

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

Volume 67-Number 11. Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
November, 2021



Comments & Conservation Notes

In January of this year the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) assumed control and permitting authority over Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. I wrote back then that this was a very bad idea due to FDEP's lack of experience with enforcement of this federal program. They're also woefully underfunded and barely able to do the work they were charged with before assuming this new responsibility. Of course, this was the plan all along on.

Developers have long whined about the time it took to wind their way through permitting process when Section 404 was administered by the Army Corps of Engineers. Abetted by their cohorts in the Trump administration, who changed things at the federal level, their minions in our state legislature wrote a bill that transferred Section 404 permitting to FDEP. They knew that FDEP wouldn't be up to the task and permits would slide through with little or no review. The October 23rd [Audubon Advocate](#) reports that FDEP is now realizing that they're terribly understaffed and unable to handle their new duties. FDEP is asking for 23 new full time staff from the Florida Legislature this session to help cope with the large backlog. I know this will sound cynical but I don't see any way that all those new hires will be coming onboard. They are also planning to use contracted staff from water management districts to help. Yeah, the same water management districts that are so underfunded and understaffed already. That has long been the way things work here in the Sunshine State. Pass "feel good" legislation that appears to address serious problems, like water quality. Then be sure to pass enabling legislation that caps funding at such niggardly levels that all that happens is hand wringing and lax, if any, enforcement.

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From Birds Canada comes information on the decline in most hummingbird species. Most but not all. An article published in Scientific Reports entitled "Current contrasting population trends among North American hummingbirds" offers some encouraging information. While all bird species, including hummingbirds, have declined by over 30% since 1970, some species have actually seen population increases. Among the *Selasphorus* genus (found in western states), Allen's, Rufous, and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds have declined since 1970, and the rate of decline increased from 2009 to 2019. In the East, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have begun to decline, though only since 2004. Out West again, Calliope and Costa's Hummingbirds have remained relatively stable. Anna's has seen big population increases. If you're interested in reading the complete article, here's a [link](#) to it.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, November 15th, Program Meeting- Short-tailed Hawks and Reddish Egrets, two species with very little in common. Except that they're both subjects of study at the Avian Research & Conservation Institute in Gainesville. Gina Kent, Senior Conservation Scientist at ARCI will be our speaker and give what promises to be a fascinating program on these two diverse species. This will be a Zoom meeting. Please register at [MeetUp](#) to receive the link. You'll then receive an email with the meeting link. The gathering begins at 6:30 pm and Gina's presentation begins promptly at 7:00. A brief business meeting will follow. Please plan to join us.

Field Trips

Friday, November 5th, Lake Apopka- Join David Hartgrove for this trip to one of our state's birding hot spots. We meet at 7:30 am at Int'l Square - East of I-95 on Int'l Speedway Blvd behind Krystal 2550 West International Speedway Blvd. Daytona Beach FL 32114. Bring lunch. Questions, call David, 386-235-1249.

Thursday, November 18th, T M Goodwin Marsh- Join David Hartgrove for this long trip to one of the better hot spots here and it's only open to us on Thursdays. Afterward we'll have lunch at the historic [Marsh Landing Restaurant](#). We meet at Target, East of I-95 on Dunlawton Avenue behind Panera's 1771 Dunlawton Avenue, Port Orange. Questions, call David, 386-235-1249.

We also have Joan's bird walks at the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center, 601 Division Avenue, Ormond Beach. They're at 8:00 am and will be on Tuesdays, November 2nd, 16th and 30th. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Field Trips With Others

Saturday, November 6th, North Peninsula State Park- Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail will host a trail walk at Smith Creek Landing in North Peninsula State Park, 40 Highbridge Road, Ormond Beach. Dr. Don Spence, Plant Pathologist and Certified Master Arborist, will lead this 2 hour hike beginning at 10:00 am. We'll go over uneven terrain during the hike so please wear your sneakers or hiking boots. Bring plenty of water, snacks, sunscreen and insect repellent, as well. Questions, call Nancy Galdo, 305-467-4412.

