

# The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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## Comments & Conservation Notes

Responding to citizen requests, the Volusia County Council has directed staff to study the idea of opening more sections of the beach to dogs. Currently dog friendly areas are limited to both sides of Ponce Inlet, at Lighthouse Point Park and at Smyrna Dunes Park. Both locations require that dogs be leashed at all times and that owners pick up after their dogs. Some owners strictly observe these rules. Many do not.

One section of the beach apparently under strong consideration lies north of Granada Blvd. in Ormond Beach. Board member, Melissa Lammers, lives up in the area under consideration and walks the beach daily. She reports that even though this section of the beach is currently off limits to dogs, she sees them on the beach daily and often off leash. The potential for harm to feeding and resting migrating shorebirds is obvious. While most dogs do not truly pose a direct threat to shorebirds, the birds don't know that. To them that's a 4 legged predator, no different than an arctic fox or a wolf, which on their nesting grounds kill and eat them and their young.

If we could be sure that ALL dog owners would be responsible and keep their dogs on leash then we would have no problem with expanding the areas open to dogs. The existing areas open to dogs are plagued with owners who apparently assume that rules are made to be broken. That Fido's right to run free trumps all other considerations. As with so much of our experience in life, it's the actions of a few that force limits on all of us. We have written to the County Council expressing our opinion. We await the reports from the planned workshops.

\* \* \*

Listening sessions for Volusia Forever are going on now. We worked hard to get this and ECHO renewed by the voters. Three listening sessions remain, on successive Wednesday evenings: May 5th at the Beach Patrol Headquarters, May 12th at the Ormond Beach City Commission Chambers and May 19th at the Deltona Regional Library. All are scheduled from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The program has been an outstanding success. Its future going forward will be enhanced by adding language to its charter that takes into consideration the needs we have to protect our freshwater recharge areas, continue connecting the established wildlife corridor and make decisions based on science, not political connections. Please plan to attend one of these meetings. If you're so inclined, fill out a card as you enter and speak out in favor of the concepts outlined above. Our leaders want to make this program successful and that's far more likely to happen if they hear from all of us in the environmental community.

David Hartgrove

## Calendar & Events

**Monday, May 17th, Program meeting-** Join us for a birding trip to that birding mecca, Costa Rica, with our host for the evening, Chris Fisher. This will be a Zoom meeting of course and pre-registration is required. It is **imperative** that you use this [link](#) to the Zoom reservation system. You'll then receive an email with the 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.

## Elections

It's time once again for our chapter elections. Our bylaws state that we have four positions elected by the membership: President, Vice President, Recording Secretary and Treasurer. The rest of our board is appointed by the President and approved by the board.

Since we're meeting by Zoom this means that if you have someone you'd like to nominate for one of these positions, including a self nomination, you're free to do so. The candidates below were the product of the nominating committee. Once nominations are closed, if we have no more nominees, the slate of candidates below will take office. If we have other nominations we'll hold an election by a show of hands.

### Our slate of candidates

President	David Hartgrove
Vice President	Joan Tague
Treasurer	Ellen Tate
Recording Secretary	Catherine Goodman

### The Rest of Our Board For the Next Two Years

Past President	Melissa Lammers*
Membership Sec.	Joan Tague
Corresponding Sec.	Steve Underwood
Historian	Holly Zwart-Duryea
At Large Members:	Barbara Northrup, Steve Underwood and Peggy Yokubonus

\* Melissa is being asked to remain as Past President, beyond the required tenure, because we need her expertise.

## One Time Only

“A one time and one time only sighting.” And that makes it special. A White-winged Dove, a Common Nighthawk or a Sandhill Crane, a backyard can be a marvelous place to bird. A place that will rattle with excitement as that “one time only” bird appears. The event can trigger a memory that will last forever.

Jane and I have lived in the same house here in Florida for the past 21 years. We enjoy looking out our kitchen window to the backyard bordering a half moon shaped small pond. One day a tall Sandhill Crane nonchalantly walked up from the pond to the screened porch where I was sitting. It turned right to walk around our house. I immediately spun 180 degrees and charged into the house, grabbed my camera and shot out the front door to the street. I made my photo of the crane at the front door. Back around the house into the back door, through the house, opened the front door and made another photo through the storm door from inside the house. During one frantic charge around the house, the crane strolled by me not four feet away. My camera was on motor drive. I was on motor drive. Many photographs were made of the Sandhill Crane’s half hour visit that day. A “one time only sighting” in 21 years. Never to visit again.



*This Sandhill Crane visited my house once. Walking around once, stopped at our front door and continued on. It waited so long at the door I expected it to ring the doorbell!*

One Summer morning in 2005, a White-winged Dove visited our feeder. It came every day for two weeks. It mixed nicely with the other regulars at the feeder, especially with the ever present Mourning Doves. I was excited. Would White-winged Doves become regular visitors to my feeder as the Mourning Doves? I had observed them in Southern Florida but not up here in Port Orange. But alas, it didn’t happen. We had the pleasure of a two week visit and gone. Never to return again.



