

The Pelican

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For wildlife & people since 1923



The President's Column

A Pandemonium

There are lots of clever, folksy and archaic names for groups of birds specific to species. An internet search brings up both the obvious and the unexpected. Have you ever heard of a group of sandpipers referred to as a "Fling". The number of snipe viewed this year in the mud at Merritt Island and other spots never had me thinking "Whisp", but I love the term. Today a word presented itself at Washington Oaks - a Pandemonium. The term has been ascribed to anything parrot - and I can see that - but today I was in the middle of one and no parrots were involved. (Although the Nanday Parakeets live just up A-1A, but I digress).

This is the time of year when I try to get out at least a couple of hours each morning to see what might have dropped into the neighborhood. I have already enjoyed a couple of nice surprises (Cape May and Swainson's Warblers) and that fuels my resolve to be out the door at sunrise to get to a place to that might be attractive to the the birds that will descend from the sky. Today I decided on Washington Oaks Gardens State Park.

I try to schedule a Fall and Spring field trip to this lovely location in hopes of getting the timing just right as the neotropical migrants zip through Florida. As I left the parking lot today, I was struck by the vigorous singing of the "usual suspects". Northern Paula's and Yellow-throated Warblers, Carolina Wrens and Mockingbirds. Male cardinals were in full battle mode and when a female just happen to land on the path for a little grit, they went bananas. They almost ran into me and at one point the female seemed to put me between herself and the boys. Nothing unusual, I thought, but lots of drama.

I walked towards the formal garden. I was stunned by how beautiful they are right now. There has been a lot of storm stress over the last few years. Often when we went to the park there were areas that were closed, or under construction. Well, every part of the grounds are wonderful. Of course, the flowers and shrub and plants are stepping up for the season, but the facility is polished, benches are new and refinished, greenhouses are neat and full of plants, the ponds are pristine. Butterflies of several varieties graced the flowering shrubs. So many things were blooming. Newly committed couples posed for photographs that will grace web pages and invitations. Kudos to the dedicated staff and volunteers.

Continued on the next page

Calendar & Events

Wednesdays, Morning Bird Walks- Joan Tague is hosting morning bird walks at Ormond Central Park on Wednesdays, April 9th, 16th and 23rd. Meet at the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center, 601 Division Avenue, Ormond Beach FL 32174 at 8:00 am. These casual 2 hour bird walks are along the groomed trails in the park looking for early avian migrants. Binoculars are highly recommended. Questions, call Joan, (386) 871-6049.

Wednesday/Saturday, April 9th to the 12th- Fort DeSoto. See the flyer on page 3 for all the info.



Thursday, April 19th Big Beautiful Birds of the Loop- Join Melissa Lammers for this look at birds seen while driving the scenic Ormond Loop. The event will be held at the Ormond Beach Regional Library, 30 S Beach Street, Ormond Beach FL 32174 from 5:30 to 6:30 pm.

Saturday, April 19th, Earth Day- Join us for this event which will also serve as our April chapter meeting. This too will be at the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center, 601 Division Avenue, Ormond Beach FL 32174 from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. We're looking for volunteers to help man our booth and to help with the scheduled bird walks. Call Joan (386) 871-6049 or David, 386-235-1249. See the flyer on the next page.

Events With Others

Friday, April 11th, End of Season Potluck at MDC- Join our friends from Southeast Volusia Audubon Society for their end of the season potluck dinner, with live music, fellowship and bird stories. Held on the outside patio at the Marine Discovery Center, 520 Barracuda Boulevard, New Smyrna Beach. Bring a covered dish and be there at 5:00 pm for all the fun.

In the middle of my admiration of the park - the trees exploded. The large ancient oaks, with no warning, were full of birds. Mostly warblers, but you could hear and sometimes spy a Gnatcatcher or a Red-eyed Vireo. How many birds? A lot - 100, 200, 300? My binocular view would yield several birds at a time - anywhere I looked. Some dropped for water, some worked the dry Resurrection Fern, some picked at oak catkins, some pried at bark. Then they all changed places, then they came back to the first spot. They flew past each other, yet moved as a group through the trees. Zig-Zag, back and forth. Chipping, chipping, chipping. A pandemonium!

