

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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Comments & Conservation Notes

Water, it's what we're mostly made of and something we can't do without. So as the western US bakes in the hottest temperatures ever recorded and levels in reservoirs drop to points not seen in our lifetime, you'd think states out there would use some common sense in planning for the future. Au contraire.

The proposed Lake Powell Pipeline will guarantee water from the already over burdened Colorado River for golf courses and turf grass in the gated communities of southwest Utah. If this sounds crazy to you just remember that here in Florida our water management districts have issued so many permits that the Floridan Aquifer is in danger of becoming saline and their proposed remedy is yet another pipeline. This one to send water from the Suwannee River into the aquifer at astronomical costs.

Here in Volusia County, in a bid to increase the profits of a few sand mine operators, the County Council is about to vote on changes that would severely reduce the set backs between the sand mines and our wetlands and open water bodies. The current setback limit is 150 feet and several well researched studies opine that this is inadequate and recommend a 300 foot setback. The requested changes set the limit at just 50 feet with a possibility for exemptions to allow the set back to be just 25 feet! The Volusia County Planning and Land Development Regulation Commission (PLDRC) voted 3 to 3 to send this issue to the County Council with no recommendation. It is the hope of our local environmental community that the Council will see this for what it is- a grasp for increased profits for a few to the detriment the rest of us. The set back limits are there to safeguard our Sole Source aquifer here in Volusia County. Once contaminated the aquifer is all but impossible to clean up and then only at exorbitant costs. It would take only a few minutes to call your council person and ask if they'll vote down this ordinance and seek a new one mandating a 300 foot setback. Here's a [link](#) to their contact information.

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[Archbold Biological Station](#), near Venus, Florida on the Lake Wales Ridge, recently held a "Science Blitz" at Eagle Haven Ranch, on the shore of Lake Kissimmee. This 29,000 acre property is now in permanent conservation thanks to a generous donation from an anonymous donor. Fifty-nine species of birds were logged, including Snail Kites and Florida Scrub-Jays; over 160 plant species and assorted mammals, frogs, invertebrates and others were also recorded. This was an opportunity for Archbold scientists to instruct students in the techniques used in scientific studies of biodiversity.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

It's September and that means we're back to our regular schedule of monthly meetings and field trips. We had hoped to be back to meeting in person. However the surge in Covid cases means we need continue with Zoom meetings until at least January. Just like last year you'll need to send an email to members@halifaxriveras.org to register for the meeting. You'll receive an email back with a link to the meeting. Here's a link to our Fall Schedule on our [website](#).

Monday, September 20th, Program Meeting- In what is becoming a tradition, we open our 2021/2022 season with a program by Michael Brothers. Michael (now retired from his position as Director of the Marine Science Center) will give a program on shorebird identification. Flocking together for the meeting begins at 6:30 pm and Michael's program will begin promptly at 7:00. A brief business meeting will follow. Please plan to join us.

Field Trips

We're going to ease back into this slowly with just one field trip this month.

Wednesday, September 22nd, Port Orange Bridge- Join David Hartgrove for a casual walk around the bridge area. We should get around 30 species and we'll be scanning the sandbars and mud flats for migrant shorebirds, terns and gulls. We'll meet below the west side of the bridge at 4:00 pm. Questions, call David at 386-235-1249.

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Field Trips With Others

Volusia County Environmental Management has long hosted a variety of monthly field trips. Here are two to consider. REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED. Call 386-736-5927

Tuesday, September 7th, Tom Rennick Park-

Join us to clean up the beach. After the Labor Day weekend with a high volume of visitors on the beach, there may be a lot of trash left behind. We will clean up the beach and learn about the impacts of trash on sea turtles and other wildlife. We will also learn about washback sea turtles and what to do if you find one. Meet at 1565 Ocean Shore Blvd., Ormond Beach

Saturday, September 11th, Hike Hickory Bluff Preserve-

Explore the natural world on an upland and swamp hike of the St. Johns River watershed to compare habitat characteristics. Meet at 598 Guise Rd, Osteen, 32764

Time For the Audubon Assembly

A little bird humor from [Funny Times](#).

