



The newsletter of Halifax River Audubon.

Volume 72, Number 10 October, 2026



The President's Column

Fall Fever

My sister pulled up the calendar for the Three Rivers Birding Club on her phone looking for things to do during my visit. This was my old bird club serving the Pittsburgh area. A walk was scheduled at Sewickley Heights Borough Park. I smiled. I had seen some outstanding birds there over the years. The park was a beautiful property consisting of wood lots, open fields, an extensive trail system and lots of rolling terrain. It is a multi-use facility maintained for many things, including Fox Hunting. Yes, hounds and horses and "pinks" (the traditional fox hunting attire). The weather had taken a very nice turn in this second week of September. It would be a very comfortable morning with cooler temperatures and lower humidity. The colors in the trees and fields only hinted at the splendor to come in a few weeks.

We gathered in the parking lot. There were a few familiar faces, including a couple I had just met this year on Black Point Wildlife Drive at Merritt Island NWR. It's a wonderful community we have in the birding world. Our leader, Sheree Daugherty, is an accomplished birder. She started off by reviewing the BirdCast report for the morning. We really didn't need it. The trees were full of birds.

We were standing at one of the highest points in Allegheny County. The park is located high above Little Sewickley Creek and the Ohio River. Major rivers are considered one of the many cues that migratory birds use to "map" their journeys. The night before the avian air traffic had been heavy and we stood watching birds drop into the trees and make their way to safe havens. It was a little spectacle. The list was a mix of locals and transients. 54 species altogether, 14 warbler species. 4 Thrushes, 4 vireos. Super morning. As we made our way along one of the trails, a woman next to me commented "This is like a banquet of birds!" She was right - it was kind of decadent to have this much luck and fun.

I grew a little wistful. You could count on these type of days in southwestern Pennsylvania in the Spring and Fall. I have experienced this rush of passerines in Florida, but only on rare occasions and not every year. I enjoyed the challenge of the walk, up and down hills, never quite being able to see what was over the rise or around the corner. I then remembered that in a few weeks, these folks would be watching not just birds, but their own breath in the cold air. Damp, cold, mushy conditions would be the scenario faced by intrepid folks who wanted

Continued on the next page

Calendar & Events

**Our annual schedule of events is kicking off with a bang !
We're going all out on Fall Migration field trips.**

Wednesdays in October, Fall Bird Walks- On 10/7, 10/14, 10/21, 10/28 and 11/4, from 8:00 am to 10:00 am. Join Joan Tague for these easy bird walks through Central Park in Ormond Beach. Explore the groomed trails in the park looking for avian migrants. Pace is very casual. Binoculars are highly recommended. All levels of expertise are welcome, from beginners to "experts". Check here or on MeetUp for any changes to the schedule. Hosted by the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center and Halifax River Audubon. Meet in the parking lot of the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center on Division Avenue. Again, please bring binoculars if you have them. Meet at the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center, 601 Division Avenue, Ormond Beach FL 32174. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Thursday, October 8th, Mead Gardens- Join Peggy Yokubonus for a trip to one of Central Florida's best migrant traps. We'll meet at 7:00 am at Int'l Square for carpooling, 2500 W International Speedway Boulevard Daytona Beach FL 32114 behind the Krystal Bring lunch. Questions, call Peggy, 386-316-4085. <http://www.meadgarden.org>.

Saturday, October 10th, Tomoka State Park- We'll be going to the South Picnic area on the west side of Beach Street. First, after paying at the pay booth, drive to the first parking area on the left. Then we'll all drive back out to Beach Street and go to the South Picnic Area. Some may recall that this area was restricted in the past for bird banding activities. It has yielded some great surprises on recent previous trips. Prepare for a trail walk - sturdy shoes, sun screen, bug spray, hat, optics, camera, snacks if needed. Monitor conditions. There may be some wet spots after rains. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Thursday, October 15th, Washington Oaks Gardens State Park- Join Joan Tague for a trip to this migrant hot spot. We'll meet at the parking lot in the state park just past the gift shop and across from the gardens. 6400 N. Oceanshore Blvd. Palm Coast FL 32137. There is an entrance fee or your state park pass will work too. Optional: We will lunch at a local restaurant at the conclusion of birding. Barbecue anyone? Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Saturday, October 17th, Birding Blitz- Join us for this fun event at Tomoka State Park. See all the details on the next page.

to see the winter raptors, finches and waterfowl. There would be days that no one would venture out. Clothing would be applied in LAYERS! Some days you could never have enough layers on your body...

Yep, I remembered why I was in Florida. And I remembered that many of those northern birders will soon be returning to join me in birding adventures for the next few months. This is the best time of year. It's like going back to school as a kid.

