

# The Pelican

*We need to be the stewards of this world, not its destroyers*

Vol. 57-No.7 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon January, 2012



## Message from the President

### *Thoughts from on High*

What would January be without New Year's Resolutions? It's a new year, a clean slate, a fresh start. Anything is possible – at least in our minds. And that is, of course, where change has to start. We have to want to make a change and then we have to determine actions necessary to make that change happen. The first two steps are the easy part. It's the following through on the actions that is the difficult bit of the equation. Here are a couple of ideas I'm mulling over as my resolutions. Fortunately for me, in my mind, every day is a new beginning, a clean slate and a fresh start. So if I don't make good on my resolutions today, I can always try again tomorrow.

1. Bring a non-birding friend with me on a field trip and introduce him/her to the joy of being outside, enjoying the natural surroundings and noticing all the wildlife – birds, butterflies, salamanders, bobcats, whatever – as well as the trees, grasses and flowers and how all the species and systems work together to form a habitat. The hope is that number one, my friend will have a good time, but the lasting effect may be that he or she will have a new respect for preserving natural areas.
2. Take a course to learn more about a nature-related topic. Obviously, I have to give a plug here to the Master Naturalist program run by University of Florida. Visit <http://www.masternaturalist.ifas.ufl.edu/> for details about class times and locations. There are workshops at Marineland, Whitney Lab, the Marine Science Center and many other locations, too. Not only are the classes educational, they are fun. And unlike formal schooling, generally speaking there are no tests.

Those are two ideas on my resolutions list. Even if you don't make an actual resolution, I hope that you will find time to join our members on a field trip or at a general meeting in 2012. Best wishes to everyone for good health, happiness, peace and security in 2012. And good birding, too!

*Paula Wehr*

## Calendar, Field Trips, etc.

Our next meeting will be Monday, January 23rd (not the 3rd Monday since that's Martin Luther King Jr's birthday) at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. Socializing begins at 6:30 p.m. The speaker begins at 7:00 p.m. and a brief business meeting follows. The speaker will be our own Chuck Tague. His presentation, entitled "My Life With Owls", promises to be as intriguing as it sounds. Chuck was Education Director of the Pittsburgh Aviary and dealt with owls both at work and home. His extensive experience with these nocturnal hunters, some of which weigh less than 3 ounces, means we're in for a very interesting program.

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Friday, 1/13 and Saturday, 1/14 we'll have field trips to Merritt Island NWR. Peggy Yokubonus will be leading the Friday trip. Chuck and Joan Tague will lead the Saturday trip. For both trips we'll meet in the parking lot at the Lowe's in Port Orange, on Dunlawton just east of I-95 at 7:00 am. Bring a lunch and plan on some of the best winter birding Florida has to offer.

Friday, 1/20, we'll be headed off to Marl Bed Flats. This is on part of the St Johns River flood plain and has both hardwood forest tracts and open wet prairie habitats. We meet in the parking lot at the Lowe's in Port Orange, on Dunlawton just east of I-95 at 7:00 am. Bring lunch and maybe we'll see the elusive Wilson's Snipe.

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Friday, 1/20, The Southeast Volusia Audubon Society will host a Gull Fly-In at Frank Rendon Park, in Daytona Beach Shores, 2705 S. Atlantic Ave. at 4:00 pm. This site attracts the largest concentration of gulls on the east coast of the country in winter. Michael Brothers, Director of the Marine Science Center, will lead the group in an exercise in gull and tern identification. If you've never been in the field with Michael, this is an your chance to see what a treat that experience can be.

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The Reflections II Exhibition, at the Museum of Arts and Sciences will be on display through March 25th. The prices are reasonable if you're not already a member and the first Tuesday in the month is free for Volusia County residents. This is one you don't want to miss.

## Conservation Notes

As we start a new year there are a variety of challenges facing us. In the political arena we're faced with a group of candidates trying to get the nomination of the Republican Party for President. At each of the staged debates they seem to be vying for who can sound the least informed on the issues facing our country and the planet. Then there's the Republican controlled Congress, which wanted to hold the entire national budget hostage until the President approved the Keystone XL pipeline.

This billion dollar boondoggle is meant to transport oil obtained from the tar sands of western Alberta down to refineries along the Texas Gulf Coast. One of the many problems with this plan is that the pipeline would cross above the Oglala Aquifer, one of the most important water resource areas in middle America. A recent spill from an existing pipeline in Montana caused major damage into the Yellowstone River. Exxon has apologized.

Alberta's Athabasca River is the 3rd largest watershed in the world and it's being turned into a giant toxic sewer. Tailings ponds line its banks and seep deadly compounds into the river daily. An area the size of the state of Florida has been converted from pristine boreal forest into a moonscape of environmental degradation that's hard to imagine. The technology used to extract the oil from the sands requires vast amounts of water. Water that, once it's been used for this process, is forever contaminated. With an expanding population, the world needs all the water it can get. If your children have parched lips and swollen bellies from lack of adequate water and nutrition, knowing that you can still drive your car isn't much of a consolation. Carried to its extreme, this is the dilemma we're facing if we don't begin to make more rational choices.

In the meantime, President Obama dithers and holds his moistened finger to the wind waiting to see where public opinion will lead on the issue. The problem is that public opinion is manufactured by slick, well funded PR campaigns designed to convince us and our legislators that toxic sludge is good for us and that global climate change is a hoax. Our neighbors to the north are experiencing a problem that we here in the US have seen before: the complete corruption of government regulations for the benefit of oil company stock holders. Here's a link to a You Tube video that puts it all into perspective: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkwoRivP17A>

Al Gore named his award winning documentary, "An Inconvenient Truth." It is inconvenient to have to finally deal with the consequences of 100 years of a hydrocarbon economy. In much the same way that the grass hopper fiddled in Aesop's fable, we have been profligate in our waste of opportunities to adopt a cleaner, more cost efficient life style. The costs of all the environmental damage and health effects aren't factored into the cost of a gallon of gas. But we're paying them none the less. The time is now coming when the choices we've made will be reflected in rising sea levels and catastrophic weather events that will affect food production. Will our great grand children curse us for our inaction and self interest? Or will we finally have the courage to see the truth and recognize its implications? The future of the planet dear friends is in our hands.

Our Christmas Bird Count was a roaring success. Twenty-eight people participated and though I don't yet have all of the data sheets, I know we'll end up with over 110 species. I'll have a complete report next month. Till then, keep watching those birds.

*David Hartgrove*

## Canaveral Marshes and Blue Heron

### Water Treatment Facility

A birding field trip is a dynamic thing - always moving and gyrating to the whim of birders, weather and the nature of birds. Never the same. Always exciting - anticipatory.

Our field trip to the Canaveral Marshes and the Blue Heron Water Treatment Facility on December 9, 2011 was uniquely different than any other field trip. It had its own rhythm, always offering unexpected moments. The beginning excitement of one could easily be swapped with the ending excitement of the other.

Our last moments of this field trip were spent watching a flock of twenty-five Black-bellied Whistling Ducks at Blue Heron Water Treatment Facility, secretly hidden from casual viewing. They were feeding in a space between the dike road and the water's edge. A good view of these ducks was accomplished by patiently searching for an opening through high grasses and impenetrable thickets.

Our first stop, heightened by the anticipation of seeing Painted Buntings, was at a home in the Great Outdoors Campgrounds. We parked our cars, quietly exited, focused our spotting scopes on a small plastic feeder attached to a window of the house, and waited. A short while later, the owner came out to inform us that the buntings hadn't appeared all morning and it was the first time they hadn't in six years. We did spot three female buntings near the feeders hidden quietly in green brush. The friendly owner of the house did show us some beautiful photographs of the male bunting at the feeder. He was quiet proud of his Painted Buntings.

On to the library and the trail-head into the marshes. A stop here was very productive with many Tufted Titmice, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Pine Warblers and Carolina Wrens putting on a flitting display in the pine trees. The walk to the marshes was beautiful with serenading birds and natural, visual delights. Our host, Matt Heyden, led a very informative walk into the marshes recalling historical stories and birding updates at the marshes. The water was high in the marshes leading us to observe at the edge, which yielded a flock of Horned grebes, cruising Northern Harriers, gulls, Blue-winged Teal and a Swamp Sparrow. We walked to a turtle mound in a near by wooded area and saw three White Ibis contentedly feeding - a very unusual sighting.

At the Blue Heron Water Treatment facility we were entertained by an American Bittern doing it's best at imitating tall grasses. Listening for Marsh Wren songs and searching for a peek at the elusive wren kept us alert in our drive around the impoundments. All heard the song of the Marsh Wren and some of our members were able to see a few in the brush. A very secretive tiny bird.

Fifty-seven species of birds were counted this day with the highest number of one specie being the American Coot. Eighteen birders enjoyed the perfect birding day and drove back up I-95 very happy.

*Ray Scory*



Painted Bunting  
by  
Danny Bales

## Audubon Adventures

We are now soliciting sponsors for the classroom sets of Audubon Adventures. If you have been a sponsor in the past you know how important this program is to Volusia County students. For some children it's their first exposure to learning about the environment, wild birds, and other animals.

The Audubon Adventures program is aimed at third, fourth and fifth grade classrooms. Each sponsored class receives four sets of a newsletter with materials for 32 students in each set. They are filled with information and learning activities. There is also a teacher's manual with support ideas, activities, and evaluations.

Send your donation to Halifax River Audubon, P.O. Box 166, Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166. Any donation is welcome; \$45 will supply a classroom. Please specify on your check that your donation is for Audubon Adventures. And thank you for thinking of our future leaders.

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### HRA Welcomes Our New Members

Evelyn Bible, Steve & Mary Blackledge, (who were inadvertently left off last month's list) Jennifer Cash, Sandra Falcon, Laurie Gawriluk, Bob & Frieda Holt, Bill Kappa, Amanda Kowal, Annie Marsh, Katherine H. Millen, Bonnie Powell, and James Valk

We encourage you to join us at our monthly meetings, on one of our excellent field trips and to perhaps consider volunteering to serve on our board.

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## The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival

One of the year's premier events begins on Wednesday, January 26th. Now is the time to make your plans to attend if you haven't already. This will be the 15th year of the festival and it's the biggest and best organized birding festival in the country. Online registration is open or you can print a registration form from their website to mail in. Some of the best field trip leaders in the country will be here and field trips will fill up fast. So now's the time to make your choices. And there's lots to choose from. In addition to field trips there are work shops on bird identification for beginners and more experienced birders alike, photography work shops taught by some of the best photographers in the country and other activities for history buffs and the non birders in your family. Check out the website for all of the information:

<http://www.spacecoastbirdingandwildlife festival.org>

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## Experience the Magic of the Dry Tortugas

And do something good for yourself and the environmental organization of your choice. The Dry Tortugas during Spring migration is one of the best birding experiences in Florida. Florida Nature Tours is scheduling a number of trips from Key West to this birding wonderland beginning in April, 2012. FNT will donate \$100.00 to the environmental organization of your choice when you book your trip. Check their website for all of the information: <http://floridanaturetours.net>

## Our First Overnight Field Trip of the Season

For our first overnight field trip of the year we're going to the Circle B Bar Preserve, in Polk County, south of Lakeland, on Thursday and Friday, February 23rd and 24th. This promises to be a very good trip. We'll be staying at the Day's Inn & Suites 4502 N. Socrum Loop Road. That's at Exit 33 off I-4. The rate for a double room is \$80.26, including taxes. This was the best rate Peggy Yokubonus, our trip leader, could find and she suggests making your reservation for the night of Feb. 23rd as soon as possible. Call the hotel to make your reservation: 863-683-5095. We'll rendezvous in the parking lot behind the Krystal on Intrn'l Speedway Blvd. east of I-95. This is called International Square Mall, where Michael's, Bed, Bath and Beyond, etc. are located. Meeting time is 8:00 am. This should allow us to drive through Orlando after the morning rush hour.

The Circle B Bar is named for the ranch that used to occupy the property. It was purchased by the Southwest Florida Water Management District in order to protect the water resources on the property. The species list runs to well over 100 and includes Purple Gallinule, Limpkin, and many others: Here's a link to their list: <http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/recreation/species/birds.pdf>

American Swallow-tailed Kites have nested on the property before. The birds return to the US in February. So there's a good chance we'll see this lovely bird while we're there.



American Swallow-tailed Kite

by Joyce Stefanic

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## Gulf of Mexico Longline Fishing Update

Our chapter has been partnered with the Pew Charitable Trust and its Pew Environmental Group for several years now. Our participation has been limited to signing on to letters to the National Marine Fisheries Service requesting better enforcement of existing laws and mandated limits on those species seriously over fished. We recently received word that the NMFS has now established a policy that will help existing surface longline fishermen to replace their gear with newer, less damaging equipment. This is good news for any number of species. Surface longlines are the cause of death for thousands of birds each year. Surface longlines have long been used to catch yellow-fined tuna and swordfish. These long lines unfortunately are indiscriminate in what they hook. So endangered sharks, birds, and many other species are simply discarded as unwanted "bycatch." The new rules are a step in the right direction.

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Vol. 57-No.8 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon  
February, 2012



## Message From The President

*Thoughts From On High*

On Thursday, January 12, David Yarnold, President & CEO of Audubon, hosted a webinar discussion about Audubon's 2012 strategic plan. He spent about 25 minutes discussing the problems (habitat loss, threats to biodiversity, legal protections which are now under attack, and the narrow base of support for action) and the solution, which is Audubon's 100+ year legacy of on-the-ground conservation. "One Audubon" consists of 450,000 members, 465 chapters, 46 centers, 24 state offices, 1.8 million magazine readers and Birdlife Partnerships in 18 countries.

He spoke about the importance of having effective partnerships to ensure conservation impact "at scale," which means the conservation plan must be coordinated to protect the birds at their winter grounds, along their migration routes and at their breeding grounds. Often that means working with people and organizations in multiple states and/or countries.

The 2012 Strategic Plan focuses on five conservation strategies. Implementation steps have been outlined along with how to measure our success against our 5-year goals. If you were not able to listen in during the presentation earlier this month, please visit <http://chapterservices.audubon.org/news-announcements> where you can listen to a recording of the presentation and/or view a copy of the slides presented during the program.

National Audubon and Audubon of Florida have funding opportunities available for chapters which work on projects aligned with the five conservation strategies. If you have ideas for a project for our chapter, please contact me or one of the Board members. Contact information is listed on the last page of the newsletter.

*Paula Wehr*

## Our February Meeting

On February 20th our speaker will be Florida Parks Service Specialist, Lauren Swanson, who will give a program on the efforts to manage land for Florida Scrub Jays, our state's only endemic species. We meet at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. Socializing begins at 6:30 p.m. The speaker begins at 7:00 p.m. and a brief business meeting follows. And the bridge is still out, so remember to drive in from 10th Street.

## Calendar & Events

Deep Creek Preserve Eco Buggy tour

Friday, Feb. 10th - meet at Lowes parking lot, east of I-95 on Dunlawton Avenue at 7:00 a.m. On this field trip we will ride Volusia County's Eco Buggy to explore this newly acquired conservation property, located on S.R. 415 in the Samsula area. We will ride through pine flatwoods, timberlands and agriculture land. Seating is limited; registration is required. Contact Chuck Tague at [kingrail@mac.com](mailto:kingrail@mac.com), 386-253-1166 or 412-841-8813. Please provide email and/or phone numbers in case plans change. Bring snacks, water and lunch if you'd like. We will eat at Lake Ashby after the tour.

Orlando Wetlands on a Monday

Monday, Feb., 13th - Meet at Lowe's, in Port Orange at 7:00 am and join Bob North for a trip to this exciting spot. This trip involves a good hike on flat trails with chances for 80+ species of birds. For more information, contact Bob at 352-302-3510 or [knorth8@cfl.rr.com](mailto:knorth8@cfl.rr.com)

Overnight To the Circle B Bar Reserve

Thursday & Friday, Feb. 23rd & 24th - We'll meet in the parking lot of the shopping center at 2500 W. Int'l Speedway Blvd., behind Krystal, at 8:00 am. Though we're unable to leave cars at this location overnight, we can caravan to the Reserve, near Lakeland, to begin the trip. The Day's Inn & Suites, at 4502 Socrum Loop Rd., is the hotel we've chosen. Call them at 863-683-5095 if you haven't already made your reservation. Call Peggy Yokubonus at 386-316-4085 or [pyokubonus@cfl.rr.com](mailto:pyokubonus@cfl.rr.com) if you have any questions.

SEVAS & WVAS Go To Lake Apopka

The Zellwood Christmas Bird Count, which includes Lake Apopka, routinely logs over 160 species each winter. So this is a special place.

Saturday, Feb. 4th - WVAS will be going with their Co-President, Harry Robinson, who literally wrote the book on birding Lake Apopka. Meet them at DeLand Post Office on SR 44 east of Amelia St. at 8:00 am and bring lunch. Call Harry if you have any questions, 386-943-8342.

Saturday, Feb. 18th - Meet the folks from SEVAS at 6:00 am at Market Square, in Edgewater, corner of US 1 and SR 442, near Dunkin Donuts. Then car pool to this outstanding birding location in north Orange County. Call Gail Domroski at 386-428-0447 or [rdomroski@cfl.rr.com](mailto:rdomroski@cfl.rr.com) if you have questions.

## Conservation Notes

by David Hartgrove

The 2011-2012 Tomoka Regional Science and Engineering Fair will be held on Saturday, Feb. 11, 2012 at Atlantic High School, 1250 Reed Canal Road, in Port Orange. Our chapter, along with our sister chapters, the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society and the West Volusia Audubon Society, will again sponsor cash prizes to be awarded to winners selected by a panel of judges made up of chapter members. Each chapter contributes one hundred dollars. Then a one hundred dollar prize is awarded to the first place selections in each of the two divisions, senior and junior. A fifty dollar award is then given to the runners up in each division. The judges are looking for the best entries in the fields of natural sciences. These kids work very hard on their projects. It's really interesting to listen as they describe the steps they took in completing their projects. These are our future leaders and scientists. We want to give them all of the encouragement we can. We're including an abstract from one student's project in this issue of the Pelican to give you an idea of the breadth of knowledge on view at this exciting event.