This year's Audubon Assembly will be a combination in person and virtual event. And, in a departure from previous years, this event will be spread out over two and a half weeks. It opens on Thursday, October 21st, with a virtual session at 6:00 pm. Executive Director of Audubon Florida, Julie Wraithmell, will open the festivities followed by Chapters Representative, Jacqui Sulek, with a report on chapter events from around the state. There will be several in person field trips and a virtual keynote address brings the event to a close on November 9th. This is essentially three events, one for North Florida, one for Central Florida and one for Southwest Florida. The Southwest Florida event is already sold out. Registration is 35.00 and here's a link to the [website](#). I found the registration process a bit confusing so take your time making your selection.

David Hartgrove

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Here's an update on the first Piping Plovers to nest in Ohio in 80 years and their connection to Florida.

All Six Birds Banded and Heading South

Greetings from "Ploverville". Ohio successfully had its first Piping Plover nesting since 1942 at Maumee Bay State Park in the western basin of Lake Erie. The nest produced 4 chicks, all hatched on July 1st. On Monday, August 9th, all four appeared to depart about 9:30AM, and had not returned by the end of the day. About forty days after hatching, all four chicks, alive, independent, and flying off into the history books. The dad "Nish" left over a week ago, and the mom "Nellie" a few days later. As was reported previously, The Gulf Coast connection is: "Nish" was recorded at Anclote Key last winter and "Nellie" was recorded at nearby Honeymoon Island. Hopefully the two parents return to last years wintering locations, and the kids: Erie, Kickapoo, Maumee, and Ottawa, also, somehow find there way to Anclote or Honeymoon, having safe travels. This is another example of the amazing diversity of where the Pinellas County wintering Piping Plovers come from. Also, the numbers of Piping Plovers found on the mainland beaches of Fort Desoto, Outback Key, Shell Key, Caladesi, and Honeymoon, and the offshore barrier islands of the two Three Rooker Bars, part of Anclote Key State Park, is hard to believe. So please keep an eye out for these "Snowbirds" from Ohio. Since "Nish" and "Nellie's" arrival back at the end of May, volunteers from The Black Swamp Bird Observatory have monitored the birds for the past seventy plus days. We owe them a debt of gratitude. We're also express our gratitude to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Ohio Division Of Wildlife, and the staff of Maumee Bay State Park. The six members of the celebrity plover family, have all been banded, so it can be determined who successfully makes the thousand mile journey to our part of The Gulf Coast.

Robert Lane / Pinellas County, FL & Mahoning County, Ohio

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Tips For Using Merlin's Bird Song App

[Merlin](#) is an app for your smart phone, either Android or Apple, that allows you to identify a bird with astonishing accuracy. The good folks at Cornell Lab of Ornithology have now added an information page if you have questions about using the bird song identification feature in Merlin. Here's the [link](#).

Editor



Welcome to Our New Members

While the gentleman in the cartoon above may be a bit over enthusiastic, we hope all our members have fun and learn from their association with Audubon. We extend a warm welcome to our new members: Harvey Barnett, Lorna Beck, Lillian Cocce, Judy Diemer, Deborah Green, A. E. Mirabito, Linda Neubauer, George Weinert and Evelyn Wolfe. We hope to see you at one of our meetings on Zoom or on one of our excellent field trips.

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From the Quotable Birder

"Lying under an acacia tree with the sound of the dawn around me, I realized more clearly the facts that man should never overlook: that the construction of an airplane depends on an advanced civilization, and that where civilization is most advanced, few birds exist. I realized that if I had to choose, I would rather have birds than airplanes."

Charles A Lindbergh, in an interview shortly before his death.

Time for another in our continuing series "Everyday Birding",
by Ray Scory

Remembering "The Big Sit"

The rain came in sheets, a pounding force to flatten the coastal landscape. It was not concerned for any earthly comfort on this gray, gray, wet and early morning. I arrived under the Dunlawton Bridge before daybreak to the sound of powerful water pellets machine gunning my car. I did not get out. I waited for John Carr to arrive to decide how we should begin our bird count for the annual "The Big Sit."



