

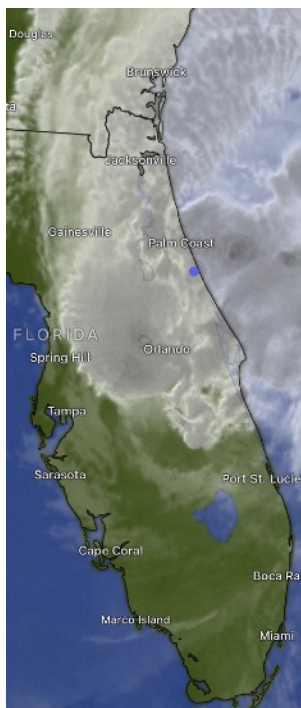
The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon

October, 2022



SURVIVING

I will never forget the moment the wind stopped. It startled me, the suddenness of the calm. The pounding and rushing of the 36 hour tempest still echoed in every inch of my being. I had been watching the clock, counting the hours until Ian was to move on and the moment had arrived. I was not sure it ever would.

We all reached out to friends, neighbors and family in the aftermath, assuring each other that we were okay. We assessed our property and belongings and started the work of recovery. I hope that you are okay, too.

When the power returned with the internet we began to understand the complete and total devastation of the storm. The enormity of the weather system is written in the broad swath cut across the state. The clips of smashed houses and storm surge are occasionally mixed with strange items like a shark swimming down a neighborhood street...and our thoughts turn to the natural world.

The first bird I noticed after the storm was a beautiful young male American Redstart hopping through my yard. The Mourning Doves were around in large numbers. I watched a pair before the storm nestle into the boots of a cabbage palm. Wise choice! While the oaks and magnolias twisted frantically in the maelstrom, the palm trees seemed to shrug in the face of the wind. Bald Eagles, Cooper's and Red-shouldered Hawks coursed the post-Ian brilliant blue sky. Ibis flocks flew overhead at dusk on their way to the evening roost. I could list many more examples of avian resiliency.

How do the birds survive this? Of course many don't, but check this Audubon article about the effect of hurricanes on birds. [Click here](#) The loss of precious dwindling habitat may have the greatest long term

effect. It makes it so important for us to commit to protecting the places that birds need and to replace lost habitat whenever we can - even in our own backyards... and to transform merely surviving to successfully thriving.

Joan Tague

HRA FOR THE SHORT TERM

Our first outing of the Fall season was scheduled for Wednesday, September 28. The weather began to deteriorate that morning and the decision was made to cancel that outing. Going forward no outings are on the schedule until we can determine the conditions of the locations we are planning to visit. Safety will be our primary concern. This will require some time as some of our members are dealing with recovery issues of their own.

You can help us with field trip planning. If you are birding a local spot, let us know what you find in the field. Are the trails and roads clear? Are the comfort facilities open? Did you have any trouble getting there? What alternative route worked for you? You can send a note to members@halifaxriveras.org. We would appreciate it.

As soon as we feel that we can offer some group trips, we will post them in 2 locations. These two links will have updates and current field trip information.

For the calendar page on our web site:
<https://www.halifaxriveras.org/events/index>

For our community listings on MeetUp
<https://www.meetup.com/HRAEvents>

You can add your name to the list of attendees on the MeetUp. This is a great feature. If we know you are planning on coming, we can easily message you through the application with updates to events.

OCTOBER CHAPTER MEETING

Monday, October 17, 2022

Paul Rebmann will be featured at our monthly meeting speaking on "Endangered Native Plants of Volusia County". Paul is an outstanding photographer and his knowledge of the flora and fauna of our area is exceptional. The meeting will be conducted over Zoom. The link will be available on our calendar page <https://www.halifaxriveras.org/events/index>

The virtual doors open at 6:30pm for set-up and chatting. The program commences sharply at 7:00PM. The Zoom link on our calendar page will be the "Live" link and will bring you right into the session. Hope to see you there!

Wax myrtle, also variously classified as *Morella cerifera* or *Myrica cerifera*, is a large shrub, about 15-20' tall and 8-10' wide. To the delight of yellow-rumps, its blue-gray, waxy berries mature just in time for fall migration and last through the winter. Its evergreen leaves and dense branching also provide ideal cover for any songbird in need of a hideout.

An easy-to-grow shrub native to the Southeast, wax myrtle thrives in any type of soil and prefers at least 4 hours of sun each day. Once established (after about 6 months), it will live through drought, inundation by salt or fresh water, hurricane winds, salt spray, and freezes. This fast-growing shrub can be planted as a single specimen or in multiples for a privacy screen. It can also be pruned into a small tree.

When shopping for this bird feeder make sure you get at least one female plant since the males do not develop berries. Both sexes produce flowers but they are inconspicuous and not heavily visited by insects. However, larvae of the red-banded hairstreak butterfly feed on the leaves. So if the birds don't find the caterpillars you might get a glimpse of the small, beautiful butterflies with a bright orange band on the edge of their slate gray wings.

Scientists may vacillate in their taxonomy of common birds and plants, but they do agree our Florida butter-butts love to hang out in the wax myrtle shrub.

