

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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Comments & Conversation Notes

Back in the “good old days”, before smart phones, social media, email, etc., organizations like ours maintained a “phone tree.” When a rare bird was seen at someone’s feeder the member called the leader of the phone tree and that activated a cascade of phone calls from one member to another. This was especially important when a particularly egregious piece of legislation was soon to be voted on. We could activate the phone tree and calls would be made to our legislators to register our opposition. Could we do a variation of this again?

I’m looking for a group of our members who will commit to being engaged in the serious work of trying to steer our local, state and national leaders toward a more bird and nature friendly decision making process. I know that to some this might sound “pie in the sky” but when we reach out to our leaders we can have a positive impact on the outcome of issues which affect us and our grand children.

If you would be willing to become one of our “Conservation Dialogue” participants all you need to do is contact me: birdman9@earthlink.net or president@halifaxriveras.org and I’ll add you to a list of volunteers. We will have a policy of limiting outreach to you to no more than twice a month, and often it will be less. Your participation shouldn’t take more than a few minutes of your time. Please give this idea some consideration and then send me an email. Thanks!

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Bird Flu, What To Do

The [Birding Community E-bulletin](#), published monthly by Massachusetts Audubon and the National Wildlife Refuge Association, had an article on highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI)—which includes the H5N1 bird flu virus.

"This outbreak in the wild bird population is a lot more extensive than [the last time]" said David Stallknecht, an avian influenza researcher with the University of Georgia. "Just a lot more birds appear to be affected."

Not surprisingly, there has been some confusion over recommending that people should take down their bird feeders to stop the spread of this disease among wild birds. There is currently very low risk of an outbreak among wild songbirds, and there is no overall official recommendation to take down feeders unless you also have a backyard poultry flock. As always, cleaning bird feeders and birdbaths regularly (with a mild bleach solution) is a fine way to keep many kinds of bird-associated diseases at bay.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

We’ve just entered our annual summer hiatus. So we have no field trips or meetings until September. The board has yet to decide whether or not we will return to in person meetings or stick with the Zoom format. There’s a lot to be said for attending a meeting from the comfort of your favorite chair.

Just because we’re not having field trips doesn’t mean there aren’t organized outdoor activities available. Our friends at Volusia County Environmental Management have their monthly list of trips. Please remember that you **must** pre-register for these trips by calling 386-736-5927.

Saturday, June 4th, Lake George Hike- Join us at Lake George to celebrate National Trails Day! We will enjoy walking the blue trail, learn about native and invasive plants, and give back by removing invasive Caesar Weed and debris. Meet at Lake George, 770 Nine Mile Point Road in Pierson.

Monday, June 13th, Pollinator Garden Volunteer & Learn- Join us at Lyonia Environmental Center for seedling transplanting. Volunteers will place seedlings into pots for distribution to the community. Volunteers will learn about native plants and the benefits of choosing native pollinator plants for their own gardens. Meet at Lyonia Environmental Center, 2150 Eustace Ave, Deltona.

Thursday, June 23rd, Beach Bike - Esther Park- Take a leisurely ride from Ester Park to Ponce De Leon Inlet and back (approximately five-mile total trip). During the ride participants will learn about wrack lines, marine mammals, sea turtle nesting, and much more. Participants are required to wear a helmet and bring their own bicycle (large tired bike recommended). Meet at 551 Esther St. New Smyrna Beach, 32169. (Please review parking area requirements, free to Volusia County Residents with a parking permit. https://permitsnsb.rmcpay.com/#account_start).

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From the Quotable Birder

“The very idea of a bird is a symbol and a suggestion to the poet. A bird seems to be at the top of the scale, so vehement, and so intense his life... The beautiful vagabonds, endowed with every grace, masters of all climes, and knowing no bounds— how many human aspirations are realized in their free, holiday-lives— and how many suggestions to the poet in their flight and song!”

