

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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Comments & Conservation Notes

Florida Conservation Voters is the reformed organization that was originally the group behind Amendment 1 in 2014. Here's information on their latest project.

2021/2022 Briefing Book

Whether in our freshwater systems, estuaries, or marine waters, water degradation is the result of excess pollution, made worse by inadequate monitoring and lack of enforcement of environmental standards. Water quality crises affect human health, natural systems, and Florida's economic stability.

While Florida is blessed with abundant freshwater resources including numerous springs, large rivers and lakes, and the extensive Floridan and Biscayne Aquifer, these resources are not limitless. Erratic and changing weather patterns, made worse by climate change, can result in prolonged droughts, as well as heavy rainfall that brings flooding. These concerns and others are all highlighted for your lawmakers in our [2021-2022 Briefing Book!](#)

We have collaborated with 24 conservation and social justice experts to produce this comprehensive guide for Florida lawmakers. Every Florida state Senator and Representative has received a copy of this guide and now you can access it too.

We hope that this briefing book will serve as your lawmakers' guide to understanding the critical environmental issues facing our state along with the social justice issues to which they are inextricably bound.

More than 90% of Floridians rely on underground aquifers for drinking water. The Florida Legislature must safeguard our water and the long-term health and well-being of all communities. Our elected officials need to hear about the importance of these issues to you and your family.

Aliki Moncrief, Executive Director

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ECHO/Volusia Forever is moving forward quickly after the resounding vote in favor of these two programs last November. Advisory boards for both have been named and listening sessions for ECHO were [scheduled](#) earlier. Listening sessions for Volusia Forever took a little longer to schedule but they're now posted to the County's website too. Scroll down a bit on this [linked page](#) for that schedule. We hope you'll get involved and attend one or more of these listening sessions. It's important work and your input can make a difference.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, April 19th Program Meeting- Join us for trip into the past as we learn about the history of New Smyrna Beach. Our guide for this trip back in time will be documentary film maker, George Sibley. A film maker for over 40 years, his work spans a lot of subjects. If you've seen the film at the beginning of the tour of the Ponce Inlet Lighthouse, that's one of George's productions. He's done films for several national parks and on a host of other subjects, all with an eye to conservation. This will be a Zoom meeting of course and pre-registration is required. Please check [our calendar](#) for more information and the link to the Zoom reservation system for your login. 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.

Field Trips

Wednesday, April 7th, Washington Oaks Gardens State Park- Join Joan Tague for this trip. Meet at the parking lot in the state park, 6400 N. Oceanshore Blvd. Palm Coast FL 32137. We will explore the gardens and trails while looking for Spring migrants. This can be our best opportunity to see a good number of Neotropical migrants as they pass through Florida. Check our [website](#) for more information. Questions, call Joan at 386-871-6049.

Marine Discovery Center Boat Trip

Thursday, April 15th- 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. This is the last of these trips for the year.

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.

Marion County birder, Alice Horst, sent this story recently

Sandhill Cranes in the Villages

March 15th, I stopped for a quick look at Alhambra Way Pond. Water level is lower now and not too attractive for much of anything. I did see 8 Blue-winged Teal, 2 Yellowlegs and 2 Least Sandpipers.

But the BEST was watching the Sandhill Cranes that are nesting on the bank of the pond. Originally they were working on a nest in the middle of the pond but when a rain storm elevated the water level that nest was abandoned. Then they began working on a nest on dry land. Tonight I saw one adult sitting on the nest while the other adult was wandering in the middle of the very shallow pond.

The wanderer wandered toward the nest-sitter. When the nest-sitter stood up 2 large eggs were visible. She turned the 2 eggs while he stood guard in the water nearby. Then she slowly sat down again on the egg and he just wandered awaywhat a guy!

Sometimes you just have to be lucky for photos. I certainly was tonight. Every day is a GREAT day to go birding!

Alice Horst



Standing guard while Mrs. turned the eggs
Photo by Alice Horst

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From Large to Small

The article above is about birds that stand 4.5 feet tall. This one is about birds that are 3.25 to 4.5 inches in length. Steve Underwood, our Corresponding Secretary, was cruising the Internet recently and came across this [YouTube video](#) of hummingbirds in high def, slow motion Enjoy!

