

# The Pelican

For wildlife & people since 1923

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## Comments & Conservation Notes

From "[The Advocate](#)", Audubon Florida's weekly update on legislative issues, comes good news. Miami-Dade County is looking to expand its Urban Development Boundary westward into the Everglades. In order for this to happen they had to apply to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity for a permit. Audubon Florida testified in a hearing on the matter and pointed out that the county's application had discrepancies. Those were sufficient to force FDOE to reject the application. So it's back to square one for the county.

\* \* \*

Down in DeSoto and Hardee Counties there's good news. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection finalized the purchase of a nearly 12,000 acre conservation easement along Horse Creek, a major tributary of the Peace River. This will be combined with another conservation easement to protect nearly 16,000 acres in the Peace River watershed. This ranch land is home to Burrowing Owls, the Eastern indigo snake, Crested Caracara, Sandhill Cranes and other threatened and endangered species.

\* \* \*

Up in Union and Bradford Counties a company was seeking a permit to open a phosphate mine. This would do serious damage the Santa Fe River and the Floridan Aquifer. Union County tried to fight the project and was sued to the tune of 300 million dollars. Bradford County engaged an environmental consultant to study the project. His report was so damaging that the county sat on the report for 2 years, afraid that it would kill the project. For the past 9 years the fight against this project was lead by the Bradford Environmental Forum, a grass roots organization whose spokesperson is Carol Mosley. Back in 1996 I worked with Carol on the [Walk For The Earth](#) . Touted as a big job creator, the phosphate mine had the support of the business communities in those 2 economically depressed counties. BEF was able to force Bradford County to release the report. Once it was published and the community realized just how bad the potential environmental damage was the company withdrew its lawsuit, withdrew its permit application and went out of business. In an article by Craig Pittman in the Florida Phoenix Carol said, "The crazy thing is that I went from being everyone's enemy to everyone's darling." Thanks to Carol and BEF our state's major drinking water source is safe until the next threat arises.

David Hartgrove

## Calendar & Events

**Monday, February 20th, Program Meeting-** In December, 2014 our chapter sponsored a birding trip to Cuba. Join us for a look back at the wonderful time we had there. 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, February 10th, 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.

**Thursday, February 23rd, T. M. Goodwin Marsh-** Join David Hartgrove for a trip to this outstanding location. This is a long drive, so we'll meet at 7:00 am at the Target East of I-95 on Dunlawton Ave behind Panera Bread. Afterward we'll have lunch at [Marsh Landing](#) restaurant in Fellsmere. Questions, call David, 386-235-1249.

### Field Trips With Others

*Our friends at the Marine Discovery Center have once again scheduled monthly pontoon boat trips to Disappearing Island. These offer a great opportunity to go to this shorebird hotspot during winter migration.*

The trips are scheduled on the following dates:

Wednesday, 2/15 9:00 am to Noon

Wednesday, March 15th, 9:00 am to Noon

and Wednesday, April 26th, 9:00 am to Noon.

Reservations are required and can be made online at this [link](#) or by calling the MDC, 386-428-4828. Cost is as follows:

Adults: \$40 | Seniors (62+) & Students: \$37

Family: \$110 | Children under 12: \$22

\* \* \* \*

## Save The Date

Saturday, April 15th, the Paw Paw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society will hold a native plant sale and expo from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm at the Piggott Center, 504 Big Tree Road, in South Daytona. This is your chance to purchase some native plants for your home landscape and to support a partner in our county's environmental community.

Red-headed Woodpecker.  
Photo: Manny Salas/Macaulay Library

# How many birds can you find?

26th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count

February 18, 2023

birdcount.org



Here's Holly in 2020 showing kids how to fill out their field notebooks.

## Time Once Again For Some Birding Fun

The Event is From 10:00 am till 2:00 pm

The Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center will once again be ground zero for all of the activities. We will start out early (7:30 am) with a bird walk. This will be the baseline survey of the park, noting all of the species and the numbers of each that we see. This is where you experienced birders in our group come in. We need 5 or 6 people to volunteer to lead hourly walks. Based on the last several years of experience we can expect 150+ members of the public to show up over the course of the event. If you're volunteering contact Joan or David, 386-871-6049 for Joan. 386-235-1249 for David

In addition to our booth the Paw Paw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society will also be there as well as Melissa's Plants For Birds display. There will be games involving identifying birds and these are one way a child or adult can get stickers for their Field Notebook. Upon arrival the guests check in at our booth and receive their Field Notebook. Then, as they move around from booth to booth to game exhibits, they are awarded stickers. Once a book is filled with stickers the child or adult gets to pick a rubber duckie from our large selection.