The Lake Apopka Restoration Area is one of the premier birding destinations in Florida. Though it's currently only accessible with a guide from the St Johns River Water Management District, plans are moving forward to open the area to everyone as a self guided tour, much like Viera Wetlands. The area is listed as an Audubon Important Bird Area, as well it should be. The checklist runs to 350 species. Lake and Orange Counties and the SJRWMD have plans to make Lake Apopka a major eco tourism destination. In March they'll hold joint workshops to announce the plans for miles of auto and biking trails and other amenities. Now comes word that a small private airport nearby wants to become a jet port. This will mean they need to extend their runway. SJRWMD is being "encouraged" to declare 1500 acres as surplus land so it can be bought and the runway extended. Locating a jet port next to a huge bird area is about as dumb an idea as can be imagined. Many airports have issues with birds and spend considerable sums to purchase propane cannons and other noise makers to drive birds away from their runways. There's already a jet port in Leesburg, just a few miles away. Of course, this plan is being pitched as a "job creator." In the interest of safety for the passengers on the jets, as well as the birds, this project needs to be derailed now. As soon as we have more information on a comment period, we'll let you know.

This year has been what's called an "eruptive" year for Snowy Owls. Due to an increase in last summer's lemming population in the Arctic, Snowy Owls had a banner year for breeding. Now, with increased food pressures of this larger population, Snowy Owls have been seen in record numbers much further south than their usual Canadian wintering grounds. They've been reported as far south as Kansas and Oklahoma. Twelve years ago one even showed up in Florida, where it perched on the dunes above the Gulf of Mexico at Alligator Point. It was the first and only time that we know of. Here's a link to a video that was posted by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. It provides some stunning views of this bird that for many of us may never be seen in the wild. Enjoy!

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfkcX-UqIjM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfkcX-UqIjM)

Below is a piece written for the Pelican by a student at Spruce Creek High School as part of his Science Fair project.

## The Effects of Beach Driving on Size and Density of Ghost Crab Populations in Volusia County

Cyrus Jamidar, Spruce Creek High School

The particular species of Ghost Crab studied in this project is the Atlantic Ghost Crab, *Ocypode quadrata* (Johan Christian Fabricius, 1787). This crab is found across the eastern seaboard from Rhode Island in the United States to Southern Brazil. Though there have been other experiments using populations of the Ghost Crab as an indicator species, no one has examined the effect of regular vehicular traffic on Ghost Crab populations. The Ghost Crab is a superb indicator species due to its easily visible characteristic burrow with an entrance shaft. On some beaches across Florida vehicles are allowed to drive on the beach. This field study examines the extent to which vehicular traffic has an impact on Ghost Crabs populations in Ormond Beach, Florida.

My experiment dealt with two different types of beach areas. One, on which vehicular traffic was permitted, and the other where vehicular traffic was not permitted. These two beach areas were side by side and had similar physical characteristics. Vehicular driving is the only variable differentiating the two beaches. In each beach area I marked off 500 meters in which I counted the different Ghost Crab populations. I divided up the 500 meters into 10 sections each 50 meters long and three meters wide, and counted the number of Ghost Crab holes per section. Then I measured the diameter of each hole using an electronic caliper.

In the non-driving section there were consistently more holes and with greater diameters than in the driving section as evaluated using t-statistic. The average hole diameter of the non-driving beach area was 2.71" while the driving beach area had an average hole diameter of 2.34". In addition, the total number of holes for the non-driving beach area was 751 compared to the driving beach area which had 244. That's 507 fewer holes.

Compaction tests with a cone-penetrometer showed a significant difference in the compaction of sand in both the superficial and deeper layers. The non-driving beach had an average compaction at shallow depth of 101 psi and 225 psi at the deep depth, whereas the driving beach had an average compaction of at the shallow depth of 133psi and at the deep depth 300psi.

In conclusion, vehicular driving adversely affected the number and size of Ghost Crab burrows. There were significantly fewer and smaller burrows on the driving beach in comparison to the non-driving beach. Compaction of sand on the driving beach was also much greater statistically than on the non-driving beach. So along with crabs being killed or run over by the beach traffic, it is probable that compaction of sand by vehicles is a major factor in the decrease in burrows on the driving beach area either from cars collapsing the Ghost Crab burrows or making it difficult for the crabs to dig into the sand.

## We Welcome Our New Members

Welcome to our new members this month: Edna Andre, Chuck Bachstein, Vera Becker, Dorothy Bowden, Anthony Buglione, Renee Burson, Billie Clevenger, Dian Disantis, Veronica S. Eads, Dona Elliott, Joan Freburger, Marion Fuentes, Karen Granville, Lindy Kopp, Nancy M. Lackey, The Librarian at Daytona State College, Laura Morgenstern, Dorothy & Kenneth Pearce, Richard Poppel, Katie Rodgers, Elaine Stacey, Robert Stillwell, Ann Walden, and Rose Williams. We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting or field trip.

## Festival at Lake Woodruff NWR

Saturday, Feb. 25th, the Friends of Lake Woodruff NWR will host their annual Festival from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm at the Refuge. There will be all kinds of fun events, including Eco Buggy rides, food, live music, guided nature walks and presentations on water birds, bird identification and other subjects by chapter board members Chuck Tague and David Hartgrove, as well as other presenters. There will be lots of ducks and other water fowl, as well as raptors, warblers and sparrows.



Ring-necked Duck

*photo by Danny Sauvageau*

Here's a link to some other photos from the refuge:

<http://www.friendsoflakewoodruff.org/photo-tour.html>

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## Experience the Magic of the Dry Tortugas

And do something good for yourself and the environmental organization of your choice. The Dry Tortugas during Spring migration is one of the best birding experiences in Florida. Florida Nature Tours is scheduling a number of trips from Key West to this birding wonderland beginning in April, 2012. FNT will donate \$100.00 to the environmental organization of your choice when you book your trip. Check their website for all of the information: <http://floridanaturetours.net>

## The Christmas Bird Count

*by David Hartgrove*

Our Daytona Beach Christmas Bird Count was again a big success. Twenty-eight people found 129 species and counted 20,165 birds. This was our first year having a sea watch. A sea watch is conducted from one spot on the beach and birds seen offshore (and on the beach) are counted all day. A spotting scope is required for this type of counting, as well as in depth knowledge of the birds one is likely to see. Fortunately, Harry Robinson, WVAS Co-President, who conducted the sea watch with help from WVAS member, Eli Schaperow, has extensive experience with pelagic birds. His efforts paid off with 2 jaeger species: 5 Pomarine and 7 Parasitic. They also had 9 Black Scoters and 1 Surf Scoter, along with many gulls and terns. The find of the day on my team were 80 American Pipits, seen on the front lawn of Riverbend Church. Michael Meisenburg and Liza Caudillo drove over from Gainesville to help out again. This time they brought along little 5 month old Lola for her first CBC. When she wasn't sleeping I'm told she was laughing at the adults as they tried to tally the birds seen. We ended the day at the Royal Dynasty Chinese Restaurant where we told bird stories and enjoyed the good company. For a look at the results you can click on this link: <http://www.halifaxriveras.org/CBC%201996-2011.pdf>

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## Audubon Adventures

We are now soliciting sponsors for the classroom sets of Audubon Adventures. If you have been a sponsor in the past you know how important this program is to Volusia County students. For some children it's their first exposure to learning about the environment, wild birds, and other animals.

The Audubon Adventures program is aimed at third, fourth and fifth grade classrooms. Each sponsored class receives four sets of a newsletter with materials for 32 students in each set. They are filled with information and learning activities. There is also a teacher's manual with support ideas, activities, and evaluations.

Send your donation to Halifax River Audubon, P.O. Box 166, Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166. Any donation is welcome; \$45 will supply a classroom. Please specify on your check that your donation is for Audubon Adventures. And thank you for thinking of our future leaders.



Snowy Owls at Boundary Bay, British Columbia  
*photo by Kimberle Stark*

## Seven Tips for Great Bird Photography

from noted wildlife photographer, *Jeff Parker*,

*reprinted with permission*

### GO WHERE THE BIRDS ARE.

If herons are skittish at your local pond, go where they're not so nervous (i.e. fishing docks). Need your spirit to soar with sharp-shinned hawks? Head to Georgia's Cumberland Island in the fall. Roaring to ride the wind like a raptor? Glide to El Paso for golden eagles, Corpus Christi for its annual Hawk Watch, or Pennsylvania's Hawk Mountain Sanctuary. Seeking the serenade of a red crossbill? North Georgia's Cohutta Wildlife Management Area provides a home to these finch-family birds. Crave the currents of swallow-tailed-kites? Make your way to Florida's Lyonia Preserve. Desire dramatic sandhill crane sunrise silhouettes? Set up your tripod near Orlando at the Lake Apopka Restoration Area. Long for the luck of bluebirds? Take the Northeast Texas Bluebird Trail in Titus County. Ready for rowdy vociferous green jays and kiskadees? South Texas provides a haven for these entertaining birds. Melodic golden cheeked warblers? A limited number of Texas Hill Country ranches offer specially-built photo blinds within this species' habitat.

### FIND KNOWLEDGEABLE HELP.

Along with tip #1, hiring a guide or taking part in a tour gets you in the right place at the right time. For example, South Texas' photo ranches offer exceptional opportunities for gathering high quality images of dramatic scenes like crested caracaras duking it out -- sometimes with Harris's hawks -- but you need a guide to gain access. In addition, someone who not only knows the local avian species, but is also an expert photographer will know when and where the animal activity and the lighting suit your lens best.

### DON'T PUT THE BIRD IN THE CENTER OF THE FRAME.

One thing most great bird photographs have in common is that they're interesting. Thus, in the spirit of adding interest, when composing the shot do your best not to place your subject dead center in the frame. Instead, use what pros call the "rule of thirds," a visual trick which breaks the space into, well, you guessed it...thirds. The eye tends to find an object off to one side or the other more pleasing than one sitting smack dab in the middle. (And, just because a bird's breathtaking, don't think you can skip this rule; nope, this one holds true even with such stunners as, say, vermillion flycatchers!)

### WATCH THAT BACKGROUND!

A messy, jumbled background that distracts from the real object of beauty spoils many otherwise fine photographs. Any background elements need to be far enough away to go out of focus. Also, remember, when you're working at a feeder, that perch can be moved!

### BE AWARE OF THE LIGHT ANGLE.

Ask pros about the single most important element in photography and most would say, "The right light!" With that in mind, generally speaking, for birds you want front light (light coming from behind you). Back light works for nice silhouettes and on wading birds with plumes (...ah, the elegance this adds to the already-elegant great egret!). Try to avoid side light as it rarely does our winged friends justice.

### SELECT A PHOTO-WORTHY PERCH.

If you're creating your images at a feeding station, you've got the flexibility of providing your own perch, so get creative! Pick something interesting and make it even more so by adding a little something interesting (i.e. berries, flowers, lichen, etc.). But be careful not to add too much or you'll distract from the beauty of the bird. And keep in mind the size of the perch versus the size of the bird. A dainty painted bunting, for example, will look out of place on a big log.

### TRY TO CAPTURE A MOMENT.

What pros call "bird on a stick" shots refer to the kinds of photos that, even though they might display birds clearly and follow other tips featured here, tend to be pretty boring overall. Let's face it - we like seeing animals in action! Capturing a behavior makes for a much more interesting image and can still show off the beauty of the bird. Even a small one like an orchard oriole chomping on a berry can give great glimpses into species' personality. (Sure, a spider would be better, but don't underestimate the power of a berry!) There's certainly more to learn about each of these topics, but put these tips to work and you'll immediately take better photos of the birds within your focal point.



American Oystercatcher  
*photo by Jeff Parker*

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# The Pelican

*We need to be the stewards of this world, not its destroyers*

Vol. 57-No.9 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon, March, 2012



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

### *Thoughts from on High*

In much of the US, people begin to think about spring in mid to late March. Birds begin gathering on their wintering grounds to head north to areas where they breed. Spring migration is a relatively focused event with few stops and lingering along the route. It's important for each species to arrive early to stake out the best territories.

There are four basic flyways in the US. Florida is part of the Atlantic Flyway, a super highway in the sky! The flyway stretches between the tip of South America and the Arctic Circle. Hundreds of species and millions of individual birds travel between one point to another during any single migration season. The numbers of birds are great enough to be seen on radar equipment. Much of the travel is at night, and the phenomenon lasts for weeks.

In the eastern US, human populations are dense along the flyway. Habitats preferred by birds are prized by humans, too. To resolve this challenge Audubon created the **Atlantic Flyway Initiative (AFI)** to target specific bird habitats within the various habitats along the flyway. The strategy includes working with public and private landowners to restore the high marsh in coastal wetlands, educating people to modify beach use patterns, and doing the bulk of the work within existing critical habitat identified as Important Bird Areas.

For more information about migration conservation, see

<http://conservation.audubon.org/>. Click on the International Alliances Program link, and then click, "Read More."

*Paula Wehr*

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## Our March Meeting

Tom Dunkerton presents "Sandpipers, Plovers & Other Shorebirds". Don't miss the fabulous photographs taken by Tom Dunkerton. See up close and personal shots of confusing peeps, waders, shorebirds and more. Members who subscribe to Birdbrains or check the FL rare bird list on the web will recognize Tom from his posts about sightings of unusual birds in Brevard County. Join us at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill on March 19. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Tom's presentation will begin at 7:00 p.m. See you there!

## Calendar & Events

Friday, March 9th. Join Chuck & Joan Tague for our first Greater Daytona Beach Big Day. This field trip will begin at the Port Orange Bridge and we will visit some of the best birding spots in the Daytona Beach area in an attempt to see at least 100 species in this blitz effort. Meet at 7:00 am under the bridge.

Friday, March 23rd. We're off to Tosohatchee Preserve, in east Orange County. Bring rubber boots if you have them. At least one spot could be wet. We'll meet at 7:00 am in the parking lot of Lowe's, on Dunlawton Ave., in Port Orange.

Sunday, March 25th. Join Liz Abrams for another of our late afternoon field trips to the Port Orange Bridge. Nesting has already begun on nearby Rookery Island. This is an excellent way to see the activities there. Meet under the bridge at 5:00 pm.

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Friday, March 23rd. Join Southeast Volusia Audubon for their trip to Merritt Island NWR. Meet at the Indian River Village Shopping Center, corner of US 1 & SR 442 near the Dunkin Donuts at 7:00 am. More info: call Gail Domroski, 386-428-0447.

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Tuesday, March 6th. Join West Volusia Audubon Society for their trip to Orlando Wetlands Park. Call Sylva Parrillo for details: 386-734-4821.

Thursday, March 22nd. Join West Volusia Audubon Society for a cruise on the St Johns River with Blue Heron River Tours. Call Sylva Parrillo for information and reservations: 386-734-4821.

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## Big News At The Local Paw Paw Chapter of FNPS

The local chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society has had a few changes recently. They have a new meeting spot in South Daytona and they have several field trips and events coming up in March. For updates and to see their new, digital newsletter.

[Click here](#)

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If you're looking for an adventure in the mountains, check out the Georgia Mountain Bird Festival, at Unicoi State Park. It's the first weekend in May, 5/3 through 5/6. More information at this website: [www.gamtnbirdfest.com](http://www.gamtnbirdfest.com)

## Science Fair Results

On Saturday, February 11, 2012, the Tomoka Regional Science Fair was held at Atlantic High School in Port Orange. As Conservation Chair, I represented the West Volusia Audubon Society, Fred Mosher represented Halifax River Audubon. He was joined by Southeast Volusia Audubon Society President, Don Picard. The following projects were chosen for cash awards by us serving as judges:

1<sup>st</sup> Place Senior, \$100, Cyrus Jamidar, Spruce Creek High School.

### "Traffic's Effect on the Atlantic Ghost Crab"

Cyrus did a census of Ghost Crab burrows in areas both with and without traffic on the beach. He was able to measure a difference with less Ghost Crab presence in the beach driving area. This project assumes that Ghost Crabs are an indicator species of the health of the beach eco-system.

2<sup>nd</sup> Place Senior, \$50, Tala Saboungi, Spruce Creek High School.

### "The Effect of Environmental Pollutants on the Heart Rate of Daphnia Magna"

Tala measured the effect of fertilizer, motor oil and insecticide on "water fleas" by counting the heart beats of these water creatures after they were exposed to the above chemicals. She found that fertilizer affected the creatures the most.

1<sup>st</sup> Place Junior \$100 Lauren Bautista, Southwestern Middle School.

### "The Effect of Oil on Aquatic Plants"

Lauren used a methodical process to measure the production of oxygen by water plants exposed to motor oil. Her study showed that motor oil does impact the vascular system of these water plants even though the leaves may be above the contaminated water. The effect was measured over a time period of just five hours.

2<sup>nd</sup> Place Junior \$50 Jade Faber, Hinson Middle School  
"Does Animal Hair or Feathers Work Best to Naturally Soak Up Oil in an Oil Spill?"

Jade studied the use of hair in the BP oil spill coastal clean up and learned that one mistake was not using booms to prevent hair from floating away once it had soaked up the oil. So she took nylons and made her own booms of down feathers and animal hair, weighing each carefully before putting them into a pan with oil. She found that the hair soaked up and retained more oil than feathers and that it held the oil differently.

We judged across all scientific disciplines, not just environmental sciences. It is interesting to see how many students had done studies using fertilizers and motor oil. I believe this shows an important awareness in our youth of the challenges facing our world. It was inspiring to see so many young folks interested in science. Who knows what path these children will take in their lives and what problems they may help solve.

As it turns out, Fred Mosher met his wife, Karen, when they both participated in his tenth grade science fair. He went over to check out the competition and was fascinated by Karen's dousing rod project. He was busy testing out the dousing rods when she came over and told him to put her project materials back! They both succeeded in moving on to the County Science fair and later, when Fred's date to the Valentine's Day dance was grounded, he invited Karen and they began their lifelong relationship. Who says science isn't romantic?

