

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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Comments & Conservation Notes

A March 19th article in the Palatka Daily News announced that a consulting firm had determined that clean up and repairs to the Rodman-Kirkpatrick Dam would cost 1.6 million dollars. All across Florida thousands have called and written, pleading to have this relic of the ill conceived Cross Florida Barge Canal removed and the once pristine Oklawaha River restored to its natural flow. Local officials in Putnam County see the dam and its reservoir as a fishing destination and the “good ole boys” have long had powerful allies in the state legislature. So instead of removing the dam we’ll almost certainly see money spent to repair it and remove the debris barrier in front of the dam. In the future we may yet see a restored Oklawaha River, just not this year.

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Our chapter and Audubon Florida have asked Governor DeSantis to veto House Bill 741, the so called “Net Metering” bill. Currently customers of Florida’s municipal and investor owned utilities can have solar panels installed on their homes at their expense. Once operating these very efficient panels can end up generating more electricity than the home uses. The excess is then sold back to FPL, Duke Energy or other power suppliers at the retail rate applicable in their area. The utilities say this is unfair to their stock holders since the companies have to pay homeowners a higher rate for the power they generate than the companies pay when they buy power on the open market at wholesale prices.

House Bill 741 will phase out the requirement that the companies pay for the excess power generated by a home owner’s solar panels at the retail rate. Instead they’ll pay the wholesale rate. At those reduced rates it will take the average homeowner years longer to begin recovering their initial investment in the solar panels. This loss of revenue for the homeowner could reduce the demand for solar panels. That could mean fewer people investing in home solar, with the results being that we have less of a positive impact on climate change. Let’s hope the governor listens to the voices of the people and picks up his veto pen.

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From the [Birding Community E-bulletin](#) comes this link to the winners of the “[Art of Conservation Songbird Art Contest](#),” run by Wildlife Forever and the Jay N. Darling Legacy Center. Kids from around the world contributed their bird inspired art for this contest. Black-capped Chickadees are frequent feeder visitors. So they’re easy for kids to see and that’s reflected in the art.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, April 18th, Program Meeting- April is the time to go to the Dry Tortugas for some of the best migratory birding in the country. Join us for a trip with David Hartgrove to this tropical oasis, where each night in April brings a fresh batch of birds over the walls of Fort Jefferson. The fort is the largest brick structure in the country and its guns never fired a shot in anger. Click on this [link](#) to register for the Zoom meeting. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. The gathering begins at 6:30 pm and David’s presentation will begin promptly at 7:00. A brief business meeting will follow. Please plan to join us.

Field Trips

Friday, April 1st, Sweetwater Wetlands- We were scheduled to go on this trip last month but it was rained out. Join Joan Tague for this trip to Gainesville’s newest birding jewel. We will drive to this location separately. Travel time is estimated to be 2 hours. This requires an earlier than usual start (6:30 am) to arrive at this location for “birding time.” There’s also a very famous yellow Northern Cardinal on the UF Campus and we may try to find it while we’re there. Be sure to click the “[More Info](#)” link on our website. Questions, call Joan, 386) 871-6049

Wednesdays, April 6th, 13th and 20th- Joan Tague is leading easy bird walks through Central Park in Ormond Beach. Explore the groomed trails in the park looking for early avian migrants. Pace is very casual. Binoculars are highly recommended. All levels of expertise are welcome, from beginners to “experts.” The walks are from 8:00 to 10:00 am and we meet at the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center, 601 Division Avenue, Ormond Beach FL 32174. Questions, call Joan, 386) 871-6049

Thursday, April 7th, Ocala National Forest- This is a new location for us in the Ocala National Forest. Join Joan Tague as we travel to the Clearwater Lake Recreation Area in Paisley. We will enter the fee area, park our cars and strike out on the trails to look for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. Bachman’s Sparrows and more. If time allows, we will also walk the trail around the lake. Bring a lunch if you wish - there are picnic tables lakeside and comfort facilities available. We will meet at 7:30 am at the Ormond Town Square, 1464 W Granada Boulevard, Ormond Beach FL near Chik-Fil-A for car-pooling, or you can proceed directly to the venue, 24511 CR 42, Paisley FL ,32767. Estimated travel time is just under 1 hour.



