

The Pelican

Volume 72- Number 1, Newsletter of Halifax
River Audubon January, 2026

For wildlife & people since 1923



The President's Column

Reflecting

Every year at this time I pull out an old editorial written by my husband, Chuck Tague, at the precipice of the 21st century. I am only sharing half of the story here. In the other section, he remembers his last night in Vietnam in the Marine barracks as a 22 year old veteran and recounts the fear he felt about returning to "normal" life while carrying the invisible scars of his tour of duty.

I can hear his voice as I read it. His voice is a little high and soft, his accents and inflections are sometimes a bit off. He has a true Pittsburgh accent. He is intelligent, sincere, kind, humble and carries burdens no one can imagine. He has great empathy for all living things. But when the situation calls for it - he is a warrior.

I read these words as a call to action. I hope you find some inspiration here, too. When I am on the fence or apathetic or just plain lazy, I go to this piece to reset the compass.

I'd like to wish all of you a peaceful and productive New Year.

I'd also like to remind you that in the coming years our future demands that we all must make well informed, conscientious decisions in all aspects of our lives and society -- decisions that take into account their long term effect on the environment. These decisions can only be made by people who are not only committed to environmental responsibility, but have an understanding of the interdependence of all living things, the need for the diversity of all forms and all phases of life and the potential problems of unrestrained human population growth. These decisions must be made by people who believe we have a moral responsibility to future generations to protect and restore the earth, its life, its communities and its processes. These goals and commitments must be shared, not only by all segments of our society, but by every other nation on Earth.

However, the environmental legacy of the twentieth century is threatened with this reality: unless we avoid some deadly pitfalls, the environmental triumphs we've achieved and the challenges we must continue to address will soon be cast aside. Remember personal survival always takes precedence. Environmental responsibility and understanding require spiritual, moral and intellectual growth. We cannot expect people who live in fear; who live under the threat of violence, either sanctioned by governments, or from individuals or

groups, to make decisions that consider the future and the common good. Violence, fear, intolerance, hatred, poverty and despair are all barriers to a sound environmental future.

I'd like to wish you peace in the new year, but instead I implore you to aggressively pursue it.

Joan & Chuck Tague



Calendar & Events

Friday & Saturday, January 9th and 10th- Merritt Island NWR, Join David Hartgrove for a trip to this winter birding hotspot. We're open to exploring areas other than just Black Point Wildlife Drive. We'll meet at Target in Port Orange, 1771 Dunlawton Avenue. Bring lunch. Questions, call David, 286-235-1249.

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Clyde Butcher's Living Water Photography Exhibit Opening At The Lyonia Environmental Learning Center.

Thursday, January 15th, from 4:30pm to 6:30pm EST Join us for a short presentation, ongoing viewing of the Living Waters video, and open house to view the famous photography of Clyde Butcher, who has traveled to some of the most beautiful locations on earth, capturing black and white images that open up a fresh way of seeing the world around us. For over 50 years, Clyde developed a unique approach to photography that unlocks the untamed beauty of natural landscapes across the globe.

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Right Whales To Be Discussed in MDC's January Lecture

Julie Albert, director of the Blue World Research Institute's Right Whale Sighting Network, will kick off the 2026 Discovery Lecture Series with her presentation, "Right Whale Threats: Past, Present and Future Solutions" at Marine Discovery Center, Thursday, January 8, at 6 p.m. 520 Barracuda Blvd., in New Smyrna Beach. *The bridge construction is finally complete so it's easy to find MDC again.*

Conservation Notes

My dictionary says the definition off the word “forever” is as follows: “for always, evermore, for ever and ever, for good, for good and all, for all time, until the end of time, eternally, undyingly, perpetually, in perpetuity; British English for evermore; North American English forevermore; informal for keeps, until the cows come home, until hell freezes over,” It does NOT mean, “Hey, lets see if we can get away with scrapping Volusia Forever”.

Several of our Volusia County Councilmen (there are no women members at this time) have apparently hatched some strange plan to modify Volusia Forever to a non-in-perpetuity program (example 100 years). This way a future Council can sell off the lands we all thought we voted to protect “in perpetuity.” People voted for “FOREVER”, not a generation.