So - let's get out there. The newsletter is full of ideas and outings. There will be more on the website. See you next in the field!

Joan Tague

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We'll be at the Marine Science Center's Wildlife Festival



FREE ADMISSION

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3RD
10 AM - 3 PM

Wildlife 2026 Festival

Marine Science Center
Ponce Inlet, FL

SHARK TOOTH HUNT • PRESENTATIONS • KIDS' ACTIVITIES
ANIMAL MEET & GREET • MUSIC • ENVIRONMENTAL VENDORS

100 LIGHTHOUSE DR., PONCE INLET (386) 304-5545 MARINESCIENCECENTER.COM

Come out to the Marine Science Center on Saturday, October 3rd for all the fun and excitement. This will be our first opportunity to sell some of the photos donated to us by Dr. Harry Moulis' estate. The Paw Paw Chapter of the FNPS will be there too. So you can get a copy of the flyer mentioned in Leslie Nixon's column on the next page.

Monday, October 19th, Lighthouse Point Park- Join Joan Tague for a 3 hour walk looking for migrant shorebirds. We'll meet at 8:00 am in the park parking lot, 5000 South Atlantic Avenue Ponce Inlet FL. There is an entry fee for the park unless you have the annual county beach park pass. If time allows, we may stop at Ponce Preserve Park after leaving the park to check the oak trees for migrants. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

Thursday, October 22nd, Lake Woodruff NWR- Join Joan Tague for this trip to west Volusia. We'll spend the morning looking for birds around the visitor center, then proceed to the refuge to walk the wooded trails and impoundments. Expect Pine Warblers, Red-headed Woodpeckers and lots more. This trip is from 8:00 am to 12:30 pm. We'll meet at the Visitor's Center, 2045 Mud Lake Road DeLeon Springs FL 32130. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.



TOMOKA BASIN BIRD BLITZ

BIRD BLITZ
ONE DAY • THREE PARKS • THREE HOURS • AS MANY BIRDS AS YOU CAN FIND!

JOIN US FOR A FUN-FILLED MORNING OF BIRDING ON OCTOBER 17TH FROM 8:00 AM-11:00 AM!

WE'LL HAVE BIRDING STATIONS SET UP AT ALL THREE OF OUR MAIN PARKS, WHERE YOU CAN MEET EXPERIENCED BIRD GUIDES AND HEAD OUT ON A HIKE THROUGH THE PARK. EACH GROUP WILL KEEP TRACK OF EVERY BIRD THEY SPOT, INCLUDING THE NUMBER OF BIRDS AND THE NUMBER OF SPECIES OBSERVED.

WHETHER YOU'RE AN EXPERIENCED BIRDER OR JUST GETTING STARTED, EVERYONE IS WELCOME TO JOIN THE FUN!

WHERE TO MEET

- BULOW PLANTATION: RANGER BRI, ALICIA, AND A BIRDING VOLUNTEER WILL MEET PARTICIPANTS AT THE PAVILION.
- B12 GATE OFF OF WALTER BOARDMAN LN: LOCAL AUDUBON PRESIDENT JOAN AND SARA WILL MEET EVERYONE AT THE B12 GATE.
- TOMOKA STATE PARK - SOUTH AREA: BIOLOGIST PAUL LAMMARDO AND RANGER DAVID WILL MEET PARTICIPANTS AT THE SOUTH AREA OF THE PARK.

PARK ENTRY FEES STILL APPLY. COME SPEND THE MORNING EXPLORING, COUNTING BIRDS, MEETING FELLOW BIRDERS, AND ENJOYING OUR PARKS. WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE! 🐦🌿

PLEASE USE OUR QR CODES TO SIGN UP TO THE LOCATION OF YOUR CHOICE

TOMOKA STATE PARK BULOW PLANTATION WALTER BOARDMAN LN

Please read the flyer above carefully. It will answer most of your questions. This will be a 3 hour event on October 17, 2026. Teams will launch from 3 areas and count all of the birds they can find. The count window will be from 8:00 am to 11:00 am. Results should be entered in eBird. Lunch is served at the completion of the small count window. Members of the public are welcome to sign on with a team and walk the survey route.

When you arrive at the park and pay your admission, be sure to tell the ranger you're there for the Birding Blitz. They can then direct you to the teams meeting spot.

Friends of Tomoka Basin State Parks Photo Contest

When: September 1, 2026 through October 31, 2026
Where: Tomoka Basin State Parks

If you wish to participate in the photo contest, please download this [Photo Release Form.pdf](#), fill it out and email it to Ranger Dave at david.L.Jones@floridadep.gov.

