

# The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

Volume 69-Number 1. Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon  
January, 2023



Chapter member, Steve Underwood, sent this along from all of us.



## Comments & Conservation Notes

The American Birding Association each year selects a species to be, "Bird of the Year." Last year it was the Pileated Woodpecker. This year it's the Belted Kingfisher. Any photographer who's ever tried to photograph one will tell you the bird's about as skittish as they come. Though I long thought otherwise, they do nest across most of the state. It pays to reread some of those books on my shelf.

Belted Kingfisher is one of our few birds to nest under ground. Both adults work on excavating the nest. "The Bird Life Of Florida", by Stevenson and Anderson has numerous records going back many years. These show that the birds are often found nesting in the banks of the St Johns River, in sand piles at old phosphate mine sites, and just about any other place with water and the appropriate substrate.

\* \* \*

We are celebrating our 100th anniversary this year. One hundred years ago Rupert J Longstreet, one of the giants of Florida ornithology and a local school administrator, got together with some like minded friends and formed the Halifax River Bird Club. The following year Longstreet was instrumental in forming the Florida Audubon Society and we became the Halifax River Audubon Society.

David Hartgrove

## Calendar & Events

**Monday, January 16th, Program Meeting-** Join us via Zoom for a presentation by Jessy Wayles, Community Engagement Coordinator with the Indian River Lagoon Council. Jessy will be talking about shoreline restoration projects that are spearheaded by the Council and their efforts to clean up the Indian River Lagoon. Our Zoom meeting will begin flocking together at 6:30 pm and the fun starts at 7:00. A brief business meeting will follow.

### Field Trips

**Friday, January 13th, Tosohatchee WMA-** Join David Hartgrove for this mostly driving field trip. Meet at 7:30 am at the Target East of I-95 on Dunlawton Ave behind Panera Bread. Bring lunch. Questions, call David, 386-235-1249.

**Friday, January 27th, Orlando Wetlands-** Join Joan Tague for our trip to this great spot. We'll meet at 7:30 am at Target in Port Orange, East of I-95 on Dunlawton Ave behind Panera to carpool. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Joan, 386-871-6049.

### Field Trips With Others

*Our friends at Volusia County Environmental Management have several outings of interest. These trips require pre-registration. Please call 386-736-5927 to register.*

**Tuesday, January 10th, Eco Buggy Tour-** This tour, from 9:00 to 11:00 am, will be to Deep Creek Preserve. Take a riding tour of this 8,000-acre natural and agricultural land to learn about important plant communities. Participants may get the opportunity to see a close-up view of carnivorous plants, and an uncommon sighting of the Sherman's fox squirrel. Meet at 964 S. State Road 415, New Smyrna Beach

**Wednesday, January 18th, Long Leaf Pine Preserve-** Participants will hike the orange trail (9:00 to 10:30 am) following the Explore Volusia iNaturalist January challenge. A guide will help participants to navigate the iNaturalist app and give details about the Explore Volusia monthly challenge. Meet at 3637 E. New York Ave., DeLand, FL 32724.

**Wednesday, January 25th, IRL Preserve Park-** Take a short hike (9:00 to 10:30 am) around Indian River Lagoon Park to learn about the importance of barrier islands, mangroves, and the health of the Indian River Lagoon. Environmental specialists will discuss plant life, water quality, and local wildlife on this scenic hike. Meet at 700 Sandpiper St., New Smyrna Beach.

by Ray Scory

## Showcasing Unnoticed Things

A vast fleet of moving and stationary things to look at through an eye frame of approximately 1 1/4 inches wide and 3/8 inches high. That is a lot for the eye to take in and focus on every split second it is open. Consequently, we sometimes miss the details and nuances of a beautiful moment.

Some years ago I was standing at the edge of a sidewalk looking up into a tree when a bicyclist swiftly sped by and said, "There's nothing up there." Except I was watching a gloriously red Cardinal with its head thrown back, bill quivering to the notes produced and belting out a song of unmatched melody. All this surrounded in a forest of shimmering green leaves topped against a seamlessly stunning blue sky. But there's nothing there. Only in the eyes of the beholder. Raw. Singular. Pleasure.

