

The Pelican

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For wildlife & people since 1923



The President's Column

There's Always Something Out There

Bird people always lament the hot summer months. The rush and thrill of migration have passed. This year's fledglings are on their way to striking out on their own. We roll our eyes discussing endless heat and humidity. The daily rains have returned. Our snowbird friends have returned to cooler venues, shrinking our social circle. Birds are still around but their rhythms match our own. Active early and late, they tend to retreat from the same weather that drives us into air conditioning for most of the day. Everything slows down.

I try to get out each day to wander and look about. Maybe I choose an early beach stroll, or a drive to a favorite birding spot that only requires short forays from the automobile and my survival essentials. I try to get out and see some of the special summer events. I sign on for a Nesting Turtle Walk at Merritt Island. A boat trip anywhere can produce some cool breezes for a few moments. I actually tend my few plants in my little native garden plot. And I am rewarded for the effort.

Butterflies, wildflowers, expanses of seeding grasses and sedges. Active reptiles - Alligators, turtles, lizards, snakes - I love them all. The endless insect drone. Crab and worms and insects. The spiders that tend to show up in the house. The mystery of ticks and mosquitos. It's all so cool! My friends and I share what we see. We text and email and discuss our findings. We photograph, some better than others, and we learn.

At this point I have to post a shout-out to Heather Circelli. Heather is a true observer of all that is around her. She recently sent me a picture on an amorphous little crusty blob that she found on the beach:



Shark Eye Moon Snail *Photo by Heather Circelli*

Heather often joins my walks along the trails. She is quiet, charming with a soft voice and a very curious and dogged nature. She always steers the conversation to some very interesting things. She takes great photographs and when the subject is unknown to her, she reaches out for help with identification. She informed me that it was a Shark Eye Moon Snail. A what? I have walked over these shells a million times. There was never a snail in any of them. She spied this one **moving** along the beach. Shark Eyes are members of the moon snail family. These predators plow through the sand just below the low tide line in search of coquina clams and smaller snails to eat. They drill holes in the shells of their victims, secrete an acid into the shell, then pierce the shell with their toothed tongues. (They aren't the only snail to do that) So worthy of a starring roll in the next horror sci-fi movie! And more proof to me that if you knew what was going on in and under the sand, you would never lay on the beach.

Becoming aware of this little creature opened up a new world for me. Gastropods! I want to know more. It is so much fun to focus on something that you know nothing about! I feel like a six year old. I want to tell everyone what I learned today about them. Beautiful shells, or no shells. Even the name gastropod - stomach foot. Hilarious. Slime and detritus. Fascinating.

So, enjoy your summer - find your gastropod or bee or shrew and broaden your perspective. Can't wait to see what we all find out there - because there's always something.

Joan Tague

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Calendar & Events

As we're in our annual summer hiatus, we have nothing on the schedule this month but some of our partners are busy and have events in which you might be interested.

Our friends at Volusia County Land Management have a great program called [Explore Volusia](#). Click on the link and see what's on tap for the month of June. Once the page opens, scroll down to the Upcoming Events section. Programs are free but require sign up on [Eventbright](#). And don't forget to sign your [participant's waiver](#).

Conservation Notes

Once again a report from Harry Robinson's Sea Watch

Our state legislature seems intent on making deals that hit our quality of life in ways that hurt. They also seem to suffer from short term memory issues, not recalling commitments they made just a few years ago. This year, they did allot \$645 million for Everglades restoration but they completely zeroed out Florida Forever funding, after committing to a minimum annual amount of \$100 million in 2023.. Worse yet, they swept what little there was remaining into the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program, (RFLPP).

While Audubon has long supported RFLPP as an important and valuable component of Florida's broader conservation strategy — protecting working farms and ranches through conservation easements — Florida leaders historically recognized that both programs are essential because they serve different purposes in preserving the lands and waters that define our state. Florida Forever protects irreplaceable natural landscapes from development, while RFLPP helps sustain agricultural lands and rural heritage. One cannot replace the other.

