

# The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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October, 2021



## Comments & Conservation Notes

For our next meeting on October 18th our speaker, Chris Farrell, Audubon Florida's Northeast Florida Policy Associate, will give us an update on efforts to restore the Oklawaha River. Its destruction was part of the wrong headed plan, first proposed over 450 years ago, for a canal across Florida to connect the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean. The idea was tinkered with by President's Roosevelt, Kennedy and Johnson and finally stopped by President Nixon in 1971. But not before the Rodman Dam was built across the Oklawaha creating the Rodman Reservoir. Local bass fishermen had the reservoir stocked with bass fry and the rest is history. Having a couple of 'good ole boy' politicians as their fishing buddies meant that the thousands of voices from the across the environmental community pleading for the river's restoration fell on deaf ears. Lead by Majorie Harris Carr, those voices continued speaking out. Now we may be at a point where something good will be done. And you can help to make that happen. Click on the link to the [St Johns Riverkeeper](#) and from there to the SJRWMD's comment page. The Riverkeeper page offers a series of responses to the questions you'll be asked on the SJRWMD page. Please, this will only take you 5 minutes and you'll know you did your part in helping with this problem.

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Tropical Audubon, in Miami, is fighting the good fight against yet another wasteful and damaging proposed expressway. Miami-Dade County has a well thought out growth management plan which, like others around the state, is just a speed bump for developers and their monied interests. The plan forbids extension of a planned expressway across a part of the Everglades. When it was first proposed Tropical Audubon and other environmental groups went to court to force compliance with the plan's restrictions. Expressway planners tout the time saved by commuters from the Kendall area of southern Miami-Dade County if the road is built. An actual study shows that the average commuter will save a whopping...**six minutes** from his daily travel. Estimated cost for this 13 mile boondoggle: one billion dollars. And you know there will be cost over runs. There always are.

Now, riding to the rescue of the developers, comes Governor Ron DeSantis, the "I'm all in for protecting Florida's wetlands" governor. Governor Ron and his Cabinet (Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried voted against it) voted to void the judge's decision and give the green light to the expressway. Tropical Audubon has vowed to go back to court to try to stop the madness. Let's hope they're successful.

David Hartgrove

## Calendar & Events

**Monday, October 18th, Program Meeting-** Join us for an update on restoration efforts to the Oklawaha River with Chris Farrell, Audubon Florida's Northeast Florida Policy Associate. This will be a Zoom meeting so you'll need to register for the meeting by clicking on this [link](#). You'll then receive an email with the meeting link. The gathering begins at 6:30 pm and Chris' presentation begins promptly at 7:00. A brief business meeting will follow. Please plan to join us.

### Field Trips

*Hoping to cash in on Fall migration we have 3 trips this month plus Joans' bird walks at Ormond Central Park.*

**Tuesday, October 5th, Ormond Central Park-** Join Joan Tague at the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center at 8:00 am for a bird walk lasting about 2 hours. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

**Thursday, October 7th, Washington Oaks Gardens SP-** Join Joan Tague for this walk through the state park looking for Fall migrants. Meet at the park, 6400 N Oceanshore Blvd, Palm Coast at 8:00 am. Bring lunch. Questions, call Joan at 386-871-6049.

**Thursday, October 14th, Faver Dykes State Park-** Join Joan Tague for a walk through this beautiful park as we look for Fall migrants. Meet at Ormond Town Square – Granada & Williamson Blvds Behind Chick-fil-A at 7:30 am. Bring lunch. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

**Tuesday, October 18th, Ormond Central Park-** Join Joan Tague at the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center at 8:00 am for a bird walk lasting about 2 hours. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

**Friday, October 22nd, Tosohatchee WMA-** Join Joan Tague for this mostly driving field trip. Meet at 7:30 am at the Target East of I-95 on Dunlawton Ave behind Panera Bread. Bring lunch. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

*We have a new waiver for all field trip participants to sign. In this ongoing time of COVID, National Audubon field trip guidelines recommended having participants sign new waivers every year. Here's a link to the [waiver](#) on our website. It's a downloadable PDF so you can print and sign it now and bring it with you to a field trip. We'll also have them at the meet up sites. All of our activities from now till the end of the year are listed on our website on the Fall 2021 Schedule. It too is a printable PDF. Here's the [link](#). We hope to see you all out there.*

## Love Your State Tree

We see our state tree, the sabal or cabbage palm, almost everywhere we turn. It is so ubiquitous that we have come to take it for granted. Some Floridians even look down on it as too common (“cabbage” sounds so plebeian, doesn’t it?) and try to spice up their lives with exotic palm trees. But our sabal palm (*Sabal palmetto*) is a classic with many worthy qualities that deserve our appreciation.

For starters, the large panicles decorating the tree produce berries in the winter that sustain songbirds and small mammals throughout the lean months. We tend not to notice the panicles since they are high up in the tree, but they also support hundreds of pollinators during the summer when they develop big plumes of flowers.

