

The Pelican

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For wildlife & people since 1923



The President's Column

It's Hot

One of the more interesting adjustments I had to make when I moved to Florida was flipping my year around. Up North, Winter was the challenging season, chasing us indoors with bitter cold, ice, un-drivable conditions and consistently gray skies. Now my months of retreat occur in the Summer. Sure, I get out and in the morning check out the ocean or the neighborhood, but within an hour or two the heat builds, the sun seems to become huge and close and often, as the day progresses, the rain and lightning move in. I have no excuse now - I catch up on reading. I tackle huge desk projects. I have rediscovered my sewing machine. And I am on a bit of a sabbatical from birding - kind of.

One of the zoo keepers at the Pittsburgh Aviary many years ago was a young woman from Wyoming. She discounted our wimpy approach to Winter. She lived in an area where being snowed in was part of the routine. Birding was non-existent. So, she and her friends turned to TV birding. They kept copious lists of the birds they identified on all of the 1980 Prime Time Shows. Of course, there were always PBS nature shows to bump up the list. Those would be the equivalent of exploring a hot spot. The shows though, that were the most fun were golf tournaments. All those wonderful birds coming to you live from Florida and New York and California. Sometimes just calls and songs in the background triggered heavy identification discussions. It kept skills sharp.

Now we can stream anything we want. The world comes to us easily. I signed on to some [online courses](#). I bought two new bird books. Yesterday I explored Hummingbirds for 3 hours. I binged watched birds. It was mesmerizing. Tomorrow - Ducks? Hawks? Manakins? It's all right here. I hope you are enjoying the birds both inside and outside this summer.

On another note: The family of Dr. Harry Moulis has donated a large collection of his curated photography to our chapter. Dr. Moulis was more than a photographer - he was an artist and his medium was light. This is a generous and exciting gift of the work of an award winning artist. We will be sharing these works with all of you this year. Stay tuned for the details. And check the article in this issue.

Keep cool and hydrate!

Joan Tague

Calendar & Events

As we're in our summer hiatus we don't have any calendar events to list. However there are announcements to be made.

Canaveral National Seashore (as of June 1st) reported 1,868 turtle nests, including 20 Leatherbacks and 3 Kemp's Ridley. The Kemp's are the most endangered sea turtle species in the world. They also reported 5 Wilson's Plover nests. By now all of those numbers are much higher.

The [Marine Science Center](#) has a full schedule of events.

As does the [Marine Discovery Center](#).

Check out the [Lyonia Preserve](#) in Deltona.

Our sister chapter, [West Volusia Audubon](#), recently had a milestone. They had a fund raiser for the Audubon Jay Watch program. Their goal was ten thousand dollars. They raised \$12,500.00! Congratulations!

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Joan's column mentions Dr. Harry Moulis and his award winning photography. Here's an example.



Tricolored Heron chick *Photo by Harry Moulis*

The photo above was one of several that won awards in Audubon's annual photography contests. Harry spent many hours drifting along the Tomoka River in his kayak with his camera ever at the ready. We are deeply grateful to his family for their generous donation to our chapter.

Vulture Haiku Contest



Calling All Poets!

Announcing our first-ever Vulture Haiku Contest, in honor of International Vulture Awareness Day on September 5. Often misunderstood and under appreciated, vultures are nature's clean-up crew, eating carrion that would otherwise spread disease in our environment. From now through July 31, we're collecting submissions for a haiku exhibition celebrating Black Vultures and Turkey Vultures that will be displayed at the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey in Maitland, Florida! 15 winners will be included in the exhibition and receive a one-year membership to the Center. See contest rules and submit your haiku [here](#).

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Dr. Harry Moulis: Physician, Naturalist, and Award-Winning Photographer

Dr. Harry Moulis was a distinguished gastroenterologist, accomplished nature photographer, and passionate advocate for the outdoors whose life exemplified dedication, curiosity, and artistic vision. For nearly three decades, he served the residents of Volusia County, Florida, not only as an exceptional physician but also as a gifted observer of the natural world.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1960, Dr. Moulis demonstrated intellectual and creative talents from an early age. After graduating from New College in Sarasota, he attended the University of Miami School of Medicine. He completed his internship and residency at Orlando Regional Medical Center, where he served as Chief Resident during his senior year. He

then pursued advanced training in gastroenterology through the Affiliated Gastroenterology Program associated with Yale University, training at Waterbury Hospital Health Center and the Hospital of St. Raphael in Connecticut.



