

# The Pelican

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

Volume 59-No.7 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon  
January, 2014



## Message From The President

*Thoughts from on High*

The Dec 4 issue of Time Magazine includes top ten lists for “everything.” Included is a category for the [Top Ten New Species](#) for 2013. One of the newly-identified species is the carnivorous olinguito, a tree-dwelling mammal of the Amazon cloud forest which so closely resembles its common cousins that no one knew it was a different species. Pelts long-stored in museums were mislabeled as common olinguitos. Scientists now surmise that the common olinguitos housed at zoos in the 1960’s did not successfully mate because some were common and others were, in fact, the carnivorous species.

Also included in the top ten list are glow-in-the-dark cockroaches – as if cockroaches need an additional adaptation to help them survive!

NASA was surprised to find a new species of microbes in a clean room at KSC. Seems this particular microbe has only been found in two other places: another clean room in Florida and a bore hole in a Colorado molybdenum mine 1.3 miles underground.

[CNN reports](#) on scientists who found a “lost world” on the northern tip of Queensland, Australia. At least three previously undiscovered species have been documented: a frog that mates in the rain; a leaf-tail gecko (also reported in the Time Magazine article with a photo) and a golden skink.

While it would be amazing to be the person who discovered a new species, I’m just hoping to add a few new birds to my life list in 2014. I was able to add ten new species in 2013, plus the [Eurasian \(Common\) Teal](#), a sub-species of the Green-winged Teal. One male Eurasian Teal was feeding with hundreds of Green-winged Teal at Heislerville WMA in New Jersey on April 22. He was identified by the horizontal white bar on his wing and the lack of a vertical white bar on the breast. Without the excellent spotting skills of an expert bird guide who had recently returned from leading trips in Europe, I’m sure none of us would have found this bird. The wind was stiff and temperature was in the 30’s. But the sun was shining brightly and we all have excellent views of this bird. As of April 2013, the AOU did not recognize the Eurasian Teal as a separate species, but the decision remains under review. IUCN and BirdLife International do list them as separate species. Until the debate is resolved this bird remains on my list, with an asterisk.

*Paula Wehr*

## Calendar & Events

**Monday, Jan. 27th Program Meeting- Snail Kites** Join us at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill on Monday night, January 27, when Zach Welch of the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission will discuss Snail Kites. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. followed by a short business meeting. NOTE: This is the **fourth Monday of the month**, one week later than our usual meeting date.

### Field Trips

**Friday, Jan. 10th** Join us for the first of two back to back trips to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. We’ll scope the ducks along Black Point Wildlife Drive, check out the shorebirds and have a picnic at the Visitor’s Center. Meet at 7:00 am at International Square, on US 92, east of I-95, behind the Krystal Restaurant. Bring lunch. Questions? Call David Hartgrove, 386-788-2630.

**Saturday, Jan. 11th** For those who couldn’t make it on Friday we go again on Saturday to Merritt Island NWR. This time Chuck & Joan Tague will be the leaders. Again, we’ll meet at International Square, on US 92, east of I-95, behind the Krystal Restaurant. Bring lunch. On both of these trips we’ll have several spotting scopes so everyone can get good looks at all of the birds. Questions? Call 386-253-1166.

**Friday, Jan. 17th** Tour Viera Wetlands with Ken & Patsy Hunter. This place has it all, Bald Eagles, Crested Caracara, shorebirds, ducks and more. Meet at 7:00 am at International Square, on US 92, east of I-95, behind the Krystal Restaurant. Bring lunch. Questions? Call 386-679-8457.

### Field Trips With Others

**Saturday, Jan. 18th** Join our friends from Southeast Volusia Audubon for their trip to Merritt Island NWR. Meet at 7:00 am at Indian River Village Shopping Center, corner of US 1 and SR 442. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Gail Domroski, 386-453-1211.

**Monday, Jan. 6th** Join our friends from West Volusia Audubon for a trip to Smyrna Dunes Park, followed by a boat ride across Ponce Inlet. Questions? Call Eli Schaperow 407-314-7965.

**Wednesday, Jan. 22nd** Deltona has a number of good birding spots. Explore them with Eli Schaperow and the folks from West Volusia Audubon. Call Eli at 407-314-7965 for information on when and where to meet.

**Saturday, Feb. 1st** Join the West Volusia Audubon folks for a tour of one of the best winter birding spots in Florida, Lake Apopka. The trip will be lead by Harry Robinson who literally wrote the book on birding the Lake Apopka Restoration Area. Meet at the DeLand Post Office 336 East New York Avenue at 8:00 AM. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Harry at 386-943-8342.

## Conservation Notes

One of the founding fathers of the environmental movement in Volusia County passed away on December 11th. Lee Bidgood was a retired chemical engineer who moved to Florida from Delaware. He soon saw that there were serious problems in his newly adopted home. Sewage effluent and storm water runoff were killing the Indian River Lagoon. He wrote well crafted letters to the Daytona Beach News-Journal outlining steps that could be easily taken that would have major positive effects on the conditions. His pleas fell on the deaf ears of local government leaders who didn't want to hear that what they and their predecessors had been doing the cheap way would eventually cost a lot more money to fix. The conditions in the Indian River and Mosquito Lagoon now would be a thing of the past if Lee's sage advice had been heeded then. As Conservation Chair for the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society he spearheaded the move to get Smyrna Dunes Park established when the Coast Guard decided to surplus the property. It could have become yet another condo development. Instead it became a prime nesting spot for Least Terns, Black Skimmers, Wilson's Plovers and others. A lack of vegetation maintenance has reduced its usefulness to these birds now but it's still an environmental treasure.

He was also an early voice on the issue of climate change. He wrote eloquently about this in guest editorials. He worked with the New Smyrna Utilities Commission to pioneer a system whereby those with solar cells could sell their excess power back to the utility. He worked with state legislators to establish a tax holiday for energy efficient appliances. Brynn Newton, another stalwart of the local environmental community, wrote the following when announcing Lee's passing. "During the 2000s, Lee authored a regular column, *Natural Connections*, for the New Smyrna Beach *News Observer*, explaining in understandable language and with irrefutable logic the issues and dangers of global warming and nuclear waste and, as a World War II veteran, always arguing for peace. He always backed up his points with sound research and facts and urged his fellow conservationists to do the same because, he frequently reminded us, credibility is an environmentalist's only currency." He will surely be missed.

The proposal by Space Florida to grab off a chunk on Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge has moved to its next phase. The comment period that's part of the Environmental Impact Statement process opened on Friday, December 27th. Call me a cynic but I don't think it's a coincidence that this process is being announced in the middle of the holidays. After the disaster they had at the Brannon Center in New Smyrna Beach they're hoping to slip this by with as little public involvement as possible. Just to remind you of that disaster, State Senator, Dorothy Hukill and County Councilwoman, Deborah Denys, both strong supporters of Space Florida's proposal, organized a public forum at the Brannon Center. They were hoping for a lot of positive comments from Chamber of Commerce types to reinforce the idea that the public supported a new launch facility. Ten minutes before the scheduled start of the meeting, it was standing room only and nearly everyone there was vehemently opposed to Space Florida and their idea of a new and totally unnecessary launch site. The fishing guides spoke eloquently (if a bit forcefully) about how much of a negative impact the proposal would have on their business. Several retired NASA engineers pointed out that the existing facilities more than filled any needs Space Florida could possibly want for its clients. And though Space X was often referred to by Space Florida's spokesmen as the driving force wanting a new facility, they just signed an agreement with NASA to use their existing facilities. The public meeting here will be on Feb. 11, 2014 from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., at the New Smyrna Beach High School Gymnasium, 1015 10th Street, New Smyrna Beach, Florida 32168. Please plan to attend. And Happy 2014!

David Hartgrove

## Audubon Academy 2014 Coming Soon

SAVE THE DATE and register as soon as possible! The 2014 Audubon Academy is being held at DaySpring Episcopal Conference Center located in Parrish, Florida, near Bradenton. DaySpring, with 92-wooded acres on the north shore of the Manatee River, offers hiking, biking and canoeing/kayaking opportunities and is near some great birding areas. This year's Academy is being held April 11-13 and the theme is "Walking the Walk-Making Conservation Real". Academy will offer outdoor and indoor workshops and information sharing sessions to enhance the abilities of both current and future Audubon chapter leaders to build stronger and more effective chapters. Regardless of your chapter size or location, the fun activities—entertainment, chapter displays and poster sessions, conservation training, hospitality and more—can help enable chapters to expand and invigorate their outreach and conservation activities. Information—including the schedule, descriptions of the workshops and registration—will be sent out in January and posted on the Audubon Florida website. Registration is by mail. Note that early registrations, received by February 7th, will help the organizers make arrangements. Do not miss this once a year opportunity to network at this "for the chapters, by the chapters" event, dedicated to protecting and conserving Florida's natural resources.

*Bob Stamps, Audubon Academy 2014 Co-coordinator*

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## Welcome To Our New & Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to all of our new and returning members: Judy Adamson, Karen Allick, Sadie Anderson, Joseph Babila, Cassandra Ballard, Kathryn Blannett, Nancy Brown, Elaine Carlini-Davis, Marlene Estep, Bernie Gandy, Shelly Green, Cynthia Hansen, Ocena Hasty, Sarah Ho, Michelle Lewis, Virginia Lukas, Joyce Merkel, Miguel Morias, Danny O'Cain, Kathy Olivero, Richard Poppel, Kathleen Prastitis, Ann Rodgers, Deanna Schaeffer, Donna Sheean, Kenneth B. Sipes, Karen Vandusen and Susan Wilson. We hope to see you at our meetings or on one of our field trips.

\* \* \* \* \*

## 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. 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!

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## The Big Year Record Is Broken!

If you saw the movie, "The Big Year", you know it's based on fact. Based on the book with the same title by Mark Obmascik, it tells the story of the 1998 quest by 3 men to set the record for the most bird species seen in North America in a single year. Sandy Komito set the record at 745 and it held until a few days ago. Neil Hayward, a birder from Boston set out to break the record this year. On December 28th, on Brian Patteson's boat, "Skua", out of Cape Hatteras, NC, he finally got his record breaking bird, number 746, a Great Skua. Neil maintained a blog about his adventures and it's fascinating reading. Check it out [here](#).

David Hartgrove

# Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*)

a feature of Everyday Birding

by Ray Scory

Pileated Woodpeckers in my backyard! Wow, what a treat and what an introduction to Florida living through birds. A wonderful surprise to see and hear so many of them.

My first experience with the showy Pileated Woodpecker occurred long ago during a Connecticut Christmas Bird Count. On a granite rock hill overlooking a babbling brook, ice fringed in Winter's splendor, I heard what sounded like chopping on one of the many trees that dot the hillside. My companions and I decided to search out this perpetrator of wintery serenity. To our surprise the perpetrator wasn't a wood chopper but a bird, a Pileated Woodpecker. Large wood chips flew from the tree in response to its hammering. The wood chips we inspected under the tree were two to three inches long. An impressive wood chopping feat, and a dramatic display or my first Pileated Woodpecker experience. Also, a nice addition to our Christmas Bird Count.

I have come to learn that a Pileated Woodpecker chops a long rectangular hole when searching for food. However, a round hole about three inches in diameter could indicate its nest entrance, especially if drilled on a bark-free surface of a tree. An eye-stopping, heart-thumping sighting of the Pileated Woodpecker, whether in flight or boldly attached to a tree, is a life-memory experience. Not secretive is the Pileated Woodpecker. As large as a crow, the silhouette of this woodpecker is unmistakable. Big, large pointed bill, obvious crest and powerful chopping strokes readily identify this woodpecker. It appears to lean back from its vertical position when searching for food tucked in the crevices of bark. Carpenter ants are a favorite food source. I have watched them climb from the base of a pine tree to the top - always moving, always chopping. Determined, powerful and loud, that's our Pileated Woodpecker.

This handsome red crested North American woodpecker is dressed in black and sports white on its face, neck and flashy white under the wings. Mustache stripe malar feathers under its jaw are obvious, red for males, black for females. It flies with a pumping action, beginning with its wings at a level position, pushing both wings down for its power stroke and then back again. At times, during its flight it will glide. In Port Orange and surrounding places the Pileated Woodpecker is a common sight. They can be observed flying across open spaces, in backyards and local parks and nesting in small woodland pockets. How fortunate we are to have such a dramatic bird as a neighbor.

### Bird Calls

\*Pileated (pronunciation) - a vowel (a, e, i, o, u) before one or two consonants is pronounced as a long (i) as in "pie", Pileated rhymes with - animated, saturated

\*oldest known age of Pileated Woodpecker - 12 years 11 months.

A male Pileated Woodpecker feeds its about to fledge youngster.



photo by Ray Scory

# Gainesville Trip Provides Great Memories

Our chapter's 2 night overnight trip to Gainesville was a big success. We saw 83 species, including some sparrows seldom seen in our area. Our first stop came on our way over as we saw Eastern Bluebirds perched wires along SR 326. While there Renate Calero found an Eastern Meadowlark and we saw Savannah and Chipping Sparrows. We arrived in Gainesville in time for lunch and rendezvoused with Frank Brandt, who joined us from Dunedin. After lunch at Appleby's we drove out north of town to the Hague Dairy, a working dairy farm and teaching facility of the University of Florida. We met up with new Gainesville resident, Matt Bruce, who many of you will remember from lots of counts and field trips we've done in the past. Our hike along the La Chua Trail brought us quite close to some very large alligators. A bit too close for some members of our party. We saw White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows, White-eyed Vireo and Sora. We had lunch in the cool shade of Boulware Springs. After lunch we headed off to the Museum, where Dr. Andrew Kratter, Ornithology Collections Manager, gave us a behind the scenes tour. Seeing the work done by ornithology students and their professors was fascinating and one of the high points of the trip. We made it over to the bat houses in time for the evening fly out and to see a Red-tailed Hawk fly in as it does nightly and try to grab one of the bats as the mass of them flies out to hunt insects. After a stop at Payne's Prairie State Park, we said goodbye to some of our party and headed back home. The plan was to stop in Flagler County and look for the Cassin's Kingbird that's returned again to its spot on CR 305 just south of SR 100. We didn't find him. It was a fun trip and one day we'll do it again.

David Hartgrove



Dr. Kratter shows us some ducks. photo by Lois Posey



Our group at La Chua Trail photo by David Hartgrove

*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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# The Pelican

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

Vol. 59-No.8 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon  
February, 2014



## Message From The President

### *Thoughts from on High*

Adding new birds to one's life list becomes more difficult each year unless the birder is willing to travel to find birds in their native habitat. The alternative is to remain in place and hope the birds come to the birder.

2013 shaped up as a good case for the latter choice. A lone Cassin's Kingbird, a regular resident of the southwestern US and Mexico, returned to the potato fields in Flagler County for a 2nd winter. The Vermillion Flycatcher at Orlando Wetlands is one of several reported around the state as well as some Scissor-tailed Flycatchers that have returned to their chosen winter spots which are well outside documented wintering grounds for their species. A Red-necked Phalarope spent a week or so at Merritt Island NWR in November. This species normally winters in Peru, the southern Arabian Peninsula and Indonesia. The recent Arctic trifacta – juvenile Snowy Owl at Little Talbot Island State Park, Harlequin Duck at Ft. Clinch State Park and the Snow Buntings at Huguenot State Park (all in the Jacksonville area) – have brought visitors from all over Florida and surrounding southern states. What makes these birds, sometimes in large numbers as happened last winter with the hundreds of Razorbills found off both coasts of Florida but more often single in number, veer so far from their normal migration routes? And why do some of them stay for the entire winter and return again the following year instead of remaining with their flock after breeding?

Irruption migration occurs in species that respond to varying availability of food. Seed-eaters such as redpolls and grosbeaks respond to food supplies which vary greatly from year to year and location to location. A low supply of seed can push these species outside normal wintering grounds some years. Irruptions of these species are relatively common. Northern owls like the Great Gray and Snowy often stay in Canada for their entire lives, but in years when the small mammal population declines, it is believed the owls are forced to move further and further south. Florida is really a long flight from the Snowy Owl's regular wintering area in southern Canada or northern US.

Much of what is currently understood about irruptive behavior comes from citizen science – the data that is collected from volunteers all over the country/world. Data collected from the [Christmas Bird Count](#), [The Great Backyard Bird Count](#) and [Cornell's Project Feeder Watch](#), provide invaluable information to scientists to help answer these questions. Click on the links to read more about the projects above and consider participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count which runs from February 14-17, 2014. It's easy to sign up electronically and only requires a minimum of 15 minutes a day to observe birds. Of course, you can continue your count for longer, if you'd like. You can enter your observations online and it's free. Great birding!

*Paula Wehr*

## Calendar & Events

**Monday, Feb. 17th Program meeting,** A quick glance at nearly any local pond, roadside, beach or stream bank will reveal one or more relatively large species of the birds with longish legs and necks and often bright, showy plumage. Join us at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill on Monday evening, February 17, to learn more about these birds when Chuck Tague presents "Florida's Waders: A Photographic Study of Herons and Their Relatives." Doors open at 6:30 p.m. The presentation begins at 7:00 p.m., followed by a brief business meeting.

### Field Trips

**Friday, Feb. 14th,** Join us on a trip to Marl Bed Flats, in eastern Seminole County. Due to a scheduling conflict Chuck Tague will be the trip leader. This trip can mean getting your feet damp and involves a bit of walking. The shorebirds, snipe and sparrows make it worth the walk. Meet at 7:00 am at International Square, east of I-95 behind Krystal on International Speedway Blvd. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Chuck Tague, 386-253-1166.