Editor



Comfortably(?) incubating her 2 eggs

Photo by Alice Horst

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Below is a report from the GBBC website.

Birds Brought the World Together

The 2021 Great Backyard Bird Count was an incredible success. Congratulations! Look at what we accomplished:

- 6,436 species of birds identified
- 190 participating countries
- 379,726 eBird checklists submitted
- 479,842 Merlin Bird IDs submitted
- 151,393 photo submissions to Macaulay Library
- + 300,000 estimated global participants

Thank you for your contributions to this important effort to celebrate, watch, and count birds around the world so we can better protect them. No matter where your literal backyard was, our global backyard connected us to each other and the birds. To see a more in-depth summary of the 4-day event and engage with interactive world maps, [check out our final results](#). And be sure to watch our [Thank You Video](#) showcasing people and birds from around the world.

Congratulations to Anna Anders who won the Zeiss binocular give away! Anna says, "I had always been interested in birds but never felt I had the time to truly identify and observe them. And then the pandemic happened. Like many others I found solace in the natural world, especially in birds. I can't wait to do the GBBC next year and continue my birding journey!"



The Great Backyard Bird Count is an inter-organizational partnership.

Here's another plant profile from our resident expert, Leslie Nixon

The Catbird Plant

Florida Privet (*Forestiera segregata*) is a large shrub that often goes unnoticed in the landscape – except for two weeks in spring when it is chock full of small dark berries - and the catbirds who can't resist the tasty fruit. Catbirds are notoriously shy and are more often heard than seen, unless you have a Florida privet.

Florida privet is a fast-growing, drought-tolerant, hurricane-resistant Florida native that can reach 10-15' tall and 5-10' wide. It will work well in your yard as a single specimen or in multiples to form a hedge that can be sheared or left informal. In our area (planting zone 9) its dense cover thins out in December and January, but come February, just before it regains its fullness, tiny yellow-green flowers appear, which are followed in March by the bountiful berries (and birds).

Growing conditions: Florida privet is very adaptable, thriving in full sun to part shade, and dry or moist soil. Since it is tolerant of salt spray, it can also be enjoyed near the beach.

Only female plants produce berries, so if you are getting only one, make sure it's a girl. This young lady will take a couple of years before she starts producing berries, so be patient. If you plant one, the catbirds will come!

Note on purchasing bird-friendly plants: Most of the plants discussed here are Florida natives, which unfortunately means they are rarely sold in big box stores. To locate a nursery carrying native plants, look on the Florida Association of Native Nurseries [website](#).

Leslie Nixon



A Gray Catbird enjoys Florida privet berries

Photo by Leslie Nixon

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From the Quotable Birder

"In order to see birds it is necessary to become part of the silence."

Robert Wilson Lynd

For those of you looking for Ray Scory's regular column, "Everyday Birding", it's absent this month. Ray had an unexpected visit to the hospital. He's home again and resting comfortably. His column will return next month. He did send the following along though.

Hi David,

Thought you might find this article interesting. My son-in-law from Connecticut emailed it to me.

Ray

Rare bird: 'Half-male, half-female' Cardinal

Some of what follows ran on the BBC website. As you can see the bird exhibits the colors of both sexes and appears split right down the middle.



Though not unheard of, mixed sex birds are rare. Male Northern Cardinals are bright red but females are pale brown, suggesting this specimen may be a mix of the two sexes.

Retired ornithologist Jamie Hill, 69, told the BBC it was a "once-in-a-lifetime, one-in-a-million encounter".

A friend of Mr Hill told him that she had seen an "unusual bird" coming to her bird feeders in Warren County, in Pennsylvania. At first Mr Hill wondered if the bird was leucistic - a term that means the specimen would have a loss of pigmentation in its feathers, but would not be half-female, half-male.

But after seeing mobile phone pictures, he suspected it had what is called bilateral gynandromorphism, which is when a bird would have both a functioning ovary and a functioning single testes.

