

The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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Comments & Conservation Notes

Hurricane Ian's passage through Florida left many scars on the landscape. Huge amounts of sand were scoured off our beaches. Sea turtle nests that hadn't hatched already were washed out to sea. The jetty at Ponce Inlet suffered serious damage and will be closed for some time. And many of our neighbors learned that concrete, while appearing quite solid, is also quite porous and allows water to invade where it never had before.

Speaking of sea turtles, all was not lost. The end of season report from the Friends of Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge shows that they had 17,855 Loggerhead nests, 12,444 Green nests, 101 Leatherback nests and 1 Kemp's Ridley nest. According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's preliminary reports less than 2% of the projected total of Loggerhead nests for this year were lost to the storm. Green turtles, which tend to begin nesting later in the season may have seen as much as a 21% loss. The Volusia/Flagler Turtle Patrol reported that there were a few nests still occupied on our beaches here and all were lost to the waves.

Most birds simply fly away for the short duration of a hurricane's passing, but not always. In March, 1993 the "Storm of the Century" roared out of the Gulf of Mexico so quickly that thousands of Clapper and Black Rails, Marsh Wrens and others were caught in the twelve foot storm surge that swept into the Big bend area of our state and perished. Of course that wasn't actually a hurricane because it didn't occur in hurricane season. Though it sure looked like one on the TV weather radar.

Chapter member, Celine Sullivan, sent me a link to a story on the Burrowing Owls of Cape Coral, on Florida's west coast just north of Fort Myers. Ian brought its most destructive winds and water to that area. The birds fled flooded burrows until they could dry out. Some burrows were clogged with debris but with the help of concerned folks who cleared the plastic bags and other junk, the birds returned. Here's a link to a brief [video](#) from several years ago.

You may have seen reports that the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (HR 2773) passed the House in June by a vote of 231 to 190. Passage in the Senate is problematic at this point. Please write or call Senators Marco Rubio and Rick Scott to ask for their votes on this most important conservation legislation. Senator Rubio's number is (202) 224-3041. Senator Scott's number is (202) 224-5274. Thank you.

David Hartgrove

Calendar & Events

Monday, November 21st, Program Meeting- Join us for an informative presentation on the effects the recent passage of Hurricane Ian had on our area beaches. Carolyn Kovacs is the Florida Sea Grant Agent with the University of Florida's IFAS Extension Service for Flagler and Volusia Counties. Flocking together for the meeting begins at 6:30 pm and Carolyn's program will begin promptly at 7:00. A brief business meeting will follow. Please plan to join us.

Field Trips

Yes, we're getting out in the field again and we hope you'll join us. If you have suggestions for future field trips please contact us at forbirds@halifaxriveras.org

Friday, November 11th, Lake Apopka Wildlife Drive- This jewel of a spot offers some of the state's best birding. Join David Hartgrove for this trip that involves driving to stops for short walks. Rarities like Fork-tailed Flycatcher and Smooth-billed Ani have been seen here in the past and recent reports show northern migrants already arriving. We'll meet at Int'l Square on Int'l Speedway Blvd, east of I-95, behind Krystal at 7:00 am. Bring lunch. Questions: call David at 386-235-1249.

Saturday, November 26th, Merritt Island NWR- Birding at MINWR is about as good as birding in Florida gets. And being with us means there are plenty of scopes to allow everyone good views of all those gorgeous ducks and other birds. We'll meet at 7:30 am at the Target in Port Orange behind Panera Bread. Bring lunch. Questions? Call David, 386-235-1249.

Field Trips With Others

*Our friends at Volusia County Environmental Management have another action packed month planned for November. Pre-registration is **required**. Call 386-736-5927.*

Wednesday, November 16th, 9:00 to 11:00 am, Eco Buggy Tour of Tomoka State Park- Take a ride through a part of this wonderful 2,000-acre Florida State Park located along the Tomoka River. Explore the natural communities to learn about land management practices and the history of the area while riding through the diverse ecotones of the land. Meet at the park, 2099 N Beach St., Ormond Beach FL 32174.

Here's a [link](#) to check out the rest of the opportunities they offer.

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

Hurricane-Resistant Plants for Birds

Sadly for our wildlife, many plants that supply them with food and cover were beat-up by the nightmare called Hurricane Ian. Florida native plants, of course, are adapted to these weather events, but due to climate change, the storms are now more intense and damaging, and this is happening faster than the plants can evolve. Before you give up on landscaping, however, you can choose plants that stand-up better than others to extreme weather.

After the brutal 2004-2005 hurricane seasons, the University of Florida performed a study (summary found [here](#)) to identify wind-resistant trees. To no surprise, 14 out of the 16 most wind-resistant trees were Florida native trees. The list includes all the trees that were previously discussed here: sabal palm, yaupon holly, and the three oaks (sand live oak, myrtle oak, and turkey oak).

