

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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Comments & Conservation Notes

Audubon Florida has developed the concept of regional conservation committees over the years. These regional committees are made up of members from Audubon chapters that are geographically connected. The idea behind this concept is that when issues of regional impact, like a giant new development being planned or water quality issues, local chapters can work together to multiply the effectiveness of their efforts to guide the decision making process.

Our chapter is actually affiliated with two regional committees: Indian River Lagoon and Central Florida. Since COVID came to upend all our lives these committees have been meeting via Zoom. At these meetings local chapters from around the area can bring to the table issues that may have escaped the notice of other nearby chapters. Finally, a decision is made on wording to present to Audubon Florida at the annual Audubon Assembly. This is done by each regional conservation committee and a document is produced that is intended to give Audubon Florida staff guidance in deciding where to put their efforts and resources in dealing with our state's ongoing land use and other environmental issues.

As you might imagine some of the priorities listed in each document overlap. The Indian River Lagoon RCC's list is as follows:

- * Support local, regional, and state initiatives to increase funding for conservation initiatives
 - * Work together to advocate for improved regulation of land application of biosolids, and to foster new strategies for beneficial use of biosolids.
 - * Encourage Native landscaping
 - * Promote Equity and Inclusion in Chapter Activities
- Central Florida's list is one item shorter:
- * Promote Lake Apopka Restoration, Visitor Access and New Audubon Nature Center
 - * Monitor and Act on Local & State Government Land Use Decisions Impacting Wildlife Habitat
 - * Equity, Inclusion and Diversity

Note that the last item on both lists involves reaching out to groups of people not well represented in Audubon chapters nationwide. It's a challenge we need to face if we're to remain relevant in the future.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, January 17th, Program Meeting- Join us for a step back in history, a big step. "Zach" Zacharius, Senior Curator of Education and History at the Museum of Arts & Sciences, will give a presentation on "Ice Age Mammals in Florida." 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 Zach's presentation begins promptly at 7:00. A brief business meeting will follow. Please plan to join us.

Field Trips

Thursday, January 6th, Lake Harney Wilderness Area and a stop at Hatbill Park- This will be our first trip to this site. Join Joan Tague and we'll meet at the site at 8:00 am. Directions will be provided online in the Calendar section of our [website](#). Bring lunch. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Friday, January 14th, Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive- Join David Hartgrove for this trip making up for one that was rained out in November. 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, January 20, Birds and Brews- This will be a joint outing with Southeast Volusia Audubon Society. We'll meet at Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center, 601 Division Avenue, Ormond Beach at 3:00 pm. We'll walk the trails and then retire to the Ormond Brewery Company, 301 Division Ave., Ormond Beach. The walk will last 90 minutes to 2 hours depending on the birds that we find throughout the park. We will then make a short drive down Division Avenue to the Ormond Brewery by the railroad tracks. Outside picnic tables are available in the courtyard along with extensive indoor seating. A food truck will be available for snacks - think Taco or Cheesesteaks. Menu to be announced.

* * *

MDC Winter Boat Tours Return

Mark these dates, January 13th, February 10th, March 10th and April 14th. The [Marine Discovery Center](#) will run boat trips to Disappearing Island. Cost is 40.00 for adults, 37.00 for seniors (62+) and students and 22.00 for children.

We'll leave our dock and head north to Disappearing Island, where birding enthusiasts will disembark and spend two hours exploring this large sand bar, looking for winter migratory birds. Reservations are required. Click on the link above. Scroll down to the "3 Hour Winter Birding Tour."



The Great Back Yard Bird Count is Back!

Calling all volunteers!

HRA is partnering with the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center (OBEDC) once again after a break in 2021. (See our virtual participation from last year at this [link](#).) The Great Back Yard Bird Count will take place on Saturday, February 19, 2022 at Central Park in Ormond Beach. This one day outdoor event for the community offers lots of bird themed activities for young and old, including games, nature walks, information tables, drawings and more.

This is a great opportunity to share our love of all things bird with the community. It is also a chance for folks to become familiar with our group and to generate interest in our activities. Our greatest asset is our members and this venue is where we can shine.

So - we are calling out for volunteers. No extensive bird knowledge is required. Instructions will be provided for all of the specialty tables and stations. There is limited preparation needed for the event outside of maybe a Zoom meeting or two and a walk through of some of the activities. Past experience with this event has shown that we need help in the following areas:

1. Co-Chairman will attend OBEDC Coordinator meetings, help exhibitors set up the day of the event and be a point person for questions.
2. Nature Walk Guides - We can never have enough help here. Orientation walks will be held for those who are not familiar with the park. This was extremely popular, in part because it rolls into our field trip journal challenge. (The rubber ducky trophy) Please don't be intimidated. You will be guiding brand new bird watchers young and old.
3. Table hosts - We have an Egg match Challenge, feathers and more artifacts to display. Also possibly a station showing realtime results of the international tally of birds.
4. Deck Observers - We have 2 observation stations set up and we require guides at both sites.

