

The Pelican

Volume 71- Number 5, Newsletter of Halifax
River Audubon May, 2025

For wildlife & people since 1923



This issue of the Pelican is arriving later than usual so we can include a slate of candidates for our board election.

Daytona Beach News-Journal (published as Daytona Beach Evening News) - January 13, 1938 - page 4
January 13, 1938 | Daytona Beach News-Journal (published as Daytona Beach Evening News) | Daytona Beach, Florida | Page 4

BIRD CLUB IN DANGER OF PASSING OUT

Halifax River Bird club will meet at Peabody Community house at 7:30 o'clock Saturday night, according to Edna E. Snow, a member, who said last night that the club was in danger of passing out of existence for lack of support. She said all those interested in the study and protection of birds would be welcomed at the meeting Saturday night, when an effort will be made to revive its activity.

Seriously, We Need You

Get out the white board! It's time to weigh those pros and cons - not just for a specific item, but for my commitment as a whole to Halifax River Audubon and to my career as a volunteer. I have a decision to make - should I take on another term as President of Halifax River Audubon? Tough question with no easy answer. I have been encouraged to "re-up" from several folks, but reacting on that alone only speaks to flattery. I take my responsibility seriously. I know I have done well in some areas, and came up short in others. I learned many useful lessons. I was often confused and frustrated. It goes with the territory. It's a journey.

The "President" title is ceremonial and legal - our by-laws have established the office. It is really only another name for volunteering. Having the title requires that you do a little more of the administrative work and a lot more listening. Much of what I do in Halifax River Audubon stayed the same when I stepped into the roll. If I step out, I will still perform many of the same

duties as I did before. I accepted the job with a big 2024/2025 season looming. We faced 2 major, non-standard events - Audubon Assembly and Audubon's Birds of Florida. In addition, with a great team, we also pulled off a fantastic event - "Your Yard Matters". These events had a lot of moving parts, with meetings, deadlines, preparation and execution. My old project coordinator chops were useful.

So, stepping back, where do we go from here? Yes. I said we... this is OUR Audubon Chapter. Another seminar for Native Plants? What would that look like? Maybe a hands-on workshop or a nationally renowned speaker? A highly visible community project - Purple Martin housing, maybe? A commitment to education that we tabled last year - bird classes, one on one instruction? More engaging field trips? Social connecting with members? Guest lecturers? What would bring people in?

How do we streamline our administrative responsibilities? That's a burden for our small organization.

Most importantly - how do we get folks to step forward and dig in to do the good work?

We had new faces representing Audubon this year. That was so gratifying. We manned our community events booth. We were the "Hot.Fun" table at Space Coast with our shared space as HRA, Southeast Volusia Audubon and the Museum of Arts and Sciences. We shared on field trips and weekday walks, introducing new people to the birds around us and to the support we provide for birds and our community. We stood in council halls formally stating our position on important issues. We spoke with decision makers as we met them in our neighborhoods.

I often think about the news clip from the Daytona Beach Evening News - January 13, 1938. My dear friend Miss Snow. She saw a young, 15 year old organization that had accomplished some neat things fading away. I worry about that - a lot.

In the next several weeks we will speak of challenges and goals, schedules and staffing, funding and implementation, membership and publicity. We will speak of motivating and mobilizing our chapter. I will make my decision. I will choose my roll in the organization. And I will continue to do the good work.

Joan Tague

Our Slate of Candidates

No doubt regular readers will wonder why the board needed an extra 5 days to announce the following candidates.

President.....Joan Tague

Vice President.....David Hartgrove

Treasurer.....Bob Kellogg

Recording Secretary... Vacant

Melissa Lammers.....At Large Board Member and Conservation Co-Chair

Our other At Large Board Member position is vacant, as are several other regularly filled positions: Corresponding Secretary, Historian, etc.

If you look at the article above, reprinted from January, 13, 1938, you'll have an idea of where we as a chapter are in the arc of our history. The same names have been atop the masthead of the organization for the past decade. Local organizations like ours face a daunting task that Mrs. Snow and her contemporaries were only vaguely becoming aware of: the increasing distractions of a modern society. In 1938 it was the increasing ubiquity of radio. People who had grown up in a society where entertainment often meant cranking the handle on the Victrola and listening the scratchy records you'd heard a dozen times already, suddenly had nightly shows to listen to. The Whistler, You Bet Your Life, Lum and Abner, Hop-Along Cassidy, Super Man and soap operas all combined to entrance the public. This caused a fall off in attendance at all kinds public and private events.

