

The Pelican

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For wildlife & people since 1923



The President's Column

Anticipation!

When I step outside in the early morning, I hope it is there: that subtle, magnificent shift where the humidity drops by a whole two percent and the breeze feels almost human-friendly. Florida "fall" is officially knocking on the door, and for those of us with binoculars permanently slung over our shoulders, there is simply no better time of year.

While the rest of the country is preparing to rake leaves, we get to welcome millions of winged travelers using the Atlantic Flyway as their personal winter getaway. Neotropical migrants are already passing through, shorebirds are crowding our coastlines, and our local hammocks are about to be bursting with warblers, raptors, and wintering songbirds.

*** Fall Field Trip Planning is underway:** We welcome your input. We will certainly schedule the tried and true favorites, but we are always looking for new suggestions. Join the team that sets the course for our outdoor adventures.

*** Speaker and Community Events are filling our calendar:** We start at the Ormond Library in September for the How To Festival on September 12. We will be speaking for Regrow The Loop, The Marine Discovery Center and more. Check with our calendar throughout the season.

*** Special Chapter Events:** Movie? Art show? Picnic? Plants for Birds? We want to celebrate birds and connect with our bird loving community. We are looking for creative types here to help plan fun events focused on conservation and education. Is there a project manager out there? What about a community garden with our name on it? The sky's the limit here. I dare you to amaze me!

Dust off your field guides, clean your optics, and double-check your bug spray, get involved—our high season will soon be upon us.

I look forward to catching up with everyone at our next outing or event and sharing a trail (and a few great sightings) with you soon.

Joan Tague

Calendar & Events

While we're still in our summer hiatus we have a couple of events coming up to tempt you into coming out.

Wednesday, August 12th, Perseid Meteor Shower- This is the first time we've tried something like this. August 12th will be the peak night of this year's Perseid meteor shower. We'll have a chance to see up to 150 meteors per hour. Now for the odd part, we're meeting at the High Bridge Road beach walkover way up north on A1A at High Bridge Road at 11:00 pm. We'll be there until 1:00 am. Questions ? Call David Hartgrove, 386-235-1249.



Tuesday, September 1st at the Port Orange Regional Library- On Tuesday, September 1st at 2:00 pm, we will present a program on birding in the Dry Tortugas. This program was originally scheduled back in late April but had to be rescheduled when medical issues got in the way. Questions, call David Hartgrove, 386-235-1249.

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Brown Noddies on the remains of the old coaling dock at Fort Jefferson.
Photo by David Hartgrove

The benefits of buying a Duck Stamp every year have been outlined in these pages often. On June 26th the National First Day Sale Event was held at the Bass Pro Shops, in St Augustine. Here's a report.

First Day Sale of the 2026/27 Duck Stamp

On June 26th I traveled north to St Augustine for the First Day Sale of the new Duck Stamp. This new stamp shows a group of Buffleheads in flight, by Minnesota artist, Jim Hautman.



The event was held at the Bass Pro Shop and was a big success. Valerie Fellows, Chief of the Federal Duck Stamp Office, writing about the event said, “I wanted to take a moment to reflect on the outstanding success of our First Day of Sale event at Bass Pro Shops in St. Augustine. We estimate that 75–100 people attended, and stamp sales were roughly double what we have seen in recent years—an exceptional outcome.”

The event was special for me too in that I had the pleasure of meeting the Deputy Secretary of the Dept. of the Interior. She directly connected me with the gentleman who leads the organization that manages the grants we had hoped to apply for to help with programs at Lake Woodruff. The grant was due 3 days later, so I completed it on the plane, on my train, and in the B&B when I arrived in Wales. Fingers crossed that we get it to offer new programs at Lake Woodruff.

Rochelle Hood

Rochelle Hood is the Executive Director of the Merritt Island Wildlife Association, the Friends Group for the Merritt Island and Lake Woodruff NWR's. She is currently out of the country touring the British Isles on a well deserved vacation. Duck stamps are the number one way to support our National Wildlife Refuge system. Anyone who regularly visits any of our national wildlife refuges needs to purchase a stamp every year. They go on sale every year in June. You can purchase one at the Visitor's Center at Merritt Island NWR or online. Here's a [link](#). Scroll down to the Collector's Edition Duck Stamp – PSA (Pressure-Sensitive Adhesive) or get the new digital version.