The full, rounded crown provides nesting sites and materials for birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. Mosquito-eating bats and beneficial bugs roost in the brown fronds. Woodpeckers hammer the trunk and boots in search of a meal.

Our sabal palm is also one of the most durable trees in Florida, having flourished here since time immemorial. It grows in any type of soil, thrives in sun or shade, and survives strong winds, freezes, salt, drought, and periodic flooding. It is evergreen and long-lived.

Can your imported palm tree perform all these ecological feats?

Yet, a sabal palm cannot either – if it is pruned, especially if it is over-pruned. Trimming off green branches weakens the tree by reducing its ability to photosynthesize, i.e., feed itself. Removing the mature green fronds actually makes it more susceptible to hurricane damage because the young fronds cannot withstand strong winds without the protection of their older sisters. Pruning a palm also eliminates its wildlife value, reduces shade, and lessens its absorption of carbon dioxide. Put your pruning tools away for a healthier palm and a healthier environment.

Our sabal palm may not be the most glamorous tree in the landscape, but it remains vital to our subtropical ecosystem. The next time you are out birding, take a scan of our state tree and advertise your new-found appreciation for this enduring Florida classic.

Leslie Nixon

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## There’s Still Time to Register for the Audubon Assembly

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.

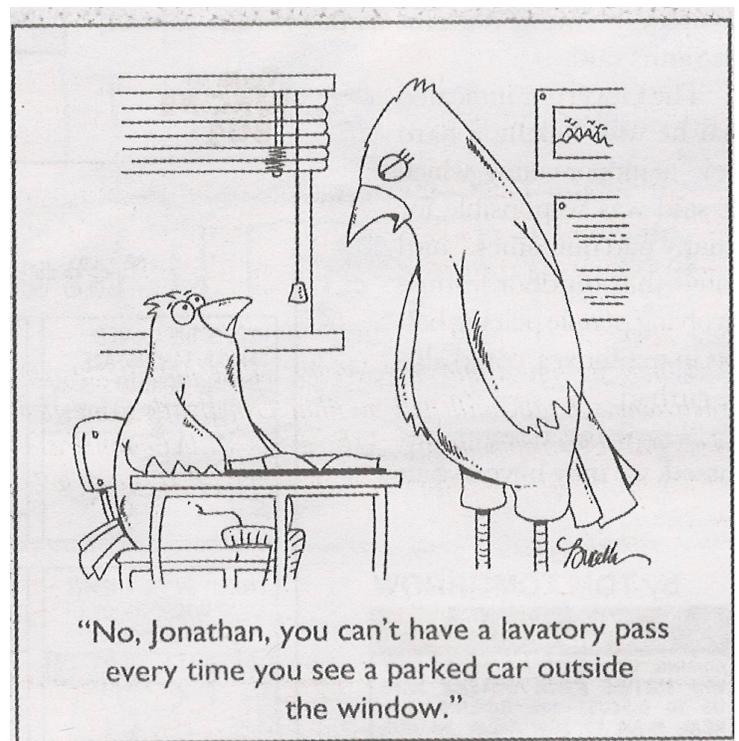


Our State Tree, the Sabal Palmetto,

Photo by Leslie Nixon

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## Some Bird Humor From [Funny Times](#)



Here's another in our ongoing series, *Everyday Birding*

by Ray Scory

## Active Memories - Lifetime Birding

I wonder why I recall a birding moment that happened so long ago. One that now wiggles foremost into the province of my memory. So bright and fresh that this ancient incident now seems like it occurred only yesterday. Sometimes these memories flash alive with no provocation on my part. Other times they come about when I'm deep in the aura of birding. The following examples illustrate this phenomena.

Now Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (MINWR), the Mecca of birding on the East Coast is one huge memory for me. I welcomed in the first decade of this 21st century by participating in a waterbird survey every ten days for seven years at this important wildlife refuge. The first section of Black Point Wildlife Drive is surrounded by wetlands, ponds and fresh water impoundments and became my survey territory and passion. An hour's drive from my home to the portal of the Wildlife Drive before daybreak was not soon enough. Since time changes the habits of all living things, at the first touch of light thousands of ducks will explode from the marshes announcing in a new day and the refuge will change in a dramatic way. During migration many birds will stay for the Winter. While some will stop to rest on their way farther South. Watching the lyrical spiraling descent of American White Pelicans or the graceful landing of hundreds of Northern Pintails is a beautiful experience. Finding a rarity, such as a Ross's Goose or a Gull-billed Tern is almost a common occurrence at the Refuge. Merritt Island NWR is certainly a Florida treasure creating endless memories.