**Saturday, Feb. 22nd,** Join us for a trip to Orlando Wetlands Park. Bob North will lead us to this jewel in eastern Orange County where we'll look for the Vermillion Flycatcher that's wintered here the past few years. You won't get wet feet but this one does have a long walk. Meet at 7:00 am at International Square, east of I-95 behind Krystal on International Speedway Blvd. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Bob North, 352-302-3510.

**Friday, Feb. 28th,** Join our Field Trip Co-Chairs, Chuck & Joan Tague for a buggy ride in Longleaf Preserve with Volusia County Naturalist, Bonnie Cary. This is a new addition to the environmental lands of the County and promises to be a great trip. Meet at 7:15 am at International Square, east of I-95 behind Krystal on International Speedway Blvd. Bring lunch. Reservations are required. Please call Joan at 386-253-1166.

**Wednesday, March 12th,** We're giving early notice for this special evening cruise along the St Johns River. Reservations are required so please call trip leader, Celine Sullivan, 386-257-1980. You'll need 20.00 in cash and a sense of adventure. Meet at 3:00 pm at International Square, east of I-95 behind Krystal on International Speedway Blvd.

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## Welcome To Our New Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Patricia Anderson, Vera Becker, Bill & June Campbell, Ivey Bedell, Geraldine Clark, Shirley Conn, Joe Hamilton, Denise Huckaby, Michael Hughes, Ethel Inglis, Mary Lewis, Brandon Noel, Barbara O'Neil, Annette Parker, Gloria Parris, John Revilock, Sharon Rosenthal, Penny Scott, Peg Shelton, Patricia Stout and Kay Streater. We hope to see you at our meetings at Sica Hall and on excellent our field trips.

## Conservation Notes

Space Florida, the quasi governmental pipe dream organization that seeks to rip off a chunk of Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge for its completely unnecessary new launch facility, continues to advance its timeline. The Federal Aviation Authority (whose record on environmental issues is abysmal) is in charge of conducting the Environmental Impact Statement. On February 11th the first of two scoping meetings required under the EIS process will be held from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm at the New Smyrna Beach High School Gymnasium, 1015 10th Street, New Smyrna Beach. It is very important that we get as many people there as possible. Space Florida has been working hard to assure that they won't suffer the same embarrassment they saw at the last meeting held in New Smyrna Beach. That one was organized by State Senator, Dorothy Hukill and County Councilwoman, Debra Denys. They seemed to be under the impression that the public supported a new space launch facility. Only four people of the hundreds in attendance that evening spoke in its favor. Bird lovers, hunters, fishermen and retired NASA engineers spoke in total opposition to the idea and for a variety of reasons. Our chapter has commented on the project by way of a letter and you can too. Here's a [link](#) to more information and there's an e-mail address for you to offer your thoughts. Please plan to attend this important meeting.

The Volusia County Council made a wise decision when it voted 5 to 2 against the idea of opening the entire beach to dogs. This was proposed as a three month trial period and was to be limited to early morning and late afternoon hours. Anyone who's spent any time observing the activities at the two sections of the beach currently open to dogs can attest that most dog owners appear to obey the rules. Dogs are kept on a leash and owners act responsibly when interacting with others and their dogs. Of course, there are those boorish individuals who seem to think that the rules are designed for everyone but them. Enforcement of the rules is spotty at best and often bad behavior is ignored by park personnel who see their duties as strictly maintenance related in nature. If you've ever gone to Frank Rendon Park to view the huge flocks of gulls at this time of year you know that all it takes to disturb them is some thoughtless person walking or running through the flock to flush the birds and lessen your experience. Imagine what would happen if dogs were involved. I personally can't thank the Council enough for reversing their position on this issue.

A heartfelt thanks goes out to the folks who braved the rain on the morning of December 28th and turned out for our Christmas Bird Count. We had 112 species, which is about average for us. The CBC is the oldest citizen science project we have and since it's been so successful its methods have been adopted for a variety of other bird and animal related studies. One is the Great Backyard Bird Count. Held between February 14th and 17th this is a project that doesn't involve teams and a driving. As the name implies it's done by folks looking out their windows at the birds in their yard. If a person wishes they can monitor their favorite park or birding trail. The key element is that it's a personal event where you do the observations and then log onto the GBBC website to enter your data. It's easy, fun and you'll be doing your part to help in the protection of bird species by documenting their presence. Here's a [link](#) to the GBBC website. It has links to a variety of tools that will help you to collect your data in such a way as to make data entry easy. These activities are guaranteed to make you a better birder. Are you looking for ways to use that new camera you got for christmas? Document the birds you see and perhaps one of your shots will inspire you to enter it in the GBBC photo contest. Here's a [link](#) to last year's winners. Finally, here's a [link](#) to a short quiz about some things you may have heard regarding feeding birds. See how well you do and then be sure to participate in this year's Great Backyard Bird Count.

*David Hartgrove*



### Meet our Chapter Volunteer

#### Joan Tague

Many of us know Joan as half of our Field Trip leadership. Together with her husband, Chuck, they scout out potential locations where we can find good varieties of birds, often lead the trips, and construct the field trip schedule for the birding calendar. Joan has excellent hearing and knows the songs and chip notes of many avian species. We've often found a well-hidden species which may have been overlooked because Joan heard the bird, identified it by voice and alerted the rest of the group as to what we should be looking for.

She is a Pittsburgh native, the oldest of six children – 4 boys and 2 girls. She worked for Bell Telephone (now Verizon) for most of her career, beginning in the Customer Service Dept. She moved to the Marketing area and into the tech support group for large companies such as US Steel. She later was promoted into "the best job in the Company," running the demonstration center where she made presentations and conducted training for all the advanced communications systems/applications.

She's been musically inclined all her life, playing the tuba in the school band. She can play most brass instruments, a little guitar and a little piano. Her current interest is in "noodling around" with tin whistles.

As a young adult, Joan and her sister took a "how to" class on exotic birding at the Pittsburgh Aviary. As a zoo docent at the Aviary, she learned how to handle exotic birds but wasn't knowledgeable about wild birds. She met Chuck, an instructor at the Aviary, and joined one of his field trips to look for short-eared owls in the strip mines. That was the beginning of her love affair with owls and her introduction to the native birds around her.

When Joan isn't in the field looking for/at birds or setting up a field trip, she enjoys home decorating and sewing. And she enjoys watching football – especially the Steelers. She said it is nearly impossible to grow up in the Pittsburgh area and not be a football fan. What else would people talk about on Monday morning?

*Paula Wehr*

# The 17th Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival

## Another Great Birding Adventure

The 17th annual Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival, held in Titusville and sponsored by the Brevard Nature Alliance, was a great success. Some of the people who went on the extremely popular Black Rail trips to the St Johns NWR actually got to see this elusive bird. The field trips, art competition, silent auction and the displays in the Gym were once again very popular. A lot of people, including some of our members, bought new optics from the wealth of vendors there. The first day of field trips found me standing in the cold waiting for dawn and the Red-cockaded Woodpeckers to emerge from their roost holes at St Sebastian River Preserve. Manmade nest boxes are inserted into young longleaf pines for the birds while we wait for the trees to mature enough and develop the heart fungus the birds require for natural nesting cavities. This is our only woodpecker species



*photo by David Hartgrove*

that nests in live trees. They're on the Endangered Species List.



*Red-cockaded Woodpecker photo by Chuck Tague*

There were three trips to Lake Apopka, four of the very popular "North Brevard Hotspots" trips and two of the "Central Florida Specialties" trips. The second of those trips got 102 species! The Pelagic Trip this year was something of a disappointment. It was pouring rain as we boarded the *Pastime Princess*. We had some Black Scoters on the river on our way out but the birds just must have been somewhere else on that big ocean. Two Audubon's Shearwaters and a couple of Red Phalaropes were all we had bird wise. The seas were calm though and the Atlantic Spotted Dolphins put on quite a show several times.

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, scene of many of the Festival's activities, is suffering from a severe lack of fresh water. eight years of drought have left the impoundments there with higher salinity levels than normal. As a result, the American Coots that should be there in the hundreds of thousands are completely absent. Many of the usual duck species are wintering elsewhere too. Still, it's a magical place offering winter birding like few other places in the country. Twenty-four hours can make a big difference in what you see and where. I lead the "Afternoon Hayride" around Black Point on Saturday afternoon. We had an okay day. The next day I had nine Reddish Egrets, one of them a white morph. An unusual bird for us here on the east coast.



*White morph Reddish Egret photo by David Hartgrove*

Also on Sunday there was a large group of wading birds, including Great and Snowy Egrets, Little Blue and Tricolored Herons and both White and Glossy Ibis. It was here that someone found what had to be the bird of the day, a White-faced Ibis. This western species is seen in Florida a few times a year. They closely resemble young Glossy Ibis but have piercing red eyes that the Glossy Ibis lack.



*White-faced Ibis photo by Reinhard Geisler*

Be sure you make plans to attend this spectacular event next January. One tip, start checking the [website](#) daily in October for online registration to open. That way you'll have the best chance to get aboard the most popular field trips and photo workshops. They fill up fast.

*David Hartgrove*

*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. 59-No.9 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon March, 2014



## Message from the President

### *Thoughts from on High*

The topography of SE Pennsylvania where I lived the first 55 years of my life is ridges of blue rock, shale and clay soil. Topsoil was something we purchased in bags and spread on the flower beds/gardens. Most winters, the ground was frozen for several months at a time. When the spring thaw arrived, our lawn which was covered with a nice thick layer of green turf grass, became a veritable marsh. Our Labrador Retriever and German Shepherd churned it to a sea of mud as they chased each other. We kept a plastic kiddie pool and a hose by the back door of the garage so we could wash off their feet and underbellies each and every time they came back in the house.

We lived on the side of a hill where, according to the hydrologist we hired to help fix our wet basement issues, five or more acres drained into the general area of our back yard. We had backhoes dig trenches to divert the groundwater to run around our house, into the culverts and eventually into the large lake formed by the dam five miles down the road. After burning out numerous sump pumps over the years, a 12-inch wide trench dug inside the basement which was linked to the outside trenches finally provided the dry basement we sought for nearly 20 years.

So when I learned from National Audubon Society that March 9-16 is National Groundwater Awareness Week, I didn't laugh to myself about another "special interest" campaign. Their [webpage](#) asks the question, "Who should be aware of groundwater?" The answer is "Quite simply, everyone." Here in Florida, water issues – ground water, water quality, water quantity, water rights – may be even more important than it is in other areas of the country. The focus of Audubon Florida's 2013 Conservation Action Agenda was "Conserve Water to Sustain Life." In December Eric Draper, Executive Director of Audubon Florida, sent an email message reminding us about the considerable effort put forth by the Audubon family to protect specific waterways and shape water policy. Audubon Florida staff put together a short list of priority efforts which you can read [here](#).

But as surely as the mud season comes to SE Pennsylvania, the drought follows. Then the muddy clay soil turns into a brick and it becomes necessary to hire two guys with a jackhammer to dig the holes to erect the posts to hold a wash line. It would have been much cheaper to just put the sheets into the dryer – but linens dried in a spring breeze just smell so great!

Keep an eye on the Volusia County Council's vote on a fertilizer ordinance. If they vote for a strong one that restricts phosphorus, mandates 50% slow release nitrogen and prohibits application during the summer rainy season we'll be on the road to much better water quality in our lakes, groundwater and the Indian River Lagoon. We'll talk about droughts in another issue.

*Paula Wehr*

## Calendar & Events

**Monday, March 17th, Program meeting** The original Floridians were the Timucuan Indians who populated northeastern and north central Florida prior to the arrival of European explorers and settlers. Joe Woodbury, a Ranger at Washington Oaks Gardens State Park and Native American Interpreter, will talk about the history and importance of these local tribes. His presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. Doors open at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill at 6:30 p.m. We look forward to seeing you on March 17.

### Field Trips

**Friday, March 7th** Lake Apopka. This place has it all, ducks, raptors, shorebirds, sparrows and more. Join our Field Trip Chairs, Chuck & Joan Tague, for a trip to this exciting location. Meet at **6:30 am** at International Square, east of I-95 behind Krystal on International Speedway Blvd. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Chuck Tague, 386-253-1166.

**Wednesday, March 12th** Join us for an evening cruise on the lovely St Johns River. Reservations are required so please call trip leader, Celine Sullivan, 386-257-1980. You'll need 20.00 in cash and a sense of adventure. Meet at 3:00 pm at International Square, east of I-95 behind Krystal on International Speedway Blvd.

**Friday, March 14th** Tosohatchee Wildlife Management Area, in east Orange County, has all sorts of diverse habitats and therefore, all sorts of birds. Join our Field Trip Chairs, Chuck & Joan Tague, as we explore this great location. Meet at 7:00 am at International Square, east of I-95 behind Krystal on International Speedway Blvd. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Chuck Tague, 386-253-1166.

**Friday, March 28th** Ocala National Forest has Scrub Jays, Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and more. Join us for this trip as we see what we can find. John Roessler will lead this trip. We'll meet at 7:00 am at the Publix lot at Granada & Williamson Blvds., near Chick-Fil-A. Bring lunch. Questions? call John at 386-255-9826.

### Field Trips With Others

**Friday, March 28th** The same day our chapter is going to Ocala you can join Southeast Volusia Audubon Society on a trip to Joe Overstreet Landing and Three Lakes WMA. This is one of the state's most diverse birding areas. Meet at Market Square, US 1 and Indian River Blvd. at 7:00 am between Dunkin Donuts and Chick-Fil-A. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Dick or Gail Domroski, 386-428-0447.

**Thursday, March 20th** Join West Volusia Audubon Society for a cruise on the St Johns River. Meet at Hontoon Landing on River Ridge Rd in DeLand at 9:45 AM. Reservations are required. Questions? call Eli Schaperow 407-314-7965.

## Conservation Notes

Thanks to the efforts of volunteers from around the state the amendment we all signed petitions for will be on the ballot in November. Amendment #1 is the Florida's Water & Land Legacy amendment and we need to remind our friends and neighbors to vote for it. Strong forces are against the amendment's passage and in the coming months we'll see an increasing number of misleading commercials about it. Working for its passage is one of the best things we can do for our state's future. Watch this space for future updates on how you can help.

On March 6th the Volusia County Council will decide what to do about a fertilizer ordinance. Their choices are to go with the very lenient state standards or opt for more restrictive rules favored by those concerned with actually doing something about our impaired waters. Several counties and municipalities around the state have already enacted these stronger rules. These include: a summer rainy season ban on the application of nitrogen and phosphorus; no phosphorus without a soil test indicating a deficiency; at least 50% slow release for the nitrogen content; and a 10' fertilizer free zone next to water bodies, without exception, or comparable provision protecting the Indian River Lagoon shoreline. Some have extended that last one to 25 feet from the Lagoon's shoreline. Councilpersons, Pat Northey and Doug Daniels have already spoken in favor of a strong ordinance. The others are either opposed outright or leaning toward the more lenient standards. The Indian River Lagoon has a variety of serious problems and some may require expensive solutions. This is one thing we can do now which will begin to have positive effects right away.

When we hear or read about a place like the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge or Big Cypress National Preserve or even Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, you think these places are permanently protected. But it turns out that all of these places were established on lands where someone else owns the mineral rights. In all of these cases that someone is Collier Resources, the actual owners of mineral rights to over 800,000 acres in southwest Florida. They have recently leased the mineral rights under 115,000 acres to the Dan A. Hughes Company of Beeville, Texas. The Hughes Company has applied for a permit to drill an exploratory well less than a mile from the Florida Panther NWR. In spite of strong opposition from a variety of environmental groups, Audubon included, Florida DEP issued the permit. Now the Collier group has announced two more leases. One of 103,000 acres to Tocala LLC, of Ridgeland, Mississippi and one of a whopping 234,510 acres to Burnett Oil Company of Fort Worth, Texas. The latter one lies almost entirely under Big Cypress National Preserve. This is not geological research. These leases are going to oil drilling companies who have every intent of setting up roads, wells and extraction operations once deposits have been located. So far there's been little interest among oil operators to utilize hydraulic fracturing, also known as "fracking." The limestone bedrock that underlies most of the Florida peninsula isn't a good substrate for fracking operations. Still, the Hughes Company has applied for a permit for a waste water injection well. This is a necessary step if fracking were to be used. There have also been two bills filed in Tallahassee by Representative Ray Rodrigues, Rep., Estero. One mandates that chemicals used in fracking be identified to Florida DEP, though it conveniently doesn't require the concentrations to be listed. The other bill allows drilling companies to exclude information on anything they conclude is proprietary in nature. So essentially they don't have to tell us what they'd be poisoning our water with or how much they're using. My bet is that both bills were written by attorneys for the oil drillers to give them and the state regulatory agencies cover when and if fracking is used. Stay tuned, this is going to become a hot issue.

*David Hartgrove*

## Meet Our Chapter Leaders

### Mary Blackledge



*photo by Steve Blackledge*

Mary is a Michigan native who met her husband, Steve, in her home town. They lived in Michigan until the late 1980's when they sold everything and headed to Florida in their sailboat. They made the journey from Michigan via the Erie Canal to New York Harbor and into the Atlantic Ocean. They headed back inland through Delaware Bay and traveled the rest of the way to Florida via the intracoastal waterway, ending up at the city marina in Daytona Beach. They lived there, on the boat, for about three years until they once again became land lubbers nearly 20 years ago.

In Michigan, Mary pursued a career in sales. She chose an entirely different career after arriving in Florida when she went back to school and became a physical therapist – a career she enjoyed until retiring several years ago. Mary has two daughters and Steve has two sons, all but one of whom are scattered in other states.

In the fall of 2011, Mary and Steve registered for the HRA Beginner Bird ID Class. They have both always loved outdoor activities and learning about nature. They enjoyed the class and began coming to meetings and attending field trips. Audubon just "felt right" to them. Mary has taken co-responsibility for sales of 50-50 tickets at our monthly meetings.