Fast forward to today, where all of us walk around with far more computing power in our pocket than was used to send Neil Armstrong to the moon. In the Fifty's you had VHF and UHF, maybe in a big market like Miami there were 5 channels, and they all went off the air at midnight. Today the choices are limited only by your willingness to pay. People come home from working all day, they sit in a comfy chair and watch the wealth of entertainment; whether it's opera on PBS or the Jerry Springer Show, and they're loath to get back up and come to an Audubon meeting.

We members of the Board of Halifax River Audubon need your help and input. Our organization must change to meet the demands of today's society. Trying to make an operating model that was rolled out 100 years ago isn't going to cut it in today's fast paced isn't going to cut it. We need your input in guiding the changes that we need to make. Won't you help us breathe life back into this venerable organization?

Here's another in our continuing series, *Bird Stories*



Swainson's Warbler Photo by James Rieman/Macaulay Lib.

Swainson's Warbler, One Odd Bird

Don't look for this guy high up in the trees. This is a warbler that feeds almost exclusively on the ground. Here's a link to a [video](#) by Timothy Barksdale on the Macaulay Library site that shows the bird foraging in leaf litter.

In 2014, while co-leading a trip to the Dry Tortugas, I happened onto a Swainson's Warbler that was feeding in the leaves beneath a buttonwood tree near the campground at Fort Jefferson. This bird had a very odd feeding technique. It would vigorously vibrate its entire body. Then it would plunge deep into the leaf litter to catch prey items that were stirred up by the vibrations. It reminded me of someone using one of those old time weight loss machines with the long belt that supposedly jiggled off your excess pounds while you were being vibrated. Piping Plovers use a variation of this technique. They pat the mud with one foot and quickly plunge their bill in to grab any prey items that are stirred up by the footwork.

Swainson's Warblers are birds of the Southeast and do nest here in Florida, primarily in the panhandle. They build the largest nest of all warbler species, often near or above water and seldom more than 4 feet off the ground. The female builds the nest by herself using leaves, sticks, vines and lined with softer materials like pine needles, Spanish moss, hair, etc. Two to five creamy white eggs are laid and are incubated by the female for 13 to 15 days. The male will feed her but only when she's off the nest. Both adults feed the nestlings for 10 to 12 days. Once fledged the young stay with the parents for several weeks learning to feed themselves. They generally have one brood per year. Though they lack the striking colors of other warbler species these are interesting birds with habits that are interesting and fun to watch.

David Hartgrove

Fort DeSoto Trip Report

During the years since our last overnight field trip to Fort DeSoto, Florida's west coast was hit by several hurricanes. Hurricanes Helene and Milton devastated the park. Those of us who remember spending afternoons at the mulberry tree watching tanagers, warblers, orioles and others were in for a shock. It's gone, along with many of the nearby trees. The fountain is still there and working but it will be decades before the place resembles what we all knew and loved.

The damage didn't preclude our having a good time. Eight of us rendezvoused at the big flag at 3:00 pm on Wednesday, April 9th to begin our 3 day trip. We birded around the area for a short time and then drove to our motel and had dinner. The following morning I picked up the sandwiches we had ordered from a nearby Publix and we again met at the big flag. There we started the day with a very cooperative Western Kingbird. We had our lunch at the picnic pavilion we had reserved and then spent the afternoon in disparate groups looking for more birds. In all we got 55 species at the park over 2 days. In years past we might have doubled that total. That evening we dined at what claims to be the best seafood place on Tampa Bay, Billy's Stone Crab. We agree, it was delicious.

Friday morning we headed south about 40 miles to the Celery Fields. This beautiful facility, operated by Sarasota Audubon and Sarasota County, gave us 57 species in just a few hours and one very odd wildlife experience. We started the day there watching several Painted Buntings at the feeders near the Visitors Center. There too we had Nanday Parakeets, Common Ground-Doves, Gray Catbirds and others. While standing on the boardwalk we noticed a Boat-tailed Grackle pecking at a dead Lesser Siren. He was followed by a Common Gallinule that took advantage of the free lunch. Then, from behind some vegetation, emerged a Florida banded water snake. The snake began to slowly swallow the siren. We watched, fascinated by this odd spectacle. The snake had about 1/3 of the siren swallowed when a stunning Purple Gallinule decided this was too good an opportunity to pass up. It began pecking at the other end of the siren and then stood on it. This ruined the snake's plans. What had taken the snake 20 minutes to swallow was suddenly disgorged in seconds and it receded back into the vegetation. We had finally seen enough and moved on. We had good looks at Least Sandpipers, Black-necked Stilts constructing a nest, Least Bittern, Gray-headed Swamphen, a distant Roseate Spoonbill and others, including a female Wood Duck with 6 ducklings.