We will need stationary observers and some of these positions have already been filled. Ellen and Becky Tate will be over at the Hand Ave. entrance with a scope and Steve and Mary Blackledge will be on the back deck at EDC with a scope too. We will need someone to man the exhibit table, where there will be a game that asks participants to match eggs with the birds that laid them, a display of various bird nests and eggs, etc. This is really a fun experience watching 8 year olds try to imagine what bird produced which egg. Your participation is what will make this event a success. We're hoping that at least four of you reading this will volunteer to help with this activity.

So - think about how you want to participate and let me know what you might be interested in doing. Warning - if I don't get enough volunteers for the walks and outposts - you may be drafted to help in that area. Again, we will have experienced folks posted everywhere.



Last year's bird board showing birds seen on walks



And for all the winners, this is what it's all about.

Getting to select your rubber duckie from the wide assortment of hobbies and occupations depicted is a blast! Please come out and join us. We're hoping for a minimum of 15 volunteers to help make this event a success. ThankYou!

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

## Surviving the Cold and Smelling Good

With the two recent cold snaps we've experienced lately, some of you may be contemplating moving further south. For those who choose to remain in sometimes-chilly Volusia County, there are ways to help your bird-friendly plants survive the colder aspects of global "warming". Although our world is getting hotter as a general rule, climate change is causing all kinds of extreme weather events, so don't count on the warming trend to prevent further hard freezes in Central Florida. Here are three recommendations for protecting your landscape from the cold:

\* Choose plants that naturally grow in Zone 9B. These plants, especially Florida natives, are more likely to persevere through a freeze or at least recover once spring appears.

\* Get your plants established before next winter. In other words, get them in the ground by May. This is especially important for shrubs and trees that take months to develop strong root systems which are needed by plants to withstand physical stress.

\* Plant in groups if feasible. You've heard this before. The plants in the outer layer take the hit (whether it be strong winds or bitter cold) for the team, while the more protected players



Sweet Acacia *Vachellia farnesiana* Photo by Shirley Denton

For a unique, cold-tolerant plant (down to 20o F), select sweet acacia (*Vachellia farnesiana*). This large Florida native shrub or small tree has lacy, evergreen foliage and yellow pom-pom flowers which bloom almost all year long. Pollinators appreciate the flowers and people love the sweet fragrance that gives the shrub its common epithet. Sweet acacia does not feed birds (it does not produce berries and its seeds are not a popular choice), but it does offer tough thorny branches that provide protection from predators. Plant one near your fruit-bearing shrubs to give your avian friends a quick hideout when danger approaches. (But also be careful yourself when moving around it.)

Sweet acacia grows rapidly to 8-15' tall and 6-10' wide. It is not picky about soil type, but it does demand a location with a lot of sun to maximize its potential as a dense, flowering shrub. Another durable native, it stands up to salt spray, strong winds, and brief flooding. Choose sweet acacia to add beauty, fragrant blooms, and a safe haven for birds to your landscape – even during a freeze.

Leslie Nixon

\* \* \* \*

## Feeding Birds, Yes or No ?

On Audubon's [website](#) there's an article by renowned photographer, Melissa Groo on the ethics of feeding birds. She begins by asking three questions.

Is this species at risk?

Is the food appropriate and safely provided?

Is feeding this bird likely to change its behavior in harmful ways?

The answers to these questions are fairly simple to deduce. One of the most common sights on field trips to see Florida Scrub-Jays is the trip leader or some other enterprising person in attendance pulling out a handful of peanuts. These birds are known to have a healthy appetite for peanuts and hopefully anyone feeding Scrub-Jays knows that the peanuts offered to the birds should be raw, natural peanuts. Not "cajun boiled peanuts." Still, it's a violation of federal law to feed peanuts to Scrub-Jays unless you have a permit issued by the US Fish & Wildlife Service.

Feeding birds at a backyard feeder allows us to view our avian neighbors at close range and when done responsibly offers birds an enhanced chance of survival. That part about responsibly feeding includes the necessity of maintaining a clean feeder and keeping the feed in it fresh. If you have a large capacity feeder and we have 2 days of steady rain the seed in it can become water logged and begin to mold. This can transmit diseases to the birds. So you need to monitor the feeder and make sure that at least monthly you empty it and wash it with a solution of 1 part chlorine bleach to 4 parts water. Then allow the feeder to dry completely before refilling it.