As we are once again working to protect Volusia Forever from local threats, the backdrop at the State level has grown very bleak. As you know, Volusia Forever partners with Florida Forever. Volusia Forever also has a feature that allows us to buy working agricultural land and to partner with the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program for funding. A few years ago, we were concerned that RFLPP, which has less strict criteria for identifying land as valuable (simply because the land is working-- it provides ecological benefits but is not pristine) was supplanting Florida Forever, meaning we could miss out on important land requiring conservation for lack of funds. This is a new level of risk because it actually would take land out of conservation, placed there under the strict Florida Forever criteria, and turn it into working land. To be clear, working lands IN EXISTENCE have value; much of the Wildlife Corridor is ag land, but we should not be taking our most sensitive lands and turning them into working lands.

The proposal to operate a motocross track just west of Longleaf Pine Preserve inched forward with a plan to employ yet another group of consultants to shepherd the process of finding a long-term partner to run the motocross as a land lease. The decision to green light a motocross facility at that location has been made and now is merely pending finding someone to can make it make sense economically.

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50,000 + Sandhill Cranes

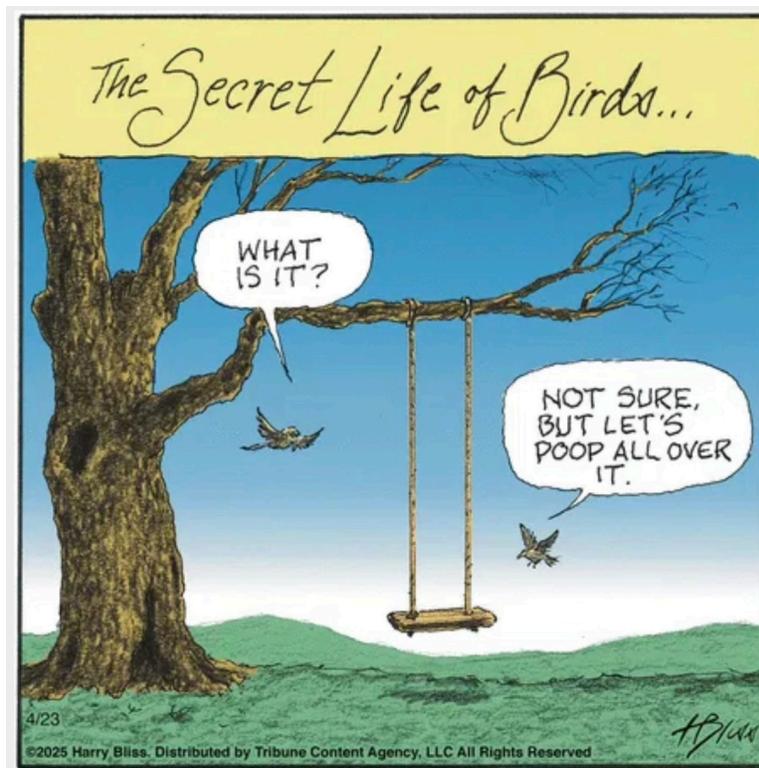
Preston Forsythe wrote the other day to report on a new destination for him, Wheeler NWR, near Huntsville, AL. “We had 50,000 plus Sandhill Cranes’ and 14 Whoopers, plus assorted ducks, geese, a few Bald Eagles...and maybe 250 bird watching visitors like us, scattered at several viewing areas and buildings, most two stories high. We have been to many NWRs, including Bosque Del Apache, NM and Aransas NWR, southeast coast of TX. Wheeler NWR is a must see, mid winter.

David Hartgrove & Melissa Lammers



Early in the New Year, the Volusia County Council will discuss making fundamental changes to Volusia Forever that could radically alter the program. Please stay tuned and in the meantime let us know if you still stand by your vote.

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From The Quotable Birder

“Come fill the cup, and in the Fire of Spring
Your Winter Garment of Repentance Fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To Fly- and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing.”

Edward Fitzgerald, “The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam”

Time once again for a word from our Native Plant expert, Leslie Nixon.

Hummingbird Plants

If your New Year's resolution is to attract hummingbirds to your yard, this article is for you. We have already discussed a few plants for these special birds, but here we group them together and add one more to create a good list of native hummingbird plants for coastal Volusia County.

Three plants no hummingbird-lover's landscape should be without are tropical sage, firebush, and coral honeysuckle. Tropical sage (*Salvia coccinea*) is one of the easiest wildflowers you can grow. Its red tubular flowers bloom all year long, attracting hummingbirds as well as other pollinators. It is a perennial wildflower that grows up to 4' tall by 2' wide and it will spread in your yard (and hopefully into your neighbor's).

