

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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Comments & Conservation Notes

In 1962, NASA acquired 140,000 acres of land, water, and marshes adjacent to Cape Canaveral to establish the John F. Kennedy Space Center. NASA built a launch complex and other space-related facilities, but development of most of the area was not necessary. In 1963 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service signed an agreement to establish Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and in 1975 a second agreement established Canaveral National Seashore. Today, the Department of Interior manages most of the unused portions of the Kennedy Space Center as a National Wildlife Refuge and National Seashore. However, NASA still owns the land under both of these popular destinations.

Space X and NASA have announced plans to build a new launch complex to accommodate the new Super Heavy rocket Space X has designed. The spot they've decided on lies about 200 yards south of SR 402, the road to Playa Linda Beach at Canaveral. The safety zone they'll claim will extend from Eddy Creek Boat Ramp at Canaveral to just east of the end of Black Point Wildlife Drive. When a rocket is on the pad ready for launch, this safety zone would be closed to the public. In 1985 when Shuttles began to launch Playa Linda was closed for up to 200 days per year and access to Black Point was somewhat restricted. The enabling language in the legislation that established both MINWR and the Seashore clearly states that NASA can take back its land whenever it wants to. However we have public opinion on our side. Considering the state of the water quality in the Indian River and Mosquito Lagoons, the last thing we need is to wipe out 175 acres of filtering wetlands. Plus, Canaveral National Seashore gets nearly 1.5 million visitors a year. They are not going to quietly accept loss of access to one of our state's best beaches.

Those of us who've lived here for decades know that there are a number of unused launch sites at Canaveral Air Force Station, now referred to as Canaveral Space Force Station. This name change is the product of the over active imaginations of those who would extend our war making capabilities into outer space. These launch sites would serve Space X's purposes just fine. However they come with security conditions with which Space X and its contractors are uncomfortable. So they want to be outside that fence in order to avoid answering questions, the answers to which the Air Force...er, Space Force, might find unacceptable. To placate Space X we, the taxpaying public, will be denied access to the some beautiful places, places we support with our fees and taxes. Audubon Florida and the rest of the environmental advocates here will be watching this and we'll speak out when the time comes.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, February 21st, Program Meeting- Bald Eagles are birds easily recognized by everyone. Audubon's Eagle Watch program offers an opportunity for volunteers to monitor these birds on their nests and to report what you see. Join us for a presentation by The Director of Audubon Florida's Eagle Watch Program, Shawnlei Breeding. This will be a Zoom meeting. Please register for the meeting on our [website](#). You'll then receive an email with the meeting link. The gathering begins at 6:30 pm and Shawnlei's presentation begins promptly at 7:00. A brief business meeting will follow. Please plan to join us.

Field Trips

Field trips are in the planning stage for the rest of the year. Be sure to check the [calendar page](#) on our website for updates.

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TheCornellLab

Audubon

BIRDS CANADA
OISEAUX CANADA



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.

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: Nature Walk Guides (please don't be intimidated, you will be guiding brand new bird watchers young and old); table hosts, where you might help visitors see eggs, feathers, etc. from our collection; deck observation stations, where you'll assist visitors looking through spotting scopes. For more information and to volunteer contact Joan Tague, members@halifaxriver.org. This is a great, family friendly event and was extremely popular when we last did it in person in 2020.

News from the Central Florida Regional Conservation Committee, January 2022

Paula Wehr graced us with two terms at the helm of the Central Florida RCC and on the Audubon Florida board of directors. She remains actively engaged but the duties of Chapter representation and the seat on the board now fall to Melissa Lammers. We thank Paula for her capable stewardship.

The Florida Legislature is in session. We urge you to follow the action by subscribing to the Audubon Advocate. You can sign up at this [link](#). We discussed two bills at length during our meeting:

* **Seagrass Mitigation Program, SB 198** would allow sea grass mitigation banks, in turn allowing private companies to build marinas or put channels through undisturbed seagrass beds. This is extremely problematic as outlined in The Advocate. The Environment and Natural Resources Committee approved the bill. The Agriculture and Natural Resources Subcommittee is next.

* **Net Metering, SB 1024, Renewable Energy Generation** will reduce what utilities pay rooftop solar owners for excess electricity they generate, making home solar installation less attractive economically. To meet climate goals, Audubon supports both rooftop solar and utility-owned solar farms in appropriate locations.

Florida Forever and the Wildlife Corridor Act of 2021 The Wildlife Corridor Act adds \$300 million from ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) to the \$100 million of State money appropriated to Florida Forever. The act strongly encourages using the funds to purchase land in the Wildlife Corridor. It's an incredible opportunity to protect lands critical to Florida's biodiversity. If your county has an active conservation land acquisition program, make sure it's looking at properties on the Florida Forever project list or in your portion of the Wildlife Corridor. If your county doesn't have an active conservation land acquisition program, you have the opportunity to become champions for specific purchases in your county. Talk to your chapter leader or conservation chair for more details.