Feeding passerines in your backyard is one thing. Trying to entice an owl into photographic range by offering pet store mice is quite another. This directly conflicts with question 3 above. Owls fly low to the ground and are often hit by cars. Before I retired I was working early one morning and was driving east on Dunlawton. Just after crossing the rail road tracks I saw what appeared to be a road kill owl in the side of the road at the entrance to Port Orange Elementary School. I went back and checked. Sure enough it was a dead Barred Owl. Its intended prey, a small mouse, was a few feet away. There's a dumpster in the parking lot and apparently the owl had just swooped down on its prey and was flying away when it flew into the side of a passing car. I collected the owl and later was able to donate it to the Natural History Museum in Gainesville.

Attempting to feed any large bird, whether it's an owl, a hawk, a Sandhill Crane or a pelican at a fishing dock will ultimately put that bird at risk because it habituates the bird to human presence. Brown Pelicans snagged on fishing line are often the birds seen at fishing docks begging handouts. So feed the small birds in your backyard but leave the other birds alone. You'll be doing them a favor.

David Hartgrove



Photo montage by Ray Scory

*Time for another in our ongoing series, Everyday Birding*

by Ray Scory

**Happy, Happy Bird Time**

Does a smile, a song, a kiss, a hug make us happy? Does a kind word, a gentle gesture make us smile? Do we like being with close friends? Do we feel the warming glow that passes through our awareness when exposed to these kind gestures?

Are we the only living creatures who feel such tender passions? I wonder. Do birds exhibit the same tenderness that we do? At times - they surely do - at least they show it.

I like making photographs - especially photographs of bird behavior. Birds in their natural settings - acting out their everyday activities - presenting individual personalities - passing through the day expressing behavior, acting like birds, but once in awhile igniting in us a kindred recognition.

That bird knows what love is. "Click!" That bird knows what a kiss does. "Click!" The pleasure of a mother bird feeding her youngster - a universal rapture. "Click!" Sometimes I feel like an intruder. Let the moment be. But I can't. I have been a photographer all my life. I need to photograph things. Now I need to photograph birds.

Give a thought to the everyday behavior of birds that strike us as kindly human-like gestures. Anthropomorphism it's called - it can be fun.

Ray Scory

**Forces of Nature**

"Forces of Nature, A History of Florida Land Conservation" is a new book by Clay Henderson. Clay served as President of Audubon Florida, served on the Volusia County Council and in the state legislature. He's currently Executive Director of the Institute for Water and Environmental Resilience at Stetson University.

The book is extremely well written and introduces the reader to a wildly interesting cast of characters whose efforts on behalf of Florida's environment have benefitted us all. Clay (who will be the keynote speaker at our chapter's 100th anniversary celebration) has two local book signing events coming up this month.

Saturday, 2/4 at the ACA downtown, Yurick Studios  
123 Douglas Street, New Smyrna Beach at 3:00 pm

Monday, 2/6 at the Stetson Aquatic Center  
2636 Alhambra Avenue, DeLand at 6:00 pm

The book is fascinating and filled with familiar names and the names of people long forgotten by many. I strongly recommend it.

David Hartgrove

# WIN A GARDEN!

## Native Florida Plants for Birds, Butterflies & You!

Enter Audubon's  
**Plant Real Florida for Birds,  
Butterflies  
& You**

contest for the opportunity to  
win \$500 for Florida Native  
Plants for your yard.

Birds and pollinators  
need native plants to survive.

For more information, go to  
[westvolusiaaudubon.org/P4Bcontest](http://westvolusiaaudubon.org/P4Bcontest)



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## AUDUBON LAUNCHES CONTEST TO WIN A NATIVE GARDEN

This month, we break new ground—literally! On February 1st, we'll launch the Plant Real Florida for Birds, Butterflies & You contest. Winning homeowners in Volusia County will receive \$500.00 to purchase Florida Native Plants for their yards. Halifax River Audubon and West Volusia Audubon have teamed up for this groundbreaking (pun intended) contest to help local homeowners help birds and pollinators by creating valuable habitat in their own yards. For more information and to enter the contest, go to <http://www.westvolusiaaudubon.org/P4Bcontest/>.