She enjoys a wide range of other interests including reading, container gardening and making pottery. We thank Mary for her contributions to making our chapter a success.

*Paula Wehr*

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## Lighter Side News And Views

Once every three years, there is an international competition in horticultural sculpture, called "mosaiculture," in a major city in the world. Last year it was Montreal. At the Montreal Botanic Gardens there were 50 major sculptures along a path two miles long. Click on this [link](#) and enjoy.

Most of us have seen the movie, "The Big Year." Three obsessed birders are doing a big year. Trying to see as many species as possible in 365 days. Dorian Anderson grew up in Philadelphia and started birding at an early age. He's taking time off from a career in molecular biology at Harvard Medical School to do a big year, on his bicycle. He passed through Daytona Beach on Monday, February 24th where he saw Florida Scrub Jay and Parasitic Jaeger, birds # 201 and 202 respectively. Read all about his adventure on his blog [here](#).

# Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*)

a feature of *Everyday Birding*

by **Ray Scory**

how interesting it can be

when you see a little bird by the sea...

A walk along an ocean beach can take us thousands of miles away. I visualized this escape from reality as I walked along the ocean beach stretching from Daytona Beach Shores to Ponce Inlet for a Christmas Bird Count with the Southeast Volusia Audubon. I observed shorebirds defining the edge of a receding tide, white-capped waves rolling in with boundless splendor and seamless fog shrouding the ocean's horizon into a mystery of endless space. The scene was breathtaking. My dream lifted to undefinable heights.

Through the mysteries of imagination we can soar and achieve things not humanly possible. How special would it be to self-propel and fly 20,000 miles a year, look down at the far reaches of our planet while covering a time period of six and a half months. This is what the Red Knot does as it makes a migratory round trip from the tundra of arctic regions to countries in the southern hemisphere.

To follow this imaginary exercise I must travel with the Red Knot on a circumpolar journey from its arctic tundra breeding grounds in upper Canada to the tip of South America and back. Such a magnificent journey for a nine inch shorebird that feeds and rests along the tidal edges of our ocean beaches. We in Florida have the opportunity to observe the Red Knot as it migrates along the east coast of North America in the early Spring and Fall. Our CBC team observed Red Knots on the beach in mid December. Some remain in Florida during the summer.

While I can not fly like the Red Knot or travel as far. I can study their behavior and read their story. This has led me to an interesting sidebar to my study - bird banding. On the day of the Christmas Bird Count our team counted over 350 Red Knots. Six of them were banded with a lime green flag on the left leg. Four of those bands had readable characters. I was able to record them quiet clearly with a 1200mm lens. I submitted my results to [www.bandedbirds.org](http://www.bandedbirds.org). One bird (U6E) was banded on the west coast of Florida on February 27, 2009 and not resighted again until January 4, 2014 by our team.

After reading the instructions, submission questionnaires and email responses from Jeaninne Parvin, database administrator, I realized that recording the smallest detail and seemingly insignificant observations while at the location of the sighting is paramount. Collecting data in writing at the location of the sighting prevents loss of data through oversight, memory lapse and eye witness imperfections. The location of the band on the upper or lower leg, and right or left leg - important. Degree of human disturbance of birds - important. Degree of weather conditions - important. Feeding habits: rapid nonstop, intermittent, occasional - important. Time of day - important. Location - important. You will be asked all of the above questions and more . The more information you collect on site and in writing, the better chance your sightings will be recorded.

I have had attached a "Birding Conditions" checklist on the Halifax River Audubon website, [www.halifaxriveraudubonas.org](http://www.halifaxriveraudubonas.org) for your use.

My involvement with Christmas Bird Counts has always been fun and exciting. My extended involvement which will include more attention to all details in bird observation can only enhance my interest and maybe help a bird, a research scientist or two.



Red Knots along the shore in Ponce Inlet



Red Knot # X7J

The silver band on the bird's right leg is its USF&WS band and is applied to all birds that are banded. *Photos by Ray Scory*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Volunteer Opportunity

Volusia County Environmental Management is seeking motivated, team-oriented adults to participate in the 2014 sea turtle and shorebird nesting monitoring program. Monitoring begins on May 1 and continues through October 31. The experience you gain from this position is limited only by your initiative to learn. The position is multifaceted, including sea turtle and shorebird nest monitoring work. Self starters and eager learners are highly encouraged to apply. This is an experience that can change your life. So take advantage of the opportunity. Click [here](#) for details, on the duties, physical requirements, how to sign-up, etc. You'll be glad you did.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Join Florida Nature Tours In The Dry Tortugas

Our friends at [Florida Nature Tours](http://Florida Nature Tours) have an ambitious schedule set for Spring of 2014. There will be five trips out to the Dry Tortugas and one South Florida land tour that can be coupled with one of the Tortugas trips. Cost is 1195.00 per person for 4 days in paradise. Our boat, the MV Spree, is perhaps the finest craft sailing out of Key West. It's clean as a pin and the food will have you begging for the recipes. And, if you don't want to drive back after being on the water all day, you can sleep aboard the boat the night we return, saving you another hotel bill. Click on the link above for all of the information.

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# The Pelican

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

Vol. 59-No.10 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon April, 2014



## Message From The President

*Thoughts from on High*

“And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of a whippoorwill or the arguments of the frogs around a pond at night?” -- Chief Seattle, 1854

Chief Seattle (an Anglicized version of the spelling Si'ahl) was a prominent leader among his people who pursued a relationship with white settlers in northwestern US. The city of Seattle is said to have been named for him. The quote above is taken from a widely publicized speech outlining the need for ecological responsibility and respect of the Native Americans' land that has been attributed to him. However, [Snopes's](#) documents that the moving words in the speech were written by a screenwriter, Ted Perry, for a 1972 film about ecology. None the less, the words still ring true. You can read the full speech on the Snopes link above.

“Why?” you ask, am I telling you this. It's my transition into Save The Frogs Day – April 26, 2014. Frogs are declining worldwide at a never before seen rate. Nearly one-third of the world's amphibian species are threatened with extinction. Since 1980 over 200 species have disappeared. The normal extinction rate is about one species every 250 years, according to the [Save the Frogs](#) website. Frogs are an integral part of the food web. Tadpoles keep waterways clean by feeding on algae. Adult frogs eat large quantities of insects, including those that transmit disease. Frogs are a food source to a variety of species from dragonflies, to fish, snakes, birds, monkeys and more.

Frogs, like many bird species, are bio-indicators of the health of local habitats – both terrestrial and aquatic. Their permeable skin readily absorbs toxins in their environment making frogs susceptible to ecological disturbance, often before it becomes apparent to humans.

And lastly, frogs are cool! Who doesn't have memories of hearing a frog chorus on a spring evening as the night grows dark? Frogs are pretty, sporting a rainbow of colors which inspire artists and jewelry-makers. And how would little boys signify that they like little girls if there were no frogs to catch and wave around while the girls shriek?

*Paula Wehr*



Barking tree frog.



Fla. Bog frog photos courtesy of IFAS

## Calendar & Events

**Monday, April 21st** Monthly Meeting. North Dakota's [website](#) lists an annual precipitation range from 13 inches in the northwest to more than 20 inches in the southeast. Average yearly temperature ranges from 37°F to 43°F. January, the coldest month dips to 2°F. July, the warmest month reaches an average high of 73°F. Quite different from Volusia County which has an average yearly temperature of 71°F and average yearly precipitation of 52 inches. Surely that means birders in North Dakota will see different species than we find here at home. David Baker will present photos of the Birds of North Dakota at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, April 21, at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. A brief business meeting follows the presentation. We look forward to seeing you there.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Field Trips

**Friday, April 4th** Lake Woodruff/Heart Island. Migration is heating up and these two locations are excellent for spotting migrating warblers. Join Chuck & Joan Tague for this trip. Meet at 7:00 am at International Square Mall, east of I-95 behind Krystal in US 92. This one has some long but easy walks. Bring a lunch. Questions, call Joan at 386-253-1166.

**Friday, April 11th** A1A North Run, Washington Oaks, Matanzas Inlet and Gamble Rogers State Park. Join Chuck & Joan for a trip up the coast to look for returning Least Terns and others. Bring lunch and meet us at Ormond Towne Square at Williamson & Granada in Ormond Beach at 7:15 over near the Chick-Fil-A. Questions? Call Joan at 386-253-1166.

**Friday, April 18th** Tiger Bay State Forest. Need Bachman's Sparrow for your life list? This is the place to get it. There are lots of other pine woods species here too. This is an easy trip with little walking. Join Chuck Tague and Ray Scory for this trip. Meet at 7:30 am at International Square Mall, east of I-95 behind Krystal in US 92. Bring a lunch. Questions? Call Chuck at 386-253-1166.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Field Trips With Others

**Monday, April 28th** Join West Volusia Audubon Society on a trip to Gemini Springs Park. Meet Eli Schaperow and the rest of the group at Lake Monroe County Park, 975 U.S. Highway 17-92, DeBary at 8:15 am. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Eli at 407-314-7965.

**Wednesday, April 9th** Join Bonnie Cary and Florida Forest Service personnel for an Eco Buggy tour of Lake George State Forest from 9:30 am till noon. Meet at St Johns River Road and Bluffton Road, west of Barberville off SR 40. Space is limited and preregistration is required. Contact Justina Jones, 386-985-7821 or email: [Justina.Jones@freshfromflorida.com](mailto:Justina.Jones@freshfromflorida.com)

## Conservation Notes

The news from Tallahassee is a constant source of amazement. Not content with having gutted growth management controls that previous legislatures struggled with for decades, the current one is working even harder to further assure that any kind of good planning and citizen input on large developments are a thing of the past. HB 703, filed by Panama City Representative (and shameless corporate shill), Jimmy Patronis, is perhaps the worst bill to come up in this year's legislature. There's also a companion bill in the Senate, SB 1464. It's aimed at crippling local governments so they can't pass or enforce environmental restrictions. It also kills the right of local government to have a super-majority vote on comprehensive plan amendments that are really important to all communities. It's like a laundry list of the worst ideas imaginable regarding thoughtful planning, water quality protection and just plain common sense. Contacting our governor is a waste of time in my opinion. House Speaker, Will Weatherford ([Will.Weatherford@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:Will.Weatherford@myfloridahouse.gov)) and Senate President, Don Gaetz, whose email address is [Gaetz.Don.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:Gaetz.Don.web@flsenate.gov) could step in a squash this thing before it goes any further. Please send them a brief note asking that they do just that.

And that's not the only lunacy in Tallahassee this year. Governor Rick Scott and Attorney General, Pam Bondi, have joined a lawsuit to prevent the clean up of Chesapeake Bay. If you're wondering why our governor would decide to spend our tax dollars on fighting the cleanup of a water body 900 miles from the governor's mansion, look no further than his campaign contributors. The American Farm Bureau Federation, the National Home Builders and those famously civic-minded folks at the Fertilizer Institute hate the idea that government wants to regulate what they can dump into our waterways. The cleanup blueprint for Chesapeake Bay includes something called TMDL's. That stands for "total maximum daily load" and it is a line in the sand so to speak. It means that only a set amount of pollution can be dumped before regulatory action is triggered and the polluters have to modify their actions. Florida has been fighting this for years because the polluters don't want to be held accountable. It's bad for their bottom line and they'd rather stick the tax payers with their cleanup costs. The Florida DEP has been sued to force it to establish TMDL's here. The legislature has already forced DEP to abandon that idea but a ruling in the Chesapeake Bay case in federal court could force DEP to do its job here. If you wonder why the Indian River Lagoon and our local springs continue to slide further into complete collapse this is the reason.

Our new Congressman, Ron DeSantis, just voted for a bill that would deal a serious blow to our national park system. In yet another example of Congressional double speak, the bill was titled the "Ensuring Public Involvement in the Creation of National Monuments Act," also known as "EPIC." Sponsored by Rep. Rob Bishop (R. Utah) the bill does just the opposite of what it sounds like. It deals a death blow to the Antiquities Act. This piece of legislation was passed in 1906 and presidents since Teddy Roosevelt have used it to protect some of our most important national treasures, like the Statue of Liberty, Muir Woods and Grand Canyon National Park. Our national park system returns 10 dollars to local communities for every dollar spent on them. Yet the Republican majority in Congress sponsored a bill to slash 380 million from the Park Service budget every year. And again, Congressman Ron was right there voting with the majority. What is wrong with these people? Why would anyone be against what's been called, "America's best idea"? Hopefully this idiotic bill will die a quick a well deserved death in the Senate. But it won't stop guys like Congressman Ron from trying to destroy what we all hold dear.

*David Hartgrove*



## Meet our Chapter Leaders

### Chuck Tague, Co-Chair for Field Trips

Many readers of this newsletter either know Chuck by sight, have heard one of his presentations, seen his photographs on his website or on the HRA home page or have participated in a field trip with him. For those folks who are meeting Chuck for the first time, here is a little background.

Chuck grew up in a small section of Pittsburgh on the other side of the tunnel into downtown. When the tunnel was opened to traffic, it funneled commuters from all the suburbs through his home area to get to the city, changing the small town atmosphere forever. His family lived on a small farm which was previously a working orchard with heritage species of apples, pears, cherries, etc. The family didn't sell any of the fruit, however, because his father didn't believe in using chemicals on the trees and, therefore, the fruit wasn't blemish free. So was it predictable that Chuck would gravitate toward a lifetime of study/work in the field of ecology?

He earned a BA from Point Park College and studied secondary Education at Duquesne University. He was the Education Curator at the Pittsburgh Aviary and adjunct professor at the Rachel Carson Institute at Chatham University. He also served in the US Marine Corps.

Chuck publishes [Nature Observer's Journal](#), an online blog and photo gallery. He is an accomplished photographer and long-time bird enthusiast. He presented classroom and outdoor programs for schools in Pittsburgh and now does the same for local elementary schools in Volusia County. He is a volunteer with The Casements Envirocamp during the summer.

If you haven't joined HRA for a field trip led by Chuck and his wife, Joan, (featured Chapter Leader in February) you may want to mark your calendar to do so in the future. We know how fortunate we are to have Chuck donate his time, expertise and knowledge to our chapter and appreciate everything he does to make HRA a vibrant chapter.

*Paula Wehr*

## Filming Birds In China and Korea

Cinematographer, Gerrit Vyn, of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, was recently filming shorebirds along the coast of the Yellow Sea. This [link](#) is to a short video of birds we'd have to travel far to see, like the Spoon-billed Sandpiper. One of the rarest birds in the world. Enjoy! *Editor*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Beak Deformities and the Ongoing Case of Why



*photo courtesy of the USGS*

An ongoing study is trying to discover the causes of beak deformities in a variety of species. The Pacific Northwest has seen a rise in incidents recently but it happens closer to home too. Dr. Peter May, of Stetson University, wrote about it on his [blog](#) last December. It's fascinating reading. *Editor*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Welcome to Our New Members

Due to an oversight on my part last month, there's a long list this month. We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Marguerite Ainsworth, Tina Appel, Grace Brown, Anne Catinna, Jacqueline Coffee, Jeanette Davis, Christina Farrell, James Fenlon, Pamela Hanson-Peterson, Marie Helser, Judson King, Shirley Levkulich, Barbara Loomis, Robert Maddern, Mary Michaud, Margaret Palmieri, Nanette Rocha, Harry Scharadin, Joseph Ships, Vicki & Tim Sprunk, David Vedder, Theresa Vrettas, Lorene Wartick, Nancy Wencel and Dennis Wolf. We hope to you at one of our meetings or on a field trip soon. Welcome aboard!

\* \* \* \* \*

## Audubon Adventures For Our Local Schools

Audubon Adventures is a wonderful program that helps engage kids in the natural world around them. 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!

## 7 Tips For Raptor Photography

Some time back we published some wildlife photography tips from Jeff Parker, a Texas based photographer and eco trip leader. His [website](#) lists upcoming workshops some of you might wish to attend, like wild flowers, South Texas Birds and one on Painted Buntings. Our thanks to Jeff for making these available. *Editor*

**Burst mode's best.** When birds blink, their second eyelid (called a nictitating membrane) opens and closes, which can result in strange looking images. Since an in-focus eye is one wildlife-photography "must," burst mode ups your chances of capturing keepers. It also helps collect quick action such as birds fighting over carrion, landing, and taking off.

**Wary is the word.** Nobody had to teach raptors about stranger danger—these birds are born nervous! Quick movement catches their eyes the most. In and out lens movement may even give them pause. Act like a statue, staying still as much as possible. Nervous birds will look at you; if one does, FREEZE! If not careful your actions will scatter your subjects—for the rest of the day. Allow raptors to relax after you shoot your landing shots. A raptor on one foot signifies a relaxed bird. A bird stretching its wings might make you think he's relaxed, but not necessarily! If he has sat still for a while the opposite is probably true—he's probably preparing for take-off.

**Keep concealed.** There's a reason we use the phrase "eagle eye": raptors will see you before you see them (see tip #2). Your best bet's to work from a blind. Often a vehicle works well as a blind, especially if you bring your biggest lens and sit extra still for a while after shutting off the engine. Since I'm talking about photographing non-captive birds, plan on staying far away from these subjects.

**Stay silent.** Raptors can hear well. Vertically offset ears located just behind the eyes help hone in on sound location. Some species get extra ear-range from facial disk feather arrangement. Your voice and your shutter—especially non-stop actuation—could cause the birds to leave for the day. If you must talk, keep your voice down. And use short bursts when shooting.

**Lookout for landings.** Focus on where a bird is headed before she arrives. Like airplanes, most birds (including raptors) take off and land into the wind. Considering when the light's best for photography, an a.m. east wind and a west wind in the afternoon, means you're in luck!