Ray and John at The Big Sit circle at the Dunlawton Bridge

[The Big Sit](#) is an international bird count established by the New Haven Bird Club (Connecticut) and has been active since 1992. I participated in the Connecticut count since its beginning until the year 2000 when Jane and I moved to Port Orange. Here I continued to count each year on the second Sunday of October. Great Fun - Great Companionship - Great Birding.

The wind and rain quieted by late morning and John and I continued birding until the early evening. We later found out that we experienced birding during what became known as "The Hurricane with No Name". So named because it came upon Florida with no advanced warning. We counted Species of birds that day from a 17 foot circle, prescribed by rules of the Count. Some notable birds observed during that wildly unusual count were: Brown Booby, Black-crowned Night-Heron, American Oystercatchers and 36 other species of birds.

My first encounter with "The Big Sit" here in Florida was an excited surprise. As I drove under the Dunlawton Bridge to my picnic table count destination on the Halifax River, I heard the mellow calls of two Great Horned Owls quietly sharing a peaceful and endearing moment together flying back and forth between two bridge supports under the bridge. They would come together shoulder to shoulder, tenderly touch their beaks together and expressing a soft "hu-hu hu hoo hoo".

I remember the people who stopped by my imaginary 17 foot circle to ask in a most friendly and inquisitive way, "What is going on here?" I would explain that I was with the Halifax River Audubon and was conducting an international bird count. It was both fun and rewarding to see the expression on their faces after they looked at an American Oystercatcher or wading shore birds through my 80mm spotting scope with its 20x60 zoom eyepiece. Priceless.

One day a young man on a motorcycle stopped by. He was a birder and I enjoyed talking with him. This day was a Sunday in Bike Week. Shortly after, five motorcycles, some with two riders, all dressed in classy black and sequin laden outfits graced my birding hot spot. They all got a chance to look through my scope. All were thrilled by the birds they saw up close. We had a wonderful time talking about birds. I will never forget that motorcycle gang.

Another year, a drab gray van stopped by decorated with faded symbols of the '60's, the peace sign, a lightning bolt, a yellow sun, and other symbols. Six youngsters (8-15) and a young woman piled out excited to see Florida birds. The young woman, the leader of the pack and a Michigan nature center volunteer found six life birds. They all drove off, bumping along, thrilled to see Florida birds up close through my spotting scope.

In the 29 years that "The Big Sit" has been in existence, I have missed two. I sincerely thank our HRA members who stopped by to say hello or stay longer hours with me. Always sincerely appreciated. Many bird ID surprises. Jane brought lunch from DJ's under the bridge. Always did - every year - without me asking. A special bird day treat. Should I never do "The Big Sit" again, I shall always be content with the endless memories of these happy birding days.

Ray Scory



Dawn, and lone Snowy Egret begins breakfast at the bridge.

Photos by Ray Scory

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Swallow-tailed Kites Are Headed South Again

Those graceful fliers are headed south for the winter and you can track their progress, thanks to the fine folks at ARCI. That's the Avian Conservation and Research Institute in Gainesville. One of their researchers, Gina Kent, will be the speaker at our November meeting. ARCI has 11 birds fitted with GPS trackers and their interactive map allows anyone to keep track of where the birds are in their long journey to western Brazil and Paraguay. Six of the birds have carried trackers before. Five were just fitted with their devices this nesting season. It's exciting to view their progress. Here's a link to the [website](#).

It's been too long since we've had a report from Sea Watch Coordinator, Harry Robinson. Here's what he reported in July.

Another month it looked like there would be no new species until the last 30 minutes of the last day. There were 31 surveys over 180 hours and the best days were the 21st with 48 species and the 25th with 838 birds (how low these numbers are compared to November/January). For the month 97 species located this is a joint high count with 2018. There have been ten additions this year with 229 for the year to date and 294 ever (it is creeping up to the 300 count).