I could not focus on most of them - even with my experience they were just a blur. I plopped on one of the newly finished benches and leaned back to take this all in. From this steady position I could see a few details as they passed along. Sure, they were mostly Yellow-rumped Warblers. But how "ramped up" they were! I imagined that they had followed the intracoastal at daybreak and searching below, decided on this stop. They were frantic to fuel and eat and ultimately find a safe place to chill for awhile before they lifted off in the evening. I wondered how they felt about the choice of this location? Were they sharing impressions, remarking on the insects they were finding? Did I have any way of knowing if they were getting what they needed?

They were moving quickly, so I travelled with them as long as I could. The sense of urgency seemed to diminish. They became a little calmer...and then I heard something I almost never hear - a couple of the Yellow-rumps started to sing. It's a 2 part ditty with some depth to it - not thin and wheezy. They were not singing loud. I had to be right under them to hear them. I always imagine that they are in practice mode as they move through Florida. It is a very important part of their social world. And here in the park, they were getting comfortable enough to expend some of their precious energy working on a skill that must be perfected within a few weeks.

Birds fly in a straight line in any direction they choose. I am limited by the roads, paths and fences that set my direction. I watched them go and of course wished them well.

Is there a message here? Not today. Here's wishing you some great migration moments.

Joan Tague



Cape May Warbler Photo by Joan Tague

THE CITY OF ORMOND BEACH ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOVERY CENTER
PRESENTS

EARTH DAY AT THE EDC

JOIN US FOR
GUIDED NATURE
WALKS, GAMES
AND CRAFTS!

PLUS ENVIRONMENTAL
EXHIBITORS, NATIVE
PLANT VENDORS, AND
GUEST PRESENTATIONS!

APRIL 19, 2025

EARTH DAY CELEBRATION & TREE GIVEAWAY

9:00AM - 2:00PM

CITY OF ORMOND BEACH RESIDENCY REQUIRED FOR TREE GIVEAWAY

601 DIVISION AVE

386-615-7081

Ormond Beach
Environmental
Discovery Center
at Central Park

WWW.ORMONDBEACH.ORG/EDC

As said above we're looking for volunteers to help out. See Page 1 for all contact info.

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Honey, It's Baby Bird!

It's nesting season and while out in your yard or for a neighborhood walk you find a baby bird. What do you do? Here's a very helpful chart to answer that question.





August 30, 2023

We're going to Fort DeSoto in April

We will be there from April 9th to the 12th. We have a block of 10 rooms reserved at the Days Inn, St Petersburg Central. Rates are 122.33 for 2 queen beds per night, continental breakfast provided. If you haven't experienced the magic of Fort DeSoto in April, you're in for a treat. If you have you'll be among the first to make your reservations. To do that, call 727-300-5425* and ask for the Halifax River Audubon block of rooms. Questions, contact David Hartgrove, birdman9@earthlink or 386-235-1249. If you're going, be sure to contact me so I can gather a list for meals, etc.

* Be sure you wait to talk to the front desk at the hotel. The first reservations option connects you with their national office and they won't know about our reserved block of rooms.

Time once again for a report from Harry Robinson. Harry conducts a sea watch at Tom Renick Park daily. The following is excerpted from his latest report. Here's a [link](#) for more info.

TOM RENICK COUNTY PARK BIRD COUNTS FEBRUARY, 2025

Another month, this time there were 28 surveys over 148 hours. For the month, 120 species located with 146 for the year. Compared to 2024 these counts are low but they are better than any of the other years. The best days were the 8th with 7,340 birds and the 9th with 65 species. Now to the birds.

There were two Red-throated Loons on the 2nd with one on the 17th. There were two Pacific Loons on the 2nd The two Red-throated and the two Pacific were seen in a single flock sitting on the sea. Common Loons were seen on six days with two on the 6th and the 19th. Northern Gannets continued to be seen in very low numbers. The high count was that of 209 on the 16th. For American White Pelicans there were 36 on the 4th, 15 on the 5th, 12 on the 16th and nine on the 26th. Brown Pelicans peaked at 88 on the 24th. Double-crested Cormorants peaked at 30 on the 6th.