John Burroughs, *Birds and Poets*



Wild coffee in its flowering stage



Wild coffee with its berries

Photos by Leslie Nixon

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Harry Robinson, A Dedicated Birder

In Harry's own words, "I have been an addict all my life." He means a life long addiction to bird watching, counting and reporting on the information he's gathered. Our [website](#) has a wealth of information that Harry has generously shared with us and the birding community at large. Quietly going about his work he is advancing serious citizen science and documenting the changing avian world around us. Check the link above. You'll be amazed. Thanks Harry, from all of us.

Time now for another plant profile from our resident expert,

Leslie Nixon

Birds Like Shade-Grown Wild Coffee

Wild Coffee is a shade-loving plant, but contrary to its common name, it does not contain caffeine. That matters not to songbirds, of course. They enjoy the caffeine-free berries.

Wild coffee is a large, lush shrub that grows up to 6' tall and 4' wide. It has many positive attributes as a landscape plant. From April through June it is covered in fragrant clusters of white flowers – and the pollinators that can't resist them. When fall comes, the bright red berries look stunning against its dark, evergreen foliage. Wild coffee is one of the few plants that flower and fruit better in the shade (or part-shade) than in full sun, so it can transform a gloomy corner in your yard into an attractive food stop for birds.

Additional benefits of wild coffee include: drought tolerance, low maintenance (a lanky branch might need to be pruned once in a while), and ability to live near, but not directly on the beach. Moreover, after a couple of years, free plants appear nearby that are easily pulled out if you feel the need to keep things tidy.

One potential draw-back to wild coffee is that it can suffer in a hard freeze. Being the tough native that it is, however, it recovers quickly.

Wild coffee's latin name, *Psychotria nervosa*, is also misleading and has nothing to do with any bizarre behavior on its part. *Psychotria* relates to the hallucinogenic properties of some of the other species in the genus; and *nervosa* refers to the deep veins in the leaves, not its fragile psyche. It's an intriguing name for a very well-adjusted species.

For an easy-to-grow, bird-friendly plant that loves shade, choose caffeine-free wild coffee.

Leslie Nixon

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Ruby-throated Hummingbird nestling

Photo by Alice Horst

Beginning in late March Alice was able to document the progress of this hummingbird nest. This little one's nest mate had already fledged and was perched above the nest. Mom was busy feeding both. Males take no part in care and incubation. More on this nest next month.

by Ray Scory

Wish I Could Speak Avian

O My Gosh! I can't believe what has just happened. In our backyard. The past week. New birds. Never here before. A happening. Is climate changing that fast? Is our natural landscape altering overnight? Is change accepted as normal? Quietly going on so inevitably that it moves sight unseen. Probably. I don't know.

But maybe the birds know. From our kitchen window and our screened backyard porch Jane and I, and our visiting daughter, Shelby, and her husband, Brian, have sighted birds never here before, or at least in the past 22 years.

We are not trained scientists, nor are we conducting an intense scientific study. Just sitting by the window enjoying our observations. However, it is impossible not to feel or see the impact of this sudden change in the tranquility and sameness of avian behavior taking place.

A dancing Carolina Wren as an example bouncing around our back yard not more than three feet high in a sloppy circle of energetic excitement. Most incredibly this dance last at least 5 to 8 minutes nonstop. Brian and I were at the same time awe struck and questioning. What is going on here? Nothing like this has ever been observed in my yard before. And I look out into the backyard a lot.

Could the wren be nervously disturbed by the influx of new guests in the neighborhood and acting out its anxiety? I don't know. Brian and I could only observe and guess. Wish I could speak avian. But it did happen and for 5 minutes brought our spinning world to a fascinating halt. We were with this dancing Carolina Wren. I have witnessed Whooping Cranes dance like this, but not a five inch songbird. Thrilling!