My buddy, Paul, and I hiked The Appalachian Trail one week a year for ten years during the 1980's. Many fond memories from that experience abound. I cherish these moments, close my eyes, and let the memories take command. One evening we set up camp on the side of a mountain overlooking a deep rugged valley in the mountainous Adirondack region of New York State. Before sunrise brought light to the valley, millions of grackles and blackbirds were streaming through south at seemingly supersonic speeds. The sound was deafening. The speed was relentless, fast, anxious, noisy. All calling together keeping time with ancient accords, a well choreographed sight. I sat on a large rock, I watched in awe, closed my eyes to listen. I felt the power of this extraordinary event as daylight brushed over the valley. Two hours later, we continued our hike up and over the mountain as the sounds faded away.

On the other end of the migratory spectrum, but equally noteworthy, was the sighting of a green female Painted Bunting the first year Jane and I moved into our new Florida home. It was 15 years later, before another ventured into our yard. Since then, Every year beginning in October, they begin trickling in and gift our yard with a dazzling display of eye popping color. Beginning in April they start leaving for their breeding grounds in southeast Georgia.

Do memories refresh as the actual event or do they grow in importance as time moves along? Do the nuances of life's experiences embellish the original experience to a higher value of awareness and beauty? Only you can say.

I have revealed three long ago bird migration experiences. One a powerful mass of charging black birds. One a trickle of Painted Buntings into a seasonal home base. The other an unencumbered repose for a migratory travel well earned. When I look back upon these moments, I am at peace and thankful for the blessings.

Ray Scory



Thousands of Northern Pintails over winter in Merritt Island NWR. Photographed landing at the refuge after migrating down from Canada's northern provinces. They breed in the upper provinces of Canada and as far north as the Arctic Circle and Alaska down into mainland USA.



Is the male Painted Bunting coming in for a landing on the feeder or is he backing off just after feeding? Two female Painted Buntings are locked on to the skill of his maneuver.

Photos by Ray Scory

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## From the [Birding Community E-bulletin](#)

### DUCK STAMP RULE ANNOUNCEMENT

"It's back to the drawing board – literally – with the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, also known as the Duck Stamp. In the July issue of the Birding Community E-bulletin, we explained the proposal to eliminate the "hunting heritage" art- requirement for the waterfowl art in the stamp. We also touched on the missed opportunity to adjust the rules to deliver more nuanced messaging on bird and habitat conservation..."

"Last month, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced the final regulations governing these standards in the annual Duck Stamp Contest – beginning with the 2022 contest. Yes, these changes basically revert to the old rules, but they also provide artists more flexibility when designing their art. And, yes, the recent "hunting heritage" art- requirement is being dropped."

"The new rules still require the live portrayal of one of the eligible waterfowl species as the dominant feature for the stamp's artwork. Hunting accessories and scenes, such as dogs, decoys and blinds will now be optional components and their inclusion will be left to the artist's discretion..." Funds collected from stamp sales exceed 1.1 billion dollars since the mid 1930's. Purchasing a Duck Stamp is one of the best things we can do to protect waterfowl habitat.



Reid Hughes, photographed on the observation tower at Spruce Creek Park. *Photo by Nigel Cook by permission of the Daytona Beach News-Journal*

## Honoring Him by Renaming North Peninsula State Park

As I wrote in the August issue of the Pelican, Reid Hughes did a whole lot of good for our county and state. A long time member of our chapter, he quietly worked behind the scenes to save huge tracts of land for conservation. He served on the board of the St Johns River Water Management District, Audubon Florida, The Nature Conservancy and just about any other board or association where he thought he could make a difference.

We are trying to have North Peninsula State Park renamed Reid B. Hughes State Park. Clay Henderson, past President of the Florida Audubon Society and long time local environmental advocate, has written a very informative letter to Eric Draper, Director of the Florida Park Service, outlining some of Reid's many accomplishments. Here's a sample:

"Hughes is closely connected to the three state parks we often call the Tomoka Geo- Park. These include Tomoka State Park, Bulow Creek State Park, and North Peninsula State Park, that together protect more than 10,000 acres of lands strategically important to conservation. While Tomoka State Park is one of the state's oldest parks, the additions of the other two would not have been possible without local involvement, leadership, and financial resources. Reid Hughes was an important part of that effort."

"For this extraordinary record of conservation, it is altogether appropriate that the Florida State Parks dedicate some portion of the Tomoka Geo-Park to the memory of Reid Hughes. Both the Tomoka and Bulow names are historic and should not be touched. On the other hand, the name "North Peninsula" is merely a handy reference to a local area without any specific historic significance."

We're asking for a few minutes of your time to help out in this campaign to rename North Peninsula State Park in Reid's honor. Please send an email to: [eric.Draper@Floridadep.gov](mailto:eric.Draper@Floridadep.gov) asking that the park be renamed Reid B Hughes State Park. It will be a big help and we'd really appreciate it. Thank you.

*David Hartgrove*



Here's a sight we don't see here in Volusia County. This is a Snowy Plover with her 2 recently hatched chicks and one unhatched egg. This was taken near Fort Myers Beach.

*Photo by Lou Newman*

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### THE PELICAN

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