More information: The formal event will be from 10AM to 2PM. We will have a new activity: an early morning walk the day of the event through the park for serious birding and to get an official count and location of the birds in the park. This will be open to the public and will begin around 7:30am and end around 9AM. That leaves time for set up and transitioning to the fun public activities.

Interested? Contact Joan Tague at at this [address](#).

For information on the Global Event click [here](#).

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

Lasting Memories

I will always remember the flock of European Starlings, hundreds were estimated, that invaded my childhood yard and spilled into neighboring yards one day during WW II when my mother always fed the birds. I was a very young boy and it was a very long time ago, but I still remember many details of that unusual birding event. You see, my mother had only one feeder hanging from a grape arbor and filled it with what was available, even though a piece of stale bread or leftovers were in short supply. But she fed the birds and they came. I remember the wooden, glassed-in back porch we watched from with my mother's hand on my shoulder. I broke loose and dashed down the stairs to our backyard so I could stand in the middle of this swarming, screeching colossus of swirling, diving blackbirds. I remember the sound they made and the cool, fresh April air and how this active mass of blackbirds silhouetted beautifully against a contrasting overcast sky. My mother was quite excited both because of this sensational display of birds and fearful the neighbors would complain. She wanted to take down the feeder. I was a very little boy and used the only weapons I had. I cried and pleaded with her (non-stop) to keep the feeder up. She relented and continued to keep it full. The excitement lasted two hours and the birds departed, never to return again in the 54 years she and my father lived in that house where the bird feeder swayed to the whim of the winds.



Scarlet Tanager - My "Spark Bird" and first bird photograph made with an Argus C3 35mm camera in April 1948 on the hedges to my childhood home's front yard.

I was brought up in a neighborhood of small, white bungalows all owned by couples with young children. Our front porch was connected to the street by a short sidewalk. Bordering this sidewalk were two thick, prickly hedges about 3 feet high. One day walking out to the street, I was stunned to see a patch of brilliant red feathers resting atop the hedge. I slowly eased closer and identified a tired Scarlet Tanager. I gingerly moved my hand to stroke the back of this gift. The bird did not move. It just looked at me and peacefully accepted my caressing. I received a lightning bolt of brotherhood, exciting my exposure to another life form. I felt alive in wonderment. My spark bird ignited me.

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Jane and I once lived in a small town in Connecticut for 25 years. Every September 2nd beginning at dusk thousands of

Time now for another plant profile from our resident expert, Leslie Nixon.

Avian Bed and Breakfast

Up to now this column has concentrated on plants that feed birds. But to truly help support bird populations, you need to supply their other two necessities in life: water and shelter. As Ray Scory mentioned in his essay last month, the painted buntings who visit his yard do so because he provides them with food (millet), water (a bird bath), and shelter (saw palmettos). Those are the three resources needed to create good bird habitat.

Birds require a source of water for hydration as well as hygiene. A simple, clean [bird bath](#) is an easy solution.

To provide shelter for songbirds you can purchase a bunch of birdhouses - or you can give them what nature intended: bird-friendly plants. Small birds seek out trees and bushes for foraging, resting, and nesting. They prefer plants with stiff, angled branches and dense foliage. Thin or flimsy branches do not support a nest or a perching bird, and a see-through plant is certainly not a good hiding place for a vulnerable prey species.

Many Florida native plants, of course, answer the call for natural bird houses. Most of them are dual purpose in that they offer both shelter and meal service. Four of the plants previously discussed here fit this bill: sabal palm, Simpson's stopper, yaupon holly, and native oak trees.



Walter's Viburnum Photo by Leslie Nixon

Another good dual purpose plant is Walter's viburnum (*Viburnum obovatum*). This viburnum is a large shrub (10-15' high and almost as wide) with dense, evergreen leaves. Its glorious clusters of late winter flowers are a boon to early season pollinators and its summer berries give sustenance to birds. As a sturdy native, it will flourish anywhere except in deep shade or on a sand dune. It is well-known for its hurricane resistance. Given time, Walter's viburnum will multiply to create a dense thicket, a prime retreat for birds.

Arrange two or three food and shelter plants next to your bird bath and you have a small, but welcoming habitat for songbirds – your very own Avianbnb.

Leslie Nixon

Common Nighthawks flew directly over our house going south. I would sit on our back porch to watch and listen to this exciting migratory display. Randomly they would swish down into the well lit high school ball field and parking lot situated on a small rise behind our house. However, one year they did not appear on September 2nd. They came the next evening, same time on September 3rd. Only they knew why. Just one day late in twenty-five years. Not bad timing.

I wonder why I recall these birding moments so long ago that they now appear foremost in my memory. So bright and fresh that the long ago happening now seems like it occurred yesterday. Sometimes these memories flash alive with no provocation on my part. Other times, they appear when I am intensely involved in the topic of birding. Sparkling sparks of memories.