There was a Cory's Shearwater on the 1st with two Great Shearwaters on the 6th and one on the 7th. There was a Magnificent Frigatebird on the 7th. There was a Reddish Egret on the 15th with a Green Heron on the 9th. Single Black-crowned Night-Herons were seen on the 4th, 5th and 18th. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were around all month with five on the 5th and the 6th. Glossy Ibis were seen occasionally with 40 on the 22nd and 15 on the 25th. Roseate Spoonbills (adults) migrated to the north to the 15th; 81 in all. The best day was the 3rd when 41 flew to the north. There were also singles on the 24th and 26th. Wood Storks were seen occasionally with eight on the 14th. Most unexpected was a Fulvous Whistling-Duck on the 9th.

Swallow-tailed Kites were seen on most days with 13 on the 5th, 12 on the 11th, seven on the 21st and five on the 22nd. There were two Mississippi Kites on the 2nd with one on the 20th. There were single light-morph Short-tailed Hawks on the 9th, 12th, 27th and 30th.

There were single Black-bellied Plovers on the 13th, 27th and 28th. There were nine Semipalmated Plovers on the 21st. On the beach there was a Piping Plover on the 25th. Black-necked Stilts seen from the 5th there were three on that date with higher counts of 20 on the 16th, 27 on the 19th and 15 on the 23rd. There were two Greater Yellowlegs on the 19th with one on the 27th. There was a Lesser Yellowlegs on the 13th with two on the 19th. Willets' were seen all month with 61 on the 11th and the 13th. There were three Spotted Sandpipers on the 21st with three Whimbrel on the 27th. There was a Marbled Godwit on the 23rd. There were three Ruddy Turnstones on the 15th with one on the 21st, two on the 22nd and one on the 23rd. There was a breeding plumage Red Knot on the 29th. Sanderling were seen from the 20th with 140 on the 25th, 110 on the 27th and 70 on the 31st. Semipalmated Sandpipers were seen from the 12th with 89 on the 21st, 240 on the 23rd and 350 on the 24th (new high count), then 330 seen on the 25th with 30 on the 31st. There were eight Least Sandpipers on the 21st with three on the 27th and singles on the 28th/29th. There were single Pectoral Sandpipers on the 10th and 26th. There were two Stilt Sandpipers on the 21st. There were single Short-billed Dowitchers on the 8th and 13th with six on the 21st and one on the 23rd.

There was a Gull-billed Tern on the 6th with two Caspian Terns on the 4th. There was a Common Tern on the 7th with two on the 20th, two on the 29th and three on the 31st. Least Terns seen all month with 14 on the 5th, 13 on the 9th and seven on the 18th. There were three Black Terns on the 19th.

There were single White-winged Doves on the 1st, 5th and 18th. Common Ground-Doves had a new high count of seven on the 24th. At the last minute there was an addition to the list there was a Budgerigar on the 31st. A female Chuck-will's-widow was present all month. There were single Ruby-throated Hummingbirds on the 6th, 10th and 13th. There were also single Belted Kingfishers on the 12th and 18th. Downy Woodpeckers had a new high count of four on the 5th. Up to two Pileated Woodpeckers were seen on five dates. There was

a Great Crested Flycatcher to at least the 25th. There were two Gray Kingbirds on the 10th (a high count) with one on the 18th. American Crows present all month with four on the 18th.

Purple Martins were seen to the 20th with 14 on the 4th. There was an adult Tree Swallows on the 31st. There was a Northern Rough-winged Swallow on the 3rd with two on the 28th, then singles seen on the 30th and the 31st. There were two Bank Swallows on the 23rd with one on the 27th, then six seen on the 30th. There was also a Cliff Swallow on the 23rd. Barn Swallows were seen all month with 113 flying to the south on the 30th. There were two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers on the 13th. There were 23 Northern Mockingbirds on the 10th a new high count. Single Brown Thrashers were seen on the 3rd, 4th and 20th. There were two Yellow Warblers on the 9th with a Common Yellowthroat on the 22nd. Common Grackles were seen to the 15th. Boat-tailed Grackles had a passage this year with a high count of 93 on the 9th there were also 43 on the 23rd. There were four Brown-headed Cowbirds on the 23rd. House Finches present all month with 13 on the 11th.

Harry Robinson

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