I like looking at things to see what I can see. I guess after forty years as an advertising/commercial photographer and two years as a US Army photographer, I developed an appreciation for details. Both occupations required strict adherence to the elements on display in each photograph. If I didn't follow photographic protocol, I probably would be using mop and bucket instead of a camera or looking for a different line of work.

As for today - those working days have past. However, I still I enjoy making meaningful photographs using those past acquired skills.



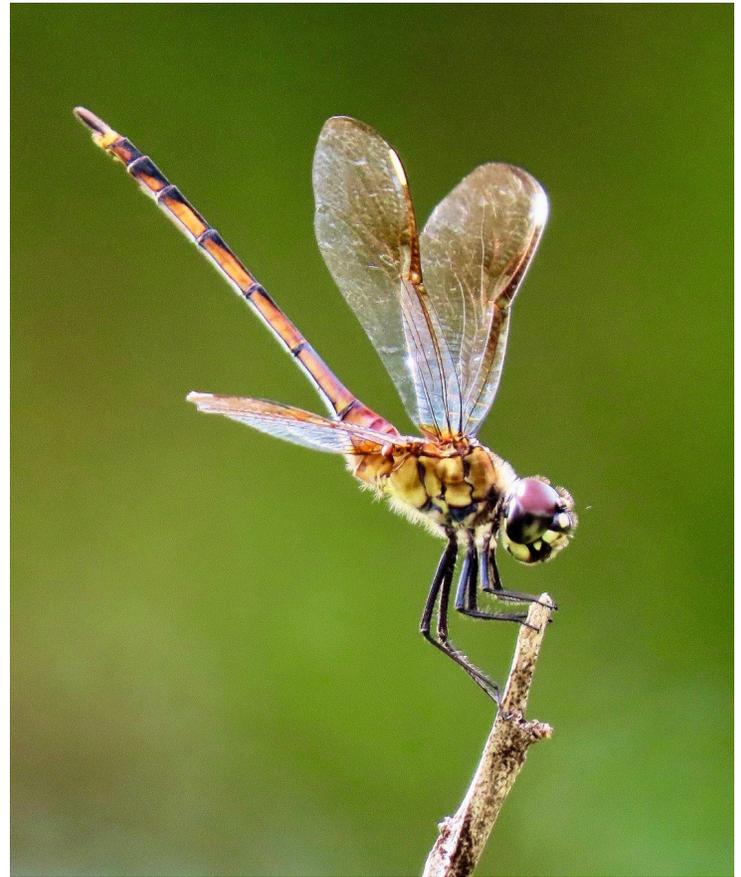
Bald Eagle carrying nesting material to its nest. This photo was taken in Lee County in January, 2009. *Photo by Ray Scory*

Yes, marvelous, spectacular, interesting things. Is a Bald Eagle landing on it's nest more dramatic than a dragonfly speeding about your yard - instantly making a speedy, pinpoint landing on a toothpick size twig - quite an awesome thing to watch. Some of the tiniest, unnoticed things can become magnificent with a little bit of observation. Search for the uncommon in familiar settings; for the common in uncommon settings.

We are starting a New Year and we always wish for a Happy New Year. There is a lot out there to be happy about - to see. It isn't always a coastal sunrise that is so beautiful. Sometimes

a single crashing wave can do the trick or a starfish on the beach - a leaf on a sidewalk - a single bird flying through a wide open sky - a Painted Bunting in your birdbath.

What do we not see when we don't stop to look out the window or up into a tree?



This colorful Wandering Glider dragonfly stopped by my backyard in late August 2020 along with others of its specie. They are world-wide wanderers and stay here about two weeks. Off to other long distant stops with many migrating over vast ocean waters. They are noted for being the longest migrating insect in the world. They can be found around ponds and streams necessary for breeding.