NEWS FROM The CENTRAL FLORIDA REGIONAL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE (RCC)

2021 was a banner year for funding from the FL legislature. \$400 million budgeted--\$100M from the document stamp tax and \$300M is a one-time appropriation from the Federal Relief Fund. Farmers and ranchers are realizing that conservation easements align with their interests and are increasingly willing to enter into agreements that will keep their lands undeveloped in perpetuity. Chapters will continue advocating for purchase of Florida Forever pre-approved conservation properties in their geography.

A proposed bill in Lake County will abolish the Lake County Water Authority and transfer its assets to the Lake County Commission. AF is working with EPA and SJWMD to try to have authority transferred to SJWMD instead. Assets include approximately 20 conservation properties.

Audubon Florida owns property in Lake Butler which has become a favorite spot for boaters to dock, particularly on weekends. Boaters trespass on the island, sometimes littering and often disturbing beach-nesting or beach-resting birds. Keeping the public away has become difficult, but Orange County found an ordinance that allows exclusion of motorboats because people swim in the area. This option will be discussed at public meetings scheduled for October 19.

The Orange County Commission voted \$100M from the general fund for Green Place programs. They are setting up an advisory board and Orange Audubon Society has an opportunity to be represented on that board.

Leaders from Seminole and Orange chapters met with Senator Jason Brodeur, Chair of Environment & Natural Resources Committee and Margaret Spontak, Chair of Free the Ocklawaha River Coalition. St Johns River Water Management District coordinated a public survey about the future of the Ocklawaha River's restoration. It is hoped that 10,000 people will complete the survey.

West Volusia AS is working with the Deltona Dept of Economic Development which has recently declared the environment as the third pillar of Deltona's economic plan.

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

This will be Paula's last report as an Audubon Florida Board member. She's handing her seat to Melissa Lammers. Our chapter has now sent two very strong, effective women to the Audubon Florida Board.

Editor

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Audubon Adventures

[Audubon Adventures](#), is a wonderful program that helps engage kids in the natural world around them. Ranked as one of the most popular environmental education curricula in the country, our chapter has been donating to provide this valuable program to Volusia County school kids since its inception. Donations from members fund this program. 45.95 will cover the cost for one classroom. Any amount will be greatly appreciated. Send your donation to Halifax River Audubon, P.O. Box 166, Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166. Please specify on your check that your donation is for Audubon Adventures. And thank you!

Back from an absence last month, here's another plant profile from our resident expert, Leslie Nixon.

A Small Treasure



Rouge plant, Photo by Leslie Nixon

A fun little plant for a shady area is the rouge plant (*Rivina humilis*). As a small shrub growing only up to 4 feet tall and 3 feet wide, it can fit into almost any landscape. Its bright red berries and white-pink flowers appear intermittently all year long, bringing cheerful color to your yard. Most plants for birds are trees and large shrubs (to match their preferred altitude), but rouge plant is a low-growing bush that invites mockingbirds and brown thrashers down to the ground to grab a tasty snack.

Rouge plant is an evergreen perennial of the Florida woodlands, so to enjoy it in your yard place it in part shade where a spot of sun helps it to produce its flowers and fruit. It prefers a bit of moisture, but tolerates occasional drought, and while it can survive a freeze, it will suffer from salt air and hurricane winds.

As a carefree native, rouge plant only needs maintenance if it gets leggy, and then you can simply trim back the long stalks – or not. Once it decides it is happy where you have planted it, it will reseed readily to provide you with a continuous supply of down-low berries for birds.

Rouge plant was so named because its berries have been used in cosmetics. Plant a small group under a tree and think of it as a mini makeover for your shady island.

Leslie Nixon

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From the Quotable Birder

“I wish the Bald Eagle had not been chosen as the representative of our country; he is a bird of bad moral character; like those among men who live by sharpening and robbing, he is generally poor, and often very lousy. The turkey is a much more respectable bird, and withal a true original native of America.”

Benjamin Franklin, in a letter to his daughter, Sarah Franklin Bache, January 26th, 1784.



Memories are made on walks such as this. Note the wooden barricade in the upper center of the photograph. Jane and I stop here and look left up into the creek embraced by a sylvan setting surrounded in a busy neighborhood. Small fry of Large-mouth bass, Nile tilapia, bluegill, red-bellied Spider mud and red-eared turtles, waterbirds, two Wood ducks, Coopers and Red-tailed Hawks, dragonflies and various water plants frequent this inconspicuous creek. Certainly, a treasure to walk by. You just never know what you will see.