The study also found that planting trees in groups (as opposed to singletons or in a row) proved to be an additional defense against hurricane wind damage. Trees planted in clusters offer physical support both above ground and deep down in the soil through interconnected roots.

While similar studies on smaller plants are lacking, of the shrubs and wildflowers discussed in this column, the following were anecdotally less damaged than others: Florida privet, goldenrod, saw palmetto, Simpson's stopper, Walter's viburnum, wax myrtle, and yaupon holly.

Just like trees, shrubs and wildflowers fare better in strong wind events if planted in groups. Even plants with broad leaves (more easily torn asunder in fierce winds) can keep their foliage if sheltered by a few of their own kind. The ones facing the full force of the wind protect the plants on the downwind side, so those sheltered remain more-or-less upright with flowers, berries and bird-protective cover intact.

Hurricane Ian may have done more damage with water than with wind in your yard. For the bird-friendly plants previously profiled, the ones that are known (fnps.org) to survive at least short periods of salt or fresh water flooding are: button sage, lantana, Florida privet, sabal palm, saw palmetto, Simpson's stopper, wax myrtle, and yaupon holly. Notice: all but the lantana are also wind-resistant.

No plant is guaranteed to be hurricane-proof, but fortified with a little data, you can make environmentally sound decisions on how to replace your lost vegetation. Help birds build back better by planting hurricane-resistant native plants.

Continued in the next column.

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Good News For Scrub Jays

Apparently the movie line, "if you build it, they will come" is true. [Scrub Oak Preserve](#), located at 1495 McGregor Road, Deland, is a 134 acre property purchased in 2008 through Volusia Forever. Trey Hannah, Environmental Specialist with Volusia County Environmental Management, said that the County began managing the property for Scrub Jays using fire and roller chopping. He said the area had been burned within the past year. Trey also said the Scrub Jays migrated naturally into Scrub Oak Preserve – probably from Blue Springs State Park because the properties abut at one end. Good news indeed.

Paula Wehr



That's a Simpson's Stopper on the right (exposed to the north wind and barely damaged) and two lantanas on the left that lost most of their leaves. *Photo by Leslie Nixon*

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Here's a regular, if not too common, winter visitor to Florida. The Long-billed Curlew, which nests on the Great Plains, evolved to have that long bill in order to feed in the tall grasses of the prairie. It usually nests near water. So it does eat some aquatic invertebrates in its summer range. In Florida and the Texas Gulf Coast, where it winters, it changes its diet to consume both freshwater and salt water crustaceans, invertebrates and small fish.

photo by Danny Sauvageau

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From the Quotable Birder

"We are all pirates at heart. There is not one among us who hasn't had a little larceny in his soul. And which one of us wouldn't soar if God had thought there was merit in the idea? So, when we see one of those great widespread pirates soaring across the grain of sea winds we thrill, and we long, and, if we are honest, we curse that we must be men every day. Why not one day a bird!"

Roger Caras, Birds and Flight

by Ray Scory

My 20 Penny Walk

I like to walk. I like my legs to move. I like to walk in the woods; listen to the birds sing; hear the wind rustle; feel the air; remember times past and be entrenched in the moment. I like to walk to the creek down the street, in a park, along the ocean, a river, in all kinds of weather, at dusk or dawn. I like to look at things; to watch; focus close or far-away, up or down or all around. I like to feel the place; be there walking - mesmerized, quiet.

I like to take "My 20 Penny Walk" around the circle in front of our house, starting at daybreak 7:00AM. One penny for each revolution. Twenty pennies, twenty-five minutes, approximately one mile distance. I use the 20 penny count because it is the best method in keeping count of my walk. Before I kept losing count to other distractions. Starting my walk, I put ten pennies in my right pocket and transfer to my left pocket one penny for each revolution. Twenty times around - Twenty pennies.

The circle is a wonderful place to make my morning walk because I am close by our house while Jane recovers from her total right knee replacement and my 20 penny system works conveniently and flawlessly.

The birds fly by and the clouds move in the sky. Squirrels dodging me; an Osprey finds time to visit me; as a Bald Eagle awaits in our tall pine tree. Everything's around me, including some memories. I go round and round. With so many things to see.

Before daybreak this morning, I listened to the deep hollow hoot "whowhoooo" of the a Great Horned Owl - high in our backyard pine tree. First time this year and a welcomed surprise after a three year absence. Back then they would serenade us every Autumn for years.

A Northern Mockingbird singing atop a red bottle brush tree but better than me. I can't whistle that early in the morning and this particular Mockingbird can't imitate. We both feel sorry for each other, but we will meet next morning. And try again.