*Photo by Ray Scory*

*Jane and I wish for you and your family a Happy, Healthy New Year and much to see in 2023.*

\* \* \* \*

## Come Help Build The New Bird Habitat

The Marine Science Center's bird hospital is getting a make over and they need our help. On Thursday, January 5th, from 9:00 to 11:00 am, volunteers will construct prototypes of concrete trees for the new raptor enclosures and help make enrichment toys for the resident birds. Please start saving empty tissue boxes, paper rolls, newspaper, etc. to construct enrichment toys. After volunteering, we will tour the bird boardwalk to learn about the bird residents and the work at the bird hospital. We may even get the opportunity to meet a bird up close! Participants will meet at the Marine Science Center parking lot at 100 Lighthouse Drive, Ponce Inlet .

Bob Lane, a Pinellas County birder whose writings we've published before, recently posted this to [BRDBRAIN](#).

## Finding A Rarity On A CBC

Here's a reminder of the exciting possibilities of finding a rare bird on a Christmas Bird Count. Twelve years ago during the West Pasco Christmas Bird Count, the now famous Kelp Gull was found at Anclote Gulf Park near the town of Holiday in Pasco County. The gull was sometimes present, from December 28, 2010 thru January 8, 2011 and seen by many visitors from near and far. The Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee extensively reviewed the sighting record and accepted the Kelp Gull as a natural vagrant. This observation represented the first and only record for Florida.

I think a short explanation of the original sighting, and what took place in the next few days after that sighting, is a story worth telling. The group of three, that originally found the then, unknown gull species, were myself, Steve Mann, and Frank Brandt.\* Here is a recap of the beginning of the morning of Tuesday December 28, 2010. While participating on the West Pasco Christmas Bird Count, we arrived at Anclote Gulf Park about 7:30AM. Immediately off the end of the short pier to the right, we saw what appeared to be a Great Black-backed Gull, but it was noted by all of us that it was only the size of a Herring Gull. A Lesser Black-backed Gull had been seen at this same location by a CBC scouting party on a previous day. If this was a Lesser, it was the darkest backed, individual, any of us had ever seen. Fortunately, Steve Mann was able to click off some of his usual excellent photos of the puzzling gull. A short time later, the bird flew out of sight, and was not seen again by us in the next hour that we remained at Anclote Gulf Park.

Prior to us moving on to continue the count, I made the statement that if this was a Great Black-backed Gull, it was of the dwarf variety. Later in the day we compared the day's sightings with Dave Gagne (Region Leader), and Charlie Fisher. We talked about the gull circumstances; from the photos it appeared we had a runt Great Black-backed Gull. After returning to home in Clearwater and thoroughly researching all my field guides, I concluded as far fetched as it seemed, the only black backed gull of that size was Kelp Gull. I immediately called Dave Gagne and reiterated my thoughts on the size of the gull, and the remote possibility of it being a Kelp Gull. I also sent the photos and explained our sighting to some expert \*\* birding friends, who have had experience in gull identification, for their opinion. The replies were possible Kelp Gull or Kelp Gull/Herring Gull hybrid. Luckily, after several days had passed, Dave Gagne and Bill Pranty's persistence in re-finding the elusive bird paid off; when they finally succeeded in re-finding it at the original sighting location, on January 3rd, 2011. The floodgate of visitors to Anclote Gulf Park began and lasted off and on until January 8th. Keep in mind, that every time you are out birding, be thinking about what rarity might be out there, at the most unlikely location. This year's West Pasco CBC is this upcoming Tuesday December 27th. Can another rarity be found?

*Bob Lane*

\* Frank is long time chapter member, Rachel Ramsey's brother and a published bird guide author. *Editor*

\*\*One of the experts consulted in the story above was our own, Michael Brothers. He and I drove across the state to see this wandering rarity. Kelp Gulls are birds of the southern hemisphere. So rare this far north. *Editor*

Photographer, [Lou Newman](#), from down southwest Florida way, has seen his work in our pages as well as many others. I wish we had room for the whole series of these shots of young Herring Gulls seemingly playing for the fun of it.