*Karyn Hoffman, Conservation Chair,  
West Volusia Audubon Society*

## Conservation Notes

Our state legislature is up to its old tricks again. Not content to have gutted the five water management districts in last year's budget slashing episode, a bill is now moving through the Senate Budget Committee that would turn control of the various districts' budgets over to the legislature. Funded through local tax districts, the appointed boards of the districts have long been able to fund environmental lands acquisition from which we all benefit. These decisions have rankled some in the development community and now that their stooges are more firmly in control than ever, it's get even time. Control the budget and you control the decisions. With the decision making process becoming more politicized, it's bound to lead to more acrimony and just plain dumb choices for our future. One of the main reasons for setting up the water management districts in the first place was to try to assure that water use decisions were as free of politics as possible and based on science. We could debate how successful that strategy has been but it's going to get a lot worse if this bill passes. The Florida Conservation Coalition is already lobbying against this bad bill. Let's hope they're successful in derailing it.

In 2008, EarthJustice, on behalf of several environmental groups, sued the state of Florida for not enforcing the Clean Water Act by refusing to set "numeric nutrient" discharge standards for sewage and fertilizer compounds released into state waters. The state legislature last year said that Florida would ignore limits set by the Environmental Protection Agency and instead passed some useless piece of legislation aimed at preventing enforcement of the stricter federal standards. Now comes word that US District Judge, Robert Hinkle, has ruled that the stricter federal standards must be enforced beginning on March 6th. This will cause a number of state and local agencies to claim that they can't possibly afford to comply with the ruling. The alternative is to continue to poison the water we all need to live. Toxic sludge is bad for us. No matter what they say.

And in another welcome development involving EarthJustice, they have been engaged by the Florida Defenders of the Environment to file suit against the US Forest Service for its continued refusal to remove Rodman Dam. This remnant of the Cross Florida Barge Canal project has turned the once beautiful and wild Oklawaha River into a stump filled sump that is popular with a handful of bass fishermen near Palatka. So far they've been able to prevent removal of the dam. Now that EarthJustice is on the case, let's hope that will change.

*David Hartgrove*

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**Can you identify this bird? Answer on page 3**

*Photo by Phil Graham*



## A Man Named George

He first came to Florida in 1885. He was 26 years old and had recently begun the practice of law in Pittsburgh. His father was a Supreme Court Justice and he'd graduated from the Yale Law School. So to say that he'd led a charmed life wouldn't be an exaggeration. He first visited the upper peninsula of Michigan when he was 12 and discovered the spot that would eventually become his favorite retreat, on the shore of what he called Whitefish Lake. It's now called Peter White Lake, after his father in law.

George Shiras III, or George Shiras 3d, as he wrote it, was a pioneer naturalist, photographer, writer, lawyer and a one term Congressman, among other things. In 1906 he bought a small cabin on the Halifax River just south of the Ormond Bridge. He traveled all over this state and many others in pursuit of his passion. The first photos ever published in National Geographic were his. It was the beginning of a long relationship with that magazine and its parent organization. Ernest Hemingway once wrote that , "He's about the most interesting man I know." Though I've yet to confirm it, he almost certainly knew and went birding with the founder of our organization, Rupert J Longstreet.

In his short time in Congress he wrote and tried to get enacted the legislation that later became the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. He knew at the time that he didn't have the votes to get it passed. But he also knew that such monumental legislation often has a number of fathers on its way to enactment and he was prescient enough to see that he was uniquely positioned to get the ball rolling. It only took another 13 years to get the Act passed. He counted Teddy Roosevelt among his friends and wrote of traveling down river with him to Pelican Island NWR. The nation's first wildlife refuge and proclaimed as such by Roosevelt.

When he was getting started in photography the use of flash powder was the only way to illuminate scenes. It smoked a lot, made a loud bang and scared small children. So no one had ever thought of using it to take photos of wildlife. He did. He used a canoe to glide silently up near his quarry. He devised a method of using two flashes, one to startle the animal, another to actually take the picture as it quickly ran away. He also rigged up cameras with trip wires and remote controlled shutters. None of this had been tried before he did it. His neighbors in Ormond Beach would hear the explosions and see the flashes at night in the woods near his home. The next day they'd ask what he'd caught in that magic box.

I like to think that I'm pretty knowledgeable about nature and nature writing. So why had I never heard of this man? Time helps erase the memories and new comers in the field have their accomplishments, the news of which replaces the old. Now someone has decided to remedy the fact that George Shiras has disappeared from our collective memory. James McCommons, an Assistant Professor of English at Northern Michigan University, is writing a book about George Shiras 3d. He contacted Paula Wehr and asked if there was anyone in our chapter who might be able to shed some light on the places where George went birding. She arranged for him to meet up with Meret Wilson, Chuck Tague, Charles DuToit and me. Meret, Chuck and I took him to a number of spots locally to go birding. Charley was able to give him a lot of historical background, especially on Tomoka State Park. When the book is published it'll be an excellent read on a man who gave much to the birding world.

*David Hartgrove*

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Send your donation to Halifax River Audubon, P.O. Box 166, Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166. Any donation is welcome; \$45 will supply a classroom. Please specify on your check that your donation is for Audubon Adventures. And thank you for thinking of our future leaders.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Experience the Magic of the Dry Tortugas

And do something good for yourself and the environmental organization of your choice. The Dry Tortugas during Spring migration is one of the best birding experiences in Florida. Florida Nature Tours is scheduling a number of trips from Key West to this birding wonderland beginning in April, 2012. FNT will donate \$100.00 to the environmental organization of your choice when you book your trip. Check their website for all of the information: <http://floridanaturetours.net>

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### We Welcome Our New Members

We welcome our new members this month: Gloria Appell, Dian Disantis, Larry Fable, Teresa Jewell, Brian Lawlor, James Moore and Sharon Westlake. We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting or field trip.

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### Bird Quiz Answer, etc.

So, did the color fool you on our quiz bird? Or did you look at those greenish yellow legs and the bi-colored bill and say to yourself, "That's an immature Little Blue Heron." If so, you're correct. Below is a species we saw on our recent field trip to the Orlando Wetlands. He's way out of his normal range. This little beauty is a Vermillion Flycatcher and it can take your breath away. Our thanks to Chuck Tague for the photo.



*A Spacial Thanks To Our Sponsors*

**Florida Power & Light, The Ormond Beach Garden Club and Colonial Colony**

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# The Pelican

*We need to be the stewards of this world, not its destroyers*

Vol. 57-No.10 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon April, 2012



## Message From The President

### *Thoughts From On High*

Spring Training! The crack of the bat. The slap of the ball hitting the catcher's mitt. Hot dogs and peanuts in paper sacks. The continuous undercurrent of the crowd noise. The intermittent organ music piped into the stadium when the home team loads the bases. That's what Spring Training means to many folks in Florida.

To some of us, spring training means cleaning the binoculars and opening the Peterson Field Guide to Warblers to pages 105-106 to study the under tail pictures because that's the most common view of a warbler. A walk around the neighborhood or a nearby park can take much, much longer than it did a few weeks ago. The songs of birds we haven't heard for 5-6 months make us slow down to try for a glimpse of the bird as we search our memories to identify the notes. We've become complacent over the winter as we watched waders, waterfowl and shorebirds – most of which are relatively large, out in the open and tend to stay put. Spring training requires us to find a 5-inch bird flitting from branch to branch in a fully-leaved tree, follow it with our eyes, find it in our binoculars and make an ID – all in the matter of seconds.

While spring warbler watching may be physically more demanding (think warbler neck,) the rewards are oh so satisfying. Happy warbler watching to you all.

*Paula Wehr*

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## April Program: Bees and the Environment

Bees aren't just for making honey. Learn about why bees are critical to successful gardens and how they play a part in our food chain when Ed Williams, The Bee Dude, talks about bees and their role in our environment at our chapter meeting on Monday, April 16, at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. The presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. And remember, the bridge on Daytona Avenue is still out. So use 10th Street. Also, the parking lot lights have now been repaired. We hope see you there.

## Calendar & Events

Wed., 4/11, Join Chuck & Joan Tague for a trip to Tiger Bay State Forest, where we'll look for Bachman's Sparrows, Brown-headed Nuthatches and others. Meet at 7:30 am at International Square, 2500 W. International Speedway Blvd., behind the Krystal and bring a lunch.

Wed., 4/18 through Friday, 4/20, Our big overnight trip to Ft DeSoto. This is one of the best birding spots in Florida during Spring migration. We have arranged a reduced rate at the Comfort Inn, 1400 34th Street North, St Petersburg, 727-323-3100. The rate is 92.50 per night for a double room plus tax. Please contact Joan Tague, 386-253-1166 or by e-mail: [babyowl@mac.com](mailto:babyowl@mac.com) if you are planning to go and for further information.

Sat., 4/28, Join Meret Wilson for a trip to Tomoka State Park. Meet her at the park near the concession stand at 8:00 am. Meret runs the bird banding station at the park and knows the place like the back of her hand. Bring a lunch.

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Sat., 4/14, the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society will be going to Canaveral National Seashore. Rendezvous with them at 8:00 am at Indian River Village, corner of US 1 and SR 442 near the Dunkin Donuts and bring a lunch. Info: call Gail Domroski, 386-428-0447.

Friday, 4/20, SEVAS will be going to Princess Place Preserve, in Flagler County. Again, meet them at the Indian River Village. This time at 7:00 am, with your lunch. Call Gail Domroski for info: 386-248-0447

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Thurs., 4/19, Join the West Volusia Audubon Society for a trip to Gamble Place. This site in Port Orange has been in the news recently as the city and the Museum of Arts & Sciences negotiate over its ownership. It's a very special place with diverse habitats and many species. It's located at 1819 Taylor Road, approx. 1 mile west of I-95. Those living on the east side of the county may wish to rendezvous with the group at Gamble Place. Call Harry Robinson, 386-943-8342, for more information.

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For information on field trips with the Paw Paw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, check out this [link](#).

## Conservation Notes

On our way home from the chapter field trip to Orlando Wetlands, on February 13th, some of us stopped by River Breeze Park, in Oak Hill. We were hoping to see some shorebirds on the sandbar that's exposed there at low tide. Standing there with several Willets and some assorted gulls was a Marbled Godwit. On each of its legs were single yellow bands, with "A5" on them. I went on the USGS website, [here](#), and entered the information. About a week later I heard from the database administrator, Jeannine Parvin. I had made a mistake in reporting the GPS location. We got that corrected and then I waited to hopefully hear from the researcher who banded the bird. Here's what I learned.

On the morning of November 20th, 2008, researchers from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources were using a cannon net on Little St Simon's Island. They captured 19 Marbled Godwits that day. The bird that would soon wear the bands "A5" was one of them. Brad Winn (no longer with GDNR) weighed and banded the bird. The bird, a male, weighed 286 grams. That was a little too low for it to be fitted with one of the new solar "geolocators." Females tend to weigh almost 20% more than males. So they're the ones most often fitted with the tiny devices.

The latest issue of Audubon Magazine has an extensive article on these amazing devices that are revolutionizing the science of migration studies. It also mentions one of the birds written about in this column in October of last year. Six of the Marbled Godwits that were captured that day were fitted with geolocators. The signals from 2 of the geolocators were lost before spring migration began the following April. The other 4 did begin migration. One was lost over Illinois on its way north. The other 3 reached nesting grounds in North and South Dakota. I learned all of this in an e-mail from Bridget Olsen, Deputy Project Leader with the US Fish & Wildlife Service. The birds were banded and the geolocators were placed as part of a study she was doing for her thesis on Marbled Godwit biology. It has now been published online and can be viewed [here](#).

Technology has brought us many things. Some of them horribly destructive and causing the extinction of many species. But it's also given us these new devices, which may help us save some species for future generations.

*David Hartgrove*



**Marbled Godwit**

*by Chuck Tague*

## The Circle B Bar Field Trip

A great trip to a Polk County gem. That's how I would describe the Circle B Bar Reserve field trip Thursday and Friday, Feb 23 & 24<sup>th</sup>. The Circle B Bar Reserve was purchased in December, 2000 by the Polk County Board of County Commissioners and Southwest Florida Water Management District for the protection of water resources and wildlife to restore the Banana Creek Marsh system. This 400 acre marsh reclamation project creates habitat for thousands of resident and migrating birds and wildlife. Nineteen HRA members and one member of Duval Audubon participated in the trip. We arrived around 10:30 on Thursday morning and birded the trail for about three hours. Highlights that morning were a nesting Sandhill Crane, nesting Bald Eagles and a Great Blue Heron eating a Round Tailed Muskrat. After lunch in the pavilion at the Visitors Center, we all decided to go to downtown Lakeland to see the birds on Lake Morton. We had great views of Ring Neck Ducks, Mute and Black Swans, White Ibis, Ruddy Ducks and White Pelicans. All of these were very close and right in the middle of town! Our next stop was a short visit to the gorgeous Hollis Garden on Lake Mirror. That evening we had dinner at Harry's, on the square in downtown Lakeland. Next morning everyone returned to the Circle B Bar to walk the Alligator Alley trail, which was aptly named for its large alligators. This beautiful trail runs between two canals, provides great views of Lake Hancock and is good for warblers and wading birds. Our total bird count for the two days was 84 species. Circle B Bar is definitely worth the 2 hour drive and Lakeland has a pleasant downtown to visit.

*Peggy Yokubonus*

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## The 2012 Florida Birding and Photo Fest

The 10th annual Florida Birding & Photo Fest in St Augustine runs from April 25th through the 29th. It promises to be their best yet.

### So What is the Birding & Photo Fest?

It's a five-day annual festival that features some of the world's greatest outdoor photographers sharing their skills and stories with amateur photographers and birders who want to listen to and learn from the very best in the business. There are classroom sessions, outdoor workshops, field trips and social events – more than 100 to choose from, ranging from \$10 to \$100 on an advance registration basis. Included are workshops on warbler and shorebird identification, beginning and advanced photography, digiscoping, use of Photoshop to clean up those images you thought were beyond repair, and much more.

Speakers include Kevin Karlson, whose book on shorebird ID is **the** one to have. Check out all of the information [here](#).

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## Welcome To Our New Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new members: Juliet E. Bain, Gayle Barrett, Carolyn Beekman, Robert Devine, John Dias, Elizabeth D. Franco, Cathryn E. Holt, Fred Loeser, Danielle Rigby, Sandra J. Rossmeyer, Gracie Sauter, and Judith Schroder. We hope to see you at a meeting or on one of our field trips soon.

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## Experience the Magic of the Dry Tortugas

And do something good for yourself and the environmental organization of your choice. The Dry Tortugas during Spring migration is one of the best birding experiences in Florida. Florida Nature Tours is scheduling a number of trips from Key West to this birding wonderland beginning in April, 2012. FNT will donate \$100.00 to the environmental organization of your choice when you book your trip. Check [here](#) for all of the information.

## *A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors*

**Florida Power & Light, The Ormond Beach Garden Club and Colonial Colony**

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**Our mailing address is PO Box 166 Daytona Beach, FL 32115-0166**

**Our website is [www.halifaxriveras.org](http://www.halifaxriveras.org) For information on upcoming field trips, etc.**

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# The Pelican

*We need to be the stewards of this world, not its destroyers*

Vol. 57-No.11 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon May, 2011



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

### *Thoughts from on High*

Audubon members are a diverse lot – some are nature and outdoor enthusiasts, others join for the beautiful photos and scientific articles in the award-winning monthly magazine. There are many members who watch, feed, identify and love birds. Halifax River Audubon chapter members are also very generous. Our chapter members have donated almost \$2,000 in response to our first-ever appeal letter which was mailed in February.

These donations guarantee that we will have funds to pay the rent to Sica Hall for the 2012-2013 season and continue to hold monthly meetings and provide a small honorarium to our speakers who present educational and entertaining programs each month. We will be able to continue to provide Audubon Adventures to elementary classrooms in our area. For some children, Audubon Adventures may be one of their first exposures to why they should care about our environment and the interdependent web of life built by different species.

We will also have the funds to continue our support of local wildlife rehabbers, Tomoka Bird Banding Station, and other community-oriented organizations which preserve, protect and improve native natural resources.

On behalf of all our Board members, THANK YOU to all who donated so generously.

*Paula Wehr*

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## The Spring Migration Count

The Spring Migration Count will be our final field trip of the season. We'll meet at the southeast corner of the parking lot of the City Island Courthouse at 7:00 am on Saturday, May 12th. This is an all day event but if you're unable to devote the whole day we'll be glad to have you along for whatever portion of the day you can be with us. This is an important part of our mission of citizen science as stewards of the natural world. It's also an excellent learning opportunity for those just getting into birding. Count coordinator, David Hartgrove, would appreciate it if you'd contact him in advance if you're planning to participate so he can begin organizing teams to cover our area. Call 386-788-2630 or e-mail: [birdman9@earthlink.net](mailto:birdman9@earthlink.net)

## Program for the May Meeting

The program for our meeting on May 21, 2012 will be

Nature of Southwest Florida – The Good, The Bad and The Invasive

In November 2011, Indigo Press announced that The Living Gulf Coast-A Nature Guide to Southwest Florida won the gold-medal (the President's Award for Florida adult non-fiction) at the annual awards ceremony of the Florida Publisher's Association. We are fortunate to have the author, Charles Sobczak, talk about his book which is a nature guide covering six counties of Southwest Florida, including Sarasota, Charlotte, Lee, Collier, Glades and Hendry. His talk is an overview of the birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians found in the region. The guide also includes information on parks, preserves and eco-destinations located within these six counties.

Join us at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill for Mr. Sobczak's presentation at 7:00 p.m. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. He will have books for sale before the presentation.

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## Calendar and Events

Thursday, May 3rd, join our friends in Flagler Audubon for their May meeting. Meetings are held in Meeting Room "A", at Flagler Hospital, on SR 100 just west of I-95, at 6:30 pm. The program this night will be an update on the effects of the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Surprise! Things aren't as rosy as the ads BP is running on TV would have us believe.

Saturday, May 5th, our friends in the Paw Paw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society will hold their annual plant sale. Free seminars throughout the day. Available in the vendor area for sale will be native plants, herbs, local honey, exhibits on wildlife and wildflower photography, rain barrels, composters, native plant books and more. This is an excellent opportunity to pick up some healthy plants for that butterfly garden you've been hoping to plant in your yard. Unlike most Audubon chapters (ours included) which take a summer hiatus, FNPS chapters maintain an active schedule year round. You can learn more [here](#).