I await the flocks of migrating birds that fly over at this time of year - the American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, Laughing Gulls or Double-crested Cormorants. However I get a good look at flying Fish Crows move by - at times individually or in small scattered flocks. Periodically voicing a scratchy one note "Caw" to let me know they are Fish Crows.

One early morning a flock of two hundred Common Grackles flew over so low I could hear their wings beat, while two Marsh Rabbits stoically ate grass and roots from our lawn. Treasured Gifts.

At the end of my walk as the Sun begins to paint its warming glow across our ever present coastal clouds, I put the last penny in my pocket and walk into our home, saluting the gorgeous Bald Eagle that looks down on me from high in the lone backyard pine tree. A morning walk is a good thing to do.

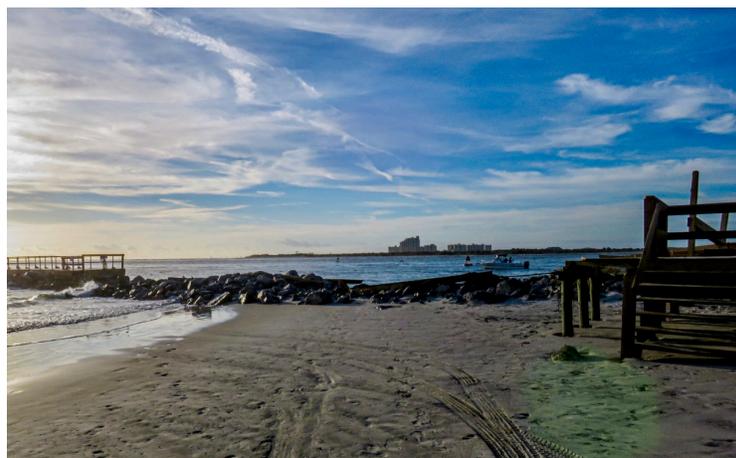
Ray Scory



This Bald Eagle keeps an eye on the neighborhood.

Photo by Ray Scory

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Hurricane Ian did serious damage to the jetty at Ponce Inlet. The power of the ocean, when boosted by hurricane force winds, makes a mockery of man's attempts at permanency.

Photo by Bob Kellogg

HRA has a new board member, Bob Kellogg. Bob's a retired Naval Officer who volunteers with the Volusia Turtle Patrol and wrote this piece with a bit of editorial help from our Recording Secretary, Catherine Goodman.

Ian's Wake

The gates were secured and locked. A new, hastily erected chain link fence was added. The sign said, "Lighthouse Point Park closed due to damage from Hurricane Ian." This was my first visit since Ian. A walk north to the Beach Street auto entry driveway revealed that the gates were locked, the toll booth gone, and debris filled portions of the drive.

Although the surf was high and the waves were crashing, there was a profound difference: silence. As I walked seaward and turned to face south, the magnitude of damage, loss, and incomprehensible change was overwhelming. Front-line dunes were simply gone. The remaining dunes were greatly diminished. All the cross-dune boardwalks were fractured and destroyed. At the far end of the park, the jetty boardwalk was gone; the jetty now with large gaps. The tide was unusually high, perhaps due to strong onshore winds and erosion? My mind was trying to process why I was seeing what I was seeing.

The wrack line held the remains of shore and sea wildlife, vegetation, and manmade debris of all kinds. I don't recall seeing any shore birds. Even though the waves were pounding, it was so very quiet. Walking carefully south, watching for small life entangled in the wrack, it felt as though I had just entered a hospital's critical care unit -- hushed and intense. The wind and the surf mimicked the sound of life support equipment; the bright sunlight infused the remaining life with vital energy.



The damage left by Hurricane Ian will take a long time to repair.

Photo by Bob Kellogg

I sensed the severity of the land's wounds and perceived the desperate struggle for existing dune life to survive and for new life to take hold. I walked gently with care and reverence. Time was moving slowly. The sights, smells, sounds and feel of a place I had come to know well were all altered. A few vistas caught my eye; with a sense of permission, I took a few photographs.

This image, in particular, allowed me to look beyond the immediate hurt. In the background was the Ponce de Leon Inlet Lighthouse, unbroken. I allowed myself to hope that this structure made for mariner guidance, safety and survival, just might be a guiding light for enhanced stewardship and protection of our vital natural coastline.

Bob Kellogg

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Are You An eBirder ?

[eBird](#) is a free application that allows you to keep track of the birds you see when out in the field. Developed by Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and Audubon this valuable app not only allows you to enter your data from the field as you're looking for birds it can be your personal life list. It also has all kinds of features like how to find for the best place to see a bird you've been looking for. Now Cornell Lab has a [free tutorial](#) so you can easily learn how to get the most out of this great product. Click on the link above and start to learn and enjoy.

David Hartgrove

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