Editor

Conservation Notes

Governor Ron DeSantis has said he wants to be remembered as “the environmental governor.” Unfortunately he recently vetoed a bill (HB 1245) which would have gone a long way toward fixing a pollution problem of huge proportions.

Biosolids is the polite name given to sewage sludge, the goop that remains after treatment in our aging and over capacity sewage treatment facilities, as well as in our septic tanks. There are three classes of biosolids, Class B, Class A and Class AA. Class B is minimally treated and will be banned from use as fertilizer after 2028 thanks to a bill passed by the Legislature. Class B biosolids, have the consistency of mud as well as that well-known aroma. Class AA biosolids, by contrast, are pasteurized like milk. The process involves drying the sludge out. The result is that Class AA biosolids look like pellets. Doing it that way costs more, but it's worth the extra steps to clean up some of the pollutants and pathogens. And what kind of pathogens are we talking about: E. coli, Salmonella, Shigella, Campylobacter, Cryptosporidium, Giardia, Norwalk virus and enteroviruses. All can cause severe gastrointestinal illness in humans and other species. In addition there are pharmaceutical compounds left over from the prescriptions we take, forever chemicals like PCB's and PFAS and heavy metals. These are only minimally affected by the process. Biosolids contain nitrogen, which is why the pellets are applied to farm fields as a form of fertilizer. Unfortunately, irresponsible use also fertilizes algae in our lakes and streams just as well as it does tomatoes.

HB 1245 sailed through the Legislature without a single vote in opposition. The bill would have mandated that only enough Class AA biosolids needed by the crops could be applied to the land. Currently the haulers of biosolids can dump as much of the stuff as they can carry, regardless of whether or not it is too much. This guarantees that the next big rain event will send pollutant-laden runoff from the farm fields into receiving water bodies including the St. Johns River and the Indian River Lagoon where they will feed algal blooms and further pollute the water. Even our benighted Legislature could see the wisdom in regulating sewage sludge. In a letter justifying his veto the Governor said that the bill “creates unnecessary regulations” and “subjects landowners to onerous record-keeping requirements.” Prior to 2013 farmers and sludge haulers were required to keep records of how much and where biosolids were dumped. Governor Rick Scott got rid of that requirement saying it was too demanding on those doing the damage. “Florida spends billions of dollars on water quality,” said Sen. Jennifer Bradley, R-Fleming Island, who sponsored the Senate version. “That is what makes our state special and beautiful and wonderful. But we can't maintain that if we have a big loophole in our biosolids regulations.” Governor DeSantis is coming to the end of his term. Let's hope our next governor is more concerned with curbing pollution than in making life easier for the polluters.

David Hartgrove and Melissa Lammers

This month our resident plant expert, Leslie Nixon, reveals her humorous side.

Bird Nerd, Bug Nerd

When you plant for birds
You might observe
More insects in turn,
Some common, some absurd.

You'll see native bees and honeybees,
Butterflies and damselflies,
Lady beetles, painted ladies,
Wooly bears and pearly eyes.

Watch out for assassin bugs and robber flies,
Ferocious water bugs and toe-biters,
Giant walking sticks, pygmy grasshoppers,
And moths that look like hummingbirds.

But the bug most absurd
Is a swallowtail caterpillar
That, you may have heard,
Resembles the turd of a bird.

So when you plant for birds
Don't be disturbed
If the insects you lured
Turn you into - a bug nerd.

Leslie Nixon



Clear-winged Hummingbird Moth *Photo by Leslie Nixon*



Giant Swallow-tailed Caterpillar, *Photo by Roger Hammer*

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Tomoka Basin State Parks Photo Contest

Tomoka Basin State Parks encompasses Tomoka State Park, North Peninsula State Park and Bulow Creek State Park. These local environmental treasures offer great opportunities for photographers to capture photos of wildlife and scenery unique to our area. Whether you're a professional with huge lenses or an inspired amateur using your iPhone, all are welcome to join in the competition.

The contest is open to all who want to participate. The submission period will be open from September 1st to October 31st. That doesn't mean your photos have to be taken during that time frame. However that's when submissions will be accepted. Photos submitted must have been taken in one of the three state parks to be considered eligible. Entries are limited to 3 photos and must be accompanied by the signed [photo permission and release form](#). They must be emailed to Parks Superintendent, [David Jones](#) during the contest period, 9/1/26 through 10/31/26. Here's a link to the Friends of Tomoka Basin State Parks quarterly [newsletter](#).