Could the visit this past week of five strangers warrant this strange behavior from the wren? Would they wreak havoc on the daily routine of the wrens who could come to our yard any time of the day and frequently. Is the Solitary Sandpiper too fast? Why are two adult Bald Eagles beating up on each other on our lawn, while a juvenile Bald Eagle watches? Where did the Painted Buntings go, and why? Why did the Pileated Woodpecker come back again after such a long stay away? Why did the flock of Cedar Waxwings swiftly fly by without stopping as they did years ago. Why did the Common-ground Dove come to the yard feeding on a manicured Saint Augustine grass lawn, bathe in a birdbath every day and now brings a friend? Is the Swallowtail Kite looking to make a home in our yard? And the peaceful Great Blue Heron, where have you been? Why after all these years have two Northern Mockingbirds, our Florida State Bird, raised a family in our yard for the first time and go about chasing every bird or squirrel that enters onto our lawn, where their fledgling frequently rests? Quite interesting, but I can only guess. The Carolina Wren might know. Wish we could talk about it.

Ray Scory

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Atlantic Puffins On Screen

Atlantic Puffins are about as "cute" as birds get. On Seal Island, off the coast of Maine, Audubon researchers have installed a nest cam in one of their burrows, deep in the boulders where they nest. Incubation is going on now, so soon you can watch the little ones. Here's a [link](#).



Always ready to move, always active, always inquisitive, perky - that's the Carolina Wren.



"Hey, What's this wide open, green space I see. What happened to that cozy , little home I grew up in?" Note the tiny short tail of the Northern Mockingbird fledgling.

Photos by Ray Scory

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The June Challenge

The June Challenge was started several years ago by members of Alachua Audubon. As with all good ideas it grew way too big for just those few folks to handle. The idea is to go out and see how many species you can find between midnight, May 31st and midnight June 30th. Migration is finished, it's hot out there and since many birds have fledged their young they aren't quite as easy to locate. Thus, the "challenge."

This year the Florida June Challenge has been adopted by Wings Over Florida and The Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail. They have created a [webpage](#) on the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail website for the June Challenge. Here the rules are listed, the history, and soon they will have an online submission form for your checklist. The birds must be ~~s~~een, not just heard, they must be ABA countable and they must be seen in a single county.

Editor

Preston Forsythe and his wife, Shari, are snow bird members who are often on our field trips. They have a friend who's written a poem about Cedar Waxwings. We thank Ed for allowing us to publish it.

CEDAR WAXWINGS

I never see them lush days
when summer can't think anything
but green--only in early spring, the day
after the day the sun almost warms
the still air

Little grayish birds with
a sunrise blush on the breast,
sharp peaked cap, stylish black mask
like revelers at a Venetian ball,
tail-tip dipped in yellow, a dab
of red on the wing.

Puff ball piranhas who, when they find it,
will strip a berry bush to stick.

I hear them first and have to look hard
before they dip to another tree.

This is how we've lived for 100,000 years.
How we still live: family, lovers, friends—
a little band. Everything we've thought
and felt, everything we've said—

...a high, thin piping...

...compact flocks..., the guidebooks say,

...irregular in their wanderings....

Edward Wilson

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Birds Aren't Real!

Perhaps you've seen this meme or even seen some of the posts on social media. There are articles about how birds are really surveillance drones sent out by the CIA, that they recharge their tiny batteries by landing on power lines, that real birds were wiped out clandestinely with pesticides so they could be surreptitiously replaced with the winged drones we now see. Sounds crazy, right?

Peter McIndoe looked around one day and thought, "The world has gone crazy." With Q-Anon spewing conspiracy theories that would be laughable if seemingly intelligent folks weren't lining up to believe such tripe, he had an idea. In a masterful stroke of satire he has shown us that just because it's on the Internet doesn't mean it's true. Click this [link](#).

Southwest Florida photographer, Lou Newman, sent some stunning photos. Here's one.



Glossy Ibis with chicks, photo by Lou Newman

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