*This White-winged Dove, a two week visitor, juxtaposes smartly with its counterpart, the Mourning Dove. The White-winged dove is larger, has a squared off, white tipped tail and an obvious white marking on each wing.*

There were other “one time only” backyard birding moments in the past 21 years in Florida:

Sitting at my desk I saw a Common Nighthawk whizz over the roof. I grabbed my camera, ran to the back yard hoping it stopped in one of our pine trees. It did. I make my photo.

A male and female Great Horned Owl roosted in our backyard pine tree every day. Many evenings Jane and I watched as they silently flew across the pond to begin their nightly excursion. They stayed one season only. Never to return.

A color faded Painted Bunting. First time in yard. Never saw one like it before.

One Mute Swan sailed peacefully by. Lasting only a few minutes, but bringing grace and majesty to our backyard pond. Never to appear again. “One time only.”



*This Mute Swan casually sailed by Jane and me while we were sitting at our screened porch. It sailed around the bend in the pond and disappeared.*

I cherish these fantastic “one time only” birding opportunities. They bring wonder to my medley of birding experiences.

## Oak Trees Are Superstars

According to Doug Tallamy, the noted entomologist who studies bird-insect-plant interactions, the best thing you can do to help birds is to plant an oak tree. Oak leaves are the preferred food for hundreds of species of caterpillars which, in turn, are the preferred food for baby birds. Think of an oak tree as a grocery store for bird parents.

Oak trees also provide good cover and materials for nesting. In the fall and winter, they produce acorns – a valuable nutritional source during the lean months. Migrating birds especially appreciate a pit stop at oak trees during their long journeys north and south.

A massive live oak is a superb tree for our feathered friends, but there are three smaller oak species that are just as worthy and almost as long-lived: sand live oak (*Quercus geminata*), myrtle oak (*Q. myrtica*), and turkey oak (*Q. laevis*). All of these Florida native trees grow less than 40' tall, tolerate drought, withstand winds, and provide abundant insect delicacies for hungry birds.

When planting an oak tree, consider that it needs supplemental water for 6 months, full sun, and room to grow. Be sure to keep turfgrass several feet away from the trunk because some caterpillar species drop down on the ground to pupate and will be pulverized when the lawn is mowed.

Not only do oak trees supply essential resources for birds, they also provide many other ecological services. They create cooling shade, reduce CO2, store carbon for decades, increase oxygen, support other wildlife, buffer wind, and reduce rain runoff. Oak trees are environmental superstars. As Tallamy says, if you are planting a tree, "let it be an oak".

Leslie Nixon



A Downy Woodpecker looks for insects under lichens on an oak branch.

Photo by Leslie Nixon

## Legislative Issues/Updates

SB 100, the M-CORES repeal bill passed with only one dissenting vote after senators voted unanimously to include an amendment that requires DOT to use M-CORES Task Force recommendations in any future road project planning and design. While SB 100 does not have an identical House companion, similar bills alive in the House are good candidates to conform and ultimately result in passage of this important legislation. See additional details in the 3/27/2021 edition of [The Advocate](#).

St Johns WMD and Lake County government went to court to stop the use of unauthorized borrow pits on the Wekiva Parkway. Future legislation may require documentation of all requisite land use permits before a borrow pit can be created. Language being formulated now will probably pass.

Florida Forever funding is requested at \$100 million in the House but only \$50 million in the Senate, most of which will be directed to conservation easements. Funding for Rural and Family Lands may go to DEP which will pick up the obligation for conservation easements.

*Fast changing events in the Florida Legislature have secured 100 million dollars for Florida Forever since this report was written. Ed.*

The River Cross Development proposed for rural east Seminole County was rejected by county commissioners in 2018. A new proposal was submitted to settle a pair of lawsuits filed by the developer against the County. It is not believed that the County will approve this new proposal.

*Since this was written the Seminole County Commission voted unanimously to reject this ill conceived development. Ed.*

On April 27 Lake County Commission will discuss a request to approve White Water Farm Sand Mine. The Planning Board has recommended "no."

*The Board of County Commissioners voted unanimously to deny the permit. Ed.*

## Chapter Activities

All reporting chapters continue to monitor local government agenda and planning/zoning agendas and meetings and stay in contact with their elected officials.

Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive continues to be a popular outdoor destination, particularly during the pandemic. Visitor attendance in nine months of 2020 (the drive was closed for 3 months) exceeded attendance in 2019 by over 8%. Hiking and bicycling numbers are on the rise as well. Friends of Lake Apopka hope to host a fishing tournament.