Joan Tague will be leading a couple of bird walks in the parks in October. On Saturday, October 10th, from 8:00 to 10:00 am she will lead a walk on the Mound Road. The Mound Road entrance is on the west side of North Beach Street, across from the main park entrance. The following Saturday, October 17th, from 8:00 to 10:00 am she will lead a walk at the B-12 Bulow Creek Trailhead on south side of Walter Boardman Lane just west of the bridge over Bulow Creek. These walks will also be noticed in the October Pelican, on our [website](#) and on [Meet Up](#).



Brown Thrasher

Photo by Chuck Tague

Brown Thrasher, King of the Avian Singers

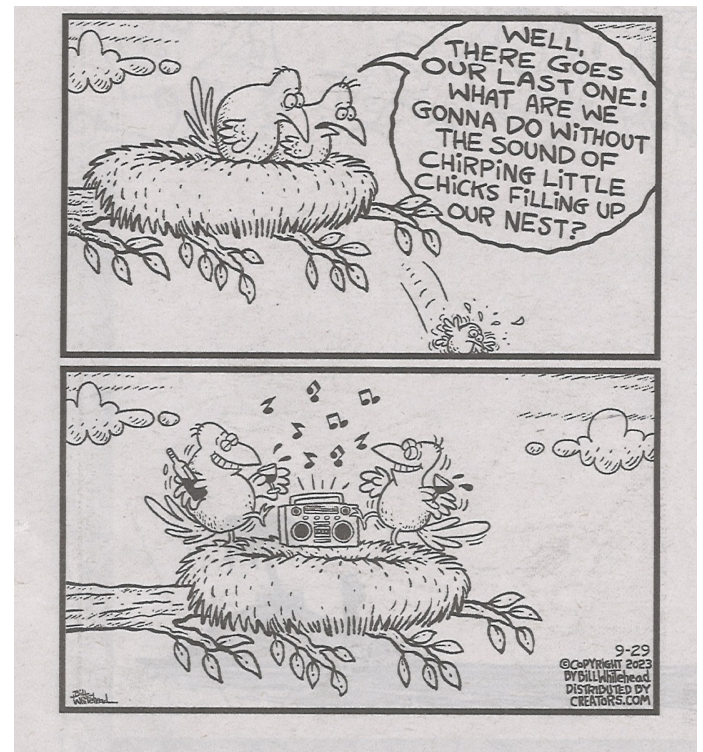
Brown Thrashers have the largest song repertoire of any North American passerine. Though its cousin, the Northern Mockingbird, gets all the press attention and is the state bird of five states, its repertoire is roughly 200 songs. The Brown Thrasher's extends to some 1,100. It's the state bird of our neighbor to the north, Georgia.

In Spring and early Summer Brown Thrashers feed mainly on insects. These are captured mostly on the ground where these long-tailed brown and white birds can be seen using their slightly curved bill to sweep the leaf litter and soil with rapid, side-to-side motions, scattering leaves and picking out food items. They have been observed pecking a small, shallow hole in hard ground, then inserting an acorn and hammering it open to extract the contents. In Fall and Winter they transition to a more fruit and nut based diet.

Both adults work to construct the nest. it's often located low near the ground in either trees with thorns or with thorny vines climbing the limbs. Very rarely on the ground itself. Three to six eggs are laid over several days. The egg color varies from off white to light green or blue with multiple brown or reddish brown speckles. In 1948, A. C. Bent reported a nest holding 7 eggs from 2 females. The nest was attended by 3 adults and all 7 eggs hatched. Incubation and brooding is done by both adults, with females doing roughly 70% of the duties while the male forages for food for the nestlings. Nest parasitism is a problem for this species. Brown Thrashers are the number one host of Brown-headed Cowbird eggs. Evidence suggests that most cowbird eggs are removed from the nest by the thrashers and in one case a young cowbird disappeared from the nest while the thrasher chicks remained.

Keep an eye out for the fledglings. They'll be almost as big as the adults and have recently hatched in our area.

David Hartgrove



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PO Box 166
Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166

Email: editor@halifaxriveras.org

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

Halifax River Audubon

forbirds@halifaxriveras.org

Meets monthly September through May

President: Joan Tague

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David Hartgrove

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