As a gastroenterologist, Dr. Moulis was recognized for his clinical excellence, innovative spirit, and commitment to patient care. During his fellowship, he published numerous review articles and mastered emerging techniques and procedures that he later introduced to the Volusia County region. For 28 years, he practiced at Borland-Groover Clinic and was affiliated with Halifax Health and AdventHealth, earning the respect of colleagues and patients alike.

While medicine was his profession, photography became one of his life's great passions. Armed with patience, technical skill, and a profound appreciation for wildlife, Dr. Moulis transformed a high school hobby into a nationally recognized artistic pursuit. His fascination with photography began during his teenage years, inspired by a photography class and by experiences living abroad in Iran with his family. He later served as photo editor for his high school, college, and medical school yearbooks, foreshadowing a lifelong dedication to the craft.

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Dr. Moulis gained national recognition in 2011 when his striking photograph of a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron was selected for the 2012 National Audubon Society Calendar. Chosen from among approximately 8,000 entries and ultimately selected as one of only twelve images featured in the calendar, the

Conservation Notes

We have a request for all of you. The Farm Bill is currently being debated in Congress. Farmers and ranchers across America are not just vital for their role in production, they're also critical stewards of vast swaths of our country's working lands. Voluntary conservation programs work with producers to improve soil health, protect water quality, increase drought resilience, restore grasslands, support pollinators and wildlife, and maintain productive working lands. By investing in working lands conservation, Congress can help producers strengthen the long-term sustainability and profitability of their operations while delivering meaningful benefits for wildlife habitat, natural resources, and rural communities.



This QR code will open a link to the petition requesting that Congress write a bill that benefits farming and farmers, forests and grasslands. You can also use the link [here](#). Grassland birds like the Western Meadowlark above are disappearing at alarming rates. Birds eat insects. Our obsession with living a bug free life comes at a terrible cost. To us, in the form of pesticide contamination in our food and our bodies, and for the millions of birds and other “collateral damage victims” where these deadly products are applied.

The Farm Bill is our nation's largest investment in voluntary conservation on private working lands. There is an urgent need to pass a new Farm Bill, as current investments and programs are being outpaced by growing challenges, leaving working landowners with insufficient tools to protect or restore grasslands and the bird habitat they sustain. North and South Dakota have a program called the Conservation Forage Program. Audubon and partner organizations, including North Dakota Game and Fish, Ducks Unlimited, and Delta Waterfowl, provide technical and financial assistance to landowners who want to return marginal croplands to native grasslands. These represent a practical grassland restoration option to establish permanent cover on the landscape, boost soil health, protect water quality, reduce erosion and nutrient loss, and enhance wildlife habitat, all while helping landowners meet their financial goals.

As consideration of the Farm Bill continues on Capitol Hill, work is needed to strengthen and modernize critical conservation programs. We're urging the Senate to build on momentum from the House by continuing bipartisan negotiations crucial for getting a Farm Bill across the finish line. Your comments in support of the Farm Bill are critical to getting a good bill passed. Please, it'll just take a few minutes.

David Hartgrove

photograph captured not only the beauty of the bird but also the personality and character that became hallmarks of his work. The image was taken while he quietly drifted in a kayak along the Tomoka River near his Ormond Beach home, after spending countless hours observing and earning the trust of the nesting herons he photographed.

His work earned praise for its remarkable ability to reveal the individuality of wildlife. Cynthia Duval, Chief Curator of the Museum of Arts and Sciences in Daytona Beach, observed that Dr. Moulis possessed a rare sensitivity that allowed viewers to feel he had captured each bird's personality. This artistic gift led to exhibitions at the Museum of Arts and Sciences and the display of his photographs throughout Halifax Health Medical Center in Port Orange, Twin Lakes and many medical offices, where they brought the tranquility and wonder of nature into a healthcare setting.

Over the years, Dr. Moulis's photographs appeared in prestigious publications, including Audubon Magazine, Smithsonian Magazine and National Geographic. His interests extended beyond wildlife photography to weddings, sporting events, architecture, social gatherings, and portraits, yet nature remained his greatest inspiration. Through paddling local rivers, hiking area trails, and exploring Florida's diverse ecosystems, he developed an intimate understanding of wildlife behavior that enriched his photography. He also shared his knowledge with others through his e-book, Nature Photography Without a Tripod, in which he detailed the techniques that helped him create remarkably sharp and compelling images in the field.