Whether you're a professional with huge lenses or an inspired amateur using your iPhone, all are welcome to join in the competition.

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Some Armchair Viewing

Desert Hummingbirds

Here's a link to an [8 minute video](#) about desert hummingbirds in California from Cornell Lab that's also an ad for the OM camera system. Enjoy!

* * *

2026 Audubon Photography Awards, Top 100

Here's a link to the [Audubon Photography Awards](#) top 100 photos. As you scroll down enjoy the back story on each photo.

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Those Tiny Claws Must Feel Weird



A baby Chimney Swift tries to climb under Bob's hat. *Photo by Catherine Kellogg.*

They were being fed after having been brought in to the bird hospital at the Marine Science Center.

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

Invasive Plants Are Wrong for Birds

To quote the acclaimed ecologist Aldo Leopold, "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise". By this measure, invasive plants are wrong. Invasive plants are defined as non-native plants that have increased in abundance to the point of causing ecologic damage to the local environment. They displace native species, decrease biodiversity, and damage wildlife habitat. They don't tend to "preserve the biotic community", they tend to destroy it.

And by this measure, invasive plants are also wrong for birds. Because their vigorous growth is unchecked by natural enemies, invasive plants outcompete the native plants birds depend on for food and habitat. Hence, fewer resources for birds and fewer birds. Unfortunately, there are many invasive plants proliferating in Florida due to our mild climate and the numerous points of entry on our long coastline. Several invasive plant species are still offered for sale at the big box nurseries around town. Fortunately, the Pawpaw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society has two means of helping home owners identify invasive plants and choose native species as replacements.

First, we created a brochure titled "Invasive Plants & Their AlterNatives". The brochure is available at our monthly meetings and our outreach events (where we commonly see Halifax River Audubon attending *). It is a large trifold handout with color photos of 20 common invasive plants along with two AlterNatives pictured as replacements for each invasive.

The second way we can help is at our meeting in October when our featured program will be on invasive plants as presented by the executive director of the Florida Wildflower Foundation, Stacey Matrazzo. We will be meeting on Monday, October 12 at 6:30 pm at the Piggotte Center in South Daytona. All our meetings are free and open to the public, and we usually have plants available. Please join us!

If you'd like more information on invasive plants, visit the website of the [Florida Invasive Species Council](#), particularly the "For Homeowners" page.

October is a good month for removing an invasive plant and replacing it with an AlterNative. It's a wonderful time to be outdoors, watching migrating birds and knowing you are helping them with your native plants.

Leslie Nixon

* *We will be at the Marine Science Center this Saturday, October 3rd, for Wildlife Day. So it'll be a good chance to pick up the brochure.*

Bob Kellogg wrote a piece for his Florida Master Naturalist class. Here's an edited version. Photos by Bob Kellogg.

The Environmental Discovery Center and Ormond Central Park

A wonderful morning in the wetlands. The Environmental Discovery Center (EDC) and the surrounding Central Park are a fascinating mixture of natural wetlands, primarily swamp, enhanced by manmade lakes and connecting streams.

It was a morning outing. The first thing that caught my attention and took my breath away, was the glass mirror-like stillness of the lake reflecting Cumulus cloud formations and an inverted horizon of the lakeshore trees. Seeing the early morning clouds, which foretold the predicted coming thunderstorms highlighted the freshwater source for this freshwater system of lakes and swamps.



For several years, this has been a focal site for birding, particularly during migration season. While I have spent many hours wandering the surrounding paths and trails, I was only peripherally aware of the underlying ecological systems. So focused on birds, I was missing the wonder of the supporting infrastructure. So here are a few facts about the place. The park consists of 149 acres of man made freshwater lakes/retention ponds with canal connections. It's in a pine flat woods and hardwood hammock wetlands with 75 acres of blackwater lakes and connecting canals. It was created by funding through a Volusia County ECHO grant (2014) with a concept originated by Joyce Ebbets, a former Ormond Beach City Commissioner.

The area is a treat for the senses; a wetlands oasis, surrounded by the city of Ormond Beach. The brilliant and subdued shades of blue, green, black, grey, white and brown were a feast for the eyes. The smell was strongly verdant and organic, varying depending on the distance from the shoreline. Birdsong, insects buzzing (particularly the Cicadas), and the developing breeze through the trees provided a symphony of sounds. Birds heard and seen that morning included: Blue Jays, Cardinals, a Carolina Wren, Tufted Titmouse, Laughing Gull, Pileated Woodpecker and Red-bellied Woodpecker.