And on Saturday, June 2nd, you can become an official Scrub Jay Watcher. Marianne Korosy, Audubon of Florida's new Scrub Jay Watch Coordinator, will teach a training session at Lyonia Preserve, in Deltona, from 8:00 am till noon. More information [here](#).

## Conservation Notes

Results from the Great Backyard Bird Count are in and the event was a huge success. More people than ever before submitted reports. 104,000 checklists from all over the US and Canada were submitted over the four day window of the count. 623 species were reported, including a huge increase in the number of Snowy Owls seen far further south than in years past. The unusually warm temperatures (global climate change is a myth, just ask Rush) lead to very early migration by Sandhill Cranes and to Belted Kingfishers remaining in areas where in years past the streams where they feed would have been frozen over. More than 2 million Snow Geese were reported at Squaw Creek NWR, near Mound City, Missouri and in Ruskin, Florida, a million Tree Swallows were estimated in one evening roost. The top ten species reported on more checklists than any others are as follows, in descending order: Northern Cardinal, Mourning Dove, Dark-eyed Junco, Downy Woodpecker, American Crow, House Finch, American Goldfinch, Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee and Tufted Titmouse. Look [here](#) for more info.

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A recent unanimous decision by the US Supreme Court will have far reaching effects. In a decision handed down on March 21, 2012, Justice Antonin Scalia found it easy to give Mike and Chantelle Sackett their day in court. Writing for a unanimous Supreme Court in the case of [Sackett v. EPA](#), Justice Scalia said that the EPA could not find that the Sacketts had illegally filled wetlands on their property, order them to remove the fill, and then threaten them with penalties without allowing them to appeal the order. The outcome in the case had been widely predicted based on the sympathetic plight of the plaintiffs. When due process allows a driver to appeal a parking ticket before paying it, providing the Sacketts the opportunity to seek judicial review of EPA's administrative enforcement order without having to wait for EPA to first sue them was not much of a stretch.

Of course, the story isn't over here. As with any decision by the Supreme Court, there are implications for other cases. Agency findings issued under CERCLA (the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, commonly known as Superfund) will probably not be affected by this ruling since it contains an explicit pre-enforcement bar to legal challenges. But rulings issued under the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act will now be subject to judicial review before they can be enforced. So big corporations whose sludge has been contaminating our waterways and befouling the air will now have another tool in their legal arsenal to continue business as usual. And the agencies charged with protecting all of us from their depredations will be forced to expend time, energy and funds they're short of already.

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The Florida Ornithological Society, Audubon of Florida and the US Geological Survey will partner together in BBA II, the second Breeding Bird Atlas for the state. I will be attending the kickoff event at the FOS's Spring Meeting in Live Oak May 18th through the 20th. The first BBA, 1986-1991, showed 196 confirmed breeding species in the state with 19 others found to be probable or possible breeders. There will be plenty of opportunity for volunteers to get involved. We'll get the information out to you as it becomes available.

*David Hartgrove*

*Below is a condensed version of a post on Chuck Tague's website. If you've never checked out his excellent observations, you owe it to yourself to do so. It's [here](#). Do yourself a favor and bookmark the site. It's some beautiful writing.*

## The Inside Scoop on Spring Migration

*by Chuck Tague*

Each spring the forest comes alive with an earthshaking explosion of energy; energy generated the previous summer and stored in roots and twig buds. The leaf-out of the trees is rapid and well coordinated. In a forest with hundreds of trees per acre, each tree pumps gallons of water from the ground to the tips of the highest twigs. This hydraulic pressure forces minerals and organic chemicals, as well as root-stored sugars, to the bursting leaves. The new green leaves immediately begin the process of photosynthesis. The switch from apparent dormancy to vitality is literally overnight.

The annual greening advances northward with the lengthening daylight. Warblers and other songbirds move north with the greening. This explosion of life not only sets the timing of songbird migration, it provides the means. Any sudden availability of food attracts hordes of opportunistic feeders. As the spring leaves emerge, hordes of leaf munchers attack. Some come singly, quietly under the cover of darkness. Others attack in well-coordinated battalions. The vast majority of the attackers are vermiform herbivores from the insect order Lepidoptera: larvae of moths and butterflies. We call them caterpillars. Caterpillars are by far the most sophisticated leaf predators. They represent a single stage in the life of a butterfly or moth, the stage between egg and pupa. The pupa, of course, transforms the insect from a sluggish, foliage-eater to a flying, reproductive adult. A caterpillar consumes huge quantities in preparation for metamorphosis and becomes a nutritious bundle of proteins and calcium. Ecologically, the caterpillar population is the fulcrum that supports the forest's delicate balance. To songbirds that cannot digest leaves, caterpillars are their conduit to the forest's vast store of food.

To a birder caterpillars are a mystery. Except for Tent Caterpillars and tiny inchworms that dangle from silk threads, spring caterpillars are a force as invisible as the wind. We see their damage on leaves. Occasionally we see a bird with a juicy green one in its beak. Caterpillars have a powerful presence. Their biomass is huge. We just can't see them. This is not a coincidence. The survival of most spring caterpillars depends on their ability to escape detection. Simultaneous with the caterpillars' attack on the emerging leaves, hordes of worm-eaters descend on the forest. The army of vermivores are not just songbirds, but spiders, ants, rodents and parasitic wasps.

During the day the caterpillars assume the colors, patterns and shapes of objects in the forest. They impersonate leaves, leaf-stems, twigs, lichens or flakes of bark. Their disguises are diabolically convincing. Hordes of sharp-eyed songbirds -- kinglets, vireos, warblers, tanagers, buntings and grosbeaks -- scrutinize every leaf, bud and twig. These waves of birds have a search image fine-tuned by months and years of experience and millennia of natural selection, but they probably miss more caterpillars than they find. Enough caterpillars evade the worm-eaters to supply abundant recruits the following spring. Leaf-cursers and other birders are confined to the ground; removed from the treetop battlefield. Most have stiff necks and eyes tearing from pollen. Caterpillars conspicuous enough for us to spot were devoured long ago. The battle's waged for millennia. The only constant is the preservation of the balance. No individual, no species is guaranteed success. However, no part is expendable; nothing except us, the observer.

## What A Difference A Day Makes

Dinah Washington won a Grammy for her performance of that song in 1959. For birders, that sentence can have a different connotation. Weather is a very big factor in the migration of birds. Wind speed and direction, precipitation and pressure systems all influence the timing of the arrival of birds along their migratory pathways.

Fort DeSoto, in Pinellas County, is a birding Mecca each April because it's a peninsula jutting out into the Gulf of Mexico. Trans Gulf migrating birds see this little strip of land, with its trees, water and insects as a vital stop on their rush to points north. We went there on our overnight trip, 4/18 through 4/20, in anticipation of seeing large numbers of warblers, tanagers, grosbeaks and others. Being in the right spot is only half the equation. Being there at the right time is the other half.

As we stood looking in vain for the Indigo Buntings and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks we were sure would be at the famous mulberry tree, we had to be content with brief glimpses of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird or two that came to the nearby feeders and the Gray Catbirds lurking in the understory. The shorebirds and waders at the North Beach were exceptional. The Long-billed Curlew that has been in the park (to my knowledge, the only one in Florida) for over a year has molted into the warm brown tones of its breeding plumage and was busily eating fiddler crabs. We saw not only a Reddish Egret but a White Phase Reddish Egret too. Both birds were in peak breeding plumage with wispy plumes and shocking pink bills. At the East Beach Turn Around we had four species of plover: Semi-palmated, Wilson's, Black-bellied and Killdeer, plus Least Sandpipers, Short-billed Dowitchers and others. They just weren't the warblers and other passerines we'd hoped for.

So on Friday morning, the 20th, most of the group left the hotel that morning and went to the Circle B Bar Preserve, south of Lakeland, on the way home. They had some good birds there but not the ones they were hoping for when we all left Daytona Beach two days earlier. Those of us who went back Fort Desoto did get good looks at a very nice male Cape May Warbler, but just one.

That afternoon and evening a major cold front swept across the Gulf and drenched the parched park. It also brought a huge wave of migrating birds. The following morning, in the same trees at the East Beach Picnic Area and along the Privet Trail, where all we could find were a few Northern Cardinals and a pair of Yellow-crowned Night Herons half heartedly working on a nest they later abandoned, over twenty species of warblers were being seen. One man posted on the Bird Brain list serve of having several Scarlet Tanagers, Summer Tanagers and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak all in one tree at the same time. He was so excited he almost forgot to take pictures. Another man posted his [list](#). It included 20 Eastern Kingbirds, 7 Ovenbirds, 80 Tennessee Warblers, 8 Black-throated Green warblers, 35 Summer Tanagers, 50 Blue Grosbeaks and 35 Baltimore Orioles! For him it was the kind of day birders dream of and seldom experience. And he saw them all in trees where just 24 hours before we had to look hard to find one of the commonest birds in North America.

Timing is everything. In the column on the right are some photos of some of the birds we could have seen if we'd been at Fort DeSoto at the right time, courtesy of our Field Trip Co-Chair, Chuck Tague. Enjoy, and dream of days to come.

David Hartgrove



Black-throated Green Warbler *Dendroica virens*



Blackburnian Warbler *Dendroica fusca*



Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia*

*A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors*

**Florida Power & Light, Garden Club of the Halifax Country,  
The Ormond Beach Garden Club and Colonial Colony**

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**Our mailing address is PO Box 166 Daytona Beach, FL 32115-0166**

**Our website is [www.halifaxriveras.org](http://www.halifaxriveras.org) For information on upcoming field trips, etc.**

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# The Pelican

*We need to be the stewards of this world, not its destroyers*

Vol. 57-No.12 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon June, 2012



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Thoughts from on high*

When I lived in Pennsylvania, it was generally understood by the natives that most of the unusual, extraordinary and/or "weird" items found in the newspaper originated in California. Then I moved to Florida and learned that Carl Hiaasen wasn't kidding when he said he didn't need to make up the oddities that he wrote about in his novels.

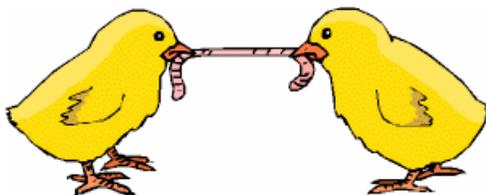
I recently stumbled across information on worm grunting, a method of vibrating the forest floor to entice huge, pink, native Florida earthworms to the surface where they are collected and sold for bait. These worms are so special that fishermen all over the south pay a premium price to use them for bait. These worms cannot be raised on farms, although it's been tried. Only a few counties in northern Florida (Wakulla, Liberty and Calhoun as well as the Apalachicola Forest) have sufficient quantities to allow them to be harvested.

Grunters are hardy outdoorsmen who brave mosquito and gnat-infested conditions. They have two tools. One is a stob, or stake between 18-24 inches long, often made of a hard wood such as oak. The stob is pounded into the low, flat area of the forest to a depth of about 12 inches. Then the second tool, a piece of flat iron, is rubbed across the top of the stake to produce vibrations which either irritate the worms so much that they surface or perhaps the worms mistake the vibrations for the digging of a mole and they go to the surface to avoid being eaten. Either way, when they surface, they are collected by the grunters and sold for bait.

So, if you are hiking in the woods and hear a regularly repeating noise that "...sounds like a bullfrog band accompanied by a chorus of asthmatic pigs,"<sup>1</sup> look around to see if there are any worm grunters working nearby.

<sup>1</sup> M. Timothy O'Keefe, *Seasonal Guide to the Natural Year: A Month to Month Guide to Natural Events. Florida with Georgia and Alabama Coasts* (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1996) 100

Paula Wehr



## Program Meeting – June 18, 2012

It's been said that air conditioning and mosquito control are two of the greatest factors leading to population growth in Florida. Join us on June 18 when Ed Northey, Environmental Specialist with Volusia County, will present "Bloodthirsty – Mosquito Life Cycle and Control." Ed will describe some of the concepts and methodologies of integrated pest management, as well as some of its perceived misconceptions. Remember, IPM is not just about a guy riding around in a truck spraying the area! Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. This will be our last meeting before our summer break so we hope to see you there.

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## Calendar & Events

Our sister chapters, in Southeast Volusia and West Volusia, have already begun their summer hiatus. Look for information about resumption of their activities in the September issue of the Pelican.

The Paw Paw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society has a very active summer schedule. Their meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month at the James Street Youth Activity Center, 1700 James St., South Daytona. Doors open at 6:30 pm and the meeting starts at 7:00. The June 6th meeting will feature Jennifer Winters, Volusia County's Sea Turtle Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Manager. She will give an overview of the HCP program with a focus on sea turtle protection efforts and other wildlife and plant projects of environmental interest.

Saturday, 6/9. The Paw Paw Chapter has a boat trip planned on the St Johns River. The Eco-boat tour meets at Highbanks Marina, 488 West Highbanks Road, DeBary at 9:30 AM and is 2 hours long. To get the group rate (\$20/ person) you must reserve in advance! (capacity 28). Contact the Leader: Sonya Guidry at [sonyaguidry@yahoo.com](mailto:sonyaguidry@yahoo.com) or 386 690-1797 for more information.

Lunch after tour at Swamp House Grill at Highbanks Resort and Marina.

Click [here](#) for more information on the chapter's events.

Also on Saturday, 6/9, Volusia County will host the Beach Eco Expo at the Ocean Center from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. This event is free and will offer lots of information about the environmental impacts on area beaches. Our chapter will have a table at this event. So plan to come out to see us. For more information, click [here](#).

## Conservation Notes

The environmental community is divided on the worth of the recently announced guidelines for wind power development. Audubon's national office sent out a press [release](#) extolling the virtues of the agreement announced by Interior Secretary, Ken Salazar, in late March. The American Bird Conservancy sent out their [own](#) press release calling the agreement a waste of time and money and useless in preventing bird deaths at wind power sites across the country. So what are we to think?

The ABC is correct when it states that the announced guidelines are voluntary. In a time when there's open hostility to all kinds of environmental initiatives, voluntary guidelines are better than no guidelines at all. There were twenty-two seats on the Wind Turbine Guidelines Advisory Committee. Audubon held two of those seats, along with scientists from the US Fish & Wildlife Service and several state wildlife agencies, lawyers for wind development companies, including Florida Power & Light, and even the Blackfeet Nation. Committees reach agreement by consensus. You don't reach consensus by attempting to dictate to the other committee members the validity or ethical purity of your group's position over all others. The committee was charged with developing guidelines that would facilitate wind power development while protecting birds and bats. If we're going to start reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and pouring more tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every day, the sooner we begin developing alternative energy sources the better.

There have been a significant number of bird deaths at existing tower sites already. One of the largest sites is in Altamont Pass, in California. A report on San Francisco's public television station, KQED, in 2007 is available [here](#). The new guidelines incorporate some of the ideas and knowledge gained from the research done there. Audubon is not issuing a blanket endorsement of all wind development. There could be times when it will be necessary to go to court to prevent the permitting of a site whose potential for bird mortality far outweighs any benefits to placing a facility in a certain spot. These decisions will be made on a case by case basis.

Finally, these guidelines are only relevant to land based wind farms. In Europe, especially along Scandinavian coast lines, wind farms are built out in the ocean. In order for this form of energy production to become a reality here there will need to be environmental impact studies completed. Last year I was asked to participate in a pilot project off the coast of North Carolina. The idea was to test the efficiency of using high resolution, digital cameras to film the surface of the ocean in order to capture images of all of the wildlife. This includes not only birds flying above the water but marine mammals and sea turtles below the surface. Then, could those images be correctly identified? The jury is still out on whether or not this technique will be utilized when an impact statement is required. The long term effects of the low frequency vibrations created by these wind turbines on mammals like dolphins and whales is another consideration. Research on these issues continues in Europe and will be incorporated into the decision making process here. We have to do something to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. The pollution spewing from coal fired power plants is far more lethal to us and to wildlife than the damage from bird strikes at wind farms. This is not a subject that lends itself to easy answers. But we've made a good start.

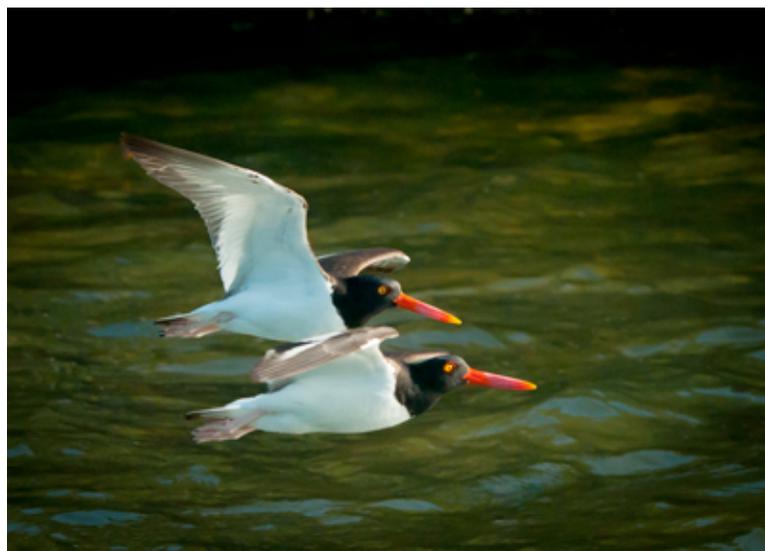
*David Hartgrove*

*Dan Gribbin, one of our members, is a photographer and blues musician. He attended a photography workshop and had quite an adventure.*

## Shore Birds on the Wing

*by Dan Gribbin*

I recently participated in a [NatureScapes.net](#) workshop led by Greg Downing. Our objective was to photograph shore birds at rookeries in the Sarasota area, while learning how to get the most out of our equipment. In my case that's a Nikon D300s with 70x300 zoom and processing the photos with Adobe's Lightroom Three. Luckily, that turned out to be the program that Greg used in our early afternoon tech sessions. The hard part for me was that, in order to speed up the autofocus for shooting birds in flight, Greg recommended the "M" setting on the camera—handling ISO, aperture, and shutter speed manually. In practice, that was like being asked to tune in a particular station on your car radio while reacting to a 747 landing in front of you. But we got used to "M" and had better exposures as a result. Action was fast and furious at the Braden River rookery, with birds coming and going every minute. "Spoonbill on our left," we'd call out; "Tricolor taking off"; "Cattle Egret"; "Great Blue"; "Snowy." I probably averaged 600 shots per sunrise or sunset session. I got almost no sleep for three days, trying to cull these batches at night, then rising at 5:00 am for the next dawn shoot. One morning, we brought our boat along the beach area of an island in the Alafia River, and I finally got to see oystercatchers. The photo below depicts the pair in flight and was a stroke of good fortune. They were a mere twenty or so feet away when my autofocus caught up with my eager intention to preserve the moment. Another morning, on a rookery island in Sarasota Bay, we found a male oystercatcher protecting its nest and chick from an attack by a Black-crowned Night Heron. The female joined the fight but was a bit preoccupied with her unhatched egg. That same morning, I got hands-on experience saving two pelicans that were entangled in monofilament. I'm now wearing on my outback hat the plug that we carefully removed from the chest of the second pelican. This was a young bird we came upon totally exhausted by the struggle to free itself. Both birds were back to normal functioning as we motored away from their area. A great day for photography and the amateur pelican patrol!