Our state doesn't have a state income tax, a big selling point in getting new residents to move to Florida to fill those new subdivisions popping up like toad stools after a hard rain. The Legislature returns to Tallahassee this week to take up the governor's requested plan to lower property taxes. The latest proposal is for a constitutional amendment to be voted on in November. It would significantly increase Florida's homestead exemption, raising it to \$150,000 in 2027 and \$250,000 in 2028 for current Florida homeowners. This would have sweeping impacts on local government budgets and their ability to provide services to residents. The Florida Association of Counties estimates county revenue losses of \$3.57 billion in FY 2027-28 and \$6.32 billion in FY 2028-29.

I for one am sick of hearing the constant complaints about paying taxes. Our elected officials seem to be trying to "starve the beast" of government by depriving it of funds for everything except public safety, emergency services and schools (and even those are likely to see reductions under the proposed tax legislation). Locally, Volusia ECHO, approved by more than 73% of voters in 2020, is likely to disappear. It doesn't fund "core functions" but it does fund our trail system, parks and sporting facilities, cultural centers and more, in public private partnerships. Our local parks, too, are likely to disappear as there will be no funding source to maintain them. And closest to home is our award-winning, first-in-the-nation land conservation program, Volusia Forever, approved by more than 75% of 2020 voters. There will be no funds to manage our conservation lands, which will make the temptation to sell them off overwhelming. As Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, "Taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society." I don't know about you but I want to live in a civilized society. One that values the input of its citizens, rather than enacting laws that remove their ability to have a voice in the events impacting their lives.

David Hartgrove & Melissa Lammers

TOM RENICK PARK – BIRD COUNTS MAY, 2026

Another crazy month, with 150 species located. The previous best year was 2023 with 140 species. This was over 31 surveys and 135 hours. The yearly total now stands at 241 which is higher than the highest total to the end of June. The best day was the 3rd with 70 species and 1,540 birds.

There was a Least Bittern on the 12th. Great Blue Herons peaked at 37 on the 11th. A Great White Heron flew to the north (inshore) on the 29th. There were single Reddish Egrets on the 3rd, 5th, 12th, 24th and 27th. There were single Green Herons on the 8th, 9th, 13th and 14th with two on the 11th. There was a Black-crowned Night-Heron on the 9th. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were seen on 16 days from the 8th with three on the 31st. White Ibis peaked at 32 on the 26th. Glossy Ibis were seen on 11 days with nine on the 18th. Roseate Spoonbills were also seen on 11 days with 19 on the 12th. For the vultures there were 25 Black on the 3rd and 21 Turkey on the 28th.

Swallow-tailed Kites were seen on 19 days with counts of four on the 1st and 3rd. Mississippi Kites were seen on 13 days with three on the 3rd. Up to two Bald Eagles were seen to the 13th. There were single Northern Harriers on the 1st and 2nd. There were single Cooper's Hawk on the 8th, 12th and 14th. There was a dark morph Short-tailed Hawk on the 5th. There was a Red-tailed Hawk on the 6th. There were single American Kestrels on the 17th and 24th. Single Merlins were seen on seven dates to the 19th with three on the 3rd and two on the 4th.

There was a Sandhill Crane on the 7th. Black-bellied Plovers peaked at 34 on the 16th, the last was one on the 28th. There were single American Golden-Plovers on the 12th and 15th. There was a Wilson's Plover on the 2nd. Semipalmated Plovers were seen on 20 days to the 31st with 65 on the 4th and 150 on the 15th the latter is a new high count. On the 31st a flock of 18 flew to the north. Single Killdeer were noted on the 6th, 10th and 21st with three on the 17th. There was an American Oystercatcher on the 3rd. For Black-necked Stilt there were two on the 28th. There were two American Avocet on the 18th. There was a Greater Yellowlegs on the 4th with 12 Lesser Yellowlegs on the 3rd. There was also a Solitary Sandpiper on the 3rd. Willet were seen on seven dates (up to two a day) the last being seen on the 19th. Spotted Sandpipers were seen on 17 days to the 19th with one on the 28th. The high count was that of 12 on the 14th a new high count. There were single Whimbrel on the 1st and 3rd with 15 on the 14th, then two seen on the 15th with one on the 26th. A Long-billed Curlew flew to the north on the 14th just the third park record. Ruddy Turnstone peaked at 120 on the 3rd the last were three on the 30th. There was a Red Knot (summer plumage) on the 17th. Sanderling peaked at 200 on the 4th the last were seen on the 28th. Semipalmated Sandpipers were seen to the 30th with 855 on the 3rd and 505 on the 15th. Least Sandpipers were seen on six dates from the 3rd to the 14th with 18 on the