Those who knew Dr. Moulis remember a man whose passions were inseparable from his character. Whether practicing medicine, photographing a heron at dawn, traveling with his wife Debra, or quietly exploring a river in a kayak, he approached life with enthusiasm, patience, and genuine appreciation for the world around him. He loved wildlife, the outdoors, and adventure, and he found joy in sharing those experiences with family and friends.

Dr. Harry Moulis passed away on November 17, 2020, at the age of 59, following a courageous battle with brain cancer. His legacy endures through the thousands of patients whose lives he improved, the medical innovations he brought to his community, and the extraordinary photographs that continue to inspire appreciation for the beauty of the natural world.

He will be remembered as a physician of exceptional skill, an artist of remarkable sensitivity, and a man whose curiosity and passion enriched every life he touched.

Joan Tague

Below is an abbreviated version of a presentation made to the Holly Hill Historical Society on June 16th, 2026.

Mary Keller, “The Bird Lady”

Mary Keller was born in Steubenville, Ohio. In 1954 she and her husband, Earl, (she called him Red long after his red hair turned white) and their kids were on their way to Miami and a job with Eastern Airlines. Their car broke down and they decided they liked it here. Red was a union electrician and easily got work. She was a housewife and mother who couldn't say no to a stray animal. In 1967 Mary was a volunteer with the Halifax Humane Society. One day someone brought in an injured gull. Its damaged wing had been removed by a veterinarian. Mary took the bird home with her where it soon died. She realized that she really knew nothing about treating injured birds. She reached out to her own veterinarian, Dr. Rusty Taylor, for guidance. He helped to get her started.

The June 8th, 1999 Daytona Beach News-Journal had an extended article by Donna Callea about Mary. Here's how Ms. Callea described her first impression of meeting Mary.

“The cheeping and peeping is constant. Five unrelated baby mockingbirds waiting to be fed open their beaks wide, and jockey for position around an eyedropper full of food. A blackbird recovering from a fishhook injury flexes its wings in a cage that's stacked atop another cage holding a large, listless-looking loon, stained with oil from the ocean. And in other enclosures, ranging in size from small to floor-to-ceiling, there are sparrows, blue jays, doves, ducks, thrashers, starlings and wrens, to name a few, all struggling to make themselves heard. This is Mary Keller's screened front porch on a recent afternoon.”

“Inside her house -- an unpretentious structure in an unincorporated neighborhood sandwiched between Daytona Beach and Holly Hill -- there are even more living in cages in an 11-by-24-foot room that's been turned into an aviary. All told, she currently has more than 200 birds to nurse. Woodpeckers, yellow-bellied sapsuckers, green herons -- just about anything that flies or used to -- plus tiny hatchlings without feathers being kept warm in makeshift fish tank incubators. There's also a big "flying cage" in the fenced back yard where the nearly grown and the nearly healed can try their wings before being set free. And this is how it's been, more or less, since 1967.”

I first met Mary on the telephone. She called me to ask if I had any ideas on how we could get people to do a better job of discarding their old fishing line. Back then we were still known as the Halifax River Audubon Society. Our chapter, one of three here in Volusia County, adopted Mary early on and helped replenish her supplies, replaced her backyard fence and helped her when she asked. We thought some informational signs might be in order

Installing signs means erecting a perch that could be used by a predator to better view its prey, which can often be baby birds. However we decided the danger of that was offset by

the benefits to all birds if we could reduce the amount of fishing line in the environment. I approached Bob Coleman, the Area Manager for FPL, about getting a donation to cover the cost of the signs. His only request was that the work be done by Daniel Ambrose, who became a very popular local artist who was just out of high school at the time. FPL paid for 25 of the signs and they were installed at boat ramps and fishing docks in east Volusia County.

I was in Mary's house twice and I can attest to the fact that Ms. Callea's description of the porch and living room/aviary was accurate. Every flat surface in sight had a cage, a terrarium with a heating pad, or some type of enclosure with a bird or birds in it. Mary and Earl were devoted care takers. Their son, Butch, lived with them and was an integral part of the team too. Baby birds need to be fed every two hours. This means hand feeding as many as 100 baby birds. By the time you finish with number 100 it's time to start back with number one.

In the 1999 article Mary is quoted, “I love birds. They're so intelligent. They really are wonderful. You fall in love with them. You can't help it. But they have to be taught to fend for themselves and go free. With wildlife, you can't let them become too much a part of you. You have to be able to turn them free,” she said.

It's hard to imagine the size of the heart of a person who devoted 37+ years to a house full of sick and injured birds. She once spent 3 days in the hospital with severe bronchitis and Earl was with her. That meant Butch was covering the duties of 3 people by himself. Their team was solid. Every year, from March to October, the place was full of baby birds. In the meantime the sick and injured adult birds were brought in almost daily too. Mary cared for them all.