Common Nighthawk - photographed in September 2008 in my Florida backyard. It came high out of the sky, aimed for my house just missing the roof and dropped onto a branch of an awaiting pine tree.

Story and photos by Ray Scory

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A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds, January 20th, 7:00 pm

Do you want to learn about birds that fly for up to 6 months non stop? Birds that are able to do feats like that because they have the ability to put half their brain asleep at a time and still fly and navigate? These and many other fascinating facts will be revealed during this exceptional program.

On January 20th Orange Audubon Society is pleased to host "A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds" by ornithologist and best-selling author Scott Weidensaul.

Migratory birds undertake some of the most extraordinary and exhausting travels of any living thing on the planet, an endurance test made all the more difficult by climate change, habitat loss, and illegal hunting. Few know this better than Weidensaul, a bird researcher, prolific nature writer, and the author of more than 30 books, mostly about birds.

This is a YouTube Live online program and will be archived on OAS' You Tube channel. To see the program live simply open YouTube and put Orange Audubon Society in the search field. Don't miss this fascinating program.

Christmas Eve Heroes

Hero is a word tossed around so often that it's lost some of its meaning. This most recent Christmas Eve that word once again regained its power through the actions of some very special people. Joannie Awtry and Cody Cassidy are a couple living in Ormond Beach. They and their kids had been out doing some last minute shopping and returned home around 2:30 in the afternoon. They were all standing out in their backyard and the youngest child kept looking up in the tall oak tree and pointing. Joannie looked up and at first didn't see what had the child's attention. Then, after seeing some leaves floating down, she looked even higher and there was a Great Blue Heron struggling in obvious distress. The more they looked it became evident that the bird was entangled in fishing line that was entangled in the branches of the tree. Joannie's five year old daughter, who loves being outdoors, told her Mom, "You have to do something!"

Cody, being in law enforcement, made a couple of phone calls but it was late afternoon Christmas Eve. Help was in short supply. As it happens there's a city fire station two blocks down the road. So Cody drove there and came back with the fire truck. If the tree had been in the front yard, near the street, the fire department's ladder truck could have reached it. But the tree was in the backyard. It's a sixty foot tall oak tree and the bird is struggling near the top. Joannie, who's a nurse, was scheduled to go in to work. As she was getting dressed she frantically worked the phone trying to reach anyone she could think of who might be able to help. She finally reached a neighbor who's an enforcement officer with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Her suggestion was to call their headquarters to see if they could recommend someone. Their suggestion was to try a tree trimming company. Just before walking out the door to go to work Joannie got on Facebook, reaching out to her friends and theirs. Did anyone know of a tree trimming company that could help?

By now it's 6:30 pm. Cody is at home with the kids and Joannie is at work and trying to reach out through Facebook to find someone to help this bird. Meanwhile the kids were worried about the bird and wondering if Santa's expected visit would be affected. About this time Joannie got a break at work and checked her phone again. There was a message from Dannie Shields, owner of Above and Beyond Tree Care, an hour away in Edgewater, giving his phone number. Joannie called and learned that Dannie already had an employee, Dan "The Man" Illardi, on his way to their shop to pick up a piece of specialized ladder equipment that's narrow enough to go through a residential gate and has outriggers that extend to safely allow working at heights. Just before midnight, as most of the neighborhood stood in their backyard watching, Dannie was able to cut the bird free of fishing line. The bird, still panicked by the event, pecked Dannie in the back of the head as he was bringing it down. They placed the bird in a large dog crate and everyone went to bed.

My phone rang at 8:15 Christmas morning. It was the bird rehab facility at the Marine Science Center. They had arrived that morning to find the phone message from late the day before asking for help. I got my large carrying box and gloves and drove to Ormond Beach. I arrived to find the bird in the dog crate with a large fish hook in its right leg. I got the bird into my container and heard for the first time the amazing story of these wonderful people who went so "above and beyond" expectations in a search for help for this wounded bird. I don't know that it qualifies as a "Christmas Miracle", but it's certainly in the running.

Continued in the next column

I drove down to the Marine Science Center where, even though it was Christmas morning, the staff was there bandaging the injuries of an immature Bald Eagle that had been burned when it flew into a power line. Once they were done we got the heron on the examining table and they quickly removed the hook. Some medication was applied and as I left they were getting ready to administer some fluids to prevent dehydration. I was told that barring unforeseen complications the bird would be released within a few days. It was a happy ending to an already heart warming and life affirming story.

David Hartgrove

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BirdsCaribbean Raises Alarm

"BirdsCaribbean is a vibrant international network of members and partners committed to conserving Caribbean birds and their habitats." That's from their mission statement and they're raising the alarm about the sudden increase in the traffic in wild caught song birds in Cuba. As you know our chapter sponsored a trip to Cuba in 2014. While there, on our first day, as we were riding through Havana on our bus, several of us saw a male Painted Bunting in a cage on a second floor apartment balcony. Here's a link to a lot more [information](#).

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