Photo montage by Ray Scory

Walk a Mile with Me

I haven't been out walking on my cement sidewalk trail for the past year and a half. I am so happy to be out with Jane on this sunny, cool morning. So many things to see. So many nice people to share a smile with and just say, "Hi".

When I step out from the doorway, I take a deep breath offered by the fresh coming day. Look out at the neighborhood pine trees and homes silhouetted against a diminishing darkness and walk to the corner, looking first up at the lone tall pine tree anchoring the beginning of our walk. This morning I will be walking with Jane, her first walk to the creek in a long time. "So, Jane, let's start walking to see what we can find that will make this walk different from other walks."

"Ray, do you always start out this early?"

"Yes I do, Jane. I like The Golden Hour, the time when the Sun breaks through the night and splashes burning colors

across the sky revealing itself just above the awaiting horizon. This transitional moment doesn't last long. It is a magical moment edging the observer into a zone of peaceful calm. And you will feel it."

This morning, my friend, the female Red-tailed Hawk, is perched high in the pine tree. She appears in this tree the same time every year. Last year a male appeared and shortly after they were nest building high in a tree near our home. Along the way I occasionally look down at the sidewalk and search for compositions that Nature has placed for me. Consequently, I started a collection of images for a Sidewalk Art collection.

Jane and I spot a Wood Stork perched high in a tree. While we may be more familiar seeing them poking in a highway ditch or along the edge of a pond. I have seen them nesting high in trees in swampy areas where the water affords protection from ground predators and offers readily available

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Welcome to our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Jack Agett, Merryl Black, Lynn Bunnell, Linda Cantwell, Clarence Childs, Laura Chilkott, Elta Cooke, Stephen Daniels, Nelda Davis, Margaret Fyotek, Joe Galdo, Marilyn Garcia, Richard Goldstein, Marge Grosberg, Jacquelyn Hanson, Robert Hanson, Carol Hjorth, William Hunter, Susan Kasnoski, Jill Kelly, Kim Klancke, Ed Kocis, Terry Mercer, Mary Nilsson, Harriet Nolan, Kathleen Peterson, Sang Roberson, Elizabeth Robinson, Patricia Sample, Lois Sessoms, Cresilda Shahzada, Peg Shelton, Linda Simms, Frances Smith, Margaret Snyder, Lori Staudt, Edgar Stewart, Joan Tague, Mindy Taylor, Margaret Venzke, Gladys Walker, Susan Wandelt, Sharon Westlund, Meredith Wilson, Vivian Zielinski, Carole Zink. We hope to see you at one of our virtual Zoom meetings or on a field trip.

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Another Season of Project Feeder Watch

[Project Feeder Watch](#) begins November 13th. It's an easy way to contribute to a citizen science project that makes a difference. Click on the link above and get registered. Then you can begin counting, totaling and entering your numbers in the database. It's fun and spending time watching will make you a better birder.

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Some Bird Humor From [Funny Times](#)



food for the nestlings. On this particular walk a Wood Stork flew so close to us that we could hear the sound from its wings flapping and I was able to photograph it in flight. A rare occurrence. Also, we stopped at the creek and Jane spotted a Great Egret close-by and then, clandestinely walking toward us, a Wood Stork disguised in the shade of trees. Rarely do we see more than one bird species in the creek at a time.

Birds singing, birds in the trees, some times in a flock other times alone, colorful flowers, people walking, normally at the same time in the morning, a fast flowing creek or barely trickling, depending on the time of the year. Freshly poured cement sections in the sidewalk, creating a strong graphic design. Nature changing. People changing. Ongoing, always different - never the same. Enjoy today what wasn't there yesterday and might be gone tomorrow.

A walk anywhere, anytime, is a refreshing thing to do.

Ray Scory

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THE PELICAN

is published monthly by Halifax River Audubon, a chapter of the National Audubon Society and a member of Audubon Florida serving eastern Volusia County.

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We wish to thank our sponsors, whose contributions play a vital part of allowing us to continue our work: Florida Power & Light, Colonial Colony and the Spruce Creek Garden and Nature Club.