**Prepare for lift-off.** You get some of your best action shots as birds leave. That means you've got prepare for take-off. Good news! Raptors also prepare for take-off and will give you plenty of signs that they're about to depart. A bird looking into the breeze and/or crouching is a bird about to take-off. So, too, is a bird that defecates.

**Practice patience.** Patience pays in wildlife photography, especially when shooting raptors. Don't fire away at a perched bird just sitting there. You're creating lots of boring images and running the risk of scaring your subject away with the sound of your shutter. Wait for natural behavior, the kind of show a relaxed bird puts on: stretching, preening, calling, eating. Wait for her to do something before taking your shot.

*Jeff Parker*

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A friend in Colorado, Kent Nygard, sent me a [link](#) to a short video of a "murmuration" of European Starlings. These birds get a bad rap here in the U.S. because of their habit of out competing our native species for nesting cavities. I once watched some starlings harassing a Red-headed Woodpecker from his newly excavated nest cavity. I know there are several of these videos making the rounds on the Internet these days but this one is really well done. Enjoy!  
*Editor*

*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. 59-No.10 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon May, 2014



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Thoughts from on High*

If you receive regular correspondence from Audubon Florida via email, print materials, social media or word-of-mouth at meetings and events, you know that obtaining sufficient signatures to place Florida's Water & Land Legacy amendment on the 2014 ballot was a #1 goal in 2013. Thanks to the tireless efforts of thousands of volunteers throughout the state, the goal was met and this item will appear as Amendment 1 on the November 4, 2014 ballot.

As stated on [Florida's Water & Land Legacy](#) website, voter approval of Amendment 1 will:

**Ensure that our beaches, rivers, lakes, springs and forests are protected for future generations.** It is only with a stable, long-term funding source that programs like Florida Forever and Everglades restoration can continue.

**Direct one-third of existing state revenues from documentary stamp tax to fund restoration and conservation projects in Florida's most critical water protection areas and lands.** Fees on real estate transactions, known familiarly as 'doc stamps,' have been used for decades to pay for water and land conservation programs. Only recently have these fees been diverted to the State's general revenue budget while Florida Forever funding was cut by more than 95%. There are no new taxes required for this amendment, only a commitment to use existing tax dollars as they have been used for decades.

**Reinforce Florida's long-standing leadership on water and land conservation.** Preserving water quality of Florida's lakes, rivers and springs and acquiring land to protect drinking water sources was been a priority for Governors Graham, Martinez, Chiles, Bush and Crist. This amendment will provide guaranteed funding to continue the protection.

With six month to go before the election, please take time to familiarize yourself with all the details of the campaign. Visit [Vote YES on 1](#) to read the summary and full text of the amendment, review frequently asked questions (FAQs), find resource information or learn how to be involved.

*Paula Wehr*

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Conservation Notes will return next month.

I'm down in the Dry Tortugas, latitude 29 degrees 37' 43" N, longitude 82 degrees 52' 24" W. We're looking for a Black Noddy among all of the Brown Noddies, Sooty Terns, Magnificent Frigate Birds and Black-whiskered Vireos.

*David Hartgrove*

## Calendar & Events

**Monday, May 19th**, Program meeting: Mrs. Belsky's Third-Grade Class, Tomoka Elementary School. Last summer Mrs. Belsky contacted HRA to request assistance in upgrading their existing butterfly garden to include bird-friendly habitat. Chapter volunteers, led by Chuck Tague, and volunteers from the Pawpaw Chapter of Florida Native Plant Society worked with Mrs. Belsky and parents to design and create additional habitat. Join us at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill on Monday evening, May 19, to hear about the project, what the children have learned and how an environmental project makes a difference to the school. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.; presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. A brief business meeting follows.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Field Trips

**Sunday, May 18th**, Join Ray Scory for a walk at Port Orange Causeway Park, below the Port Orange Bridge. Meet at 3:30 pm in the parking area on the west side of the bridge for this easy walk and view the birds on Rookery Island and the shoals nearby. This will be our last field trip before our summer hiatus. In September we'll post a new field trip schedule.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Field Trips With Others

**Volusia County Land Management** and Bonnie Cary have a number of exciting activities planned for May. Here's a [link](#) to the calendar of events. There are eco buggy tours of Longleaf Pine and Deep Creek Preserves, an 11 mile bike ride along the new bike trail and others. Be sure to scroll down past the listings for April to see what's going on this month. For more information, call Bonnie at 386-736-5927 x 21263.

\* \* \* \* \*

## NOMINATIONS FOR BOARD POSITIONS

As outlined in the HRA By-Laws, the Nominating Committee presents the following nominees to fill the three-year position of At-Large Board Member Class of 2017. The term of office begins immediately after elections at the June 16, 2014 Annual Meeting and runs for three years, expiring after the elections at the June 2017 meeting. Nominees for this position are Renate Calero and Marion Monaghan. Members who wish to run against these nominees should contact Paula Wehr so they can be added to the ballot. Self-nominations will be accepted from the floor prior to the election in June.



Mourning Dove

Photo by Ray Scory

\* \* \* \* \*

**EAGLE SCOUT PARTNERSHIP**

Cody Carrier, ninth grade IB student at Spruce Creek High School, approached the HRA Board in August 2013 requesting editorial and financial assistance with his proposed Eagle Scout project. Tomoka State Park had already approved his proposal to upgrade the wildlife observation platform on Boardman Pond, clear the trail leading from the street to the platform and to design and install an interpretive sign on the platform. Cody had already raised nearly \$1,200. The HRA Board approved a matching gift donation of up to \$600 – meaning that if Cody could raise an additional \$600, we would match that amount. Cody was up to the challenge and had commitments for most of the required funding early in the fall.

Working with a professional graphics designer, he took a panoramic photo of the view from the platform and drafted text explaining the importance of this salt marsh to the many species of local and migratory birds that depend upon its continued existence. HRA Field Trip Co-Chair, Chuck Tague, provided photos of birds which are commonly found on Boardman Pond. Together, he and Cody selected nine photos to include in the 54x24-inch sign.

From start to finish, the project took about 13 months and cost about \$2,700 which covered panel design and manufacture with mounting brackets, stain and sealant, painting supplies, caulking and hardware. He began the refurbishment of the platform over the Christmas break but had to work in short time blocks due to rain, cold and school commitments. He finished all work during the first weekend in March and passed inspection by Tomoka State Park. Cody, now in 10th grade, did a great job and we're proud of him.

Story & photo  
by  
Paula Wehr



**Mourning Dove** (*Zenaida macroura*)

a feature of Everyday Birding

by Ray Scory

A Mourning Dove song sung in a soft, plaintive way. Yet it sounds so far away. Nothing very complex here. Yet it serves as an everlasting memory to a place once visited. In the pines of Cape Cod, the backyard of our Florida home, at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, In Boulder, Arizona, Michigan, Connecticut and the Florida Keys, The Mourning Dove is always a welcoming friend. Found most anywhere except deep woods . Wide spread and very common. It is no wonder that 400 million Mourning Doves have been estimated in North America.

The Mourning Dove is a prolific breeder, inhabiting suburbs, farmlands, woodlands, fields and open spaces with trees for its nesting purposes. In warmer areas it can have at least six broods per year. As a game bird the Mourning Dove is well managed. It is estimated at least 20 million are shot each year for food and sport. However, because of its healthy proliferation, it maintains its high numbers and is not considered a threatened species.

I once stood under a mourning dove's nest teetering at the end of a white pine tree in the backyard of my Connecticut home. I looked up and right through to the sky above. I never saw a bird's nest constructed so flimsily, nothing like the fortress-like construction of a robin's nest. A few randomly placed sticks allowed me to see two beautiful white eggs from underneath. Quite an amazing sight. On the other hand, I thought that the bird was quite lazy and really an inept builder of a safe nest for its young. A breeze, that couldn't blow out a match, seemed capable of blowing this nest out of the tree.

Docile and detached the Mourning Dove seems to be. Watch how they sit on a feeder awaiting a refill of seed. Oh, so patiently. Upon refill, so deliberately they feed. Harboring the patience of a good birder, or most likely, the other way around. Don't be fooled by their timid demeanor. I repeatedly watch its ferocity at my feeder. They stand their ground and will not let another bird bully, including another Mourning Dove. The other day, I watch feathers fly before one was pushed off the feeder after a worthy struggle.

While the Mourning Dove does not display eye-popping color, its brilliance is quite in tune with its subtle behavior. Patience and keen observation will expose the delicacies of its color. Open, expressive eyes surrounded by thin azure eye rings contrasts nicely with its soft tan gray body and wings. I especially scan individual mourning doves looking for the soft wash of quiet pink on its neck and lower chest and the strength of the buffed color tan cloaking its underparts. Note the small iridescent patch on each side of its neck. The Mourning Dove is resilient, interesting, softly beautiful and easy to find. A favorite of mine.

Bird Call - Mourning Dove

- \* the oldest known mourning dove was 31 years 4 months old
- \* a straight, fast flying, ground feeding, seed eating bird, a popular bird feeder bird
- \* long pointed tail, small head in comparison to sleek body, wing span - 17.7 inches
- \* drinks by suction without lifting its head
- \* begins feeding young a special "milk" stored in its crop
- \* wing whirl on takeoff and landing is a diagnostic feature



Connie Paulding Photo by Paula Wehr

### MEET OUR CHAPTER VOLUNTEERS

Connie Paulding was born in New York State but lived most of her life in Massachusetts. After raising two sons, she worked in retail sales before starting her own business. Connie had been making sterling silver jewelry as a hobby. A friend from metal-working class invited her to a lecture about making glass beads. Connie was fascinated and began producing her own beads – melting the glass in front of a torch, dropping the molten glass onto a rod and spinning the rod by hand while creating the design in the glass. She sold her creations at juried craft shows in the northeast section of the US before opening her own business.

Her husband, Bart, a consulting engineer specializing in ground water and a professor in the Civil Engineering Dept at their local college, became Connie's moving man when they traveled to craft shows. Connie is more or less retired from jewelry making now but is still a member of Florida Society of Goldsmiths and works in the studio in Deland to make special gifts and to keep her skills current.

She and Bart owned a 38-foot sailboat for 25 years, living on the boat moored at Halifax Marina during the winters of 2000 through 2008. They brought the boat to Florida via the ICW, but have taken ocean voyages to Nova Scotia and Maine. They participated in races from Massachusetts to Bermuda twice with a crew of six, including themselves. Not only did Connie do the cooking, she also had to take night watch and her turn at steering the boat. Racers sail 24x7.

They moved to a condo in 2008 but remained snowbirds until 2013 when they sold their home in Massachusetts and are now permanent Florida residents. They joined Halifax River Audubon after reading an ad in the newspaper about one of our meetings. Connie found Audubon to be very educational. She enjoyed the field trips but wishes the birds would sleep in just a little bit later. Be sure to greet Connie when you see her selling 50/50 raffle tickets at our monthly meetings.

Paula Wehr

Mike Judd, a birder from Dunedin, FL, posted this fascinating article to [BrdBrains](#) on 4/14/14. Our thanks to him and the article's author, Felicia Sanders, of the South Carolina DNR. The points made in Felicia's article about the birds utilizing beaches applies to ours here in Florida as well. Geolocators are tiny devices used to determine information on migrating animals. Here's [link](#) to more information. Editor

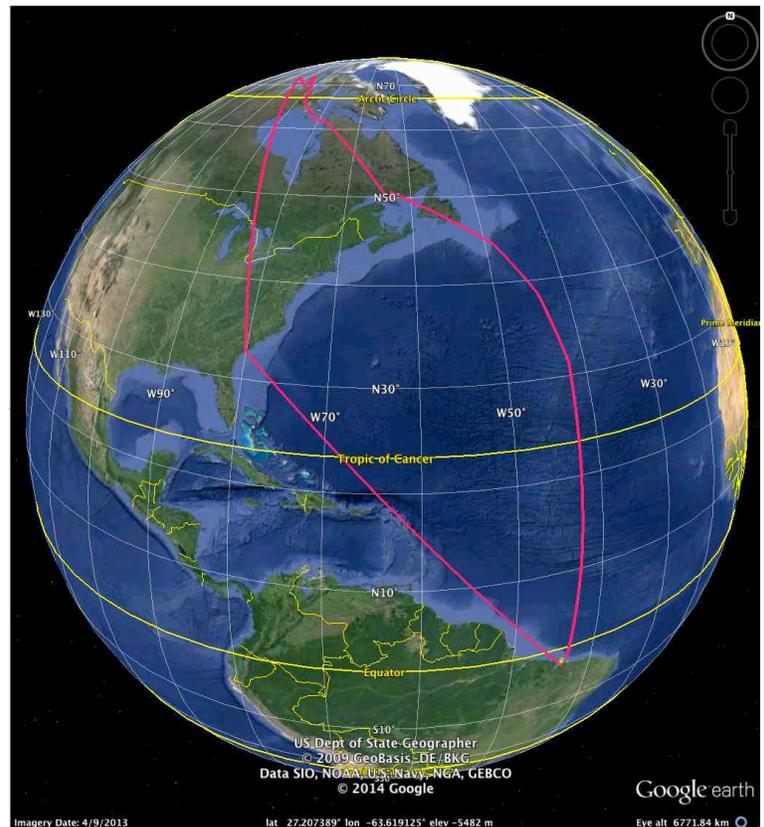
### Ruddy Turnstones, Long Distance Flyers

A team of researchers lead by Dr. Larry Niles captured and attached geolocators to Ruddy Turnstones in Brazil. This is a map of the flight path one Ruddy Turnstone took during one year. Ron Porter is an expert at interpreting data downloaded from geolocators and attachment of these devices. They shared this map and timeline with us.

This Ruddy Turnstone was captured Feb 27, 2013 in Brazil and banded and a geocator attached to a leg band. May 15, 2013 it flew 4 1/2 days and landed at Cape Island, in Cape Romain NWR, SC. June 1, 2013 it flew from SC to Arctic nesting grounds. At the end of July it flew south and arrived back in Brazil August 24, 2013. On Feb 26, 2014 it was recaptured in Brazil, the geocator retrieved and the bird released. The western line is the north migration and eastern line south migration.

Ruddy Turnstones are an arctic nesting shorebird. They are seen on South Carolina's coast all year but are especially common during spring migration when they gain weight and fat to fuel the long flight to the Arctic. Many shorebirds are declining and one reason for this decline is human disturbance on beaches and in coastal areas. This research points to the importance of South Carolina and a need for undisturbed beaches so these birds can rest and feed and make the trip another year!

Felicia Sanders





Red-shouldered Hawk nest at the Port Orange Library

*photo by David Hartgrove*

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### Science and Engineering Fair Winners

Each year the three Audubon chapters in Volusia County pool equal donations to award 4 winners cash prizes for projects with an environmental theme in Senior and Junior categories. Due to space limitations in last month's Pelican these budding scientists were not mentioned. We correct that situation here.

1st prize Senior (\$100) awarded to Priya Gurjar from Spruce Creek High School for her project "Soil analysis for detection of antibiotic producing bacteria".

1st prize Junior (\$100) awarded to Samantha Serroao from River Springs Middle School for her project "Determining the Earthworm's ability/preferences in decomposing common organic waste".

2nd prize Senior (\$50) awarded to Rachel Jimenez from Spruce Creek High School for her project "Pollution in the Intracoastal".

2nd prize Junior (\$50) awarded to Matthew Davis from Burns Science and Technology Charter School for his project "How Does Salinity Affect Manatee Grass?".

While at the "Lagoonacy" event at the Marine Discovery Center on Saturday, April 12th, Matt introduced himself to me. Our future is in good hands.

*David Hartgrove*

\* \* \* \* \*

### Audubon Adventures For Our Local Schools

Audubon Adventures is a wonderful program that helps engage kids in the natural world around them. 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!

Many of you saw the articles in the News-Journal about the hawks at the Port Orange Library. Renate Calero, one of our board members, relates her experience below. Editor

### A Red-shouldered Hawk Protecting Its Nest

Something unexpected happened several weeks ago, just as I stepped out of the local Port Orange library to go back to my car. I felt an impact, as something hit me in the back of my head. Instinctively, I covered the area with my hand, while turning around to find out what it could have been. Since other library patrons seemed to be far away, I looked up above me to see whether there was an explanation to what had just happened. There it was: a hawk sat at the edge of the roof gazing down at me! What a magnificent bird, I thought, as our eyes interlocked for what seemed like an eternity. I took in all its beautifully colored plumage - it was a Red-shouldered Hawk. A lady calling out to me, brought me back to reality: "You are bleeding profusely. You better go into the library to get some help."

Once inside the library I learned that a pair of hawks had an active nest with three chicks in a tree right above the entrance of the library. Yes, they had acted aggressively in the last few days, swooping down close to patrons, but that I was the first person they had physically attacked. While I was putting pressure onto a bump swelling up on my head and to stop the bleeding from three lacerations, the librarian filled in what seemed like endless paper work. The EMT people recommended I to go to the emergency room for a tetanus shot. Then I overheard someone they had to send in a "nuisance bird" report and maybe have the nest relocated. I remember saying to them that I believed that hawks are a protected species and that their nests could not be relocated.

Several hours later, when I finally came home after getting my tetanus shot, I called David Hartgrove, our Chapter's Conservation Chair, with regard to a possible "nuisance bird" report. He did talk the following day to the Library Director, Jane Weimer, who told him that "the hawks had been in residence there for a number of years" and that to her knowledge "this is the first time they've ever attacked anyone." She assured David that the library "would not consider calling in an animal control person to remove the nest or harm the hawks." Thereafter, signs appeared warning of "nesting hawks" and suggesting the use of an umbrella while going in and out of the library.