## Gulls At Play



Sometimes the birds would play with the shell, repeatedly drop it or toss it around.



Squabbles and competition for a shell occurred occasionally.

*Photos by Lou Newman*

But is it also training for the kleptoparasitic life style of their species? That's a "6 bit" word as my Dad used to say. It means they steal the food of other birds. Regardless of how unappealing it might be to human palates, Herring Gulls will harass and chase other gulls and terns in an effort to get them to regurgitate their last meal, often partially digested fish. They've been observed landing on the heads of Brown Pelicans sitting on the water. Again, in an effort to get the calories to make it through another day. It's a bird eat bird world out there and practice goes a long way in helping assure survival.

*David Hartgrove*

## Share The Beach With Shorebirds This Winter



Wilson's Plover Photo by David Hartgrove

This winter season, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) reminds beachgoers how to help protect vulnerable resident and migratory shorebirds and seabirds while enjoying Florida's coastal habitats.

Each winter, Florida's resident shorebirds and seabirds are joined by both human and avian snowbirds coming to our state's shorelines from colder climates. Help shorebirds and seabirds along our coasts by following these simple shorebird-friendly tips:

**Do the flock walk.** Instead of walking straight through, try walking around flocks of birds at the beach and stay out of posted areas. Getting too close to resting shorebirds, seabirds and wading birds can cause them to flush, disturbing birds that may need important rest from long migratory flights.

**Look for Critical Wildlife Area closures.** Be on the lookout for signs designating [Critical Wildlife Areas](#) on the beach or coastal islands – these areas are closed to public access to protect high concentrations of wading birds and shorebirds. Boaters and beachgoers can help birds by keeping their distance and noise volumes low near CWAs.

**Keep your pups at home.** Even well-behaved dogs can frighten shorebirds, causing them to panic and expend valuable energy. If you bring your dog with you to the shore, go to a beach where they're allowed and follow all leash laws.

**Resist the urge to feed the birds.** Sharing snacks with birds at the beach may seem harmless or even helpful but it can be harmful to them and other wildlife. Shorebirds and seabirds are healthiest when eating the natural prey they normally forage for, such as small invertebrates in the sand and fish they've caught themselves from the water.

**Properly stash all trash.** Trash and food scraps attract predators while litter on beaches and in the water can entangle birds, turtles and other wildlife. Fishing line can be deadly to waterbirds, sea turtles and other wildlife, so be sure to dispose of it properly.

## Items of Interest

Archie Carr NWR spans portions of the coast lines of both Brevard and Indian River Counties. Their [Friends group](#) newsletter has an end of season report. 30,466 sea turtles nested on the refuge beaches. The vast majority hatched before Hurricanes Ian and Nicole washed out the remainder.

\* \* \*

## From The Quotable Birder

"We must not make a scarecrow of the law, setting it up to fear the birds of prey, and let it keep one shape, till custom make it their perch and not their terror.

*William Shakespeare, Measure for Measure, Act II, sc. 1*

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE PELICAN

is published monthly by Halifax River Audubon, a chapter of the National Audubon Society and a member of Audubon Florida serving eastern Volusia County.

PO Box 166  
Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166

Email: [editor@halifaxriveras.org](mailto:editor@halifaxriveras.org)

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

### Halifax River Audubon

[forbirds@halifaxriveras.org](mailto:forbirds@halifaxriveras.org)

Meets monthly September through May

President: David Hartgrove

Vice President: Joan Tague

Past President: Melissa Lammers

Treasurer: Ellen Tate

Recording Sec.: Catherine Goodman

Membership Sec.: Joan Tague

Corresponding Sec: Steve Underwood

Historian: Holly Zwart-Duryea

At-Large: Bob Kellogg, Carol Roberts, Steve Underwood

### Committee Members

Conservation: David Hartgrove

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 4 Colony and the Spruce Creek Garden and Nature Club.