Google that term, bilateral gynandromorphism, and you'll get hits that include information about a half and half Rose-breasted Grosbeak that was also discovered in Pennsylvania. That article ran in [National Geographic](#) in October of last year. Sort of makes you wonder what's in the water up there.

Of course, with millions of birds in the country, extremely rare events like these two examples are most likely the result of coincidence and not some hidden, man made, external cause.

It's a strange and wonderful world we live in. While we see evidence daily of the disastrous effects our species has on the others we share the planet with, sometimes things like those above are the result of simple genetic variation. If indeed the workings of genetic diversity can ever be called "simple."

David Hartgrove

³ Thanks to the BBC and retired ornithologist, Jamie Hill for parts of this article.

We Welcome Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Dave Bachansingh, Toby Berger, David Billmeier, Joseph Bilotti, Sam Cline, Irene Curran, Ralph Inman, Bill Kappa, Richard Langston, Nancy Lewis, Billie Lynch, Anne Marshall, Dean Palamara, Shivani Rudradat, Sherry Salvaggio, June Sefcik and Christopher Van Duyne. 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 Birding Community e-Bulletin

Red-Cockaded Woodpecker Future?

In our November 2020 Birding Community E-bulletin we described the actions then in motion to "down list" the Red-cockaded Woodpecker from "Endangered" to "Threatened" under the Endangered Species Act. The proposal was published in the Federal Register, with a 60-day public comment period ending on December 7th.

Indeed, it was in the final months of the Trump administration that the down-listing process was started. At the same time there were a number of conservation groups who claimed that the action might undermine gains made in part with the aid of public-private partnerships that had taken decades of work to put in place and accounted for millions of dollars spent.

There had been success, of course. In the early 1970s, near the time when the woodpecker was first listed as Endangered, there may have been no more than 1,500 clusters (groups of cavity trees used by one or more woodpeckers) of the birds. By the mid-1990s there were perhaps 4,600. Today, there are almost 7,800 such clusters ranging across 11 states from southern Virginia to eastern Texas.

But these same increased numbers also can be viewed differently: they are located in 124 distinct populations, and 108 of those populations have fewer than 100 clusters, usually with low or very low "resiliency." Moreover, many of these locations are in or near coastal regions, vulnerable to increasingly common and powerful hurricanes, ready to potentially snap pine trees with woodpecker cavities.

A number of observers see the as-yet-unresolved listing proposal as simply part of a Trump-administration holdover effort to erode environmental protections. It is no accident that the down-listing is still under consideration even with a new administration in Washington.

Mike Lynch, formerly on the leadership team at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, overseeing training areas where Red-cockaded Woodpeckers were a serious wildlife-management issue, summarized an ongoing concern: "If we don't stay focused, we'll just relive history again, in 10 years... It doesn't take long for a forest to choke itself out, or a species to be on the brink if it is not properly managed."

Stay tuned for more on this issue, but you can hear a good summary of options [here](#) on WUNC, North Carolina Public Radio.

Birding Community E-Bulletin

You can access all the past E-bulletins on the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) [website](#).

Birding Community E-Bulletin is published by Wayne R. Petersen, Director, Mass Audubon IBA Program and Paul J. Baicich, Great Birding Projects and NWRA.

West Volusia Audubon Society Fund Raiser

This has been a difficult year for all of us, and we need your help to meet your chapter's goals to protect birds and their habitat. The West Volusia Audubon Society Board has set a goal of raising \$5,000 in the next three months, with the board members pledging to match the donations we receive, dollar for dollar, up to half the goal amount. This will effectively double the donations that we receive.

This funding will allow us to continue protecting birds and their environment through projects like the Friends of Lyonia Environmental Center, Blue Spring Alliance, Gemini Springs Alliance, Jay Watch at Lyonia Preserve, the Institute for Water and Environmental Resilience at Stetson University, Audubon Center for Birds of Prey, and the Florida Wildflower Foundation. You can donate on our [website](#), with a credit or debit card or by PayPal. You can also donate by mail: West Volusia Audubon Society, PO Box 1268 DeLand, FL 32721-1268. Thank you so much!

Arnette Sherman, Chapter President

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