News spread quickly, especially, after a newspaper article talking about several more people being attacked by the hawks in the days that followed mine. Bird enthusiasts, photographers and other curious onlookers who came to see the hawks feeding their chicks in the nest, started to "hang out" in front of the library. Adults and children alike kept pointing excitedly to the nest. I am sure that for some of them it was a first to see hawks that close. All in all, it was a good learning experience for everyone.

Many friends and neighbors who know my love for birds and nature, did ask me in the first few days after the happening whether I had heard about the aggressive hawks at the library. All I could do was to smile knowingly, before letting them know about my close encounter.

*Renate Calero*

\* \* \* \* \*

### Welcome to Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: David Anderson, Robert Auth, George Blewitt, Clyde Bridewell, Alyce Disiena, Earl Griswold, Walter Harwell, Jr., L L "Doc" & Vera Larrison, Elaine Malkani, Janet Mills, Sandra Owens, Clyde Rodgers, James Schweizer, Patricia Stout, Deborah Sweet, Ferrer Terranera and Bernard Yvon. We hope to see you at one of our meetings or on a field trip soon.

*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. 60-No.1 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon July, 2014



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Thoughts from on High*

During the summer in Florida, birding sometimes gets forgotten beside the activities of walking the beach, relaxing by the pool, boating and the like. But those intrepid birders who brave the bugs, heat, humidity and storms can assist Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) in locating three species during their breeding seasons. The southeastern American Kestrel, the Burrowing Owl and the Painted Bunting are declining species that are often overlooked by traditional monitoring programs such as the North American Breeding Bird Survey.

FWC is encouraging birders to use their new [Rare Bird Registry](#) to quickly map locations where they observe these three species. There are options to upload photos and additional comments, too. The registry is quick and easy to use. Data submitted will be used by FWC scientists to identify important breeding areas for the kestrel, the owl and the bunting as well as estimate the size of their populations.

Karl Miller, biologist at the FWC's Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, says, "The Rare Bird Registry is an excellent opportunity for the public to participate in research. Sightings will provide the FWC with valuable data to help us study and conserve some of Florida's most unique and interesting species. This new website provides a great way to get involved."

The Rare Bird Registry is found on the [MyFWC.com/Get-Involved](#) web page, or you can click on this link, the [Rare Bird Registry](#), to go directly to the site. Breeding season runs from May 31 through July 31, so there is still time to enter data. To report Painted Buntings seen during other times of the year (August through April,) birders are encouraged to create an account on the [Painted Bunting Observer Team](#) (PBOT) website which monitors Painted Bunting sightings throughout their migration and wintering sites.

*Paula Wehr*

## BBA II Needs You and Your Binoculars

If you want to participate in the program our President mentioned above, let me put in a plug here for the Breeding Bird Atlas. This is a 5 year project to document the breeding ranges of all of the nesting birds in our state. This may seem a daunting task but it's been done before, in 1986. If you've lived here for any length of time you know there've been a lot of changes to the environment. We need another atlas to document how those changes have impacted our state's bird population. This is a valuable citizen science project that needs your help and you'll become a better birder in the process of helping. Contact me if you want to get involved.

*David Hartgrove*

## Calendar and Events

**NO MONTHLY MEETING** in July & August. Next meeting is Monday, September 15. Enjoy the summer. Keep up to date on HRA activities by checking our [website](#) often.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Volusia County Parks & Recreation Offers Ways to Learn

Do you have children, or are your grand children staying with you for a week or so? If so, there are workshops and classes designed for the whole family at the Lyonia Environmental Learning Center and other locations. Here's just a partial list:

**Saturday, July 5th, 2:00 to 3:00 pm** Get the buzz on native bees and wasps during a free presentation at DeBary Hall Historic Site, 198 Sunrise Blvd., DeBary. Master Beekeeper Ed Williams will share information about these beneficial insects and their value to agriculture, gardens and landscapes. Attendees may tour DeBary Hall, an 1871 hunting lodge, for regular admission prices, which are \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors, \$2 for children ages 3 to 12, and free for children 2 and younger.

**Sunday, July 13th, 2:00 to 3:00 pm** Join us in the LEC classroom for part one of two of the film "Earthflight." Soar with countless birds across six continents and 40 countries, and see the world from their point of view. David Tennant narrates this exhilarating adventure, filmed over four years with help from camera-carrying birds, drones, paragliders and remote-control microflight planes. This program is free. Meet at Lyonia Environmental Center, 2150 Eustace Ave., Deltona. Reservations are requested and may be made by calling 386-789-7207, ext. 21028.

**Saturday, July 19th, 2:00 to 3:00 pm** Fireflies all over the world are disappearing! During this free indoor workshop, LEC staff will discuss some of the reasons these insects are in peril and some helpful tips we can do to help. Meet at Lyonia Environmental Center, 2150 Eustace Ave., Deltona. Reservations are requested. Call 386-789-7207, ext. 21028.

**For information on all of their offerings check the [website](#).**

\* \* \* \* \*

### Upcoming Events Elsewhere

**September 19-22, 2014 [Cape Cod Bird Festival](#).** The Friday night social features David Sibley, who will speak on "The Psychology of Bird ID." Saturday night dinner features Greg Miller of "The Big Year" book and movie. Both David and Greg will lead field trips. Registration is now open.

**September 23-28, 2014 [Florida Keys Birding & Wildlife Festival](#).** Featured trip - all day, Sunday, Sep 28, boat trip to Dry Tortugas National Park with Mark Hedden of Florida Keys Audubon.

## Conservation Notes

A show down is coming with Volusia County over enforcement of regulations designed to protect wildlife, especially birds, in the Ponce Inlet area. Lighthouse Point Park personnel routinely ignore violations of the rules regarding the feeding of wildlife in the park. Someone, who no doubt means well, places heaping mounds of cat food out for the feral cats that still have not been trapped and removed from the park. Their presence is a direct violation of the Habitat Conservation Plan the County has been committed to since the settlement of the law suit which allows continuation of beach driving. Putting the food out for the cats means that the real wildlife, like raccoons, will eat it too. This violates the County's own rules and park personnel turn a blind eye to these violations daily. Repeated attempts by Wilson's Plovers to nest in the park have failed every year because of predation of their nests. Is the predation by feral cats? We don't know but it's estimated that feral cats kill 500 million birds in the US every year. They certainly have no place in a bird sanctuary.

In May, while doing the monthly shorebird survey of the area, we found nesting Least Terns on Disappearing Island. These birds are listed as Threatened under the Endangered Species Act and extra measures of protection are mandated. To its credit the County has tried to protect these birds. They've installed construction fencing around the colony to deter the folks who routinely go out to the island. Too often the first thing boaters do upon arrival is to allow their dogs and their kids to run amok all over the island. The initial string fencing and signs we put up the first day was ignored by people visiting the island. On June 10th County personnel counted 63 nests in the colony. A week later the number of nests was down to 6. People like the ignorant clowns pictured below, allowing their unleashed dogs to wander through the colony, are the reason for the decline in nest numbers. There's no way they couldn't have seen all the signs.



*taken from Lighthouse Point Park by Michael Brothers*

The new, more expensive, construction fencing will help but the damage has already been done. Thanks to Steve & Mary Blackledge and Rachel Ramsey for answering the call for volunteers to help with the fencing installation. Rachel spent a very hot day out there helping County personnel.

There have been several failures of rooftop colonies of Least Terns locally. The colony atop the Together Unisex Salon, in Ormond Beach suffered heavy predation by Fish Crows. The colony on the Music Building at Bethune-Cookman University was fitted with a camera to monitor the roof at all times. The failure of the colony there was perhaps due to water ponding problems on the roof after heavy rains. Further review of the hours of digital video may reveal predation by crows, gulls or other natural causes. Those are part of the natural cycle. Feral cats and loose dogs are not.

*David Hartgrove*

## The June Challenge Was A Big Hit Around The State

The June Challenge, started by the folks in Alachua Audubon and reported on last month, was a big hit around the state. First state records of birds being seen in the month of June were broken all over the place. Bill Pranty had a pair of Caspian Terns in eastern Pasco County, a first record for that location. Alachua County birders found a Broad-winged Hawk, unusual that far south in June. They also found an American Bittern, as did birders in Pasco County. That bird was photographed for a first June record of that species in the county. American Bitterns were once very rare breeders in Florida but are now seen almost exclusively in winter. While out combing Marion County for her June Challenge list, Alice Horst found this striking Mississippi Kite.

*David Hartgrove*



*Mississippi Kite, photo by Alice Horst*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Bird Flies To The Moon and Back, Sort Of

Articles have appeared in the Pelican about Red Knots on several occasions. These small, 4 to 6 ounce birds make annual migrations of 20,000+ miles round trip, from the Arctic tundra to Tierra Del Fuego at the southern tip of South America. In 1995 a young Red Knot was given band number B95. Over the years this banded bird was resighted by a number of researchers. In the past few years when the bird was seen again it was assumed that it might be for the last time. In the years since it was banded its migration travels would have taken it a distance equivalent to a round trip to the moon. Hence the bird's nick name, "Moonbird." Here's a [link](#) to an article about the bird from the Nature Conservancy.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Blue Spring Alliance Offers Course

The Blue Spring Alliance is once again offering the Springshed Academy, which will include six weekly class sessions to be held on Fridays, starting September 12, 2014. Click on this [link](#) for more information.

## Spotted Sandpiper (*Actitis macularius*)

a feature of Everyday Birding by Ray Scory

I walked by my kitchen window and watched a small, stiff winged bird fly rapidly, low over my backyard pond. It lands and begins an exaggerated body bobbing, repeatedly tilting back and forth from head to tail, feeding. Unique. The Spotted Sandpiper is back. Alone, ready to glean minute bits of energy from the edges of the pond during its brief stopover here before continuing on to its breeding grounds in the sub Arctic regions of Canada and Alaska, or to its wintering grounds as far as South America.

Yes, I would like to think that every little bobbing Spotted Sandpiper that stops by my pond is merely stopping by for a few days before continuing onto exotic places in South America or the upper reaches of Canada. In reality it is the most wide spread breeding sandpiper in North America. It breeds from the upper reaches of Alaska and Canada to the southern states of the continent. It winters in our southern states to Mexico and South America.

This is a very busy bird, covering great distances in migration. Migrants arrive in Florida in mid-July and return north as late as May. On their wintering grounds they lose the bold, black chest spots. My impression of the black spots of their breeding plumage reminds me of the streaky, black spots of the Brown Thrasher or the Wood Thrush's black, spotty look of its breeding plumage.

I am on the lookout for the Spotted Sandpiper whenever I am out near the edges of fresh water ponds, lakes, streams or freshwater wetlands. I photographed one in breeding plumage on the side of Bio Lab Road, Merritt Island NWR long ago. Mostly, I have been able to collect photographs of them at my backyard retention pond. This year, for the first time, two came together. The handbook and reference "Florida's Birds" ©1990 shows the Spotted Sandpiper present in Florida every month except June. My yard records show the non-breeding sandpiper visiting my pond during February, March and August. The breeding plumaged Spotted Sandpiper has appeared during April, May, July, September.

This very interesting sandpiper prefers to travel alone and is seldom seen in flocks. On their breeding grounds the female mates with more than one male and leaves the incubation up to the male. Females that don't find a mate will help incubate and rear other chicks.

I enjoy keeping a yard list, listing the birds on a quarterly basis in categories of feeder birds, yard birds and others. Now and then, I will flip through the pages to see if I can discover patterns of appearances in my yard. The Spotted Sandpiper is one of them. It's nice to know that this unique bird visits my back yard pond and allows me to dream. To dream of its travels and experiences and through my observations I imagine the life it leads.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Welcome to Our New Members

We welcome our new and returning members: Jean Beckwith, Susan Blank, Leanne Fedele, Ben Harrington, Marie Heisler, Bob Hillenbrand, Jenny Meyers, Mimi Munro, Frederick Telling and Ralph Vosdingh. We hope to see you in September at our next meeting or on one of the exciting field trips we're now planning.



Spotted Sandpiper in alternate plumage, photographed in May.



Spotted Sandpiper in basic plumage, photographed in September.

*photos by Ray Scory, taken along the shore of a retention pond near his home in Port Orange.*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Audubon Adventures For Our Local Schools

Audubon Adventures is the 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).

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!

*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. 60-No.2 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon August, 2014



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Thoughts from on High*

In the words of Mark Lane, columnist for The Daytona Beach News-Journal, we have reached ultra-summer here in central Florida. Everything slows down in the heat and humidity. The birds are up at first light and hiding in tree cavities, deep canopy or marsh grasses by 10:30 a.m. when the air gets steamy. Now may be a time to reflect on our birding goals for the fall and winter.

Our Field Trip Co-Chairs, Joan and Chuck Tague, are finalizing the list of official field trips which will begin in September. Details will be posted on our website and a quick reference card will be forwarded to all our members. We look forward to seeing our regular field trippers again in September and encourage them to bring someone new on a future trip. We also invite all our members who've never been on a field trip to join us. We'd love to have some teens or young adults participate.

Over the many years that I attended workshops at Cape May Bird Observatory, I picked up some tips for enhancing the enjoyment and learning experience of field trips.

\* Stay together as a group and keep conversation to a minimum so you'll be able to hear the birds calling/singing/moving. You'll also have the best chance of hearing someone call out when they've spotted a bird. Everyone has the best opportunity to find the bird before it moves on if the first announcement is heard by all and we don't have a chorus of "where?" or "what did he say?"

\* Birders love to share the birds they spot with everyone in the group. But don't take your glasses off the bird unless you've had a satisfying look and you are positive about the identification. Describe the size, shape, profile and field marks to the group as you make your ID.

\* Another, more difficult aspect of calling out the bird you just spotted, is to give clear, concise directions so that others are able to find the bird. Look for something to use as the reference point; i.e.: See the tallest pine tree in the group of four. Follow the trunk to the longest branch angling out to the right. The bird is in the pinecone clump at the end of that branch. Using the reference point allows everyone in the group, no matter where they are standing or how tall/short they are to have the best chance of finding the bird.

Hope to see you at a future HRA field trip.

*Paula Wehr*

## Calendar & Events

There is **NO MONTHLY MEETING** in August. Our next meeting is Monday, September 15. Enjoy the summer. Keep up to date on HRA activities by checking our [website](#) often.

\* \* \* \* \*

**October 3-5, 2014 – [3rd Annual Wings & Wildflowers Festival](#)** at Venetian Gardens, Leesburg, FL. Keynote speaker is Greg Miller, inspiration behind the movie "The Big Year," Stacy Tornio, editor of "Birds & Blooms" and Roger Hammer, director of Castellow Hammock Nature Center.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Pack Your Bags, We're Going To Cuba

If you want to see a Bee Hummingbird or a Blue-headed Quail Dove, the only place to do so is in Cuba. They're two of the 28 species endemic to Cuba. The [Caribbean Conservation Trust](#) has been running birding trips to Cuba for over 17 years. They have experienced guides, comfortable, 1st class accommodations and safe, well planned itineraries. The trip begins on December 1st with a charter flight from Miami to Havana. It ends 12 days later back in Havana, with the possible extension of a one day tour of old Havana for a nominal extra fee. All ground transportation, fees, tips, etc. are included in the price of 4,375.00 per person, double occupancy. Single supplements are an additional 425.00 per person. Final payment is due by September 15th. So there's no time to lose. We need a minimum of 12 people to make this trip happen and a maximum of 15. We have 7 already so that means just 8 more openings. For all the information, call David Hartgrove, 386-788-2630 or e-mail: [birdman9@earthlink.net](mailto:birdman9@earthlink.net).

\* \* \* \* \*

## Lyonia Environmental Learning Center Programs

**Saturday, Aug. 2nd, 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm** Earthflight: Europe. Beat the summertime heat and join LEC staff indoors for an amazing look at storks flying thousands of miles to reach their breeding grounds in Africa. This free program is sponsored by the Friends of Lyonia Environmental Center. Meet at Lyonia Environmental Center, 2150 Eustace Ave. Deltona

**Saturday, Aug. 23rd, 8:30 am to 9:30 am** "Early bird gets the worm." LEC staff will lead this hike into Lyonia Preserve to observe what native birds are out and about searching for food. Bring binoculars and cameras for this wonderful birding opportunity! This program is free. Meet at Lyonia Environmental Center, 2150 Eustace Ave., Deltona. Reservations are requested and may be made by calling 386-789-7207, ext. 21028. And plan to stick around afterward for a history of the Everglades presented by Zach Zacharias, of the Museum of Arts and Sciences. Learn things you never knew, like the story of the 120 year old hermit, the first airboat and more. Call the number above for more information.

## Conservation Notes

In a surprise announcement that went almost unremarked upon in the media, the Obama administration last week opened the entire eastern seaboard to offshore oil and gas exploration using seismic canons that produce sound levels dangerous to ocean wildlife. Fish, turtles and marine mammals all use sound to communicate and to locate prey and mates. These seismic canons kill fish eggs and larvae and scare fish away from important habitats. They also likely deafen marine mammals, like manatees, dolphins and whales. This is all in preparation for the opening of vast areas of the eastern continental shelf to oil and gas exploration in 2018. A move eagerly anticipated by the petroleum industry.

Having promised a change in the way Washington works, the President has been a serious disappointment to his supporters in the environmental movement. The human race faces the greatest crisis in its history as our planet's climate warms in response to the carbon dioxide our fossil fueled mechanisms continue to spew into the atmosphere. Encouraging the continued use of these fossil fuels through more production means the new, cleaner technologies we need for the future are pushed further off into that future. And at what cost? There are fewer than 500 northern right whales left in the world. They come to our coastline in winter to breed and have their young. How many of them will we see beached and bloated as a result of this irresponsible decision? How many dolphins and other marine mammals will suffer permanent damage or die from these tests? What price are we as a society willing to pay for "cheap" gas?