Birds and pollinators need native plants to survive. 96% of North American land-based birds need protein in the form of insects to feed their chicks so they can grow strong enough to fledge. Even hummingbirds feed insects to their chicks! Almost all of the insects baby birds depend upon eat only the plants they evolved with over millennia – Florida native plants! So, if there are no native plants for the bugs, there are no bugs for the baby birds. And no more baby birds means no more birds! In fact, we've lost more than 3 billion birds in the last 50 years, mostly due to habitat loss. But you have the power to help reverse that!

**You can preserve nature right in your own backyard!** While many people are frustrated by the pace and scope of development in Volusia County, they don't realize that they have the power to counteract some of the habitat loss from the construction of their homes and other homes around them, right in their own backyards! By changing landscaping from mostly turfgrass and exotic (non-native) plants to Florida native plants, a residential yard can provide food and shelter year-round for resident and migrating birds. Native plants provide seeds, berries, nuts, nectar and yes, insects for growing chicks!

**Why Florida Native Plants?** In addition to supporting insects, which support birds and other larger animals, Florida native plants are beneficial to the ecosystem and kinder to the environment – they're better for water, wildlife and you!

- \* Once established, they require far less water than turfgrass and many exotic ("not from here") ornamental plants.
- \* They don't need pesticides (you're leaving the bugs for the baby birds, right?) and so those poisons stay out of the water.
- \* They don't need herbicides, either. A lot of what you might be calling weeds are actually important native plants. So by not using or limiting weed killers, those chemicals aren't going onto the water, either.
- \* They rarely need any kind of fertilizer (maybe some compost now and then), so you're not adding nitrogen, the main culprit in the impairment of the Indian River Lagoon, the Halifax River and many other waterbodies in Florida, to the water.
- \* They not only provide food for wildlife; they also provide shelter where birds can escape predators like cats.
- \* They are the REAL FLORIDA!!!

**Audubon's Plants for Birds Program** is part of our Bird-friendly Communities work. In addition to adding native plants to your yard, you can also help birds by

- \* moving your bird feeders close to your home (within four feet) to help avoid bird strikes.
- \* making your windows visible to birds by placing decals or tape on them, or nets in front of them. The idea is to reduce reflections in the glass so birds don't injure or kill themselves by flying hard into windows.
- \* Keeping your cat indoors. Cats, a non-native species in North America, are estimated to kill 4 billion birds a year.
- \* Providing fresh, clean water all the time.
- \* Keeping snags (tree stumps) in place, if it's safe to do so.

For more information about Audubon's Plants for Birds, go to <https://www.audubon.org/PLANTSFORBIRDS>

If you know of an organization or a homeowner's association that would like to learn more, please send an email to [forbirds@halifaxriveras.org](mailto:forbirds@halifaxriveras.org) and put "Speaker" in the subject line.

*Melissa Lammers*

\* \* \* \*

### From The Quotable Birder

Thou tree of covert and of rest  
For this young bird that is distress  
Among thy branches safe he lay  
And he was free to sport and play  
When falcons were abroad for prey

*William Wordsworth*

*Song At The Feast Of Brougham Castle*



### Farewell To A Good Friend

Back around 2000 Kevin Doxstater was a photographer, not a birder at the time, and worked at Speedway Photo. One day he was photographing race cars at the Speedway when he saw a Bald Eagle perched atop a light pole. He swung his camera up and took a shot. Suddenly, the bird dropped off the pole and came diving down toward the lake in the center of the track. The eagle snatched a Laughing Gull off the surface and flew off. Kevin was photographing the action and his life was forever changed. He joined our chapter soon after this event and almost immediately volunteered for the board.

Within four years he'd sold his house, bought a travel trailer and spent the next two years photographing birds and other wildlife all over the West, beginning with eagles in Alaska. One day he was at Bryce Canyon National Park and overheard a conversation between two rangers that they were looking for someone who knew Photoshop. A serendipitous moment.

I couldn't find a photo of Kevin in his ranger hat. He worked a seasonal ranger at first but finally made it to the big leagues and never looked back. While here he designed a large display board filled with bird photos that we used at tabling events. He also designed the large sign describing the Port Orange Wildlife Sanctuary that was placed by the City below the Dunlawton Bridge.

Kevin had retired from the Park Service and was living near Aransas NWR, in east Texas. He was a volunteer at Aransas and several other places when he was diagnosed with cancer. He recently entered hospice and passed on this week. He will be missed by all whose lives he touched.

*David Hartgrove*



American White Pelican

*Photo by Lou Newman*

When you're this big you need a lot of room to take off.

\* \* \* \* \*

### THE PELICAN

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