There were 23 Great Egrets flying to the north on the 28th, migration? There was a Tricolored Heron on the 10th. 42 Cattle Egrets flew to the north on the 27th. Again, migration? There was a Green Heron on the 5th. There was a Black-crowned Night-Heron on the 27th. There were three Glossy Ibis on the 10th with eight on the 12th and two on the 16th. There were two Roseate Spoonbills on the 5th. Wood Storks peaked at 37 on the 9th. For the vultures there were 26 Black on the 21st and 1,150 Turkey on the 4th.

An adult white morph Snow Goose flew to the south on the 20th. There were three Blue-winged Teal on the 9th. There were also two Green-winged Teal on the 1st. There was a Redhead on the 3rd with three on the 7th and two on the 28th. There was a Ring-necked Duck on the 3rd with 20 on the 20th. Greater Scaup were seen on six days with 40 on the 10th. Lesser Scaup were "resident" on the river but there appeared to be two influxes. There were 3,150 on the 4th with 5,200 on the 6th, then 3,650 seen on the 8th with 1,830 on the 13th and 480 on the 15th. There were 1,350 on the 17th with 3,000 on the 18th and 3,500 on the 22nd, then 2,130 seen on the 24th with 1,820 on the 26th and 1,420 on the 28th.

There were single Purple Martins on the 14th, 26th, 27th and 28th. Tree Swallows peaked at 690 on the 5th and 1,600 on the 10th. There were two Barn Swallows on the 27th. There were two Carolina Chickadees on the 4th with singles on the 11th, 14th, 25th and 28th. Tufted Titmouse were noted on 11 days with three on the 3rd. There were single House Wrens on the 2nd and the 5th. There were also single Blue-gray Gnatcatchers on the 9th and 22nd. There were two Ruby-crowned Kinglets on the 3rd with singles on the 4th, 9th and 16th. There were single Eastern Bluebirds on the 4th and 9th. American Robins peaked at 1,630 on the 11th and again on the 14th.

Harry Robinson

Conservation Notes

August 30, 2023

Assaults on the environment and the laws that protect it aren't new. Back in the 1980s, when James Watt was Secretary of the Interior, he mentioned that he'd taken a rafting trip down the Colorado River. He said he got bored after the second day. It's hard to fathom that a man who had so little appreciation for the great outdoors could be placed in charge of our national park system. But he was there for a reason --his association with the Mountain States Legal Foundation, an organization dedicated to ending things like the Environmental Protection Agency, the Endangered Species Act and the Voting Rights Act. They were not wholly successful.

Fast forward 40 years and this war is still being waged. Now we have a gang of ideological misfits in charge. These are people who've dedicated their lives to turning back the clock on every progressive policy enacted in the past 80 years. These are people who think strip mining Yellowstone National Park is a great idea.

Case in point, Lee Zeldin, our newest Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. Upon taking office Mr. Zeldin began dismantling the agency and reversing its mandate. Its mandate is, "to protect human health and the environment by establishing and enforcing environmental laws, conducting research, and providing guidance and education." His efforts continue. Now, those poisoning our atmosphere with mercury can simply apply for and be granted an exemption from regulation by sending in an email. During his confirmation hearing for EPA Director, Mr. Zeldin stated that climate change is a real issue and needs to be addressed. In February, working with the FBI, he charged nonprofit and state government agencies that had legally received funding from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund with conspiracy to defraud the United States. As a result, Citibank froze the assets of Habitat For Humanity, the United Way and others. It's hard to see how this is treating climate change as a real issue that needs to be addressed.

We who believe that nature is a vital part of our lives can't sit on the sidelines. Many of the regulations and policies that we know are vital to our health and well being are the product of legislation by Congress and only Congress has the authority to undo them. They can't be wiped out by the president signing his name with a Sharpie and holding up the document like a kindergartener showing off his latest finger painting. Passing laws that remove environmental protections we've counted on for over half a century will be an uphill push. But only if we speak up. When following this course to remove environmental protections exposes our children to lead and mercury poisoning, kills the fish our tourists come here for and threatens our drinking water I don't see those in Congress voting for it. They want to stay in office. Please speak with your elected officials. Your participation is vital. Here are some resources. Nationally, join [Audubon's Action Network](#). Here in Florida there's [the Advocate](#).

David Hartgrove

A New Bird For America

Sometimes serendipity strikes and everything comes together just right. On March 20th Michael Brothers was walking along the beach near Frank Rendon Park when he spotted a gull that looked different. You and I might have noticed that the bird looked odd. But knowing that gulls go through a lot of plumage changes, we would have just chalked it up to that and walked on. Michael has way too much experience for that.