Of course it isn't cheap. The real costs of oil and gas production aren't included in the price we pay. There are other ways to pass those costs onto tax payers. Fracking does irreparable harm to ground water supplies and takes millions of gallons of precious water that could be used for agriculture and converts it into hazardous wastes. The natural gas produced by fracking is driving the conversion of coal fired power plants to far cleaner gas powered units. Yet, while we reduce the soot and other damaging particles from coal as we power our electrical based society, we still pump lots of CO2 into our atmosphere instead of increasing our use of solar, wind and other renewables.

Neil deGrasse Tyson put it best, "We just can't seem to stop burning up all those buried trees from way back in the carboniferous age, in the form of coal, and the remains of ancient plankton, in the form of oil and gas. If we could, we'd be home free climate wise. Instead, we're dumping carbon dioxide into the atmosphere at a rate the Earth hasn't seen since the great climate catastrophes of the past, the ones that led to mass extinctions. We just can't seem to break our addiction to the kinds of fuel that will bring back a climate last seen by the dinosaurs, a climate that will drown our coastal cities and wreak havoc on the environment and our ability to feed ourselves. All the while, the glorious sun pours immaculate free energy down upon us, more than we will ever need. Why can't we summon the ingenuity and courage of the generations that came before us? The dinosaurs never saw that asteroid coming. What's our excuse?"

*David Hartgrove*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Audubon Adventures For Our Local Schools

Audubon Adventures is a wonderful program that helps engage kids in the natural world around them. 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!

## We're Having A Birding Workshop

Birding is a fast-growing, enjoyable hobby and central Florida is the ideal place to learn its techniques. Join experts from Halifax River Audubon and experience the wonders of fall migration while developing your skills. No experience is necessary. The workshop includes three classroom sessions and three outdoor workshops. This is ideal for beginners but more experienced birders will gain valuable knowledge too.

Indoor workshops will be held on Tuesday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. October 28, November 4 and November 11.

Field workshops will be held on Saturday mornings:

November 1 – 8:00 a.m. at Tomoka State Park\*

November 8– 8:30 a.m. at Port Orange Bridge\*

November 15 – 7:00 a.m. at Merritt Island NWR\*

\* Field workshop details are subject to change.

Place: Prince of Peace Church Hall, 600 S. Nova Rd., Ormond Beach

Bring your binoculars to all classes and field workshops.

Donation: \$25.00 check, payable to Halifax River Audubon.

Mail to: Halifax River Audubon c/o Joan Tague

22 Creek Bluff Way, Ormond Beach, FL 32174

Contact the instructors @ 386-253-1166. Or email: Joan Tague at [babyowl@mac.com](mailto:babyowl@mac.com) or Chuck Tague at [kingrail@mac.com](mailto:kingrail@mac.com).

Class size is limited, so sign up early. Children are encouraged. Minors and a parent/guardian pay only one \$25 donation. Check with instructors to determine if your child's age is appropriate.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Welcome To Our New Members

We welcome our new and returning members: Karen Collins, Karen Feller, Eileen Pazos and Marilyn Putnam. We hope to see you at our next meeting in September or on an upcoming field trip.

\* \* \* \* \*

Joe Misiaszek is a birder and photographer who divides his time between Lakeland and Sturbridge, Ma. He recently captured photos of a female Ruby-throated Hummingbird feeding a youngster. Here's one. Another is on a following page.



*Ruby-throated Hummingbirds* photo by Joe Misiaszek

# House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

## a feature of Everyday Birding

by Ray Scory

...in defense of the very singular House Sparrow.

Finding itself

on cement, wood, grass or rot

building a nest is such an art.

Little brown bird strutting about

adding life to an unmoveable thing.

It doesn't matter you cannot sing

that you don't have a melodious voice

like other birds of your sing song race.

Little brown bird regal in brown

gray in contrast and black to match

ready to go out and occupy a new land

ready to raise your industrious clan.

Released in Brooklyn, New York, USA in 1851. The ubiquitous House Sparrow rapidly spread across the nation, reaching the Rocky Mountains by 1900. Known for its chatty and aggressive behavior, it has adapted well to both cities and farms, as well as Mall garden centers. In fact, in years past when I wanted to round out a Christmas Count list with a House Sparrow at the end of the day, a garden center was the place to visit. Never a miss at the Mall. This little brown ball of energy is an experienced city dweller. However, if they find seeds at a farm, they will become farmers. They adapt quite well to living among people - not intimidated. They build their nests where they find open space: behind a store sign, at a garden center, under a bridge, in a traffic light or a bird house whether occupied or not. Very flexible.

Dressed in a gray, brown suit of various shades with impressive accessories of a gray cap, formal black bib and handsome black stripes on the back of its coat completes the House Sparrow's dressy attire. If my appreciation for the appearance of the House Sparrow surprised anyone. I can only reply, "I like the color brown and all its variations." I like the white, green or bluish eggs marked with gray or brown splashes. The House Sparrow's appearance reaches a subtle level of beauty. The color brown is a natural color that evokes a sense of strength and reliability, note the UPS theme color. Brown expresses a feeling of warmth and comfort. It represents wholesomeness, earthiness, steadfastness, simplicity, friendliness, dependability and health. Needless to say, the House sparrow fits many of these qualities.

While the description of the House Sparrow so far fits the male of the species. I would be grossly neglectful if I did not include my admiration for the female attire of the species. This bird is dressed in light to medium shades of brown with no distinguishable markings. David Hartgrove, longtime Conservation Chair of Halifax River Audubon says, "photos of the female House Sparrow are one of the most frequently posted images on birding list serves seeking identification help." However, I personally say that she is a most subtle thing of beauty waiting to be discovered. Look to the House Sparrow for its rich variations of brown, soft grays and strong blacks.

Bird Calls - House Sparrow: a stay at home bird - doesn't migrate; certain studies indicate that the House Sparrow can reach altitudes of 18,000 feet; weights about 0.85 - 1.39 ounces, measures 5.5 inches.



**Male House Sparrow** photo by Ray Scory



**Female House Sparrow** photo by Ray Scory

\* \* \* \* \*

## Call or Write Your Congress Person

At the recommendation of Julie Hill-Gabriel, Audubon Florida, the HRA Board agreed to support House Bill HR 996, the Invasive Fish and Wildlife Prevention Act of 2013 (and its Senate companion bill, S 1153). Florida is ground zero in the fight against invasive, exotic species. While Burmese pythons get all of the headlines, it's the smaller reptiles that will do far more damage to our native species. South Florida is over run with all manner of bearded dragons, monitors and iguanas. They climb trees and eat birds and their eggs. It's time to do something about this invasion before it gets any worse. And reptiles aren't the only exotic we need to be watchful for. Florida will soon have no more red bay trees thanks to a tiny beetle that entered the US through the port of Savannah. The National Environmental Coalition on Invasive Species is heading up the fight to get this legislation passed. You can learn more about them [here](#). Phone calls are good. A hand written letter really does get results. Follow the links below to get the contact information for our legislators.

[The US House of Representatives](#)

[The US Senate](#)

David Hartgrove



**Carolina Wren** photo by Chuck Tague



**The Nest In The Geranium Pot** photo by Paula Wehr

\* \* \* \* \*

Below is the other photo of the Ruby-throated Hummingbird feeding her youngster.



**Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** photo by Joe Misiaszek

HRA member, Eileen Pazos, wrote this for the Pelican

## The Very Persistent Carolina Wren

Today I cheerfully sent off a special donation to the National Audubon Society. I did this not only because I want to aid in the preservation and protection of all birds and wildlife, but because of the personal relationship I've developed recently with the Carolina Wrens on our property. For the past two months or so the pair has been trying diligently to build a nest and start up a family. But these tiny birds have been having a very hard time of it lately and it's been frustrating for both the birds and me.

The first nest they built this spring was a lovely masterpiece sheltered on a window ledge in our tool shed. It was my bathroom window as well, so I had an excellent view for watching the nest building and forthcoming hatchlings. How exciting, since I had never observed this at close hand! But the plans and hopes were to no avail. Either the men working around the property -- or my occasional raising of the frosted window to get a better peek -- scared them away.

Their second pick for a nest site -- on a small ledge under a hose caddy fixture on a wall -- was not a very smart choice. I hate to say it, but I guess the Carolina Wren can also be uncommonly dumb at times. Even though they have an intelligent-sounding scientific name: "*Thryothorus ludovicianus*" My sister and I had to thwart this nest building by placing a stuffed animal toy in the open space.

Their third choice turned out to be the best --but only with a helping human hand. We had noticed a lot of fluttering activity around our garden under the banana trees. Upon further inspection I found the beginnings of another nest in a geranium flower pot. I understand (from Aunt Florence's bird guide) that this is not an uncommon practice for these birds. The pot was situated on a decorative 3 ft high (doric) column, which might have been safe from some predators like snakes. But I guess the wrens hadn't noticed that this location was right opposite the cat door! Although I am proud to tell all the ornithophiles out there that neither of our two stray adopted cats have caught birds while living with us -- only squirrels, anoles and moles --such an easy catch of hatchlings would be just too tempting.

Obviously something had to be done. The column was a pretty good idea (I don't think snakes can navigate this sort of thing) so I looked around for a safer place to put it. I found one in a sheltered alcove where two sections of the house meet. Here the nest would be protected from the hot sun, rain and wind. To further protect the site from jumping-type predators (perhaps the cats) I placed a plastic zig-zag fence around the column. It took about two days for the wrens to realize that the nest site had been relocated, but when they did discover it, they continued with their nest building, tunneling into the dirt in the pot and lining the nest with dried leaves and such.

Well, there's sad news coming, but then a bit of renewed hope. The two lovely speckled eggs that were soon laid, disappeared after five days. We have no idea who or what was responsible. But then - over a period of 10 days perhaps -- I found one egg-- then two-- then three-- in the same nest. The wrens were trying again! What courage and perseverance! What a will to survive and propagate! I was happy again. Happier still when I got a close look at mother wren sitting on her eggs, and this time she didn't fly away as before. Instead she looked me straight in the eye, and appeared to say, "I'm okay with you now." She had the most bright, beautiful-- and huge eyes for her size. We established an instant rapport, on my part at least. Perhaps I'm guilty of anthropomorphizing. I was in fact, "smitten" by this tiny, brave creature. That's how the situation now stands at the homestead with our Carolina Wren family, and I'm praying for a very happy ending.

Eileen Pazos

*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*

Volume 60-No.3 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon  
September, 2014



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Thoughts from on High*

As we've discussed here previously, those of us who follow the natural calendar, know that the new year actually begins in September. Although it will be some time before we here in central Florida feel the effects of cooling temperatures, the official start of Fall is only 22 days away. Early migrants – Semi-Palmated Sandpipers, Black and Least Terns, to name just a few – have been spotted locally. Swallow-tailed Kites have been massing throughout August in preparation for their return to South America.

To maximize our chances of finding all the migrants as well as our regular winter residents, our Field Trip Co-Chairs have developed a full schedule of field trips calculated to put us in the habitat most favorable to find the birds which are migrating at the time. You'll receive a quick reference card within the next few weeks via US mail listing all the details. There is no need to wait until January to begin your New Year's resolutions to join us on an outing. September is the perfect time to begin.

September also puts us in the "back to school" and learning mindset. Register now for the Beginner Birdwatching Workshop, which includes 6 sessions for only \$25. Click [here](#) for details and the registration form.

And finally, the warm September waters of Volusia County come alive with bioluminescence. Every movement in the water produces light: the swirl of a paddle, a swarm of a school of mullet or even a drop of rain, as documented by John Anderson in the article entitled, "[Dance of the Diamonds.](#)" Click on the link to read Mr. Anderson's report which is reprinted in the Ormond Beach Historical Society Fall Newsletter, page 6. Let us know if you've ever seen a similar phenomenon while walking the bridge!

*Paula Wehr*

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## Welcome To Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Kathy Brehm, Cheryl Burgess, Carla Christianson, Reid Conrad, Lauren Convey, Anita Deckard, Michael Dresner, Robert Durham, Gary Dymesch, Charles Elwyn, Sr., Lee & Ann Faircloth, Sandy Geddes, Alva Gill, Gregg Goldsworthy, Carolyn Goodrich, Robert Hanson, Reid Hughes, Brenda Levine, Patricia Moore, Donald Moore, Annemarie Morris, James Murphy, Jean Phillips, Holland Pugh, Kim Ramos, Sandi Scott, Earl Stutzman-Miller, L. Taylor and Dorothy Weber. We hope to see you all at our informative meetings or on our fun and exciting field trips.

## Calendar & Events

**Monday, September 15th, Program Meeting,** "Little Fish are a Big Deal to Birds". This is our first meeting of the 2014/2015 season. Forage fish are an important food source for Florida's seabirds, sport fish and other top predators. Join Cameron Jaggard, from The Pew Charitable Trusts, to learn about the critical role forage fish play in the marine food web, discuss the link between forage fish and Florida's birds and find out how you can help safeguard healthy forage fish populations for the benefit of Florida's environment and economy. The doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. Our speaker begins at 7:00 p.m. A brief business meeting follows.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Field Trips

**Friday, September 26th:** A1A Fall Run. Join Chuck & Joan Tague for this trip to points north along A1A. We'll stop at Washington Oaks State Gardens for migrating warblers and Matanzas Inlet for shorebirds. Meet at Ormond Town Square, corner of Granada and Williamson at 7:15. Bring lunch.

**Wednesday, October 1st:** Buschman Park. Join Joan & Chuck Tague for this trip to look for migrating fall warblers. Meet at the park, 4575 Spruce Creek Road, at 8:00 am. This easy walking trip of a mile or so will not extend into lunch.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Field Trips With Others

**Friday, September 19th:** Join our sister chapter, West Volusia Audubon Society for their trip to Audubon Park, a Deltona City Park. Meet at 8:00 am in the shopping center parking lot at Doyle Road and Courtland Blvd. Questions? Call Eli Schaperow at 407-314-7965.

**Saturday, September 20th:** Join the WVAS folks for a trip to the banding station at Tomoka State Park, hosted by our own Meret Wilson, licensed bird bander. The West Volusia folks will be driving over from the DeLand Post Office but you can just meet them at the park if you like. The address is 2099 North Beach Street, Ormond Beach. Questions? Call Eli Schaperow, 407-314-7965.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Saturday, September 20th:** The Museum of Arts & Sciences will host its annual Natural History Day. Our chapter will have a table at this event and there's lots of fun activities for adults and kids. Craig Saffoe, Curator of Great Cats at the National Zoological Park, will give a presentation on the park's captive breeding program for Cheetahs and there will be a kids fossil program too. All of the information is on this [link](#). The fun starts at 9:00 am.

## Conservation Notes

September 1st marks the 100th anniversary of the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon. In an article in the current issue of Smithsonian Magazine it's reported that 101 years earlier, in 1813, John James Audubon arrived in Louisville, KY during a migration flight of the birds. It took nearly 3 days for the entire flight to pass by. Audubon said that, "The light of noonday was obscured as by an eclipse..." Due to the pressures of market hunting and habitat loss, within less than 90 years, seeing a Passenger Pigeon in the wild was extremely uncommon. This bird at one point made up over 40% of the entire bird population of North America. On September 1st, 1914, Martha, the last surviving Passenger Pigeon, was found lying on the bottom of her cage in the Cincinnati Zoo. Having been hatched in Chicago's Brookfield Zoo and later donated to the zoo in Cincinnati, she had never been in the wild. In the last year of her existence the zoo keepers had to erect extra fencing to keep members of the public from throwing sand in her cage to make her move.

\* \* \*

We all know that if we're ever going to get a handle on global climate change we need to invest in alternative forms of energy. Wind power and solar are very good alternatives. They do have their drawbacks though. The [American Bird Conservancy](#) has filed suit against the Interior Department's recent ruling that wind energy operators can obtain incidental take permits to cover the deaths of Bald and Golden Eagles at locations in the west. And solar has its problems too. A solar array in the California desert operated by Bright Source Energy uses 300,000 mirrors that are computer controlled to direct concentrated sunlight onto a large water tank. The super heated water turns to steam and powers up to 140,000 homes. Unfortunately, the array covers a wide area and birds flying through the super heated air are instantly incinerated and turned into "streamers", which flutter to the ground leaving a smoking trail. Estimates range from about 1,000 bird deaths per year by Bright Source's accounts to 28,000 by the Center For Biological Diversity. The true total is probably somewhere in between.

There are no easy answers here. We simply can not continue pouring green house gases into our atmosphere through the use of fossil fuels for power generation. Recent reports show that the ice caps in Greenland and Antarctica are melting even faster than the worst case scenarios predicted just 10 years ago. At the same time no one wants to see birds killed by wind turbines or incinerated in mid air over solar arrays. Research is being done to see if some kind of ultra sonic device might discourage birds from flying into areas where they would be endangered. Not siting wind farms in migratory pathways is a good start too. One thing's certain, the particulate pollution from coal fired plants kills humans and birds every year through a variety of respiratory illnesses. Unless we're all ready to give up our energy dependent lifestyles, tradeoffs will have to be made.

\* \* \*

Finally, a happy ending in the form of a You Tube video posted by some of the good folks at the Marina Discovery Center in New Smyrna Beach. If you've ever been walking along a shoreline and seen an empty horseshoe crab shell you might well ask yourself how that animal goes about discarding the old one. In the touch tank at MDC the horseshoe crabs live pretty much solitary lives keeping to themselves even though there are several in the tank. But apparently these primitive creatures are more attuned to their surroundings than we think. Listen as MDC volunteers, Mark Spradley and Noelle Dunbar, discuss the action and postulate on what's happening. Here's a [link](#) to the video.