American Oystercatchers

*by Dan Gribbin*

Our Field Trip Co-Chair, Chuck Tague, has an excellent blog from which we borrow from time to time. [Link](#)

### Orange Breasted Chat, The Honeysuckle Warbler

On a pleasant June evening, a dissonant racket from a group of disturbed birds stopped my walk through a brushy field in northern Washington County, Pa. It was prime chat habitat. In June an intruder always brings out the ferocity of nesting songbirds. A male Common Yellowthroat spat and a cardinal voice scolded with loud, sharp chips. A Blue-winged Warbler landed on a honeysuckle shrub and raised his head feathers as he flitted and chipped in a wide circle around me. A towhee chewinked from the tree line. As the avian symphony of admonitions continued, one by one the voices dropped out until all that remained was a strange, oddly phrased chee-uck. "That catbird sounds flat," I thought as I waited for the catbird to finish his song. I should have known a chat was making the sound.

I scanned the area where I thought I heard the strange call notes. A blaze orange ball in the green shrub flashed at me like a deer hunter or a traffic cone. I focused and saw the Yellow-breasted Chat's unmistakable white spectacles and thick beak. The chat cautiously peered out at me from behind a leaf. He perched, crouching between two branches, using his practiced "I'm invisible and invincible" pose. With an orange breast instead of yellow, the strategy was ineffective. So, why orange instead of yellow? The source of this orange coloration has been found to be Morrow Honeysuckle. This aggressively invasive alien species has been widely planted for wildlife since the early sixties. The original studies of this color variation were prompted by variant colors seen in the tails of Cedar Waxwings. Observers noticed the yellow/orange color switch in species of birds other than waxwings, although to a lesser degree. Could the bright orange coloration be a contributing factor in the Yellow-breasted Chat's drastic decline since 1960, about the time Morrow Honeysuckle was being planted for the first time in the U.S.?

I thought about how easily I spotted the conspicuous orange-breasted chat. The game lands are full of danger. Cooper's Hawks patrol wooded edges. Screech owls peer from tree cavities, looking for songbird nests to pillage after dark. Grackles, crows, jays, black snakes, chipmunks, opossums, raccoons, skunks, fox, coyote, feral cats and other opportunistic predators stalk the thickets searching for eggs, nestlings or incubating parents. Could the change in color of songbird plumage be yet another disastrous consequence of a carelessly introduced plant?



Yellow/Orange-breasted Chat, by Chuck Tague

## The Florida Breeding Bird Atlas II

*Let The Observations Begin!*

The Florida Ornithological Society met over the third weekend in May at Camp Weed, near Live Oak. In addition to being the regular Spring meeting, this served as the official kickoff of the BBA II. The first Florida Breeding Bird Atlas was sponsored by what was then called the Florida Audubon Society in 1986. After 25 years, this database needs to be updated and volunteers are needed to help with this very large task.

The Florida Breeding Bird Atlas is a grid-based survey of the bird species breeding in Florida. The grid used for this project is based on US Geological Survey 7.5 minute topographic quadrangles (Quads) and each Quad is broken into six survey blocks of 11 square miles. There are 1038 quads covering the entire state. That means there are 6,228 blocks to be covered in the next 5 years. If that sounds like a daunting task, it is. And that's why it's important for us to volunteer. You do not need to be an "expert", whatever that is. All you need is a desire to help. You'll be rewarded with learning far more about the birds in our state and their behavior. For more information, click on this [link](#). If you're interested in volunteering, contact me. My contact information is on the last page of the Pelican.

*David Hartgrove, Conservation Chair*

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### Membership News

Our Membership Secretary, John Carr, recently sent the national office an inquiry regarding the multiple, and often annoying, membership renewal notices some members have been receiving. People whose membership isn't due for renewal until 2014 or later have been receiving urgent requests for immediate action. In response to John's request, Rebecca Sills, Chapter Services Program Associate, wrote back that there's an easy solution to this problem. At any time, members can call Customer Service at 1-800-274-4201 to request paper-free renewal or to receive the final paper renewal notice only. Problem solved.

In the last issue the names of our new members was inadvertently left out. So there's an even longer list of new members for this month: Ann Atkinson, Ernest K. Baudhin, Mary R. Carpenter, Elizabeth Duff, Edward Figgins, Susan Franchi, Steve Glover, William Hammer, Susan Kidd, Katherine Martin, Sandra Owens, Mary A. Ozdarski, Shirley Parrillo, Elza Phillips, Elsia Pollitz, Jeffrey Sebastyn, Marylou Stasenکو, Mary Thom, and William Voges. We hope to see you at our meetings and on our field trips. And if I can get your e-mail address you'll receive our newsletter.

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### Apologies For The Oversight

In last month's issue of the Pelican there were three photos of warblers that I neglected to credit to our Field Trip Co-Chair, Chuck Tague. I'll try to remember in the future.

*The editor*

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### The Last Word

"Live in such a way that you would not be ashamed to sell your parrot to the town gossip."

*Will Rogers*

*A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors*

**Florida Power & Light, Garden Club of the Halifax Country,  
The Ormond Beach Garden Club and Colonial Colony**

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**Our mailing address is PO Box 166 Daytona Beach, FL 32115-0166**

**Our website is [www.halifaxriveras.org](http://www.halifaxriveras.org) For information on upcoming field trips, etc.**

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# The Pelican

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Vol. 58-No.1 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon July, 2012



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Thoughts from on high*

[Birdbrains](#), the USF website where bird sightings are posted continues to detail where hardy birders are seeing unusual, rare or infrequent visitors to Florida. It's normal to be disappointed after driving to a distant location (or even a nearby locale) and not find your target bird. Until, that is, you realize that the search is equally important.

We went to Wekiwa Springs State Park at the end of May because a singing male Scarlet Tanager had been spotted on three separate days. A Short-tailed Hawk was also photographed flying overhead. Unfortunately, we didn't see the Scarlet Tanager, but we had the good fortune to watch a singing Summer Tanager sit out in the open on a snag and preen in the sunlight. We could see the yellow feathers under the red on his breast. The bird was so close we didn't need binoculars to make the ID. We never found the Short-tailed Hawk, but because we looked at **every** bird soaring overhead, we had a magnificent view of a Red-tailed Hawk as he turned and soared in the sunlight, highlighting his red tail. We saw more Eastern Towhees that morning than I've seen in the past year. Three Red-headed Woodpeckers flashed by and began working on the bark of a dead snag. Completely unconcerned with our presence, they went about their daily routine while giving us time to study their field marks, silhouette, flight pattern and activities.

At the end of a hot and sweaty morning, we hadn't seen either of our target birds, but the trip was a great success. My two friends and I enjoyed our conversation during the travel time, we shared a few laughs and we had the opportunity to observe our beautiful feathered friends. It doesn't get much better than that.

*Paula Wehr*

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## REMINDER, NO MONTHLY MEETING

There is no general membership meeting in July or August. We are currently scheduling speakers for September through June.

Our Field Trip Co-Chairs, Chuck and Joan Tague are currently compiling a list of potential field trips for next season. If you have any suggestions, please forward them to Joan at [babyowl@mac.com](mailto:babyowl@mac.com) or by phone at 386-253-1166.

## Meet Our Chapter Volunteers

*This is the first in a series of articles to introduce some of our chapter's volunteers. Without them we couldn't exist.*

Jari (Welcome Committee) and Tom (Equipment Manager) Arbogast have held HRA volunteer positions for the past several years. Jari sits at the Welcome Desk right inside the door to our meeting room in Sica Hall. She and Celine Sullivan (who will be featured in an upcoming newsletter) greet everyone as they enter, ensure that everyone signs in, answer questions from members and visitors alike and introduce visitors and guests to other members. Tom works behind the scenes, setting up the screen, projector and microphone for our speakers. He sets up the HRA signs directing attendees to the meeting room and handles the lights during the presentation.

Tom moved to Daytona Beach in 1952 from the St. Louis area and worked as a residential and commercial electrician. He retired five and a half years ago. Jari is a native Floridian, living her entire life in the Daytona Beach area. Before retiring shortly after Tom, she worked in retail sales. When they are not volunteering with HRA or their church, Tom enjoys fishing and Jari knits prayer shawls, decorates their home and tends three flower gardens.

About fifteen years ago, Tom read an article in the newspaper about a Bald Eagle falling from the sky and wondered about why the bird died. Coincidentally, Linda White from the Birds of Prey Center was giving a local talk at that time, so he and Jari attended the meeting to get information. Tom has been a member of Eagle Watch ever since and has monitored numerous Bald Eagle nests in the greater Daytona Beach area.

Both Jari and Tom enhance the quality of our meetings. Be sure to thank them when you see them around town or at an upcoming meeting.

*Paula Wehr*



*Tom Arbogast*



*Jari Arbogast*

## Conservation Notes

The dictionary defines “perpetuity” as, “the state or quality of lasting forever.” Apparently the governor and his merry band of mischief makers have been reading a different dictionary. The thousands of acres of conservation lands that have been purchased by the St Johns River Water Management District for the protection of our drinking water supplies and for recreation were supposed to held in conservation “in perpetuity.” They have been placed in a sort of legal limbo by official edict from the governor’s office. The District has been ordered to inventory all of its land holdings for possible listing as surplus. Those tracts listed as surplus would then be sold off to the highest bidder. If you’re thinking that this idea stinks to high heaven, you’re not alone. Our County Council feels the same way and unanimously rejected the plan when it was presented to them by Robert Christianson, Director of Operations and Land Resources for the SJRWMD recently. They sent a 4 page letter to the District outlining why this is a bad idea.

Apparently, some of the governor’s Tea Party supporters subscribe to a theory that the acquisition of lands for conservation by government entities is part of a clandestine United Nations plot to turn our country into a socialist nation. This ludicrous notion would be laughable if not for the fact that state policy is supposedly being made in response to it. Perhaps it is. It could also be that some of the governor’s heavy weight campaign contributors have designs on some lands that they’d like to see turned into yet another housing development and this silly United Nations story is cover for their dreams of quick profits at the expense of the tax payers. If this sounds like I’m the one with the paranoid fantasies, think back ten years to when the guy in Flagler tried to grab off half of North Peninsula State Park for a seaside golf course and condo development. A lot of people are keeping an eye on this. There will be a public meeting held here in the county on this plan, though it hasn’t been scheduled yet. We’ll let you know when it is so you can show up and register your thoughts on the issue.

In another negative development, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge has chosen to close Shiloh Marsh Road. The only entrance into MINWR in Volusia County, Shiloh Marsh Road is one of the best winter shore bird sites in North America. Loss of access to this excellent spot denies all of us easy access, though it is still possible to walk in. What about those with limited mobility? I spoke with Refuge Manager, Ralph Lloyd, about this issue. He apologized for the inconvenience and said that there’s little he can do at this time. As usual, the problem comes down to money. With a Congress more concerned about maintaining tax breaks for millionaires than about whether or not kids have good school lunches, it’s no wonder that this refuge, like all of the others around the country, is severely under funded. The hurricanes in 2003 and several storms since have done major damage to the dikes. It’s essential to maintain the dikes for the benefit of the wildlife that depend on the fluctuating water levels offered in the impoundments. Anyone who’s driven the road before its closure knows that it wasn’t in good shape. Those with high clearance vehicles could, with a lot of bouncing around, make it to the road’s end. That bouncing around was doing serious damage to the dikes themselves. So in order to protect the integrity of the dike, the road was closed. When and if funding becomes available, the road can be reopened. So it’s up to us to help that happen. Call or write your Congress person and ask for expanded funding for our wildlife refuges. It’s something important you can do.

David Hartgrove

## “Coastal Wings” Opening in Flagler Beach

Palm Coast photographer, Charlie Badalati, will present a one man show of beautiful bird photos at Ocean Books & Art, 200 South Oceanshore Boulevard, in Flagler Beach. Located across from the Flagler Beach Pier, Ocean Books & Art will be providing light refreshments at the opening reception on Friday, August 3rd from 5:30 to 8:30 pm. Mr. Badalati has won numerous awards for his photographic work and has taught classes at the Flagler Art League. For further information, contact Sandi Sitesat: [sandi@oceanpublishing.org](mailto:sandi@oceanpublishing.org)

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## Our Chapter Welcomes Our New Members

Barbara Crittenden, Robert J. Hanson, Gaylen Phillip Harms, Kelly Hunt, Joyce M. Parks, Sherrie Wentworth and Martha Wirkutis. We hope to see you at a meeting or on a field trip when they resume in September.

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## Wading Birds At Indigo Lakes

Former Education Chair and long time member, Glade Koch, lives in Indigo Lakes, a development north of International Speedway Boulevard, west of Williamson Boulevard. She called President, Paula Wehr, recently to announce that she’d discovered a wading bird roost on the Indigo Lakes Golf Course. Each evening large numbers of non breeding herons and egrets fly in to roost for the night. Indigo Lakes Golf Course is located at 312 Indigo Drive. Enter Indigo Lakes on Indigo Drive South, which pulls west off Williamson Boulevard just north of Bayless Boulevard. The roost is easily viewed from an area adjacent to the golf course. For the photographers among us, this might be a new spot for photo opportunities. Call Glade at 386-253-8438 for directions.

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*This young Eastern Screech Owl is mentioned in the article on the next page. Photo by Chuck Tague.*

This first appeared in *The Peregrine*, the newsletter of Pittsburgh's Three Rivers Bird Club.

## Birding In A Snow Globe

At Magee Marsh, in northwestern Ohio, we could not escape the airborne fluff from cottonwood trees nor the Warbling Vireo's song -- *If I could see ya I would seize ya and squeeze ya til ya SQUIRT!* This was especially true as we walked along the Estuary Trail that follows the dike from the parking area to Crane Creek. Lake Erie's waves splashed on the other side of the trees. Rustling cottonwood leaves sounded like flowing water. There were only a handful of small clouds in a sky too blue for northwest Ohio in May. Yellow Warblers chased across the trail. A Tennessee Warbler sang, so did a Black-throated Green Warbler and an Indigo Bunting. A catbird scolded us and an American Lady butterfly glided between us. Wispy spheroids of cottony fluff drifted slowly, barely over our heads while the vireo sang continuously.

We passed three large cottonwoods and another Warbling Vireo greeted us. *If I could see ya I would seize ya and squeeze ya til ya SQUIRT!* I was with Monica Miller, my butterflying companion. It was her first visit to the self-proclaimed "Warbler Capitol of the World" and her senses were overwhelmed. She noted it was like walking through a snow globe that someone had just shaken.

The trail was an overload of stimulation, but it was also an affirmation of spring's regenerative power: singing songbirds, fluttering butterflies, cotton-covered tree-seeds floating by -- peaceful, tranquil, an idyllic spring scene -- then the screech owl called.

It whinnied, trilled and whined repeatedly, each call more plaintive. I searched for several minutes until something moved near the top of a thick cottonwood snag. There was an owlet, a down-covered screecher, standing in a notch where the crown had snapped off. The notch had once been the entrance to a woodpecker's cavity. The owlet's gray down blended perfectly with the sun-bleached wood.

We watched the youngster call for ten minutes until its eyes grew heavy. It turned and waddled into the hollow. A Tree Swallow with a mouthful of fuzz flew into a woodpecker hole lower on the snag. More fluff, loaded with cottonwood seeds, floated by.

I first encountered cottonwood trees, and the annual fuzz storm, in the 1980's on the eastern shore of Lake Erie. Then I birded Presque Isle State Park in Erie County, PA almost weekly. On the side of the peninsula that faces Erie Bay the cottonwoods' straight, furrowed trunks towered fifty feet or more beneath wide, spreading crowns. Some of the trunks were four feet or more in diameter. Many were dead. Their branches long fallen, the barkless, bleached trunks stood like stone pillars. Great Horned Owls nested in the hollow tops. Smaller cottonwoods grew along the trail to Gull Point, the eastern tip of the Presque Isle. These ranged from lines of medium trees to saplings on the edge of cattail marshes. Their size decreased sequentially; the largest at the trailhead and the smallest closest to Gull Point's tip.

Cottonwood seeds only germinate on wet sand, in full sun without competition from other plants. They sprout after floods along midwestern rivers and in freshly deposited sand on the Great Lakes shores. On Gull Point the cottonwood's role in shaping the topography of Presque Isle, indeed the existence of the peninsula, was evident. The sand and

gravel flats where Erie Bay met Lake Erie were open and windswept with very little vegetation. It was dry except for scattered wet depressions. Some depressions were kidney-shaped but most were long, narrow and parallel to the bayshore. They varied in depth from puddles to waist-deep ponds. A bristly margin of foot-high cottonwood seedlings surrounded each depression. These germinated from seeds carried to the pools on wind-blown fluff. According to Otto Jennings in *Wildflowers of Western Pennsylvania and the Upper Ohio Basin*: ". . . the cottony seeds stick to wet sand around the recently formed beach pools and lagoons where they quickly germinate. As the trees grow they accumulate drifting sand about them, thus form dunes and sand ridges."