SpaceX seeks to build a new launch facility that may impact access to the Canaveral National Seashore (CNS) and to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (MINWR). As more is learned, we'll update you.

A local bill (meaning it's been introduced at the behest of local government) seeks to abolish the Lake County Water Authority and transfer its assets, including environmentally sensitive lands, to the county commission may be facing some headwinds. Stay tuned!

Seminole County has joined the [East Central Florida Regional Resilience Collaborative](#).

Oklawaha Valley Audubon informs us Lake County may be moving to central environmental strategic planning. This would be good for Green Swamp, one of our Conservation Priorities.

Orange Audubon tells us that they've hired a part-time educational coordinator. Deborah Green, chapter President, recently gave a talk on Plants for Birds for the Florida Native Plant Society (FNPS) Lunch and Learn series. You can view it [here](#) on their You Tube channel.

Melissa Lammers

Bird Migration is Topic for MDC's February Lecture

Winter bird migration will be the topic of the Marine Discovery Center's February lecture. This year's 2022 Monthly Lecture Series will be held in a live outdoor setting under MDC's pavilion.

Guest speaker **Joan Tague**, an avid birder, nature educator and Halifax River Audubon field trip leader, will present on this timely topic on Thursday, Feb. 17, at 6:30 p.m.

A Pittsburgh native, Tague served as a tour docent for five years at the Pittsburgh (now National) Aviary and, after moving to Florida, has led tours, lectures, classes and programming at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center and Gamble Rogers State Park.

The event is free to the public, but donations to the Marine Discovery Center are always appreciated.

The presentation will be videotaped and archived later on MDC's website, allowing those who cannot attend the lecture in person to watch it later from home.

Guests attending the lecture are encouraged to wear masks and to practice social distancing during the event. Some chairs will be available under the pavilion, but guests may also bring their own folding chairs to sit wherever they feel most comfortable. Guests should dress appropriately for the outdoor temperature on the day of the presentation.

For more information about the lecture, contact the Marine Discovery Center at 386-428-4828. The Marine Discovery Center is located off the North Causeway at 520 Barracuda Blvd., New Smyrna Beach, Fla.

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MDC Winter Boat Tours To Disappearing Island

While we're on the subject of the [Marine Discovery Center](#), don't miss your opportunity to go out to this great shorebird site. The Marine Discovery Center will run boat trips to Disappearing Island on the following dates: February 10th, March 10th and April 14th. 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."

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Bird Watcher's Digest Ceases Publication

In 1978 Bill and Elsa Thompson sat around their kitchen table discussing the dearth of magazines devoted to birding. So they decided right then and there to launch Bird Watcher's Digest. Their son, Bill Thompson III, took over the reins some years later. In March, 2019 we lost Bill to pancreatic cancer. There were other deaths in the family, and though a team of very dedicated professionals took over the publication they couldn't survive the losses in revenue due to Covid. Bill and his wife, Julie Zickefoos, made huge contributions to birding and eco tourism. Bill's book, "The Young Birder's Guide" is the best book on birding for kids. Julie continues to contribute to the birding community through her excellent books and speaking engagements. We just won't find her monthly column in BWD any longer. It's yet another institution lost to the ravages of this plague that has changed our lives.

David Hartgrove

A New Year is Here

A new year is here and changes will come. It's a given. Change has been a rule since the day that the human race first marched out onto this earthly space, and we have continued that way.

I remember earning my Boy Scout Bird Study merit badge. It took me a year, a lifetime. I was only twelve years old. I had to identify the birds observed during the four seasons in four different habitats available to me - urban, woods, a marsh and a pond. Also, I had to list all birds I saw during the year and had to present this material to an adult board of review.

I used my mother's small 2.2 power opera glasses. I became aware of becoming a birdwatcher and today it remains one of my most cherished childhood memories. At that time I'd never heard of a bird club. My mother was my bird club, lending me binoculars and encouragement; exposing me to birding literature and introducing me to her friend who fed the birds. Yes, that was the way it was done in those days.

Now a New Year is coming not the year 1948, but 2022 with new birds to see. New birds in my Florida yard. Did I not see them here yesterday? Yes, I did, but this is today. A new day with new birds to see. Some may present to me a first time seen behavior, a shade lighter or darker coloring, a different patch of color located on a different part of the bird's body. Just the other day I observed a large black bird roosting high in a pine tree. I causally passed it off as a Fish Crow or Black Vulture - made my photograph and continued my walk. Later, the computer image revealed bright yellow legs. Hmmm, new?