David Hartgrove

## Bird Identification Help On Your Smart Phone

If you've been looking for a little help in identifying birds, the answer could be in your pocket or purse. Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology has developed an app for that. It's called Merlin and its interactive program is designed to ask you 5 questions. Based on your answers to those, and the power of the [e-bird](#) database, it can give you a series of options. They include photos and songs to help you learn and identify the birds that may have had you stumped. There are both i-Phone and Android versions. Here's a [link](#) to the page at Cornell's site. Oh, and it's free!

\* \* \* \* \*

## Following Swallow-tailed Kite Migration

The Avian Research and Conservation Institute in Gainesville has been attaching solar powered satellite transmitters to Swallow-tailed Kites for several years now. Here's a [link](#) to the web page where you can get updates on these birds. Most of these birds have just left Florida on their southward migration. The vast majority will spend the winter in western Brazil. They'll return to our state in February for nesting season.

\* \* \* \* \*



Bald Eagle in the nest tree in Centennial Park

photo by David Hartgrove

## They're Back For Another Year

Official nesting season for Bald Eagles in Florida begins October 15th. As they have in the past though, the pair that nests in Holly Hill's Centennial Park apparently like to get an early start. Though not nesting yet, they were reported on Wednesday, August 27th. The photo above shows the female perched in the nest tree. I was able to determine which bird this was because at one point I was able to see a portion of the USF&WS band on her right leg. The male lacks a band. He was not in the area when this photo was taken but was seen earlier. As with all birds of prey, the female is about 1/3 larger than the male and it was clear that this was a big girl. Regular readers will remember that this pair of birds fledged 3 chicks from their nest 2 years ago. One later perished in one of the large tanks at the water treatment plant just west of the nest tree. Last year they fledged 2 chicks. At our chapter meeting on December 15th we'll be showing the movie, "Eagle Flight: A New Beginning", by local film maker, Steve Brown. As seen through the eyes of a little girl named Sadie, the film tells the story of these eagles and their family. Stop by the park, located on 10th Street just west of the rail road tracks and check out the birds. It's one of the most accessible eagle nests in the area.

David Hartgrove

# Great Egret, (*Ardea alba*)

a feature of **Everyday Birding** by Ray Scory

Tall and erect. Stately. A royal presence as it defines the boundaries of its vast range. Year-round from Oregon down through California, around the shores of Mexico, up into Texas and east through the sunshine states into Florida up to North Carolina, down to the Caribbean Islands and summering in the lower New England states. The Great Egret patrols its territory cloaked in an appearance of elegant greatness. A year-round resident of South America and the lower two thirds of Africa, it also breeds and winters in southern Europe. The Great Egret is the defining landmark I first notice and look for when I return to Florida. Its classy demeanor shouts, "Florida!" It is the bird that holds the avian landscape of Florida together. Collectively, from first-time visitors to home grown Floridians, this waterbird elicits a gratification of discovery, excitement and wonder.

This bird is not a master of disguise and it doesn't sulk under cover of Nature's foliage. It is out in the open and its stately stature separates it from its avian neighbors. A large waterbird dressed in white, sporting a brilliant yellow beak and supported by two long black legs and feet is hard to miss. Identification will come with time and observation. Yet the birthright to every beginner bird watcher is to start the birding journey by recognizing the difference between the Great Egret and Snowy Egret. We must fix in our memory that the Great Egret is all white with a yellow beak and all black legs and feet. While the Snowy Egret is a smaller all white waterbird with an all black beak from tip to face and smartly displays all black legs ending with outstanding yellow feet. Yellow beak, Great Egret. Yellow feet, Snowy Egret. That is the diagnostic genius between these two birds. The discovery of more subtle differences I shall leave to the reader for their enjoyment and ID development.

Great Egrets reside near both brackish and fresh water. Wetlands, rivers, ponds, even roadside ditches define their habitat and feeding grounds. They feed on aquatic insects, fish, crabs, salamanders, mice and lizards. In my yard, I have silently watched them slither and sway in front of saw palmetto plants, as if tempted by a snake charmer, lining up [anole](#) prey. In 1953 a flying Great Egret officially became the symbol of the National Audubon Society in memory of their efforts to stop the slaughter of egrets, other water birds and songbirds at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th Centuries.

For many years I conducted a waterbird survey at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. My ten to sixteen year old grandson, Dylan, would visit us from his Colorado home during his summer vacations. His responsibilities on these waterbird forays was to unlock the gates, take water samples for salinity studies and identify and count all the white birds. I would like to think that when he reflects back on those years, he will remember the good times and the Great Egret that almost looks like a Snowy Egret.

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## Audubon Adventures For Our Local Schools

Audubon Adventures is a wonderful program that helps engage kids in the natural world around them. 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!



Great Egret photo by Ray Scory



Great Egret with chick photo by Ray Scory

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## Carolina Wren Update

*Eileen Pazos wrote about Carolina Wrens for last month's Pelican*

In last month's piece about nesting Carolina Wrens, Eileen Pazos described the activity in her yard and the story of their dedication. The hopeful nature of that piece failed to end well. The eggs hatched and Eileen saw the birds delivering food to the nestlings. When she went to check on them though she found the nest empty. The predator remains unidentified.

Carolina Wrens mate for life and are non migratory. They defend a territory all year and are one of the only species to sing year round. The male constructs as many as 3 or 4 nests. The female chooses one and completes its construction by adding soft moss, grasses, hair, shed snakeskin and other bits of found material. She does all the incubation while he brings her food. Spiders and other insects make up about 85% of their diet, though they will come to feeders for suet and some seeds, especially in winter. Here in Florida 3 broods per year are common. The young fledge after 10 to 12 days but stay in the area for up to 2 weeks, often returning to the nest to roost at night. The male provides extra food while the female moves on to the next nest to begin the cycle again.

David Hartgrove

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**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*

Volume 60-No.4 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon  
October, 2014



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Thoughts from on High*

Based on the number of fishing trips taken per year, the number of residents and visitors involved and the number of record holding catches, the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission named Florida, "The Fishing Capital of the World." While the big five species – sailfish, tarpon, red drum, spotted trout and snook – are prize catches, all the fish in the food chain are critical to sustainability. Perhaps most critical are the forage fish at the bottom of the food chain. Many are spawned in our estuaries and supply food for larger fish, marine mammals, sea birds and waders, as well as being ground into fish oil for humans and fish meal for plant fertilizer. Saltwater fishing has a \$7.1 billion impact on our economy with 2.4 million visitors and residents actively fishing in Florida waters in 2011. Over 65,000 jobs were attributed to the fishing industry in 2012. Florida's economy is heavily dependent on sustaining a balance in our fresh and salt water habitats. Being at the bottom of the food chain, small fish live in tightly-packed schools which provide protection from predation. But this very closeness also makes them vulnerable to having an entire community caught in one net.

At our September meeting Cameron Jaggard, Sr. Associate, US Oceans, The Pew Charitable Trusts, outlined growing concerns about protecting forage fish. At present forage fish comprise 20 percent of commercial take, but only two species have a management plan. Recent research, led in part by Ellen Pikitch, PhD, of Stony Brook University underscored the critical link played by forage fish in ocean food chains. They feed on plankton which produce energy from the sun. Then these fish transfer this energy to seabirds, marine mammals and larger fish. Dr. Pikitch eloquently stated, "Pilchards turn sunshine into snook." That same statement could be revised to "Forage fish turn sunshine into Roseate Spoonbills (or whatever water bird one likes best.) Because forage fish are so important to the health of birds, The Pew Charitable Trust and Audubon Florida partnered to create the report, "Fins and Feathers: Why Little Fish Are a Big Deal to Florida's Coastal Waterbirds." Click on this [link](#) to view or download this 48-page pdf document which includes stunning illustrations as well as summaries and details of all the research.

*Paula Wehr*

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## Welcome To Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Betty Delanoy, Thomas & Susan Jarosik, Christiane McCarthy, Lani Van Petten, Marcia Varga, Adam Winnie and Liliane Yates. We hope to see you at at meeting or on a field trip soon.

## Calendar & Events

**Monday, October 20th, Program Meeting:** "Oyster Reef Restoration Project". We've all read about the water quality issues in the Indian River Lagoon and some of the recommendations for improvements. One important project is restoration of oyster beds. A single oyster filters 40 to 50 gallons of water per day. The Marine Discovery Center in New Smyrna Beach has an ongoing initiative, in partnership with several seafood restaurants, to build a base for oysters to use as habitat. Annie Morgan, Shoreline Restoration Coordinator at MDC will provide details on this topic. The doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. Our speaker begins at 7:00 p.m. A brief business meeting follows.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Field Trips

**Wednesday, October 1st, Buschman Park.** This field trip meets at the park, 4575 Spruce Creek Road, Port Orange. This will be coming into peak Fall migration. So we'll be looking for warblers, vireos and some of the flycatchers that are seen in our area only during migration. We'll be finished by noon, so no need for a lunch this trip. Meet trip leaders, Chuck & Joan Tague, in the parking lot at 8:00 am. Questions, call them at 386-253-1166.

**Friday, October 10th, GTM Estuary Preserve.** Join Chuck & Joan Tague on this trip north of St Augustine to this great spot. The trails host migrant warblers. The shoreline has gulls, terns and shorebirds. Plan on a hike of over a mile and perhaps an extra pair of shoes that can get wet. Bring lunch and meet at Ormond Town Square, corner of Granada & Williamson Blvds., behind Chick-fil-A. Questions, call 386-253-1166.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Field Trips With Others

**Southeast Volusia Audubon Society:** SEVAS has two trips in October: Friday, Oct. 10th, 7:00 am, to Washington Oaks State Gardens and Sat., Oct. 25th, 8:00 am to Spruce Creek Park. Meet at Market Square, corner of US 1 & Indian River Blvd., Edgewater. Questions, call Gail Domroski, 386-453-1211.

**West Volusia Audubon Society:** Has three trips in October: Sat., 10/4, is their Fall Migration Count. Call Harry Robinson to get on a team: 386-943-8342. On Tues., 10/14, join them on a trip to Washington Oaks State Gardens. Meet us at the NE corner of the Deland Post Office parking lot on E New York Avenue (SR44) at 7:45 am. On Friday, 10/17, join them for a trip to Audubon Park in Deltona. Meet at the NW corner of Courtland Blvd. and Doyle Rd., Deltona, in the middle of the Shopping Center parking lot at 7:45 am. Questions, call Eli Schaperow: 407-314-7965.



When you mark your ballot on Election Day, the most important action you can take for the environment is to vote yes on Amendment One. The Chamber of Commerce and other big business mouthpieces are starting their campaigns against this amendment. The hyperbole will be designed to scare the uninformed voter into thinking that this is a new tax to be levied on them. Another group, catering to the truly delusional among us, has been screaming about this amendment being part of some clandestine plan by the United Nations to take over the country and place us all in reeducation camps. In the back of my mind I hear the theme from Twilight Zone being whistled by some guy with an aluminum foil beanie.

The reason we need to pass this amendment is that our state Legislature several years ago decided that they were free to ignore the wishes of their constituents. The state's budget plan had gone down the tubes when the banks wrecked the economy through all kinds of mortgage fraud and greed. The Legislature already had a plan to give tax breaks to big corporations, regardless of the problems this might cause in formulating a budget. In order to fund these they quit funding Preservation 2000 and Florida Forever. Both of these programs had been approved by an overwhelming majority of Florida voters. But the voters can't afford to write those big checks to the legislator's reelection campaigns like corporate donors. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know what happened next. Our programs were gutted and the big guys skipped off to the bank with bigger profits. Which allows them to write bigger campaign donation checks.

Amendment One will simply enshrine in the state's Constitution a dedicated funding source for environmental programs that benefit all Floridians. Some of our biggest challenges, like fresh water recharge, endangered lands acquisition and state park upgrades will have guaranteed funding that will be harder for the Legislature to get their sticky fingers on. And this is not a new tax. The funding mechanism is already in there and was the source of funds for both programs. Every time a piece of property is sold a small fee is charged and stamps are issued and affixed to the document to indicate that the purchase is legal and documented. This is the meaning of the term, "doc stamps." The amendment guarantees that one third of the funds collected from these stamps will be used for environmental programs like clean water, parks, beaches, etc. Please, vote yes for this important amendment.

David Hartgrove

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Audubon Adventures

Audubon Adventures is a wonderful program that helps engage kids in the natural world around them. See the link here for more information. Donations from members fund this program. Recent changes to offer digital versions of the course have significantly lowered its cost. Any amount is deeply appreciated and just 16.00 will fund the cost for a classroom for a year. Send your donation to Halifax River Audubon, P.O. Box 166, Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166. Be sure to note on your check that it's a donation to Audubon Adventures. Thank you!

Bonnie Cary, Naturalist with Volusia County's Land Management Department, has some exciting events planned for October. Here's a chance to see some of the environmental jewels our county has purchased with Volusia Forever funds and learn at the same time.

Friday, October 3rd- If you have a canoe or kayak, join Bonnie for a paddle along the St Johns River. Meet at 9:00 am at the Lemon Bluff Boat Ramp, 907 Lemon Bluff Road, Osteen. Paddlers will set out from Lemon Bluff Boat Ramp and take a leisurely 2 hour paddle on the St. Johns River and observe shoreline flora and fauna along the way. Life jackets and whistle are required.

Saturday, October 11th- Join Bonnie for a guided hike at Wire Grass Prairie Preserve, 1751 Lopez Road (off Pell Road) Osteen. Take a 3 mile guided hike on Wiregrass Prairie Preserve to see and experience this Volusia County Conservation Lands property and learn about the plants and animals that call it home. Wear comfortable clothes that match the weather, hiking or walking shoes. Bring water to drink. Meet at 9:00 am for this 2 hour event. Be prepared for rough roads in this area.

Friday, October 17th- Star Tour of the Night Sky at Wire Grass Prairie Preserve. Dr. Hugh Ward, astronomy educator for over 40 years, will lead a celestial tour of the night sky above Wiregrass Prairie Preserve and answer relevant questions. Adults and families will observe via their eyes and telescopes: constellations, bright stars, planets, star clusters, Messier objects, and maybe a Comet! Bring: Folding chair, insect spray, flashlight and your own telescope, if you have one. Arrive before sunset. The Preserve is located at 1751 Lopez Road (off Pell Road) in Osteen. Be prepared for rough roads in this area. Please register for this event by calling 386-736-5927, ext.21263 or her cell, 386-804-0437.

Tuesday, October 28th- Longleaf Pine Preserve Eco-buggy Tour. Meet at the east entrance to the Preserve, 4551 Pioneer Trail New Smyrna Beach at 9:00 am. Take an eco-buggy tour of Longleaf Pine Preserve. Participants will experience pine flatwoods, cypress domes and swamps on a riding tour with exploratory stops along the way to discuss wetlands and their importance in natural habitats. Space is limited to 27. Please register by calling Bonnie at 386-736-5927, ext. 21263 or her cell, 386-804-0437.

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Environmental Videos

One of our members, Captain Jim Boyle, forwarded this link a few weeks ago. It's only about 4.5 minutes and it has stunning views of Yellowstone. It describes how the reintroduction of wolves to the Park was a benefit to all sorts of other animals and even the Park's future. Enjoy!

Mark Vance is a photographer and film maker residing in Sarasota. Earlier this year he spent a lot of time documenting a Sandhill Crane family's exploits. Below are links to the brief films he's posted on You Tube.

Number One shows the eggs and the birds' location in a retention pond in a residential area.

Number Two shows the first chick's initial experiences with his new world just after hatching.

Number Three shows the arrival of the second chick. As it opens, notice how alert the parents are at the sound of Laughing Gulls calling off camera.

Number Four shows the colts' (young Sandhills are called colts) first forays into the world they'll grow up in on their first day out of the nest.

Our thanks to Mark for his permission to use these. Visit Mark's website for views of his stunning photography.

## We're Looking For Content

Publishing a monthly newsletter often means finding enough information to fill the pages. You can help with this. If you've written a piece you're proud of or if you're a photographer and have some photos with accompanying text, send them along electronically to this [address](#). Submissions should be no longer than 500 words. Photos should be under 150 kb please. Thanks!

\* \* \* \* \*

## Pelagic Trip Report

On Sunday, September 28th, The Friends of The Marine Science Center hosted another of their pelagic birding trips aboard the Pastime Princess. We left the dock in New Smyrna Beach at 4:00 am and headed out into the early morning darkness. By sunrise we were 20 miles offshore and began seeing Black Terns. Soon we were seeing scattered Bridled Terns, a few Common Terns and Sooty Terns. The first Cory's Shearwater was seen off the port side of the boat about 30 yards out going away from us. The seas were running about 3 to 4 feet and the trip was pretty smooth as the captain steered around the numerous rain squalls. By 11:00 am we were out about 60 miles when a migrating female Common Yellow-throat flew aboard and landed on the deck. It was clear that she was exhausted. Soon however she was hopping around on the deck and disappeared under the large chest freezer. With so many other things to draw our attention we soon forgot about the little bird.



Female Common Yellow-throat, *photo by David Hartgrove*

About 4:30 pm the little bird showed up again, having flown out long enough to realize that perhaps this wasn't such a good idea. She circled the boat and landed again several times. She was last seen when we were about a mile out from the mouth of Ponce Inlet. About 10 years ago another female Common Yellow-throat flew aboard the boat when we were far out at sea. She spent the rest of the day hopping around in the cabin under the benches and tables looking for tiny insects and spiders. It was dark as we sailed in under the North Causeway Bridge on our way back in. I happened to look up in time to see her fly out into the darkness. She'd hitch hiked to a place where food was easier to find and her south bound journey could continue.

*David Hartgrove*

## The Murderous Gourmet

Last month was the 100th anniversary of the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon. A bird that was hunted out of existence for the tables of diners in the late 19th century. Perhaps with this anniversary in mind, [Birdlife International](#) has been putting pressure on France to live up to its commitments to protect the Ortolan Bunting.