For lunch we went to Cooper's Hawk Winery. This is a chain that started in Chicago with its winery based in Napa Valley, CA. We had a delicious meal and then headed back north.

We had a good trip. Even though the hurricane damage at Fort DeSoto prevented us having the kind of April birding we were expecting. If you have suggestions for a different location let us know. We're always up for a good birding trip.

David Hartgrove

Conservation Information

There are a lot of good groups out there looking for your support. Of course, as HRA members we hope one thing you'll do is to volunteer for a position on our chapter's Board of Directors. Contact Chapter President, Joan Tague, by email.

Canaveral National Seashore publishes a monthly newsletter. This month it's all about sea turtle nesting, including information on registering for walks on the beach to see nesting turtles.

Our sister chapter, West Volusia Audubon, publishes a newsletter called the Sentinel Jay. This month includes an opportunity to volunteer to help monitor Swallow-tailed Kites at Lake Woodruff NWR.

National Audubon's Wingspan Newsletter this month contains information on one our nation's most cryptic birds, the Black Rail.

The Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission publishes the Wrack Line, a newsletter from the Florida Shorebird Alliance. Filled with good information that includes how to be a volunteer steward monitoring nesting shorebirds.

The Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail publishes a monthly newsletter too, Kite Tails. This month's issue has a primer on sandpiper identification.

* * * *

No doubt anxious to try out his new knee, Bob and Catherine Kellogg went up to the Alligator Farm in St Augustine. If you've been there you know how easy it is to get close ups. Tricolored Heron males acquire a magenta iris during breeding and courtship. Both sexes get the snazzy white plume atop their heads during nesting season. This bird has a brown iris, indicating a female. The female does the lion's share of the incubation, which lasts just over 3 weeks (22 to 24 days).

Editor



Tricolored Heron on the nest. *Photo by Bob Kellogg*

Once again, a word from our resident plant expert, Leslie Nixon.



Elderberry, Photo taken in Katie Tripp's yard by Lisa DiNicolò.

Planning for Serendipity

Good things come to those who wait. And good things come to those who open their mental and physical landscapes to new possibilities. We are talking about native plants voluntarily sprouting in your yard. If you ditch the herbicides and eliminate some of your earth-suffocating turf grass, you create a space for one of nature's little miracles to happen - when fortuitous winds, generous birds, or seeds in the liberated seed bank present you with native plants you didn't plan on having.

We native plant gardeners are always hopeful of this. Typically we acquire seasonal native flowers such as fleabane (*Erigeron quercifolius*) or toadflax (*Linaria canadensis*), which are serendipitous in themselves, but one of our members was lucky enough to have an elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* subsp. *canadensis*) sprout in her yard a couple of years ago. Now it blooms and fruits spring through fall and looks gorgeous next to a previously planted coral bean (see photo).

Elderberry is a large shrub, growing quickly in ideal conditions to 10' tall and just as wide, ideal conditions being full-sun and moist soil. Given average or dry soil, it will stay smaller. Elderberry has delicate, arching branches that add a softness to the landscape, large white flower clusters that attract pollinators, and juicy berries that bring in the birds. This shrub, native from Central America into Canada, is evergreen in our location, but does not tolerate salty wind.

Of course in opening your yard up to chance, you will also get some unwanted plants (weeds). So get an App. Three popular ones for plant identification are [PictureThis](#), [iNaturalist](#), and

Seek. Use one or more to help you identify future bird-friendly, native plants. On the other hand, if you are an impatient gardener, you can simply purchase what you want at a native plant sale. Speaking of which, the Pawpaw Chapter is holding their annual plant sale on May 3 at the Pigotte Center on Big Tree Road from 9 am to 2 pm. There will be three native plant vendors there; with luck you will find an elderberry at one of them.

Leslie Nixon

* * * *

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

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

Halifax River Audubon

forbirds@halifaxriveras.org

Meets periodically, September through May

President: Joan Tague

Vice President: David Hartgrove

Past President: Melissa Lammers

Treasurer: Bob Kellogg

Recording Sec.: Catherine Kellogg

Membership Sec.: Joan Tague

Corresponding Sec: Vacant

Historian: Vacant

At-Large: Bob Kellogg, Carol Roberts

Committee Members

Conservation: David Hartgrove, Melissa Lammers

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.