I'd return to the main trail and circle the thickets and ridges to the parking area at Beach 10. Progressively the dunes got higher, the cattails thicker and the cottonwoods taller, as if I were traveling through time. In fact I was. Near the end of the trail rows of well-formed trees replaced the thickets; the cattail marshes became bayberry swamps. Across the main park road were more, and progressively higher, ridges. Between each was a pond, an alder thicket or a cattail marsh. Oaks replaced cottonwoods on the older, higher sand ridges. Cottonwoods do not live long. Their life is seldom longer than a century.

Geologically, both Presque Isle and the lake shore near Magee Marsh are very young. Eastern Cottonwood, *Populus deltoides*, is the fastest growing tree in North America. It can grow four to five feet during a good year and, according to Donald Culross Peattie, in *The Natural History of Trees*, may reach fifty feet at the age of fifteen years and a diameter of two yards when it's fifty.

At Magee Marsh, the next morning Monica and I returned to the Estuary Trail. We watched a Warbling Vireo extract a mouthful of spider silk from a dead cottonwood's bark. The owlet was not visible in the snag but the Tree Swallow stood guard from the top. A Warbling Vireo carried fluff to a cottonwood branch over the trail. Its nest and its tail feathers were well-concealed among the triangular leaves.

The male vireo sang, *If I could see ya I would seize ya and squeeze ya til ya SQUIRT!* A sudden fluff blizzard squaled around as if someone had vigorously shaken the snow globe. How many cottonwood seeds spun around us? Thousands? Millions? Would one land on fresh wet sand?

Chuck Tague



Warbling Vireo, by Chuck Tague

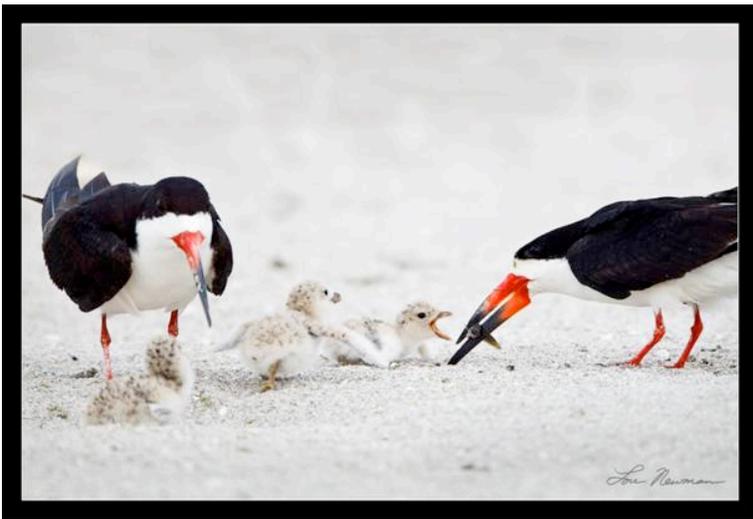
## Drought Relief Comes At A Cost

When Tropical Storm Debby was forming in the Gulf of Mexico I thought it would be a good thing for the state's long drought. While it was a short term solution to our water problems, it also caused serious flooding near Live Oak and wiped out ground nesting shorebird colonies all along the Gulf Coast. A Black Skimmer colony on Long Boat Key was one site lost. Lou Newman, a photographer who lives in Sarasota, was on the beach shortly after a storm surge from Debby washed over the beach front colony. Hundreds of eggs and chicks were washed out to sea and many others were deposited in the high tide wrack line where they were quickly devoured by Laughing Gulls, Royal Terns and others. Only four chicks were seen to make it up the beach to where the adult skimmers were standing in the lee of a building. Black Skimmers are notorious for their habit of abandoning their eggs and chicks. In spite of the evidence we had here locally a few years ago with the skimmer pair that were found on the beach, "Homer and Marge." They proved to be tenacious at defending little "Bart."

Lou, and Gail Straight, who runs Wildlife, Inc. on Anna Maria Island, were able to rescue 32 of the chicks and take them to her rehab facility. Their plan was to return them to the beach and their parents as soon as the threats from Debby passed. But things didn't work out that way. They learned that the adults will not accept chicks, apparently even their own, after such colony disturbance. So now the chicks will be held at Wildlife, Inc. until they're able to forage for themselves. Black Skimmers are listed as a "Species of Special Concern", the lowest rung on the ladder of protected species designations. Based on the information so far, perhaps half of Florida's Black Skimmer nests were wiped out by the storm. Let's hope they have a better luck next year.

*David Hartgrove*

*Below and right are some of Lou's photos of the Black Skimmer colony at Long Boat Key*



*A typical scene in the colony the day before the storm.*



*Chicks and eggs trapped in the foam and debris at the high tide wrack line.*



*This little guy made it and was later rescued.*



*A Royal Tern is part of nature's plan, capitalizing on the destruction of the colony.*

*A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors*

**Florida Power & Light, Garden Club of the Halifax Country,  
The Ormond Beach Garden Club and Colonial Colony**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Our mailing address is PO Box 166 Daytona Beach, FL 32115-0166**

**Our website is [www.halifaxriveras.org](http://www.halifaxriveras.org) For information on upcoming field trips, etc.**

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# The Pelican

*We need to be the stewards of this world, not its destroyers*

Vol. 58-No.3 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon  
September, 2012



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Thoughts from on high*

Summer isn't exactly over yet, but the new year is ready to begin again. Posts on [BirdBrains](#) (USF bird sighting website) document that early migrants are already showing up on Florida beaches and in fields and woods. Having just completed our Annual Report (July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012) for Audubon Florida, I'd like to share some of the highlights of the past year.

Excluding the three bird counts, our Chapter led 22 official field trips and 6 weekly walks. Total attendance at these programs was 372, representing 109 different individuals. We hope you were one of them. If not, log onto our [website](#) and click on the Field Trip link to see the 2012-2013 schedule. We will visit some new locations as well as the old favorites, target some different birds and venture out at different times of the day.

Twenty-one people attended the Beginner Bird-Watching Class last October-November and saw a total of 74 different species on three class outings. One photographer from the class contributes his pictures for use on our website.

Our chapter signed on in support of the position taken by National Audubon for a variety of environmental issues, perhaps the most important of which was the RESTORE Act. Halifax River Audubon also weighed in on the first-ever attempt to limit CO2 emissions, guidelines for wind installations to protect birds, National Marine Fishery regulations regarding surface long-line fishing and wood stork delisting, among other topics. On a local basis, we are monitoring decisions about the future use of North Shore Restoration Area at Lake Apopka and are working to prevent approval of a proposed private jetport adjacent to the property. We've written to SJWMD and attended public workshops in opposition to selling land previously purchased as conservation property after it has been reevaluated as surplus.

It's been a busy year. We look forward continuing the work we've begun and to identifying and implementing new endeavors.

*Paula Wehr*

## Calendar and Events

**Monday, 9/17** After our two month hiatus, it's time to resume our monthly general membership meetings. Our program for the evening will be "The Story of Thornby." In 2001, "Save Thornby" became the rallying cry that awoke and united the once-famous central Florida community of Enterprise. Join us to hear Sandy Walters tell us how she and a group of ordinary citizens came together to save the historic Thornby House and surrounding property. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; speaker begins at 7:00 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill.

### Field Trips Resume

**Saturday, 9/15** We have three field trips this month. The first of these is the Fall Migration Count. We'll meet in the parking lot at the southeast end of City Island, in downtown Daytona Beach, at 7:00 am. This is an all day affair but if you have other plans for part of the day, we can get you back to your car. Bring a lunch and your sense of adventure. Bird counts are an excellent way for those new to birding to hone their skills with people who may have more experience in the field. You're also making a significant contribution to citizen science. Call David Hartgrove at 386-788-2630 or email: [birdman9@earthlink.net](mailto:birdman9@earthlink.net) him to sign up. This makes assigning teams much easier. Thanks!

**Friday, 9/21** Identifying shorebirds can be a challenge to the most experienced of us. Join our Field Trip Co-Chairs, Chuck & Joan Tague, for a Shorebird Chase. We'll meet at the Target on Dunlawton Blvd., east of I-95, in Port Orange, at 7:00 am. Please note, this is a slight change from our old meeting spot in Port Orange at the nearby Lowe's. Bring a lunch. Any questions? Call Joan at 386-253-1166 or you can email her: [babyowl@mac.com](mailto:babyowl@mac.com)

**Sat., 9/29** We're off to the Guana-Tolomato-Matanzas Wildlife Management Area, in St Augustine. We'll meet at 7:00 am at the Publix at Granada & Williamson Blvds., in Ormond Beach. Bring a lunch. Any questions? Call Joan at 386-253-1166 or you can [babyowl@mac.com](mailto:babyowl@mac.com) her.

For a complete list of this year's field trips, click on this [link](#).

\* \* \* \* \*

**The Paw Paw Chapter** of the Florida Native Plant Society will hold their monthly meeting on Wednesday, 9/5, at the James Street Youth Activity Center, 1700 James Street, South Daytona. Doors open at 6:30 pm and the program begins at 7:00.

**Sept. 28 thru 30, The Inaugural Wings and Wildflower Festival** will be held at Hickory Point Park, in Tavares, in Lake County. The keynote speaker will be James Currie, host of the popular TV show on birding, "Birding Adventures", on the NBC Sports Channel. There will be field trips for wildflower and bird watching, photography workshops, etc. Check out the website [here](#) for all of the details.

## More Events & Announcements

With summer over, the schedule of events is picking up again. Here are more opportunities involving education, travel, birding adventures, etc.

### Pelagic Birding Trip Offered

Once again the Friends of the Marine Science Center, in Ponce Inlet, have a pelagic birding trip scheduled. Last year's September trip saw the highest number of Black-capped Petrels (recently proposed for the endangered species list) ever seen in Florida waters. Other birds we expect will be Great and Cory's Shearwaters, Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers, Wilson's and Leach's Storm Petrels and many others. We'll be aboard the very comfortable "Pastime Princess" and set sail from the dock in New Smyrna Beach at 4:00 am on Sunday, Sept. 16th, returning at 7:00 pm that evening. Cost is 180.00. Contact MSC Director, Michael Brothers, for all of the details: 386-304-5545 or email: [mbrothers@CO.VOLUSIA.FL.US](mailto:mbrothers@CO.VOLUSIA.FL.US)

\* \* \* \* \*

### Following Migratory Birds to Cuba

The Friendship Association of St Augustine has been organizing trips to Cuba for over a decade. Established in 2000, they forged an alliance to become a sister city to Baracoa, Cuba. Like St Augustine is here, Baracoa is the oldest city in Cuba, founded by Columbus in 1492. This is short notice but we've just received it. Beginning Wed., October 24, they will set out on a 10 day birding trip to Cuba. The cost is just \$3000 and includes roundtrip airfare Miami-Havana/Havana-Miami, all transportation within Cuba, full medical insurance in Cuba, all hotels (3 and 4 star), full breakfast, most dinners and lunches, all entrances fees, overweight baggage and major tips. Two English speaking guides, one professional Cuban bird guide will be along too. Check out their [website](#) for more information or call Soledad Pagliuca at 904-806-1400.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Hidden Coast Paddling Festival

Sponsored by the Friends of Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges and Pure Water Wilderness, a partnership with Gilchrist, Dixie and Levy Counties, the Festival will run from October 5th through the 7th and highlights a number of selected kayak/canoe routes. Check out their [website](#) which includes a free PDF of a booklet detailing canoe and kayak routes along Florida's Gulf Coast.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

There will be a ribbon cutting ceremony for the grand opening of the trail extension at Tomoka State Park. On Saturday, Sept. 8th, at 10:00 am, at the park entrance, 2099 N. Beach Street, Ormond Beach. Everyone is cordially invited to this event. The new trail extension will be paved and handicapped accessible and extends through the woods of the park from Inglesa Avenue to the park entrance.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Dowitcher Identification Help

Identification of Long and Short-billed Dowitchers in the field can be a bit of a head ache at times. Here's a [link](#) to a very helpful tutorial.

## MEET OUR CHAPTER VOLUNTEERS

One of the first people to greet members as they arrive at our monthly meetings is Celine Sullivan, Co-Chair of the Welcome Committee. After spending 36 years working at Northeast Telephone in Boston, Celine was ready to leave her home in Randolph, Massachusetts, for a better climate. She arrived in Daytona Beach in April 2004, several months ahead of the three hurricanes. Even though it was difficult to leave her beloved Boston Red Sox, she settled in immediately and began a five-year stint selling raffle tickets in the stands at the Daytona Cubs games. After teaching snow skiing at Wildcat Mountain in New Hampshire, she needed a different activity here in Florida and found a compatible group of tennis players at City Island courts. She can be found there three mornings a week.

Celine is a long-time supporter of Grey2K USA, a non-profit organization dedicated to passing legislation banning greyhound racing in all 50 states. She also volunteers to transport injured birds. Surprising to me, Celine said she had never been a bird watcher or Audubon member prior to moving here. She saw a notice in the newspaper for one of our free field trips. Since she was interested in seeing "natural" Florida, but reluctant to go tramping in remote areas alone, she joined our group and became hooked on birds after seeing them up close and personal in a scope. Be sure to say "thanks" to Celine for her service to our Chapter.



\* \* \* \* \*

### School Starts Again, And So Does ...

Audubon Adventures, the wonderful program that helps engage kids in the natural world around them. Donations from members fund this program. Send your donation to Halifax River Audubon, P.O. Box 166, Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166. Any donation is welcome; \$45 will supply a classroom. Please specify on your check that your donation is for Audubon Adventures. And thank you!

## Conservation Notes

No doubt you all saw Dinah Pulver's articles in the News-Journal detailing the brouhaha at the Doris Leeper Spruce Creek Preserve. Just in case you didn't, let me recap the issue.

Land acquisition for the Doris Leeper Spruce Creek Preserve was begun in 1982. The Nature Conservancy, The Trust For Public Land, Audubon of Florida and the St Johns River Water Management District were all instrumental in the efforts to piece together what is now a roughly 2,400 acre natural area that stretches from west of I-95 to the Halifax River, south of Rose Bay. The land is state owned for the most part but is managed by Volusia County. Martins Dairy Road pulls north off Turnbull Bay Road just east of Pioneer Trail. It dead ends in the parking lot for a portion of the Preserve that's become very popular with mountain bikers and those riding horses on the property.

In 1991 Archbold Biological Station sent a team to Volusia County to survey our Florida Scrub Jay population. The area where the mountain bikers ride was identified as prime Scrub Jay habitat that had been allowed to degrade, primarily because of fire suppression. The Acquisition and Restoration Council, a group within the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, has been urging the County to restore the scrub habitat since 2005, through a combined technique of "roller chopping" and controlled burning. The County posted notices on the property and began by roller chopping a small section. It was at this point that all hell broke loose and the mountain bike folks went to the County Council to complain that the plan would ruin what they thought was one of the best mountain bike trails in the state.

The County Council felt that they were already committed to a policy of scrub habitat restoration and there was little they could do. So the mountain bikers went before the City Council of Port Orange to raise the issue since that part of the Preserve lies within the city limits. All this was taking place during the election season. So all of the politicians were anxious to show that they were responding to their constituents. It should also be pointed out that the original restoration plan was perhaps a bit too aggressive in its scope since it calls for mowing down some beautiful trees and wiping out a canopied pathway popular with anyone using the property. In July, I walked the property for the first time in years. I could see right away that a compromise was easily available. By leaving the canopy shaded trails, a buffer could be created that allowed restoration of the true scrub habitat. This would leave untouched, the trails that were so valued by all of the users of the property.

Chapter President, Paula Wehr, and I attended a special meeting at the County Council to deal with the issue. The County staff had already come to the same conclusion we had and proposed it in their initial statement at the opening of the meeting. In the fractious political times in which we live, a compromise apparently wasn't what the other side on this issue wanted. They don't want any change at all on the property. All three Audubon chapters here in Volusia County have joined with Clay Henderson, former County Council member and state representative, in asking DEP and the County to move ahead with the compromise restoration plan. A delegation from Port Orange met with DEP officials in Tallahassee on August 29th. From that meeting came a decision to have a facilitated conference to determine a course of action that addresses the concerns of all stake holders. The date for that meeting has not yet been set.

*David Hartgrove*

## Beginner Birdwatching Class 2012

October is a good time to begin your birding adventures. The weather is getting cooler (slightly), the mosquitos acting less nasty and northern migrants are moving through to their wintering grounds, many staying right here in Florida.

If you always wanted to know more about birds, but never had the time. Now is the time to unlock your latent birding energies. A Beginner Bird Watcher's Identification program is just the answer. Led by two experienced birders from the Halifax River Audubon, the program will consist of three two hour class periods at the Port Orange Library and three field trips. The field trips are visits to three uniquely different habitats, where a wide variety of different bird species will be observed. In past years we have observed over eighty-five species. A nice start for your "life list."

The field trips will give you the opportunity to practice the information learned and discussed at the meetings. At the meeting you will be presented with helpful visual aids and photographs, a systemic method for positive identification of birds, a list of local birding hot spots, techniques in back yard birding, the importance of birding etiquette and the wisdom of the instructors, who have over 40 years of birding experience.

Aside of the seemingly technical aspects of bird ID, you will be outside in the special wonders of Florida's lush landscape and in the company of enthusiastic people enjoying birding with the same skill-set as you. This is a wonderful way to meet people, visit special Florida places, see interesting things, enjoy the out-of-doors, learn how to identify birds and most of all have fun.

The class covers a three week period with the first class beginning on Friday, October 26, 2012 at 9:30AM at the Port Orange Library. The three classes are held on consecutive Fridays and the three field trips on consecutive Tuesdays starting on October 30, 2012. For more information, dates and applications: go to our [website](#) or call President, Paula Wehr, at 386-673-5332.

*Ray Scory*

\* \* \* \* \*



**Florida Scrub Jay**

*by Chuck Tague*

The Florida Scrub Jay is the state's only endemic species. The plan to restore habitat at Doris Leeper Spruce Creek Preserve is being done to help this bird.