City Nature Challenge 2022: Volusia County

The City Nature Challenge 2022: Volusia County will offer an opportunity for citizen science unlike any other. It's a four-day global bioblitz that challenges communities to compete in recording the most species, documenting the most observations, and engaging the most participants. In the most recent 2021 City Nature Challenge global event, 419 cities in 44 countries participated with approximately 1.27 million total observations. Additionally, out of these observations, 45,300 individual species were recorded with 2,100 of those species being classified as rare, threatened, or endangered.

During the four-day window of the challenge, each participant is encouraged to record as many wildlife and nature observations as possible within their community while using the mobile app, iNaturalist. [iNaturalist](#) is a free app available across all mobile devices that uses computer vision/artificial intelligence to provide real-time identification suggestions. Observations and data recorded through iNaturalist are made freely available to the public and are shared with other scientific open data repositories. This data is used in scientific publications worldwide relating to biodiversity and conservation that would not be possible without the participation of community scientists. In addition to advancing science, data collected from iNaturalist is immediately accessed at local levels. Residents, resource managers and government officials alike have used this data to increase biodiversity awareness and improve decision-making. Click on the link above to be taken to the iNaturalist website. There you can link to the App Store or Google Play to download and install the app for the type of device you have.

Using the iNaturalist app is easy. Here's a link to the [Getting Started](#) page, which has video tutorials, detailed instructions and all the information you need to begin making observations, identifying them and sharing them with the iNaturalist community at large.

Have you ever been out for a walk and seen a plant or flower and asked yourself, "Now what do you suppose that is?" With the iNaturalist app on your phone you can answer your question in a few minutes. In addition, your observation will become part of vast collection of information the databases of a number of scientific sites around the world. We hope you'll participate in this first bioblitz here in our area.

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From the Quotable Birder

"She was not quite what you would call refined. She was not quite what you would call unrefined. She was the kind of person that keeps a parrot."

Mark Twain, Following the Equator

Disappearing Island Trips

The [Marine Discovery Center](#) will run the final Winter Birding boat trip to Disappearing Island on April 14th. Cost is 40.00 for adults, 37.00 for seniors (62+) and students and 22.00 for children. We'll leave the MDC 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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Turtle Day, Saturday, April 9th

After being cancelled for two years due to Covid the Marine Science Center's Turtle Day is back. Our chapter will be represented by having our tables there selling t-shirts, books, etc. This is a great spot to go if you have grand kids on Spring Break. We'll have fun and even more so if you're there.

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What is xeno-canto?

[xeno-canto](#) is a website dedicated to sharing bird sounds from all over the world. Whether you are a research scientist, a birder, or simply curious about a sound that you heard out your kitchen window, we invite you to listen, download, and explore the bird sound recordings in the collection.

Enter a bird name in the xeno-canto "Search" window and you have ten or more sound files pop up that will have you learning bird sounds in no time.

Editor

by Ray Scory

Now You See It Now You Don't

Spring came onto our creek this morning. A Wood Duck couple sauntered up the serpentine rivulet meandering down from a copse of solid green foliage. A Redbelly Turtle slid from a sunny spot near the stream as if defining a bright and active day. And the first time visitors to our verdant creek this Winter seem to call out, "Hey, we know that Spring is two weeks away, but today is our Spring and we are here, happy and ready."

A more fitting introduction to the coming of Springtime it could not be. The overall green atmosphere of the landscape is important for the well-being of our health both body and soul. The renewing presence of green trees, green grass, green plants along the water's edge and emerging Florida water plants artistically interfering with the ever-moving stream of water announces an awakening to a new vital life.



The Redbelly Turtle, one of two first visitors to the creek before the coming Springtime, is a native of central and south Florida. Often identified as Red-bellied Cooter or Red Belly Turtle. Best identified by the red stripes on top of its shell (Carapace) and yellow stripes on its face. Yellow along the edge. The bottom of the shell (plastron) is reddish.