Replace Your Frozen Norfolk Island Pine Tree

If you lost a Norfolk Island pine to the deep freeze, don't despair because there is a silver lining: you can replace it with a native tree that is much more valuable for birds. The Norfolk Island pine (*Araucarya heterophylla*) is a beautiful and statuesque tree, but its use for birds is practically nil. Being native to Australia, it feeds few local insects and rarely produces pine cones here in Florida. It is not invasive, but it has little wildlife value.

Fortunately, there are several native trees that are more ecologically fitting than a Norfolk Island pine in Central Florida. One is Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), a tree that has a similar presence to the NI pine: evergreen, tall, and dominant.



Eastern Red Cedar Photo by Leslie Nixon

Red cedars produce copious blue-gray berry-like cones that ripen in the fall and are loved by - you guessed it - cedar waxwings. In the warmer months it attracts caterpillars that baby songbirds eat by the dozens. Its year-round dense cover protects smaller birds, providing them with plenty of places to roost and nest. Red cedar is a lush, yet durable tree that can tolerate freezes, droughts, hurricanes, and salt air. It makes a great tree for your birdscape even if you don't have a void.

Two other replacements for your NI pine are the slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) and the longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*). We have discussed these trees previously. Native pines are tough trees that can withstand extreme weather, and they are a bounty for all kinds of birds, as they are loaded with nuts, insects, and strong limbs for perching. If your deceased pine was large, you might replace it with two or three native pines to fortify the bird habitat of your yard.

Your Norfolk Island pine could still recover. If you see new green sprouts on the branches or trunk, it is beginning to regrow. If it is truly dead, consider yourself lucky since now it is prime time to replace that non-native pine with a more bird-friendly tree.
Leslie Nixon

11th. For White-rumped Sandpiper there were four on the 3rd, one on the 4th, five on the 14th and one on the 15th. There was a Pectoral Sandpiper on the 2nd. There was a Dunlin on the 15th with a Stilt Sandpiper on the 4th. There was a Buff-breasted Sandpiper on the 15th.

Laughing Gulls peaked at 264 on the 6th. For Ring-billed Gull there were singles on the 1st and 3rd. For Herring Gull there was one on the 5th. There were single Gull-billed Terns on the 3rd, 4th, 12th and 18th. Caspian Terns were seen on nine days with 11 on the 16th. Royal Terns peaked at 75 on the 3rd. There were single Sandwich Tern on the 6th and 12th with two on the 26th. There was a Roseate Tern on the 3rd with five Common Terns on the 4th. There was also an Arctic Tern on the 4th. Least Terns were seen on 20 days to the 31st with ten on the 7th. There was a Black Tern on the 4th. Black Skimmers were seen on 15 days to the 31st with 13 on the 2nd. Probably the craziest record of the year was a first-winter Razorbill that flew to the north on the 31st.

There were single Tennessee Warblers on the 2nd and 8th. Northern Parula were seen on five days to the 11th with five on the 8th. There were single Yellow Warblers on the 8th and 11th. There was a Chestnut-sided Warbler on the 8th. There was a Cape May Warbler on the 2nd with two on the 8th. There were single Black-throated Blue Warblers on the 1st and 11th with four on the 8th (a new high count). There were single Palm Warblers on the 1st and 5th. For the Blackpoll Warbler there were 18 on the 1st (new high count) with seven on the 2nd, 11 on the 8th and two on the 12th. For the Black-and-white Warbler there were five on the 1st (new high count), two on the 8th and one on the 12th. For the American Redstart there were eight on the 1st, five on the 2nd, one on the 3rd, 122 on the 8th, 13 on the 11th, three on the 12th and two on the 13th. The count of 122 is a huge new high count. There was an Ovenbird on the 7th and the 8th. For the Common Yellowthroat there were singles on the 1st and the 3rd with 13 on the 8th (new high count), four on the 11th and one on the 13th.