*A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors*

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# The Pelican

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Vol. 58-No.4 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon October, 2012



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Thoughts from on high*

In the October 2011 newsletter we spoke about Halifax River Audubon completing a chapter project to assist a local environmental organization as our way of participating in the 2012 National Make a Difference Day, the largest national day of service in the country.

USA Weekend magazine helped launch this volunteer project years ago and now boasts participation from thousands of groups and individuals all over the country. See a link to the website [here](#).

This year Halifax River Audubon will partner with Tomoka State Park on Saturday, October 27. **Please contact me at 386-673-5332 if you can help with one of the following projects:**

\* Litter pick up in the parking area at Fairchild Oak on Old Dixie Highway, opposite the south entrance to Halifax Plantation. TSP will provide waste bags and gloves. Litter consists mainly of cigarette butts, candy wrappers and pull tabs from juice boxes.

\* Light trail trimming on the Tomokie Trail (from the former museum building out to the statue.) Volunteers are not required to leave the trail – just trim the vegetation that is growing into the pathway.

\* Light trail trimming (same description as above) on the Whalen Trail which begins at the Fairchild Oak parking area.

Volunteers can work for whatever amount of time they have available. Any and all assistance will be greatly appreciated by the park staff. We hope 2012 will be the beginning of a long partnership between TSP and HRA.

*Paula Wehr*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Bylaws Changes To Be Voted On

At our next chapter meeting, on October 15th, we will be asked to vote on a set of changes to the bylaws that were adopted by the board at its September meeting. These are primarily house keeping changes involving updates to language and reflect actions taken by the board over the last few years. For instance, we're removing language regarding an Alternate Treasurer since we've never had one anyway. The proposed changes can be viewed on the website [here](#).

## Calendar & Events

**HRA Monthly Meeting, Oct. 15th, 2012** With so many conservation issues facing our community, the State of Florida and the nation, it is very timely that our October speaker will be Charles Lee, Director of Advocacy for Audubon Florida. Charles will discuss advocacy processes and bring us up to date on some of Audubon's current projects. And as an added bonus, two local fourth grade teachers who participated in the Audubon Adventures program last year will tell us how they used the kits to enhance their classroom lessons. Don't miss this opportunity to learn more about how your donations to Audubon are utilized. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Speakers begin at 7:00 p.m. Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. See you there!

\* \* \* \* \*

## Chapter Field Trips

**Wed., 10/10/12** Join Peggy Yokubonus for a trip to beautiful Washington Oaks State Gardens and Matanzas Inlet. This is an easy hike of a mile or two, hopefully with lots of warblers and then a short drive to Matanzas Inlet to see shorebirds and waders. Meet at 7:30 am at the Publix at Granada & Williamson. And bring your lunch. Questions? Call 386-673-7619.

**Sun., 10/14/12** Ray Scory and John Carr will be participating in the Big Sit at the west side of the Port Orange Bridge. This is an all day event sponsored by Bird Watcher's Digest and Swarovski Optics. A team sits in one spot and counts all of the species they can. Stop by any time after 7:30 am to cheer our team on and be part of the fun. Look for them at the gazebo under the bridge.

**Wed., 10/24/12** Join Bob North on a walk around Lake Woodruff NWR. This will be an easy hike of 2 miles or so and we should see early arriving ducks and water birds, along with warblers and sparrows. Bring a lunch and meet at 7:00 am, International Square Plaza behind the Krystal, on US 92 just east of I-95. Questions? Call 352-302-3510

Complete information on our field trips is online [here](#).

\* \* \* \* \*

**Oct. 3rd Paw Paw Chapter FNPS Meeting** Our own Chuck Tague will present a program on butterflies, the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde of insects. The adults are gentle, colorful creatures that bask in the sunlight and gracefully float on gentle breezes. Not only do they add joy, beauty and whimsy to fields and gardens, they are crucial pollinators to many plants. However their voracious larvae, the caterpillars, pillage leaves and blossoms. If you've ever been on a walk in the woods with Chuck, you know this will be an excellent evening. The meetings are held at the James St. Youth Activity Center, 1700 James St. South Daytona. Doors open at 6:30 pm and the meeting starts at 7:00. Here's a link to a [map](#).

## Conservation Notes

Many of you may have already heard about the new plans for increasing funding for conservation lands here in Florida. The current legislature and administration seem hell bent on wiping out decades accomplishments in the area of conservation by slashing funding for land and water acquisition and infrastructure improvements. It's up to us, the citizens, to take control of the situation. That desire was the impetus for the creation of "Florida's Water & Land Legacy." Endorsed by all of the state's environmental groups, this will be an effort to put an amendment on the ballot in 2014 that will secure funding for conservation projects that will not be subject to the whims of the legislature. And all this will be done without a penny in new taxes. Our chapter has endorsed the initiative and we sincerely hope you'll sign the petition when the time comes. Florida's landmark land preservation programs, Preservation 2000 and Florida Forever, helped save millions of acres of from Pensacola to Key West. Now, through the use of existing documentary stamp taxes, we can guarantee funding for new lands acquisition to better protect our estuaries and recreational lands and provide for better experience for all users of these environmental treasures. Click the link [here](#) for more information on how you can be involved.

As all of you long time members know, when the Farmton plan was being debated there was a lot of disagreement between Audubon chapters as to its implications and especially its advisability. Well in spite of our reservations, it's a fact of life now. Eventually, a new city with as many as 23,000 new homes will be built in what is now pine plantation and a wildlife management area. As part of the agreement to put this plan in place, large conservation easements were to be placed in legal texts that made Florida Audubon a partner in the management of these lands. The Miami Corporation (Volusia County's largest land owner and Farmton's developer) owns and operates the largest mitigation bank in the country on its property. Now, in order to allow realignment of a proposed 4 lane road, they've applied to change the boundaries of the conservation easements to accommodate the new design. Sierra and others in the local environmental community see this as a complete abrogation of the agreements and have asked us to sign onto a petition to the Army Corps of Engineers. The petition seeks denial of the change in land use. However, it's not that simple. Adjustments to boundaries within mitigation banks are done routinely when the development credits remain unsold. Charles Lee, Audubon Florida's Director of Advocacy, points out that, in part because of this adjustment, 13,000 acres down there will be be, "locked down permanently with an immediate group of easements that will be recorded over the next year." So we're declining to sign onto the petition. It's no secret that we were dead set against the Miami Corporation's plans for its property. The deal's been struck whether we like it or not. At least this way we have an ongoing stake in the conservation lands that remain on the site.

And finally, just when we thought that perhaps the current crop of clowns in Tallahassee had exhausted their penchant for the environmental lunacy, we receive word that the Lt. Governor, Jennifer Carroll, has sent a letter to Transportation Secretary, Ray Lahood and NASA Administrator, Charles Bolden. The letter seeks their cooperation in closing the northern portion of Merritt Island NWR, including SR 3, and converting the property into a space port. We went through this in 2008 and we thought it was dead then. Stay tuned. It appears that bad ideas have a life of their own.

*David Hartgrove*

## And Still More Events

**Oct. 4-7, 2012 Central Florida Nature Fest** Central Florida NatureFest 2012 offers something for everyone; including birding, hiking, kayaking, butterfly and wildflower viewing, nature photography, star gazing, swamp buggy rides, air boat tours and exclusive behind-the-scenes access to some of Polk County's most pristine parks and natural lands. Complete information is available on their [website](#) .

**Oct. 26-28, 2012 Treasure Coast Birding Festival** The Pelican Island Preservation Society and the Cultural Council of Indian River County present their first birding festival. Complete information is available on the [website](#) .

\* \* \* \* \*

## Audubon Adventures For Our Local Schools

Audubon Adventures is a wonderful program that helps engage kids in the natural world around them. Ranked as one of the most popular environmental education curricula in the country, Audubon Adventures is perfect for anyone looking for supplemental science activities for upper elementary students. Created by the National Audubon Society, each kit contains four different editions of the award-winning Audubon Adventures Student Nature News Magazine (32 copies of each). This year's edition in called "Sharing Our Earth." The topics are: Sharing Our Shores, which features St Augustine's, John Brian Brice, on patrol protecting Florida's beach nesting birds; Caring For Our Planet, Be A Friend To Birds; World of the Forest and Grasslands A Prairie Tale. See the link [here](#) for more information. Donations from members fund this program. Send your donation to Halifax River Audubon, P.O. Box 166, Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166. Any donation is welcome; \$45 will supply a classroom. Please specify on your check that your donation is for Audubon Adventures. And thank you!

\* \* \* \* \*

## Welcome To Our New Members

After an unintentional hiatus, (a polite way of saying the editor dropped the ball) we resume our column welcoming our new and renewing members: Cheryl Allen, Mary Amato, Robert Arnold, Andre Banchi, Jacqueline Coffee, Julie Day, Barbara Deets, Charles Dodd, Jimmy Doty, Bernice Faust, Susanne Flynn, Valerie Ford, June Frasure, Jae Gates, Brenda Gresham, Sande Habali, Cynthia Hansen, Ben Harrington, David Harris, Richard Hills, Herbert Lazarus, Carolyn Lowell, Elaine Malkani, Belinda Manginelli, Arlene North, Susie O'Neill, Eileen Pazos, Lois Pent, Barbara Peterson, Steve Petruniak, Susan Pfannkuche, John & Phyllis Quesal, Edmond Rancourt, Annette Richards, Margaret Rowley, David Simes, Marjorie Sirk, Charlotte Stanton, Dyanne Strange, Marlene Wagner, William Warren, Andrea White, Janet Wieboldt James Yates, Virginia Young. We welcome to you all! We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting or on a field trip.

\* \* \* \* \*

## The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival

It's time to be thinking about attending the biggest and best birding festival of them all, the Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival. It will run from January 23-28, 2013. Online registration should open in mid October and field trips fill up fast. Every major optics manufacturer in the country will be in attendance in addition to tour operators, photographers, etc. So this is an excellent place to try out new binoculars before making a purchase. Here's a [link](#) to the Festival's website.

## Pelagic Trip Report

In last month's Pelican you were invited to head out to sea to look for pelagic species. Those birds whose habits keep them far out to sea except when nesting. And that's often done on remote islands far from the usual travel lanes. If you were along for the trip, you know how good it was. If not, here's a little summary, complete with some excellent photos by Michael Brothers. Though the seas were a bit rougher than our last outing, we saw some amazing sites. We were about 40 miles offshore in the Gulf Stream when we had a group of 4 Great Blue Herons fly over the boat on their way south. We also saw an Eastern Kingbird, a Hooded Warbler, a Prairie Warbler and 2 American Redstarts migrating south far out to sea. We also saw Cory's, Great and Audubon's Shearwaters, Black-capped Petrels, Pomeraine Jaegers, Magnificent Frigatebirds and Black, Sooty and Bridled Terns. For me though the real treat was the large group of Leatherback Sea Turtles we saw. This is the largest of the sea turtle species, with some reaching over 6 feet in length and weighing in at 1300 to 2000 pounds. They were dining on their number one prey item, jellyfish. On our way in we were joined for a time by a pod of Atlantic Spotted Dolphins. They zipped back and forth under the boat and rode in our bow wake. After looking over the photos, Michael was able to identify several Scopoli's Shearwaters. This subspecies of the Cory's Shearwater breeds in the Mediterranean Sea and isn't known to frequent the waters of the western Atlantic. There's another pelagic trip scheduled for Friday, Nov. 2nd. The cost is 130.00. Contact Michael Brothers at the Marine Science Center, 386-304-5543 or by e-mail: [mbrothers@CO.VOLUSIA.FL.US](mailto:mbrothers@CO.VOLUSIA.FL.US) for reservations.

Some photos from the trip in this and the next column.



Picture 1 is a juvenile Sooty Tern being fed by an adult.

Picture 2 is a Black-capped Petrel

Picture 3 shows one of the Cory's/Scopoli's Shearwaters with its diagnostic extensive white under wing lining and narrow bill.

Picture 4 shows one of the Leatherback Sea Turtles with jellyfish tentacles streaming from its mouth.

*David Hartgrove, photos by Michael Brothers*

\* \* \* \* \*

### Travel Opportunities For Birders

How about a trip to see some African birds? Ken Gunn and Tad Fyock, from Southeast Volusia Audubon Society are putting together a trip to Kenya. The trip dates are March 13 to April 1st. Cost is 6500.00 plus airfare. Contact Tad at 386-426-8793 or Ken at 386-423-2334. Just imagine your life list after this trip!

Florida Nature Tours has scheduled 3 trips to the Dry Tortugas beginning on April 11, 2013. These will depart from Fort Meyers Beach aboard the very comfortable "Ultimate Getaway." Cost is 1100.00 and birding doesn't get any better than the Dry Tortugas in April. Check the website [here](#) for all the details.

*A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors*

**Florida Power & Light, Garden Club of the Halifax Country,  
The Ormond Beach Garden Club and Colonial Colony**

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**Our mailing address is PO Box 166 Daytona Beach, FL 32115-0166**

**Our website is [www.halifaxriveras.org](http://www.halifaxriveras.org) For information on upcoming field trips, etc.**

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# The Pelican

*We need to be the stewards of this world, not its destroyers*

Vol. 58-No.5 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon  
November, 2011



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

### *Thoughts from on High*

With no children in the school system and my teacher-husband being retired for nine years, it was easy for me to feel less and less hopeful about our public education system. Newspaper headlines, TV reports, idle conversations at the grocery store – together they made me believe that education was in a decline. That's why I was so glad that teachers from Ormond Beach Elementary School who use Audubon Adventures kits agreed to speak with our members at our October 15 meeting. If these teachers and the students they described are typical of classrooms throughout our state and nation, then public education is alive and well.

The enthusiastic and articulate teachers told us how they use Audubon Adventures in their 4th grade classrooms and brought samples of student posters, reports and projects. Audubon Adventures kits are coordinated with the core competencies for the grade. Students read the articles together in groups (reading skills), they write reports (grammar & comprehension skills) and present their reports to other students in the classroom (oral presentation skills.) Teachers use words from the stories to tie into vocabulary lessons. After students read the articles, they complete suggested projects, and finally cut photos from the used issues to create posters & reports. The AA materials are used over and over until they are literally used up. What more fitting end could there be than to have Audubon sponsored material completely recycled!

Last year the fourth grade students planted a butterfly garden and became mentors to first grade students during weekly walks through the butterfly garden to watch the plants grow, look for caterpillars, explain metamorphosis, find chrysalises and follow the butterflies. Students used math skills to measure and cut wood to make birdhouses. Painting and decorating the houses was part of the art curriculum and lastly installing a birdhouse on school grounds allowed bird identification.

It was wonderful to know how far a \$45 donation goes to provide environmental education to our children. Hopefully, they will discuss what they learned with their families and we'll have a sustainable crop of new Audubon members into the future.

*Paula Wehr*

## Calendar and Events

**HRA Monthly Meeting, Monday, 11/19**, The differences between birds and all other animals have evolved for one activity, flight. In fact, birds are the ultimate flying machines. Every aspect of a bird—its physical structure, its behavior, its lifestyle—are influenced by flight. HRA member and Naturalist, Chuck Tague, explores the adaptations that enable birds to escape the restrictions of earth-bound creatures and the benefits this ability bestows on them. We meet at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. The presentation begins at 7:00 followed by a brief business meeting.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Chapter Field Trips

**Friday, 11/09**, Join us for the first of two field trips to Merritt Island NWR. We'll meet in the Target parking lot east of I-95 on Dunlawton Ave. at 7:00 am. Bring lunch. This trip involves very little walking but lots of great birds! Questions: Call David Hartgrove, 386-788-2630

**Saturday, 11/10**, Join us for the 2nd of two field trips to Merritt Island NWR. We'll meet in the Target parking lot east of I-95 on Dunlawton Ave. at 7:00 am. Bring lunch. This trip involves very little walking but lots of great birds! Questions: Call Peggy Yokubonus, 386-673-7619

**Friday, 11/16**, The daily liftoff of the birds on Rookery Island is a sight to behold. And that's just what you're invited to do with Ken & Patsy Hunter. Meet beneath the west side of the Port Orange Bridge at 6:30 am. Perhaps we'll head off for breakfast later?

**Wed. & Thurs., 11/28 & 29**, Our first of the season overnight trip. For more information, see the article on page 2.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Another Opportunity

**Saturday, 11/13** Join West Volusia Audubon Society for a trip to Lake Apopka. Harry Robinson, who literally wrote the book on Lake Apopka birds, will be leading the trip. Meet them at the DeLand Post Office, 336 East New York Ave. (SR 44) at 8:00 am and bring a lunch. Questions, call Harry, 386-943-8342.

\* \* \* \* \*

## The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival

The festival is the largest in the country and has excellent field trips, exhibits and vendors. Click [here](#) for the link to their website. Online registration will open soon and field trips will fill up fast. Once again, headquarters for the festival will be Brevard Community College in Titusville, just 45 minutes away. Greg Miller, whose exploits were the basis for the movie, "The Big Year" will be one of the keynote speakers. See you there!

## Conservation Notes

Having just returned from a pleasant vacation in Hawaii, I was hoping this could be a relatively benign column. The forces of darkness have other ideas though. There are two serious threats to two of our most treasured birding spots: Merritt Island NWR and the Lake Apopka Restoration Area.

No doubt many of you saw the recent article by Dinah Voyles-Pulver in the News-Journal about the plans a shady group calling itself "Space Florida" has for a portion of the refuge. In 2008, NASA set conservation and fishing groups aflame with news that they needed to grab off part of the refuge for a new launch facility. That turned out to be a bit of a red herring and after some intergovernmental conferences, it died down. Now this Space Florida comes along trying to get the Department of Transportation to give them 150 acres of what they've convinced our Lieutenant Governor, Jennifer Carroll, is "surplus property." She was inveigled upon to write letters to Transportation Secretary, Ray LaHood and NASA Administrator, Charles Bolden on the group's behalf asking that the land be given to the state. A couple of problems jump out here to me. First, the refuge is managed by the Interior Department, not Transportation. Second, it's obvious to anyone who's ever seen Kennedy Space Center that 150 acres is in no way sufficient for a viable launch complex. So this is disingenuous at best. This is a foot in the door before the real land grab necessary for a commercial space facility. In the meantime, NASA and the Canaveral Air Force Station have existing launch facilities rusting away for lack of use. Space Florida's lame explanation that they need new land not subject to government oversight is ludicrous. Anyone who thinks that NASA and the Defense Department aren't going to know, in advance, every detail of any launch from US territory is living in a dream world.