Today people are stopping at the bridge and looking down at the creek aware of a blossoming energy. They now walk on with a smile and head held just a little higher. And two Wood Ducks and a Red-bellied Turtle announce that Life is continuing. The Wood Duck couple are a breathtaking compliment to this sylvan display of Nature. Many people call them the most beautiful duck in America and I most certainly agree.

However, I hesitate to call a bird beautiful based on color alone. I do understand that color plays a huge diagnostic role in the identification of the species. Most certainly we accept with good cheer the satisfying pleasure of identifying the birds we are observing. It makes the chase so much more exciting. But you will enhance and enrich your birdwatching adventures when you notice or discover other avian characteristics, such as: behavior, habitat, time of day, size and flight pattern.

Many, many years ago on a raw, chilly morning in Connecticut I followed the leader on my first New Haven Bird Club field trip. Our first stop was at a dreary wetland area

with clumps of grassy islands soaked in quiet, uninviting water. The trees were leafless sticking straight up like thin craggy poles jammed into an unforgiving ground. The sky was a mottled gray and not anxious to let the Sun through. And then, an explosive shout from the leader, "Out there, Wood Ducks low and straight ahead." Out over the wetland sweeping low and fast a small flock of black silhouettes with rapidly beating wings and tiny plump bodies swiftly rose to form a perfect half moon arch in flight and quickly disappeared into the horizon. My memory of that moment is as clear as if I was looking at the photo today.



Male and female Wood Ducks first spotted at the creek two weeks before Springtime. Apparently the same pair appeared at our backyard pond two days later at evening light, affording me the opportunity to photograph this very colorful and uniquely designed female and male Wood Duck pair. Please note the charming tear drop shaped, white eye patch of the female.

When I have led field trips in the past and an excited beginner would ask, "What's the name of that bird?" I would say, "What did you see first, what was your first impression when you first saw that bird?" There would be a silence and then an answer. I would next say, "What you just answered will be your personal, primary ID for that bird."

Two examples of an impressionable moment, brief as they may be. Now you see it, now you don't. But the memory of that moment will last forever.

Text and photos by Ray Scory

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We Mark the Passing of a Good Friend

Renate Calero, a long time member of Halifax Audubon and the Pawpaw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, died last week. Quiet, kind and gentle, she was a very private person. She loved classical music and art, and was intensely curious, especially, about the natural world. She was knowledgeable about Florida's native plants and always happy to share her knowledge and even seedlings.

Observant, on birding field trips, she often found birds on the ground or in the bushes others had missed. She was enthusiastic, generous, unfailingly polite and gracious. She will be sorely missed by those of us who knew and loved her.

Patsy & Ken Hunter

Reprinted below is an article by Richard Fasse that was in the March, 2022 Skimmer, the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society's monthly newsletter.

The MDC/SEVAS Purple Martin Gourds were raised in mid-January when the "scouts" started arriving in Florida. The scouts are the older males who migrate back first and go to their old nesting area. We would not expect one of the scouts to set up house with us this first year unless their nearby housing has been destroyed or removed. But now the migration is starting and we hope to attract some younger birds who don't have established homes.

Christie Miller, the Be Floridian Now and Volunteer Coordinator for Volusia County Environmental Management, is partnering with us to get some of her volunteers to help with monitoring of the nests. We are also working with UCF and a project they are starting to create a Central Florida Purple Martin Cooperative for coordinated data gathering and sharing. Everything is new to us this year for the Purple Martins.

Fred White, husband of Nancy White, used Nancy's memorial funds to pay for the premium quality system we ordered from the Purple Martin Conservation Association. His and Nancy's colony up north on Lake Ontario is well established, and he offered us good advice on where to locate the gourd complex on the MDC property. He also said it might take 2 or 3 years before we get any occupants.

We have named 6 of the gourds: Nancy W., Don P., Richard D, Hugh P., Louise T., and Kevin W. We will use their names to report which gourds have nests! If you would like to name a nest we are asking for a \$15 donation. We are guaranteeing naming rights for 2 years or whenever the name loses a letter, whichever comes first.

Richard Fasse



The new Purple Martin gourd complex at MDC.

Photo by Richard Fasse



Come on the Winter Birding trip with MDC and you might see a Piping Plover like this one. *Photo by Michael Brothers*

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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

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Welcome: Vacant

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