There was a Summer Tanager on the 15th with a Scarlet Tanager on the 2nd. There were three Indigo Buntings on the 2nd with two on the 9th and one on the 14th. For Bobolink there were 105 on the 1st, eight on the 2nd, six on the 3rd, 25 on the 4th, 35 on the 8th, two on the 10th and two on the 11th. For the House Finches the high count was that of 19 on the 27th. Finally, there was an American Goldfinch on the 17th.

June should be the quietest month of the year, but this year?

Harry Robinson

This is an abridged version of Harry's May report. We didn't have room for all of it. Harry can be found every morning at 7:30 am at Tom Renick Park, 1565 Oceanshore Blvd. Bring your binoculars and scope, if you have one. Editor

Now That's A Long Bill



Long-billed Curlew Photo by Danny Sauvageau

Long-billed Curlews are seen here in Florida in winter. They nest on the Great Plains in dry, prairie habitats that at one time were covered by prairie grasses like big bluestem and Indiangrass. Tall Grass prairie once covered 170 million acres across 14 states. Over 95% of that habitat has been converted to intense agriculture. So the number of Long-billed Curlews has fallen dramatically. Due not only to habitat loss but also to market hunting in the post Civil War years.

On the plains in states like Nebraska, Idaho, Kansas, etc. they are primarily insectivores. That long bill evolved to allow them to feed in the dense, long grasses where they nested. They're also known to feed on smaller birds, frogs, snakes, etc. Here in Florida they completely change their diet to aquatic invertebrates, fish, crabs, etc. At least one shows up almost every year at Fort DeSoto. They are our largest shorebird, though they spend a lot of time far from any shore. While they nest in dry habitat they often like to nest near a wet spot so their young can more easily find food.

From Kenn Kaufman's excellent book, "Lives of North American Birds", we learn that courtship for these birds begins with the male flying high into the air and fluttering down while calling loudly. The nest is just a scrape on the ground with a lining of fine grasses and weeds. Four, brown spotted, buff colored eggs are laid and incubation is by both parents for 27 to 30 days. The downy young leave the nest soon after hatching and follow the parents around being fed and learning to feed themselves. Their first flight occurs 5 to 6 weeks after hatching.

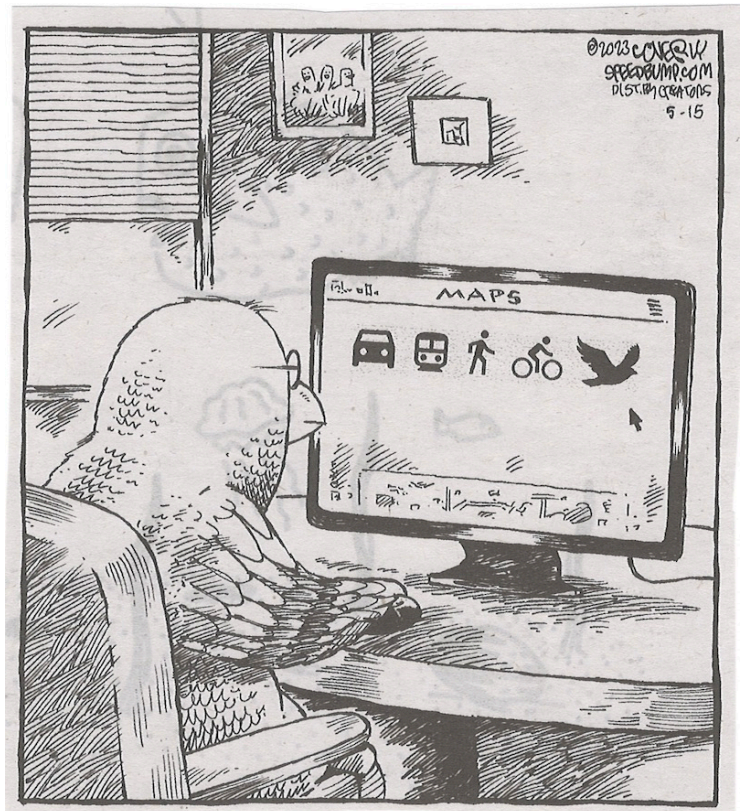
David Hartgrove

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From The Quotable Birder

"The world has grown so bad, That wrens make prey where eagles dare not perch.

William Shakespeare, *King Richard III*



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