In 2004 the Mary Keller Seabird Rehabilitation Center opened at the Marine Science Center in Ponce Inlet. Once free of the daily routine of feeding all those little birds Mary and Red retired. In 2005 they moved to Arizona to be near her daughter. Red passed away soon afterward. Mary relocated to Fayetteville, NC to live with her sister. She passed away in her sleep on June 24th, 2007. Her obituary appeared in the News-Journal on January 1st, 2008.

Mary was a special person and I know my life was enriched having known and worked with her as briefly as I did. She saw a need in a part of our community that's often overlooked or thought beyond our ability to affect change. She did what she could and she did it well. For going on four decades she worked behind the scenes, never looking for recognition for her herculean efforts. Thousands of birds were sent back out into the world and survived thanks to Mary's efforts. If you visit the Marine Science Center be sure to see the bird rehab facility. And remember, the place is named for a real local heroine, Mary Keller.

David Hartgrove



Sora Photo by Chuck Tague

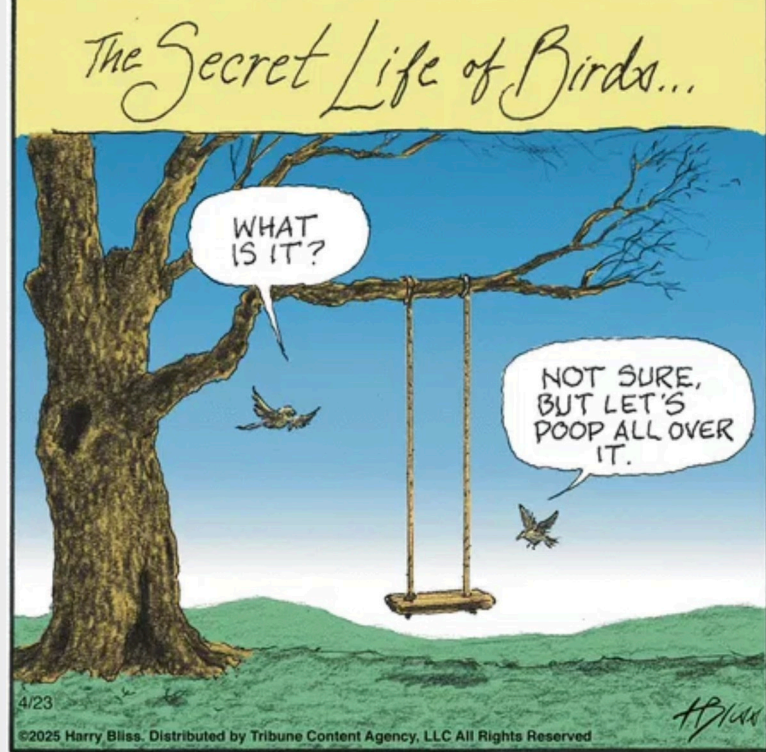
Sora: Big Feet, Strange Sounds

The Sora is a member of the rail family and as such is often heard but not seen. Their strange call, consisting of several rising notes, followed by several more in a slightly higher register and concluding with a descending trill can be heard at swamps and wetlands across the state. The lucky observer may see one emerge from dense vegetation at the shoreline of a pond or lake as it moves about feeding on seeds, small aquatic invertebrates, snails, etc. Its large, splayed feet permit walking in soft mud and atop aquatic vegetation. In flight they may appear weak and tentative as they flutter above the marsh. However they're actually strong fliers and regularly migrate long distances, with many wintering in Central and South America. Though heard year round in some parts of the state they do not nest here.

Courtship consists of both birds engaging in mutual preening, bowing and facing toward and away from each other. The nest is built over water in dense vegetation like cat tails and bull rushes. A large nest cup constructed of cat tails and then lined with softer material is built by both birds. Often the nest has vegetation arched above it as cover and may have a ramp leading into the nest. Eggs, as few as 6 or as many as 18 are laid and incubation is done by both birds for 18 to 20 days. Because incubation begins after the first few eggs are laid they do not all hatch at the same time. So one parent may be feeding downy young while the other incubates the remaining eggs. The young leave the nest soon after hatching and are fed by both parents. They take their first flight 21 to 25 days after hatching.

Large numbers of them congregate in marshes in late summer fattening up before migrating. Loss of freshwater habitat has caused a drop in their numbers however they're still common and widespread.

David Hartgrove



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