[Thanks to Joan Tague for help on warbler species – LN]



Yellow-rumped Warbler

Photo: John Lampkin Florida Native Plant Society

WAXING FOR WARBLERS

Leslie Nixon

If you like to watch butter-butts, then you would be wise to plant a wax myrtle. The myrtle warbler, variously classified as the eastern sub-species of the yellow-rumped warbler or its very own unique species, likes to eat wax myrtle berries. While other birds can and do eat the berries, the myrtle warbler is the only *warbler* that can digest the waxy coating of the fruit.



Wax myrtle

Photo: Shirley Denton - Florida Native Plant Society

SUNRISE HIGH

a feature of Everyday Birding by Ray Scory

October 2022



Migrating Cormorants

The tiny size of the flight of the migrating cormorants give a size relationship to the massive breadth of the colorful sunrise. I clicked my camera's shutter when the flock was one third distance into its crossing flight to show direction and expanse.

What makes us stop to look at a sunrise. A spirited awakening. A beautiful sight. I have watched the sun rise from mountain tops to coastal oceans, reflected on glassy ponds and through forested trails. And listen to birds refresh the dawning day. To hear wild birds sing and ocean waves splash, to imagine the silence and feel the forest winds pass. A settling moment to last.

It seems only yesterday that I drove to the Dunlawton Bridge at 6:00AM to participate in my first "The Big Sit" in my new home of Florida. As I drove under the bridge to park my car, I heard the familiar, "hoot, hoot, whoooo". It was very dark when I stepped from my car but emerging daylight began to influence the sky. I witnessed two Great Horned Owls flying between two high buttresses supporting the bridge. Bringing the two owls apparent comfort and security.

It was a mesmerizing sight to watch - the touching of shoulders held longer than to be casual, touching of beaks, flying back and forth together. Soft shrieking and barking, catlike meows, quiet like owl sounds, private intimacy. And without warning the Sun's reflection scratched the river surface. The owls quietly faded away. And I stood entranced with my everlasting memory of the owls at the bridge.

Long before sunrise, I remember when my friend, Paul, and I would set our cameras attached to tripods on the Oceanside dunes of Newcombs Hollow, Cape Cod awaiting a glow in the sky announcing a new day. We had placed our cameras some distance apart encouraging foreground and distance compositions. Upon the first blush of color on the horizon, we would take off running from camera to camera clicking the shutter buttons on each camera. It was an exhausting yet exhilarating experience for two young men. We had yet to realize the underlining impart this fun meant to us. However, this singular adventure helped us connect to a lifetime friendship.

As a brilliant sunrise and the dawning of lasting friendship slowly creeps its mysterious light into the deepest canyons of our consciousness, the memory of the moment is peacefully exciting. Never again, but everlasting.

One Merritt Island NWR Christmas Count morning the night air tingled with Florida chill. Four birders stood still overlooking a vast wetland area on the way to Playalinda Beach. The night was dark and the silence deafening; the night got brighter; a red wash sound of avian wingbeats and calling penetrated the landscape. And we are there. What a sight. What an experience. Everlasting. I will do it again.

A Sunrise holds many wonders and is worthy of its drama.



Bald Eagle

It needn't be a flashy burst of brilliant colors that attracts your attention to an early morning Sunrise. Look for the hidden jewels of detail in your visual landscape to pop your excitement. An early morning Sunrise discovered the dramatic nature of side-lighting reflected off this majestic Bald Eagle. *Ray Scory*

AUDUBON ASSEMBLY TO GO VIRTUAL

Assembly this year was to take place in Fort Myers, Florida at the Luminary Hotel. Due to Hurricane Ian, the in-person sessions and field trips are cancelled. They will be replaced with virtual sessions

Those sessions will be open free of charge. This is an opportunity to participate in these inspiring forums if you could not find the time or resources to attend. The schedule is as follows:

October 12, 2022 at 6:00pm
Conservation Action Agenda Setting

October 27, 2022 at 6:00pm
Audubon Wins and Works for Birds and Florida - A Year in Review

November 2, 2022 at 6:pm
Chapter Celebration and Florida Audubon Annual Meeting

Audubon Florida showcases the achievements of both the state organization and individual chapters each year at these meetings. There are a lot of ideas and creative projects discussed on the docket. The insights shared can be translated into local initiatives to further conservation and education. Often you see our fellow chapters involved in some impressive work.

For more information on participating, click on the link below.

<https://fl.audubon.org/about-us/audubon-assembly>

AND FINALLY:

An apology for the delayed publication of the newsletter this month - we held the publication for several days until some scheduling details could be confirmed in the wake of the storm. We hope you appreciate the more timely information.

Save the Date - April 20, 2022
The excitement is starting - just a quiet whisper...

Halifax River Audubon turns 100 years old next year. Or should we say 100 years young. It's time to celebrate the past while recommitting to the vision of HRA:

Envisioning a community where people and wildlife thrive.

We can achieve this by fulfilling our mission: Through education and advocacy, Halifax River Audubon fosters understanding and care of the environment that provides quality of life for people and wildlife.

Stayed tuned for more information about this year's events and projects.

The Pelican

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Meets monthly September through May

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Past President: Melissa Lammers

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Membership Sec.: Joan Tague

Corresponding Sec: Steve Underwood

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Education: Holly Zwart-Duryea

Field Trips: Joan Tague David Hartgrove

Newsletter Editor: David Hartgrove

Welcome: Vacant

Webmaster: Joan Tague

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.