Several chapters are progressing with our ED&I goal by setting up student chapters at a college, a university and a grade school. Audubon Adventures is being used in the school and an eco-camp. Six hundred native plant seedlings were grown and will be distributed to Lyonia Preserve, Stetson University and to local residents under a Plants for Birds Program.

*Paula Wehr, Central Florida Chapters Representative, Audubon Florida Board of Directors*

## What Can Individuals Do About Climate Change

The University of Florida's IFAS Extension and Climate Smart Floridians think they have an answer to that question. The Climate Smart Floridians program is specifically aimed at educating participants on individual actions they can take to reduce their environmental impacts. The program takes an innovative, fun, and comprehensive approach to climate change, to help build community support and reduce household impacts on climate change.

Through the program you'll learn what greenhouse gases are, how they impact our climate, and individual actions that can make a big difference to reduce those impacts on us all.

Topics covered by the course include climate change, and how it relates to water resources, green building, home energy, renewable energy, yards, food, water, transportation, and consumption with a special focus on issues that impact Volusia County and its residents.

This program is being hosted by Lyonia Environmental Center. In an effort to keep everyone safe and healthy during the pandemic, this program will be held online. These will be held on the Zoom platform. So if you've been attending our meetings you already know how this works.

The program will address the following topics and will be held from 10:00 am – Noon on the following dates:

Wednesday, May 12: Florida Climate Change & Volusia Resiliency Efforts

Wednesday, May 19: Strategic Landscaping & Water Conservation

Wednesday, May 26: Green Building & Low Impact Development

Wednesday, June 2: Home & Renewable Energy

Wednesday, June 9: Food Production & Waste

Wednesday, June 16: Transportation

Wednesday, June 23: Consumption & Waste

Registration is required. Please use the following link to register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/climate-smart-floridian-certificate-program-tickets-151128654875>

For more information, please contact Sandy Falcon at [sfalcon@volusia.org](mailto:sfalcon@volusia.org)

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## We Welcome Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Marc Allaire, William Chanfrau, Linda Downs, Ronald Englehart, Joanna Lemire, Arden Lusignan, Jennifer Petrucciani and Mary Richardson. 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

"A peacock once placed a petition before Juno desiring to have the voice of a nightingale in addition to his other attractions; but Juno refused the request. When he persisted, and pointed out that he was her favorite bird, she said: Be content with your lot; one cannot be first in everything."

*Aesop, The Peacock and Juno*

## Good News For a Florida Icon

Snail Kites are on every birder's wish list. While not endemic to our state it's the only place in our country where you can see one. Thirty years ago they were almost never seen north of Lake Okeechobee. This year there are at least 20 nesting pairs in Alachua County around Paynes Prairie. A recent article in [North American Birds](#) by Alison Vilag outlines the reasons for this sudden population increase.

Usually the introduction of non native species into Florida is a strong negative. Snail Kites, as their name implies, are very closely associated with snails, particularly apple snails. It's essentially the only thing they eat. Our native apple snail is about half the size of the channel apple snail, an exotic introduced into our fresh water ecosystems by people who bought them for their aquariums from pet shops. These new snails, in addition to being so much bigger, also lay three times as many eggs as the natives. As a result, when these invaders first showed up in local waters, biologists were wringing their hands in expectation that Snail Kites and Limpkins, another bird closely tied to snail consumption, would be unable to handle these much larger snails. It turns out they were wrong.

Snail Kites were suddenly found to be quickly adapting themselves, with slightly longer, stronger bills to be able to open these larger snails. Limpkins too showed quick adaptations to be able to better access this new food source. As a result we're seeing big increases in the populations of both of these species. The young of both species receive so much more protein with each feeding that they're surviving in far greater numbers than before. It's been a win for everyone, except for our native apple snails. That's the way of nature. A change happens and the rest of the biome adapts.

*David Hartgrove*



A juvenile Snail Kite. Photo by Alice Horst

Nothing fills space in our newsletter better than photos of our bird friends by our birding friends. Here are some shorebirds.



Solitary Sandpiper Photo by Alice Horst



Pectoral Sandpiper w/ Least Sandpiper in background Photo by Michael Brothers



Marbled Godwit Photo by Chuck Tague



This gorgeous male Painted Bunting is seen here on Jim O'Shaughnessy's feeder. We always hope these birds will hang around to nest but often they're only here for a short time.

Photo by Jim O'Shaughnessy

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Meets monthly September through May

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Vice President: Vacant

Past President: Melissa Lammers

Treasurer: Ellen Tate

Recording Sec.: Vacant

Membership Sec.: Joan Tague

Corresponding Sec: Steve Underwood

Historian: Holly Zwart-Duryea

At-Large: Barbara Northrup, Steve Underwood and Peggy Yokubonus

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Education: Holly Zwart-Duryea

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