Recognized as one of the preeminent gull experts in the country, he quickly grabbed his camera and began shooting as many photos as possible. Based on his experience he thought this bird might be an Azores Gull. When he got home he began doing some research and quickly confirmed the bird's identity. It was a first cycle Azores Gull - the Azorean Island form of Yellow-legged Gull, *Larus michahellis atlantis*. There is one eBird report from Newfoundland in April, 2020. However this bird was a breeding plumaged adult and its subspecies status hasn't been established. So this is the first documented account of this subspecies being in the United States. It's a BIG deal. The identification was confirmed by Peter Adriaens, one of the co-authors of the definitive article, "Identification of the Azores Gull", published by the [Gull Research Organization](#).

I know that some reading this article may think, "What's the big deal about yet another hard to identify, dark gull?" This species is known to hybridize with both Herring and Lesser black-backed Gulls in Europe. So eventually, if they expand their range westward, we could see hybrids here. For now we have a new species of gull to look for on our beaches.

David Hartgrove



Yellow-legged Gull Photo by Michael Brothers

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From The Quotable Birder

"Perfect as the wing of a bird may be, it will never enable the bird to fly if unsupported by the air. Facts are the air of science. Without them a man of science can never rise."

Ivan Pavlov

Environmental Updates

The [Riverside Conservancy's Lagoon Lecture Series](#) in April will feature a presentation by Kelly Young. She is an Environmental Specialist III with Volusia County. She manages the field staff and provides quality assurance on the results of data from surface water samples collected throughout the county. She has been working in water quality for more than 25 years. She will present on the topic, "Water Quality of the



Kelly testing water samples. Photo courtesy of Kelly Young

Mosquito Lagoon" on Thursday, April 17, at 1 p.m. at the Edgewater Public Library. The library is located at 103 West Indian River Road, Edgewater. Admission is free and open to the public.

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Sea Turtles Are Doing Well

From the [Friends of The Carr Refuge](#) we learn that last season they had the following nest numbers: 97 Leatherback, 16,368 Loggerhead, 5,113 Green and 3 Kemp's Ridley. The Kemp's is the world's most endangered sea turtle species.

The highlight of the summer was the return of the famous leatherback, China Girl, who had not been spotted since 2016. China Girl was tagged in the refuge in 1994; since then, she has nested in the refuge over 40 times! Sea turtle females are the only ones to come back to land after hatching. They may not nest every year but when they do they nest multiple times.

Bird Stories



Least Bittern Photo by Matt Davis, Macaulay Library

Too Many Fish

As mentioned in the past, I've been teaching birds to Volusia County school kids for many years. Some years back we were at Bicentennial Youth Park, a now closed facility east of the Fair Grounds on SR 44. I was teaching owl pellet dissection to some 8th graders when a student approached with a request from another instructor. She was down the trail at a small pond and she was afraid that a bird there was injured. I walked down to the pond and there, beneath a small dock, sat a Least Bittern. One of the last places one expects to see this bird is in pine flat woods. Yet, here it was and it was moving very slowly. I observed the bird for a few minutes and noticed that its throat was bulging out way beyond the normal range. The cause for this soon became apparent. Its crop, a sort of pouch where food is held prior to swallowing, was stuffed full of fish.

The night before the temperature had dropped into the upper 20's, which cold shocked the tiny fish in this little pond. The bird had the whole pond to himself and he had apparently been stuffing himself with the slow moving fish as fast as he could reach out and snag them. Though so full he could barely move, he continued trying to get any that wandered close enough for him to reach with his outstretched neck. There was nothing wrong with this bird. He was simply so full of fish that he could barely move. I explained the situation to the instructor and her students. I told them that since we were about done with the lessons for the day to stop their activities. They had been using small dip nets to extract tiny organisms from the muddy pond water. Then they would transfer these things to magnification devices to identify the critters therein: algae, crustaceans, diatoms, protozoa, etc. I wanted to get everyone to back off so as to decrease stress for the bird. By later in the day he would be able to fly off. Still full from his unexpected good fortune.

David Hartgrove



White morph Reddish Egret doing his classic wing shading act to better see the fish. Phot by Lou Newman

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THE PELICAN

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