For many years a Snowy Egret and a Tricolored Heron circled together along the edges of the pond bordering our back yard, feeding on their brand of edible treats. Jane called them "The Odd Couple". They became regulars to our pond. - always together, coming about the same time each day - always feeding. Then one day they disappeared. Jane and I looked fruitlessly for them out on the pond. But, alas, gone. That's the way it was.

A year later I spotted them at the Countryside Visitor's Center pond performing their very familiar routine. I suspect they are they same couple, acting together, feeding, quick-stop and go steps. active and all business.

How do I know they are they same couple? I don't. However, a Snowy Egret and Tricolored Heron are back at our pond today acting like the "Odd Couple" on this a new day in a New Year.

Ray Scory

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Beautiful and Bizarre

That's Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology film maker, Gerrit Vyn describing the endangered Greater Adjutant Stork. The film he produced runs just under half a hour and was filmed in Assam, India where this species is called Hargila. Their numbers down to around 1200 birds, these big storks are in serious trouble. A local ornithologist saw their plight and has enlisted the "Hargila Army", a group of housewives dedicated to the birds' survival. Here's a [link](#) to this short and affecting film. Enjoy!



Keeping in step, the Odd Couple patrol their pond. Following in tandem is a female Mottled duck and a female Hooded Merganser.



This young Painted Bunting has me scratching my head. At first I thought it was a female but its changing plumage now has me thinking a young male. I can't wait to see the outcome.

Bird Am I

I fly along the way.

I come to your yard to eat and play.

I sing a song, a beautiful melody.

I like to move from bush to tree
to take part in Nature's rhapsody.

I hope I make your day
in a very special way.

Jane and I wish you all a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Text and photos by Ray Scory

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

A Wildflower for Hummingbirds

Wildflowers are not solely for butterflies and bees. Some, if they have the right-shaped flowers, are also visited by a higher life form, i.e., hummingbirds. One of these super wildflowers is tropical sage (*Salvia coccinea*).

The flowers of tropical sage are tubular, perfectly sized for the long beak and tongue of a hummingbird. These flowers are most commonly red, but there are pink and white varieties available, although the red flowers are quite striking when planted en masse.



Tropical Sage, Photo by Leslie Nixon

Tropical sage is a somewhat bushy perennial, maturing quickly to 2-4' tall and 1-2' wide. It grows in full or part sun (4-8 hours sun per day), developing a fuller shape and more flowers with increased sun exposure. To keep this wildflower from looking too wild and to encourage more blooms, trim its stems when they become lanky, about once or twice a year.

This terrific little plant blooms all year long, stays evergreen even in a light freeze, and demands little to no irrigation. Once it is established and flourishing in your yard, it will start to proliferate to favor you (and the pollinators) with its continuous presence. A staple of any native plant landscape, tropical sage is about the easiest wildflower you can grow. It tends to feed more insects than flying vertebrates, but if you plant some in your yard you won't be disappointed with the variety of winged visitors it attracts.

Leslie Nixon

The City Nature Challenge

The City Nature Challenge is an international celebration of biodiversity in and around urban areas. Started in 2016 as a competition between San Francisco and Los Angeles, the CNC has grown into an international event, motivating people around the world to find and document wildlife in their cities. The CNC is an annual 4 day global bioblitz where cities are in a collaboration-meets-friendly-competition to see not only what can be accomplished when we all work together, but also which city can gather the most observations of nature, find the most species and engage the most people in the event.

The Nature Conservancy has organized a challenge for Orlando and other areas around Florida for the past few years. This year they've organized **City Nature Challenge 2022: Volusia County**. Amazing finds have been recorded on these challenges. For instance, in 2019 a new patch of Hooded Pitcher Plant, a threatened species, was discovered in Tallahassee. Our Volusia CNC will be held between April 30th and May 3rd. This is a fun event for the whole family. Watch for more information as we get closer to the date.

David Hartgrove

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PO Box 166
Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166

Email: editor@halifaxriveras.org

Web: <http://www.halifaxriveras.org>

Halifax River Audubon

forbirds@halifaxriveras.org

Meets monthly September through May

President: David Hartgrove

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David Hartgrove

Newsletter Editor: David Hartgrove

Welcome: Vacant

Webmaster: Joan Tague

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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 and Colonial Colony.

Something extra this month, a page of bird photos.

Photographer Captures Feeding Birds

Lou Newman, a photographer whose photos have been seen here before, is from Sarasota and captured these images in the closing days of last year.

This Bald Eagle has captured a Common Gallinule.

The next photo shows a Willet about to make a meal of a ghost crab. Not sure if closing one's eyes when eating a crab helps but it can't hurt.

Finally, this White Ibis is about to swallow a frog, which itself seems to have something it was trying to eat. Our thanks to Lou for his permission to use his photos.