Of course, this is being couched as a jobs vs. the environment issue. No doubt we need the good paying jobs that this venture could potentially supply. When NASA was running full steam and the space program was humming, many of the workers lived here in Volusia County. So utilizing the existing facilities at either Kennedy Space Center or Canaveral Air Force Station would easily fill this imagined need for more launch capability and offer good jobs to our residents too. The last thing we need to do is begin wrecking one of the major ecotourism destinations in our area for some pie in the sky dream by Space Florida.

The other area under threat is the north shore of the Lake Apopka Restoration Area. It's another case of unnecessary planned construction. In this case, a private jet port. The fact that there are several other airports nearby that can handle the traffic means nothing to the boosters of this boondoggle. In order to make their project work they need some marginal land now owned by the St Johns River Water Management District. It just so happens that this acreage is shown on the latest SJRWMD maps as "potential surplus." This idea of listing conservation lands as surplus is the brain child of our Governor and his clique of slash and burn henchmen who apparently see wrecking decades of conservation work as their mandate. The real problem here is the idea of placing an airport adjacent to an area with the highest bird species count anywhere in the state. If completed, the airport would be operated under the rules of the FAA. They would insist on doing everything possible to remove the threat of bird strikes to aircraft taking off and landing. So what could be one of the nation's newest national wildlife refuges (that's been proposed) could end up being ruined as a birding destination.

David Hartgrove

## Traveling The Way It Used To Be

### *A Cruise on The St Johns River*

There are still a few spots available for our overnight outing on November 28 & 29, 2012. We will be taking a leisurely trip down the St Johns River with Blue Heron RiverTours on the MV "Great Blue", exploring the river from the area of the Hontoon Dead River to the southern entrance of Lake George.

Day One: We will leave the dock from Hontoon Landing at 8:30AM. After touring the area of the Dead River, we will disembark midday for self-packed picnic lunches and take an optional short hike at Hontoon Landing State Park. We will continue North down river in the afternoon to the Castaways and our evening destination.

Day Two: After continental breakfast, we will continue North through a section of the Ocala National Forest into Lake George. Here we will see the pilings of the old Volusia Bar Lighthouse and the structures that guide boats through the channel into Lake George. After birding at this fascinating location, we will turn south, stopping in Astor for a lunch at the Blackwater Inn and finally turn for home. Price per person is \$195. For more information, please contact Joan Tague, Field Trip Chair.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Audubon Adventures

Audubon Adventures is a wonderful program that helps engage kids in the natural world around them. Created by the National Audubon Society, each kit contains four different editions of the award-winning Audubon Adventures Student Nature News Magazine. Send your donation to Halifax River Audubon, P.O. Box 166, Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166. Any donation is welcome; \$45 will supply a classroom. Please specify on your check that your donation is for Audubon Adventures. And thank you!

\* \* \* \* \*

## We Welcome Our New Members

Our new members this month are: Nadine Bagwell, Sandra Firth, Debra Kuhnly, James Mackey, Marjory Monat, Florencia Morais, Shirley Orme, Gil & Sue Rushton, Earl Stutzman-Miller, Maria Sugia, The Williamson Family, Kay Wood, Elizabeth Woods, and Carole Wylie. We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting or field trip.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Kitty Cams Document The Avian Carnage

A recent study by a team of researchers from the University of Georgia has shown that the damage done by house cats is even more widespread than originally thought. Using "crittercams" developed by the National Geographic Society, the researchers recorded the activities of ordinary house cats wearing special cameras around their necks. The cats averaged killing 2.5 animals per week, 13% of them birds. They averaged bringing home just 25% of their kills. Based on this study, the American Bird Conservancy estimates that house cats kill 500 million birds per year. Click on this [link](#) to read more of the story. Many folks have cats as pets and consider them members of the family. If at all possible, please keep those cats indoors. They'll be safer from fast cars, snakes, coyotes and bobcats and Great Horned Owls. And our dwindling bird populations will have one less threat to their existence.

David Hartgrove

## Meet Our Volunteers

Karen Mosher, Corresponding Secretary and At-Large Board Member, has been active with our chapter for the better part of a decade. She was born in Pennsylvania, lived in Florida until the age of 4 and grew up in southern Maryland. She and her husband, Fred, attended rival high schools. Fred's science fair was over but he went Karen's



school to scout out the competition – winners from the two schools went on to the County Fair. Fred was interested in Karen's project about dowsing rods (at least that's his excuse,) and he asked her out. They dated throughout high school and college. They married and moved north where Fred completed his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin. A stretch in the US Army took them to Arizona and later to Missouri for a job. They moved to Port Orange in 2004 when Fred accepted a position as Associate Professor at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. Karen and Fred have been birders since the early 90's when they started a life list. Karen said they selected Audubon because they like the people in the chapter who are knowledgeable and helpful with bird identification. She enjoys the programs and the environmental consciousness. She and Fred have two daughters and three grandchildren. She loves quilting and has been creating quilts and sewing since age 11 or 12. She belongs to three quilting / fiber arts groups and is also a voracious reader. Be sure to say hello to Karen at an upcoming meeting and thank her for her service to our chapter.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Osprey, The Ultimate Fisherman

Ospreys are truly incredible at catching fish. They have the longest, sharpest talons of any of the birds of prey and the skin on the inside of their feet is like very rough sandpaper. Click this [link](#) to see just how good they are. Enjoy!

## Looking For Proof of Migration?

Michael Brothers was out on Disappearing Island, in Ponce Inlet, doing a shorebird survey when he captured the following 2 photos.



*Photos by Michael Brothers*

They're Black Scoters, a species that nests along the western shore of Alaska and in northern Ontario, just south of the Arctic Circle. Along the east coast they usually winter from Maine to Rhode Island. However each year a few are seen in Florida. In fresh water they primarily eat insects, larva and some plant matter. In salt water, where they're usually see here, they feed at depths of up to 30 feet on mollusks and shell fish.

And some old friends are back down at Orlando Wetlands Park. A Pair of Vermillion Flycatchers has returned to the area to winter for the second year. Breeding in southern California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, they usually go to Mexico for the winter.



*Photo by Reinhard Geisler*

*A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors*

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**Our mailing address is PO Box 166 Daytona Beach, FL 32115-0166**

**Our website is [www.halifaxriveras.org](http://www.halifaxriveras.org) For information on upcoming field trips, etc.**

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# The Pelican

*We need to be the stewards of this world, not its destroyers*

Vol. 58-No.6 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon  
December, 2012



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Thoughts from on High*

"Because Conservation Doesn't Have a Party" is the motto of the American Eagle Compact, a campaign initiated by National Audubon. Between Labor Day and Election Day, more than 100,000 people across the country signed the American Eagle Compact online demonstrating that we are one nation when it comes to conserving natural resources in the United States. But that was just the beginning.

Now we need to translate our shared vision into an action plan. National Audubon will deliver the Compact with a full list of signers to President Obama and key leaders in the House and Senate in early January. Audubon is developing a bipartisan conservation agenda for 2013 to address specific issues like climate change, energy independence and public land conservation. This plan will be presented shortly after the inauguration on January 20.

It is exciting to think about like-minded citizens across our nation focusing on large-scale environmental issues. Please consider joining forces with your neighbors across the street and people you haven't met in different states to effect lasting change. If you haven't already signed the pledge, go to the [American Eagle Compact homepage](#) and fill in the form. Visit the [Eagle's Nest Blog](#) to read what others are thinking and doing.

Lastly, best wishes for a happy holiday season and a prosperous new year.

*Paula Wehr*

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## A Mouthful of Holiday Cheer



Photo by Jerry Kirshner

## Calendar and Events

**Monday, 12/17**, Our next chapter meeting will feature "Unusual Stories of the Everglades", presented by James "Zach" Zacharias, Senior Curator of History and Education at the Museum of Arts and Sciences. Learn how people lived, worked and died in the Everglades, America's largest wetlands. Unusual stories emerging from this wilderness show the determination of the human spirit. Hear about building the Tamiami Trail, Al Capone's hideout, the Third Seminole War, the 117-year old "Hermit of Panther Island," the secret nuclear launch base and other fascinating tales of life in the Everglades. Join us at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. **COOKIES!** And now that we have your attention... Since this is our holiday season meeting, if you'd like to bring a plate of cookies to share that would be fine. The chapter will provide hot and cold beverages.

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## Field Trips and Fun

**Friday, 12/7**, Join us for a trip to Viera Wetlands. This site, west of Melbourne, has been great in the past and promises to be an excellent trip for waterfowl, shorebirds and Crested Caracara. There's very little walking on this trip. So pack a lunch and join us at the parking lot of the Target, east of I-95 on Dunlawton, in Port Orange at 7:00 am. Questions? Call David Hartgrove, 386-788-2630.

## Christmas Bird Counts Are Everywhere

There are two other CBC's here in Volusia County and more in other parts of the state. And participation is now free. The long standing 5.00 charge is no longer collected. Here's a [link](#) to the other CBC's around the state, compliments of our friends at the Florida Ornithological Society. Information on ours and the others here locally is as follows:

**Saturday, 12/15** The West Volusia CBC. Contact David Stock at [dstock@stetson.edu](mailto:dstock@stetson.edu) or Harry Robinson 386-943-8342. They have more Red-headed Woodpeckers over on that side of the county.

**Saturday, 12/22** Our Daytona Beach CBC will meet at the Publix at Granada and Williamson, in Ormond Beach, at 7:00 am and be an all day affair, followed by our traditional dinner at the Royal Dynasty Chinese Restaurant. If you're only available part of the day, that's fine, we'll get you back to your car. Questions or to register, please call David Hartgrove, 386-788-2630.

**Saturday, 12/29** The Ponce Inlet CBC, sponsored by Southeast Volusia Audubon Society covers the area from the Inlet to the Landfill and everything in between. Contact Don Picard - [president@sevolusiaaudubon.org](mailto:president@sevolusiaaudubon.org) Dinner follows at Bella Napoli.

## Conservation Notes

In last month's column I mentioned two issues which are of vital importance: Space Florida's plan to grab off part of Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and a proposal to sell a portion of the Lake Apopka North Shore Restoration Area. An area that "coincidentally" is needed so a nearby airport can extend its runway for private jets. The vote by the board of SJRWMD is scheduled for Dec. 11th in Palatka.

The existing runway at the Long & Scott Farms property is 4,445 feet long. However, 1,455 feet of that lies in Lake County. The Lake County Commission just put a monkey wrench in the plans by voting in two zoning amendments. The first prohibits the property owners from extending the runway into Lake County. The second states that if the property owners extend the runway on the Orange County side, the zoning on the land in Lake County will be changed from private airport to agriculture only. This strengthens our position of preventing the airport's expansion at the expense of what could be our next national wildlife refuge. We will still be at the SJRWMD meeting in Palatka, as we were at the meetings held here and in Orange County.

I attended the recent Space Coast Audubon meeting down in Rockledge. It was a packed house that night and there were presentations by Space Florida, Charles Lee, of Audubon Florida, and Clay Henderson, who (though he's a past President of the old Florida Audubon Society) was speaking as an attorney familiar with the issues. Space Florida made their pitch and outlined why they think they're entitled to get 150 acres of prime Refuge property. The audience listened politely and then tore into the spokesmen. It was pointed out that since Space Florida has put a bid in to also take over the existing Shuttle landing strip, (which is being sold off by NASA) they should keep all of their project inside the existing fences at NASA and leave the Refuge alone. The analysis provided by both Charles Lee and Clay Henderson made numerous points on why the Space Florida proposal is potentially illegal and fraught with legal problems involving title to the property. MINWR was created in a fashion unlike any other refuge in the system. After acquiring 140,000 acres of land, water and marshes in 1962, NASA signed an agreement the following year establishing the Refuge. In 1975 a second agreement established Canaveral National Seashore. The enabling agreements provide for NASA to be able to reassert its authority over any or all of the Refuge. Essentially, it's going to take an act of Congress to allow Space Florida to take possession of any Refuge property. If that's the case, let the Congress give them some of NASA's unused property and leave the Refuge alone. We continue to monitor this situation.

Finally, one of the best things you can do for the future of Florida is to sign Florida's Water and Land Legacy petition. This proposed amendment will guarantee that 1/3 of the funds collected from documentary tax stamps shall go to conservation. There's more information [here](#). Look for us at local libraries, various events and of course at our chapter meetings.

*David Hartgrove*

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### Birds of Paradise

The number of birds whose courtship displays inspire awe and amazement are numerous. The various birds of paradise outdo them all. Here's a [link](#) from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology that proves just how stunning they are. Enjoy!



### MEET OUR CHAPTER VOLUNTEER

Bob North compiles our chapter field trip data so it can be posted on our website. He creates individual species lists for each trip and compiles all the data onto one spreadsheet for easy review and analysis.

Bob was born in York, England. At eighteen, he joined the RAF and served four years as an engine mechanic, working on aircraft in 81 Squadron. He now maintains the squadron's website [here](#). Following discharge, he earned his degree in Mechanical Engineering and took a job with Ford Motor Company in England. After coming to the US, he joined Ford Tractor in Troy, Michigan where he worked until retirement. That's when he and his wife, Pam, sold their home and traveled the east and west coasts of the US in an RV for the next six years. Bob has been active with Audubon for many years, serving as President of the Citrus County chapter and Field Trip Chair for both Citrus and Halifax River chapters.

Bob and Pam have two children, six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Be sure to say 'thanks' to Bob when you see him on a field trip or at our monthly meetings.

\* \* \* \* \*

### We Welcome Our New Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new members: Nancy Beville, Evelyn K. Eubank, Harriet Foster, Pat Grimes, Robert Jarboe, Leo & Linda Johnson, Brian Lawlor, Phil Mastin, Jr., Stewart & Evelyn Pinsof, Karen Powell, Judith Schwarzenbacher Wilma Wagner, Robert White, and Lynn Wright. We hope to see you all at a meeting or on one of our field trips.

\* \* \* \* \*

### The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival

The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival (Jan 23rd thru the 28th) is the largest birding festival in the country. Click on their [website](#) to see all of the fantastic opportunities for field trips, classes on birding skills and photography. Get up close and personal with raptors when you visit the Raptor Project in the exhibition hall at BCC's Titusville campus. DON'T MISS THIS!!

## Common Yellowthroat

### *An Uncommon Bird*

Lynn Bowen is a member of West Volusia Audubon Society and has a regular column in the DeLand Beacon. This piece was posted Nov. 18th and appears here by permission.

An energetic, elusive female Common Yellowthroat kept flying and flitting about in the tall grass and weeds at Lake Woodruff NWR in October. She's 5 inches long, has a 6.75-inch wingspan, and weighs only .35 of an ounce. She has a black bill and pink legs, her upper part has olive-brown feathers, and her underside is pale yellow. Yellowthroats are very common, yet not easy to see, because they live in wet thickets and damp brushy places in marshes and swamps and near streams, but not in forests. In the winter, they live in the southern U.S. and south to Central America, but not in desert areas. In the summer, they live as far north as the Yukon.

Common Yellowthroats are songbirds whose usual melody is a loud, high-pitched, three-part "wee-chee-tee, wee-chee-tee." These petite birds eat moths, beetles, spiders, grasshoppers, grubs, ants, plant lice, butterfly larvae, and seeds. They are not strong fliers, but easily dart among reeds and weeds searching for food from sunrise to sunset. When breeding time comes, the female builds a cup like nest in low growths of vegetation just 3 or 4 inches from the ground. The male helps to find dead grass, weed stems, dead leaves and ferns with which his mate will construct the nest. The inside is lined with delicate fibers of bark and, often, with hair.

These wise little feathered friends are very careful about their nests and never fly directly to or from them. They fly to the ground and walk to their nest and then leave the same way, so predators can't find it. If a predator, such as a snake, opossum, raccoon, hawk, owl or person, does come close, the yellowthroat silently jumps out of the nest and creeps away. Yellowthroats are quite successful at making their nests next to impossible to find. The female lays three to five eggs, and incubates them for 12 days. When the eggs hatch, the helpless chicks grow quite fast, and are able to leave the nest in only eight to 10 days. Both parents care for them and help feed them for a few weeks; then they're on their own.

*Lynn Bowen*



Female Common Yellow-throat  
*photo by Chuck Tague*

## More Birding Opportunities

Orlando Wetlands, in east Orange County, is holding its annual birding festival on Saturday, Feb. 16th, 2013. Click [here](#) for all the details.

### And Further Afield

Florida Nature Tours has scheduled 3 trips to the Dry Tortugas beginning on April 11, 2013. These will depart from Fort Meyers Beach aboard the very comfortable "Ultimate Getaway." Cost is 1100.00 and birding doesn't get any better than the Dry Tortugas in April. Check the website [here](#) for all the details.

How about a trip to see some African birds? Ken Gunn and Tad Fyock, from Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, are putting together a trip to Kenya. The trip dates are March 13 to April 1st. Cost is 6500.00/7000.00, plus airfare. Depending on how many hot air balloon trips they take flying over the herds of migrating African mammals. Contact Tad at 386-426-8793 or Ken at 386-423-2334. Just imagine your life list after this once in a lifetime trip!

\* \* \* \* \*

### "Snowbirds" Wintering Here In Florida

Below are 2 photos of birds only seen here in Florida in Winter.



Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Photo by Dennis O'Neil*



Purple Sandpiper *photo by Phillip Simmons*

Ruby-crowned Kinglets spend some of their time in Florida eating poison ivy berries, which are rich in fat. This Purple Sandpiper was photographed on the north jetty at Ponce Inlet.

*A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors*

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The Ormond Beach Garden Club and Colonial Colony**

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**Our mailing address is PO Box 166 Daytona Beach, FL 32115-0166**

**Our website is [www.halifaxriveras.org](http://www.halifaxriveras.org) For information on upcoming field trips, etc.**

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