Slowing down, stopping, waiting, experiencing, breathing in the whole of the place then connections start to appear between the trees and the climbing vines. Connections between insects and host plants. Connections between the lake water and the shoreline. Connections.... a reoccurring theme throughout Nature. Surrounded by life in all shapes and sizes. More connections... The pollinators - Flying insects in their amazing colors and shapes. From a white peacock butterfly, a four-spotted pennant skimmer, a western Honey Bee to the American Bumblebee all doing the important work of natural connections.



The trees, shrubs, vines and shoreline grasses were of various shades of green; some with flowers, others with intricate bark, and they spanned a timeline of new sprouts to decaying snags and fallen trunks. Plant identification is a weak spot in my knowledge. I do use the I-Naturalist Seek application to get me in the ballpark. I was somewhat surprised at the number of non-native/invasive plants throughout the Central Park complex. In retrospect, probably not a big surprise given the man made origin and the surrounding suburbs. Nice neighborhoods but no doubt that the majority of yards are not native plant gardens. That being said, even non-native plants are beautiful to behold, just not in our natural areas.

All in all, a wonderful walkabout in a place that I thought I knew fairly well. Now, I have a better appreciation for the multitudes and layers of natural wonder located in Central Park.

Bob Kellogg

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From eBird We Learn the Following

More than 145,600 eBirders kept the momentum going in August, submitting 1.8 million checklists and documenting 26.1 million bird observations worldwide. The community also added 1.4 million photos and 59k audio recordings. Check out this invaluable resource. <https://ebird.org/explore?continue> .



Barred Owl

Photo by Peter May

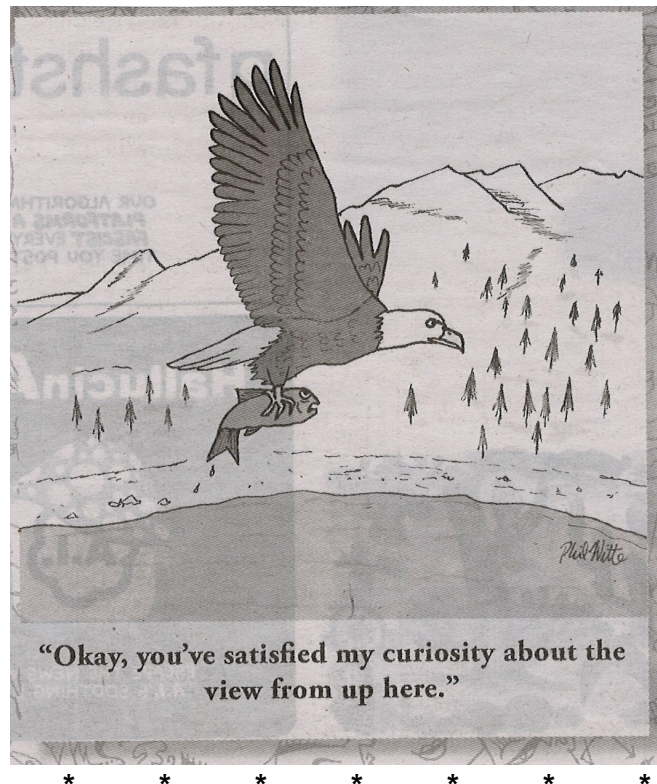
The Barred Owl is one of Florida's most numerous and vocal owl species. Mated pairs often call back and forth, especially in Fall as nesting season approaches. Their calls have been said to sound like "Who, who, who cooks for you" and can sometimes remind one of the sounds made by monkeys.

Though they prefer to nest in old tree cavities, they will also use old hawk or crow nests. They hunt most often at dawn and dusk but can be seen hunting in daylight too. Their diet consists of small mammals like mice, rats, squirrels (including flying squirrels) and other species like frogs, birds, snakes, lizards and some insects. Pretty much if they can swallow it, it's on the menu.

When nesting two to three, rarely four, white eggs are laid. The female does 90% or more of the incubation, during which time the male brings her food. Incubation lasts 28 to 33 days with the young fledging about 6 weeks after hatching.

Barred Owls are primarily a species found east of the Rocky Mountains. However at some point they moved into the Pacific Northwest where they became a serious threat to the endangered Northern Spotted Owl. Because this is a listed Endangered Species the US Fish & Wildlife Service devised a plan to enhance their survival by eliminating the threat posed by the Barred Owls. Their solution, to shoot 450,000 in 3 states over the next 30 years, has posed a huge ethical dilemma. Is the killing of one species to save another a step too far in trying to right the balance of nature? This question is being debated in the areas where the culling will be carried out. Meanwhile...

David Hartgrove



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We have programs monthly, September through May

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