever form you choose, coral honeysuckle is an attractive evergreen plant with bright red tubular flowers that are irresistible to hummingbirds. As a bonus for bird lovers, coral honeysuckle produces berries that lure in larger songbirds such as mockingbirds and cardinals.

Coral honeysuckle is a well-behaved vine; it does not spread uncontrollably in the landscape and so it is much more environmentally friendly than invasive vines like flame vine or Japanese honeysuckle.

Growing conditions: Coral honeysuckle flowers best in full sun but will also bloom in part-sun (4 hours per day). Once established (about 3 months), it does not need supplemental water except during a drought.

Plant Information basics: Bloom: Red flowers year-round. Hardiness zones: 8-10. (Volusia is in zone 9.) Maintenance: None necessary but can be lightly pruned once a year.

Plant a coral honeysuckle near a picture window or next to your porch and you can enjoy the thrill of hummingbird visits throughout the year.

*Leslie Nixon*

\* \* \* \*



### Most Bald Eagles here have chicks in the nest now

Bald Eagle chicks are hatched with a coat of natal down. This down is very light in color and does not have much insulating ability (chicks must be brooded by an adult for warmth). Natal down is replaced by thermal down beginning around 10 days of age. Thermal down has very good insulating qualities and by 15 days chicks are typically able to thermoregulate on their own. The final month of development is consumed by acquiring the coordination needed for movement and flight. Adults will continue to bring the eaglets food for up to six weeks following fledging.

*Text and Photo by Lou Newman Visit his [website](#)*

## We Welcome Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Donnie Anderson, Meredith Babb, M. Boydalexandre, Linda Chadwick, Reid Conrad, Patricia Davis, Marie French, Andrea Gilbert, Wayne Grant, Nancy Heins, Yvonne Meier, Richard Moore, Joyce Nitto, Paul Reeves, Eleanor Rossero, George Sibley, Shoshanna Tempest, Danielle Weigel and Denise White. 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.

\* \* \* \*

### Melissa's GBBC Experience

I realize almost 2 weeks have gone by and I know you are sitting on the edges of your seats wondering what wonders I was able to spy on February 13th, during the Great Backyard Bird Count, 2021. It was a cold and rainy day in my backyard. I seem to have caused that weather phenom by putting on comfy clothing, grabbing a field guide and slinging my binoculars around my neck, ready to brave the walk from my dining room door, into the garage and from the garage, out onto my patio. I set upon my trail and when I opened the garage door, the skies opened too! I made the wise decision to execute an immediate about face and head up to my bedroom where I have an, uhm, "bird's eye view", of the prime bird real estate in my yard. In the (sigh, non-native) Cape Honeysuckle. I was richly rewarded by spying a [Yellow-rumped Warbler!](#) I have no doubt about my bird ID. I saw the rump. It was yellow. This was a much more successful way to ID the bird compared to the previous week's worth of attempting to distinguish between the "chek chek"s I had been hearing and interpreting as "chuk chuk"s, leading me to believe I had Common Yellowthroats in the yard (maybe I did, too). Supposedly I have a good ear for music --I play several instruments by ear and can speak Spanish well enough to fool native speakers, but the chek-chek and the chuk-chuk dialects are still eluding me. However, I scored TWO MORE SPECIES, one each, by EAR BIRDING! Yes! I know! Astounding! I registered one [Northern Cardinal](#) and one [Eurasian Collared-Dove!](#) Who knew these birds could be RIGHT IN MY BACKYARD!?!?

I am tempted to say I have no talent for birding but the truth is I am unpracticed. I won't know if I have talent or not until I make some more field trips. When my foot heals. I'm good at spotting movement (presumably I would be a good hunter) but I am terrible at the ID-ing of the LBBs. So perhaps this year, I will do better.

*Melissa Lammers*

*Photos from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology*

\* \* \* \*

### From the Quotable Birder

"The silence and solitude were touched by wild music, thin as air, the faraway gabbling of geese flying at night. Presently I caught sight of them as they streamed across the face of the moon, the high, excited clamor of their voices tingling through the night, and suddenly I saw, in one of those rare moments of insight, what it means to be wild and free."

*Martha Reben, A Sharing of Joy*



A male Blue-winged Teal in flight showing their diagnostic wing patch. It's never seen when they're swimming, which is when we usually see them.

*Photo by Lou Newman, For more beautiful scenes here's a link to Lou's [website](#).*

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### THE PELICAN

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