Firebush (*Hamelia patens var patens*) is a large shrub (8' tall by 6' wide) that produces red-orange tubular flowers from spring through fall. The flowers are a favorite of hummingbirds and also our state butterfly, the zebra longwing. Firebush is a semi-deciduous shrub: it will lose its leaves if the winter gets too cold, but it will regrow and restart flowering with vigor come spring.

Coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) is an evergreen vine that maintains coral-red tubular flowers all year long. It is typically grown on a fence or trellis, but if you don't have one of those, you can use a tomato cage for support. If using a tomato cage, you will want to keep the vine trimmed on a regular basis so you can corral its twining tendencies.

These three hummingbird favorites can be grown together. Since the firebush is taller than the other two and prefers a bit of shade, place it under an overstory tree and plant the tropical sage and coral honeysuckle in the front so they get more sun. This grouping will tolerate cold, a little salt air, and a short drought.

For some new and different hummingbird plants, look at necklacepod, coral bean, and scarlet hibiscus. Necklacepod (*Sophora tomentosa*) is a large shrub or small tree with yellow flowers visited by the hummers. It is evergreen, sun-loving, and tolerates cold and drought. The cheery panicles of flowers bloom on and off all year. Coral bean (*Erythrina herbacea*) is a medium to large shrub that develops red tubular flowers in the spring. You see the striking blooms poking out through the understory in natural areas or along roadsides. Coral bean likes full to part sun, enjoys dry soil, and doesn't mind salt. Its thorns provide an additional benefit to hummingbirds in the form of armored cover.

Scarlet hibiscus (*Hibiscus coccineus*) is a swamp plant that produces large, red, hibiscus flowers spring through fall. Use it in a damp to wet area in your yard, or if you have dry soil, do like this gardener does and plant it in a large pot with a saucer so you can keep the roots moist. It prefers full sun

and it is deciduous, but once it blooms, you and the hummingbirds will delight in the amazing flowers. If you plant these Florida natives soon, they should bloom and start feeding hummingbirds this year so you can successfully fulfill your New Year's resolution.

Leslie Nixon



Photo by: Ginny Stibolt, Ixia Chapter FNPS

Female Ruby-throated Hummingbird feeding on Coral Honeysuckle.



Scarlet Hibiscus

Photo by Shirley Denton, FNPS

Red Knots



Red Knot *Calidris canutus* Photo by David Hartgrove

The light green leg flag on the bird above identifies it as 053. The band color lets us know that the bird was banded in the United States. In this case at Cape May by volunteers with New Jersey Audubon. The photograph above was taken in 2013 at Merritt Island NWR. That's not the first time I saw the bird though. In 2008, while doing the old Fall Migration Count, Paul Rebmann and I saw the bird on the beach in Daytona Beach Shores and Paul photographed it. Five years later, as I was entering the band number in the [Banded Birds Website](#), I looked up on my desk and saw the photo Paul had taken of the same bird, 053.

In the ensuing five years this tiny bird, weighing under 5 ounces, had flown over 140,000 miles. Red Knots are an example of the amazing resilience of our migrating birds. They nest near the Arctic Circle, then fly south to Tierra Del Fuego at the southern tip of South America. Round trip, just over 28,000 miles. And they do it every year. Along the way they stop to feed and rest. While in our area they're feeding on aquatic invertebrates in the surf, sand fleas, coquina, etc. Along the DelMarva Peninsula they frequently feed on the eggs of horseshoe crabs. Over fishing of horseshoe crabs for the pet food industry and for bait placed the survival of Red Knots at risk. Twenty years ago Audubon and its allies plead the case for saving both the horseshoe crabs and the Red Knots that depend on them. A brief moratorium of horseshoe crab harvesting in Virginia, Delaware and New Jersey, saved both species. But not before we'd lost 70% of the Red Knot population.

The average life span for a Red Knot is 3 to 7 years. However there was the case of a bird named "Moonbird" that was documented at 19 years old. Since we only see Red Knots in migration here we seldom see the beautiful red color they change into for breeding. Sometimes in May and again in late August, you may see a Red Knot migrating through with some of the red color developing or lingering on its abdomen. Count your self lucky if you see that.

David Hartgrove



Red Knot in breeding plumage, Photo by Brian Kushner

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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.

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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.