This small member of the Emberizidae family is protected under both European Union and French law. Over the past 30 years the European population has declined by over 80%. In France, the species is especially threatened because its population has dropped 42% over the past 11 years. Prior to the extension of protection to the birds in the mid 1990's, as many as 50,000 were caught annually.

In France the law has been routinely ignored because the eating of Ortolan is considered a rite of passage for budding gourmets. It's also seen as a cultural heritage icon and it's a significant pocketbook issue for the poachers. Somewhere between 10,000 and 30,000 Ortolan Buntings are poached and sold for up 150 Euros, about 119.00, a piece. Unfortunately for the poor birds this high price is the result of what happens after they're captured. Capture is done by having caged birds sing to attract wild birds. Once caught the birds are placed in either dark boxes or blinded. Their reaction to the lack of visual stimuli is to eat constantly. This causes the birds to double or triple their regular weight in a few short weeks. They are then plunged into a vat of Armagnac and drowned.

The rest of this sordid tale is enough to make civilized people shake their heads in wonder. The birds are plucked, roasted whole and are ready for the table. The eating of Ortolan is a truly bizarre event. The diner places a large napkin over his or her head. Then the entire bird is placed in the mouth with only the head protruding through the lips. The diner bites down, the bird's head drops onto the plate or into the napkin and the diner continues to chew. The tiny bones and inner organs are part of the meal. In fact, when the stomach and lungs are broken by the chewing action, the remains of the Armagnac the bird was drowned in are released into the mouth of the diner and this is thought to be the crowning moment. The practice of covering one's head with the napkin or towel is explained as being necessary to fully capture all of the volatile aromas of the dish. However, the first person rumored to have done this was a priest, Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin. His explanation was that he did so to cover his shame and gluttony from God's eyes.

On September 4th French environmental activists launched raids on known poaching locations, releasing the caged birds and retaining any that had been mutilated by blinding. These were then turned over to French authorities as proof that the practice was going on. In 2013 the French wing of Bird Life International had filed a formal complaint with the European Commission protesting that both the EU and the French government were doing nothing to protect the birds. The Commission responded by issuing a stern letter to the French government that if the law wasn't enforced, heavy sanctions would be placed on France by the other EU members. Perhaps this murderous meal will now cease to be served and the Ortolan Bunting can begin an uncertain climb back to sustainable numbers.

*David Hartgrove*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Birding the Dry Tortugas

Being in the Dry Tortugas during Spring Migration is something that should be on any birder's bucket list. [Florida Nature Tours](#) has been taking birders to the Tortugas longer than anyone else. Check out the site and make your plans to be there next April.

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# The Pelican

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

Volume 60-No.5 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon  
November, 2014



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Thoughts from on High*

The southern migration of “confusing fall warblers” continues into November. Early migrants like the Blackburnian Warbler and American Redstart were spotted in local parks in September and October. Birders in Ft. DeSoto reported as many as 20 species in a single day during early October. As of mid-October, when I’m writing this article, I still haven’t seen our most abundant winter warbler visitor, the Yellow-rumped Warbler, but we know they are on the way. A large number of the warbler species which migrate up and down the Atlantic Coast make stops in central Florida. Identifying tiny, quick-moving birds in fully-leafed trees is never easy, but in the fall when migrating warblers are sporting a more drab set of feathers, the task becomes even more difficult.

The male Black-throated Blue Warbler in spring is a distinctive, handsome warbler with a white breast and under belly, a black face and throat and beautiful dark blue back and wings, with a distinctive white “pocket square” on his wing. Even the drab olive colored spring female sports the signature white square. But the first-year Black-throated Blue Warbler migrating from the north in the fall is a plain, drab warbler with an unmarked upper wing, curved white supercilium, white lower eye-arc and often no white square on the wing. What is a birder to do??

Princeton University Press, publishers of *The Warbler Guide* by Tom Stephenson and Scott Whittle, has provided a series of Quick Finder guides available for free download and printing. These one-page full-color documents show side-by-side comparisons of just the head, just the under tail view, 45° angles and side views of both spring and fall plumage. Click [here](#) to visit the Princeton University Press website and the downloadable Quick Finders. Our thanks not only to PUP for providing this valuable reference tool, but to Chuck Tague for sharing the information. Chuck suggests printing the sheet, laminating them, and keeping them in your field backpack. My copies are already tucked into my favorite field guide in the warbler section.

*Paula Wehr*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Welcome To Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Bert & Betty Brown, Sharon Donohue, Clara Fowler, Patricia Gough, Robert Klenner, Katherine Martin, Ken Mitchell, Ann (Ayin) Moore, Christine Reinhart and John & Carol Woods. We hope to see you at our monthly meetings or on one of our excellent field trips soon.

## Calendar, Field Trips & Events

**Monday, Nov. 17th- Program Meeting:** “Research and Discovery in Florida’s Mangrove Forests: Unlocking the Secrets of the Mangrove Cuckoo.” Rachel Mullin, Research Biologist, Ecostudies Institute, will discuss our current understanding of the natural history of Mangrove Cuckoos in Florida, the mysteries that still surround it and how the Ecostudies Institute has been studying this elusive bird. The doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. Our speaker begins at 7:00 p.m. A brief business meeting follows.

### Field Trips

**Friday, Nov. 21st- Lake Apopka:** Join Field Trip Co-Chairs, Chuck & Joan Tague, on this trip to one of Florida’s best birding spots. We will meet at International Square, located on Int’l Speedway Blvd. just east of I-95 behind the Krystal Restaurant at 6:30 am. Bring lunch and plan on some walking. Questions? Call 386-253-1166.

### Field Trips With Others

**Saturday, Nov. 22nd- Lake Apopka:** West Volusia Audubon’s, Harry Robinson, literally wrote the book on birding Lake Apopka. Join Harry and the WVAS folks for their trip to this exciting spot. Meet them at the NE corner of the Deland Post Office parking lot on E New York Avenue. at 8:00 am to car pool and bring lunch. Questions? Call 386-801-4472.

**Friday, Nov. 14th- Otter Lake Trail:** Join our Southeast Volusia Audubon Society friends for this walk along the newest trail in our area. It’s a 2.2 mile, paved biking and hiking trail in New Smyrna Beach that includes a bridge over Turnbull Creek. Meet the group in Edgewater at Florida Shores Plaza parking lot at the corner of Ridgewood Ave and Indian River Blvd. Bring lunch. Questions? Call Gail Domroski, 386-428-0447.

**Saturday, Nov. 8th- Pelagic Trip:** Join Michael Brothers on this trip to see birds off our coast. Sponsored by The Friends of The Marine Science Center, the trip will leave the dock aboard the Pastime Princess in New Smyrna Beach at 6:00 am and return around 6:00 pm. Here’s a chance to see shearwaters, petrels, phalaropes, jaegers and others. Cost is 190.00 per person. Send your check to: Friends of the Marine Science Center (Pelagic Trip) 100 Lighthouse Drive, Ponce Inlet, FL 32127. Questions? Call Michael at 386-304-5543. Here’s a [link](#) to a map to the boat.

## Wings On The Wind Festival

**Saturday, Nov. 15th-** The Marine Science Center’s annual event will include live raptor programs, exhibitors, lectures, bird-related arts and crafts, nature-inspired artworks and kids activities. The fun begins at 10:00 am and they hope to release a bird from the rehab center at the end of the festivities at 3:00 pm.



As Eric Draper, Executive Director of Audubon Florida, has been saying over and over for the past two years, there is nothing more important that we can do to preserve and protect conservation land in Florida than to Vote YES on Amendment 1 in November. Amendment 1 will set aside 33% of Florida's existing excise tax on documents (also known as the documentary stamp tax which is paid when real estate is sold) and guarantee that these funds can be used only for conservation purposes, including keeping pollution out of our drinking water, rivers, lakes, springs and coastal waters as well as protecting natural areas and wildlife habitat. This amendment creates no new tax. It only stipulates that approximately one-third of this specialized tax already collected can only be used for that purpose. Please, if you haven't already voted by mail or at one of the early voting sites, remember to vote on Tuesday, November 4th and vote "YES" on Amendment 1. We need your vote. Visit [Vote YES on 1](#) for more information.

In a recent press release the Florida Parks Service had a lot to be proud of. Between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014 over 27.1 million people visited the various properties in the state park system. This generated a whopping 2.1 billion dollars in direct economic impact to the areas around these parks. They also won their third National Gold Medal of Excellence. "People come from around the world to visit Florida's award-winning state parks and state trails," said DEP Secretary Herschel T. Vinyard Jr. "Our parks offer the best in natural and cultural resources and contribute to the economy of Florida - supporting jobs and local businesses." How many jobs are dependent on our award winning parks system you might ask? The answer is 29,396!

The money that will be generated by approval of Amendment 1 will go toward making our park system even better. In addition, it could be used for a variety of water quality projects. One of which could be the removal of thousands of septic tanks. Septic tanks were a viable technology in the 1900's, when the state's population was 3/4 of a million people. Last year the estimated population here was 19.5 million. Is it any wonder that the Indian River Lagoon is dying or that our springs are often too polluted to swim in? Municipalities around the state could expand their sewage treatment facilities to allow homes now on septic tanks to connect to sewage systems. The problem is that after the sewer line is installed on your street it costs the average homeowner \$10,000.00 to connect to the system. That's why we continue having all of that pollution leaching into our water ways. Cities and towns see no point in extending sewer systems if the residents can't afford the connection costs. Senator Alan Hayes (R. Lake County) introduced a bill in the last legislative session to address this issue utilizing as a funding source the same 33% of documentary stamp tax revenue referenced in Amendment 1. He did so to confuse and conflict the possibility of passing Amendment 1 since he's opposed to it. It could just be that while he was trying to do something to obfuscate the issue he stumbled upon a way to accomplish a result that few thought possible just a few years ago. Amendment 1 offers a realm of possibilities for solving problems and leaving Florida an even better place for our offspring.

David Hartgrove

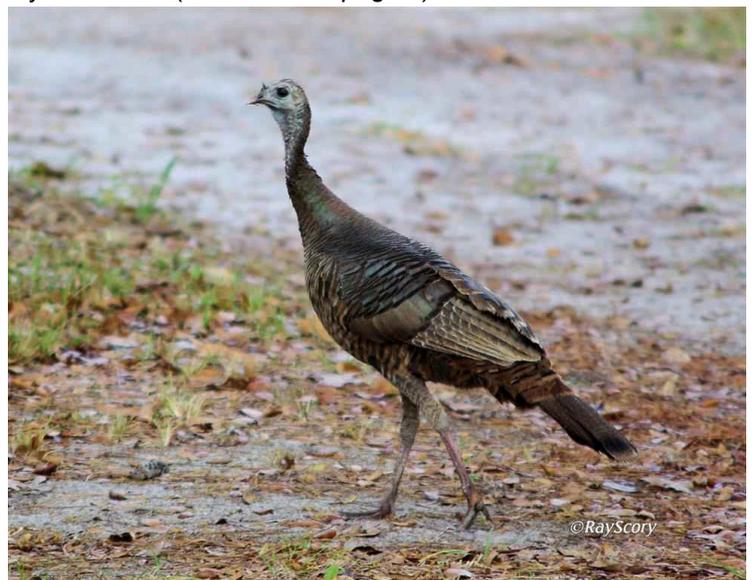
Black speeding missiles, breaking branches and thunderous crashes. My introduction to turkeys in the wild. Dramatic, exciting and a memory everlasting. I was on a Christmas Bird count in a deciduous forest in central Connecticut. This explosion of avian behavior was by far the event of the day. Certainly, not the slow, foraging behavior expected of a grounded eastern bird.

To this day, I cannot drive on Merritt Island NWR's Kennedy Parkway (SR 3) without looking up and down the adjoining, side dirt roads. Occasionally, I will see a flock of wild turkeys walking through, especially early in the morning. My favorite time is just before sunrise when the air is fresh and the sun is about to break above the horizon. The sky is red, orange, blue and slowly changing to an awakening day. It is quiet and I am there watching. I find the turkey to be extremely wary. However, I have observed a number of Florida wild turkeys in eastern central Florida at Tiger Bay State Forest, Gamble Place, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and numerous tracts of forested lands and pastures controlled by the St. John's River Water Management District.

The turkey didn't always grace our tables center stage on one particular day in November, nor did it expect to be such an iconic figure used to promote a national holiday. In fact, the wild turkey evolved upon this planet about 11 million years ago and has had quite a journey through evolution and travel to become what we see of it today.

In the early 1500's, the Spanish explorers traveled through North America bringing back native wild turkeys to Mexico and later European traders brought these birds back to Europe. The turkeys then were shipped to eastern Mediterranean countries, then to Spain and onto England, where the British associated them with the country, Turkey. Thus, the name "turkey", which has stuck to this day. The turkey successfully established some flocks in a few European countries, notably as far back into Europe as Germany. To complete their wayward journey the Pilgrims brought them back to the Atlantic Coast of America. Some were released into the wild where they mixed with the native species. Eventually other turkey subspecies evolved into six separate subspecies.

The most popular, abundant and most hunted subspecies is the Eastern Wild Turkey, estimated today at 5.1 - 5.3 million birds. We do have a much smaller flock of turkeys, numbering about 30,000, in Florida. The Florida Wild Turkey, also called the Ocala Wild Turkey is smaller, darker with wing feathers having smaller amounts of white feathers than other subspecies. The Florida Wild Turkey can also be distinguished by its overall green iridescent body feathers. *(continued on page 3)*



At our October meeting Annie Morgan, of the Marine Discovery Center, gave us a program about oyster restoration. That stirred a memory for our Chapter Historian and Membership Chair, John Carr.

## Oysters, Pennies and Terrapins

When I was a kid in North Carolina, we would drive to the coast during oyster season and get our fill. Oyster shells at that time were as large as my hand. The oysters were wonderful. Up state, there was a restaurant out from town that during the season would bring two large truck loads of oysters in the shell to be steamed. We would go and sit at the shucking tables and a shucker would shuck oysters as fast as he could. He would hand you half a shell with a fresh steamed oyster on it. If you know some one now on the NC coast, you can still get large oysters, not as large as I remember, but large enough to make Florida oysters look like they should be thrown back to mature.

When I was a teenager, the US Federal Fisheries had a research station on Piver's Island at Beaufort NC trying to discover what caused the oyster spats to attach so they could mature. There were several nursery beds about 12 feet long and 4 feet wide and about a foot deep in their laboratory. Being a typical teenager, I threw a copper penny into one of the vats and thought nothing of it. The next year they published a report stating that spat attachment was enhanced by copper ions. They mentioned at a meeting that they had found a penny in one of the vats and determined that copper was necessary for spat attachment. I never owned up to having pitched a penny in the vat. Subsequently I think they have discovered other factors that enhance spat attachment.

Also at Piver's Island the government was conducting research into the decline of Diamondback Terrapins. They had a large pen that extended into the brackish water. My mother and I were watching a large Diamondback on the shore start digging a hole with her back feet and she laid around 15 eggs. We told the people in the laboratory what we had witnessed and they got excited. No one had ever seen a Diamond Back Terrapin lay eggs (we were told) They took our names but we never knew what they did with that information. I was about 11 years old and had just learned what a Forster's Tern looked like. You never know when a little bit of new information will stir up memories of long forgotten events.

John Carr



Diamondback Terrapin photo by David Hartgrove

Terrapins are brackish water creatures. Turtles (depending on the species) can be found in fresh or salt water habitats. Ed.

The turkey ranges over vast lands of lower Canada, most of America and on through central Mexico. It is most successful where forest and open fields exist. In Florida they also range near marshes where amphibians are plentiful. The turkey forages for acorns, nuts and seeds and will eat insects, small fish, reptiles and animals. I have also watched them feeding on spilled seeds from bird feeders in Connecticut yards. This is a handsome bird to see in the wild, both for its impressive behavior and stunning appearance, much deserving your patience to locate and observe them.

Ray Scory

\* \* \* \* \*

Members Steve & Mary Blackledge spent the summer touring the Pacific Northwest. The photo below was captured by Steve in one of those lucky moments when everything just came together. Ed.



\* \* \* \* \*

## BIRD STEWARDS NEEDED

For a short time during the summer of 2014 a colony of Least Terns and some solitary Wilson's Plover nests were found on Disappearing Island. You may remember that almost all of the nests were destroyed by a couple who allowed their dogs to run freely in the nesting area. In anticipation of nesting taking place again in 2015, Volusia County Shorebird Partnership Coordinator, Jennifer Winters, wants to be prepared with trained volunteers to help educate people to keep dogs and people away from the nesting area. County officials are looking for interested individuals to call when training is scheduled in February or March 2015.

Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission is the official volunteer organization, but Jennifer is the local coordinator. For more information on what stewarding entails, please visit the guideline link at [http://flshorebirdalliance.org/media/5939/bird\\_steward\\_manual-final\\_2012.pdf](http://flshorebirdalliance.org/media/5939/bird_steward_manual-final_2012.pdf). If, after reading the volunteer requirements, you'd like to get involved, click on Volunteer Agreement and Volunteer Application, fill them out and submit the forms to Jess Rodriguez, [Jess.Rodriguez@MyFWC.com](mailto:Jess.Rodriguez@MyFWC.com). In addition, let Jennifer, [jwinters@volusia.org](mailto:jwinters@volusia.org), know that you have volunteered.

Note that volunteers at Disappearing Island may have to provide their own transportation to the island; i.e.: your own boat, kayak or canoe. Also, remember that depending upon shorebird nesting activity, there may be stewarding opportunities at other locations in the County.

Paula Wehr

*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.**

**Contact Our Board Members**

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# The Pelican

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

Volume 60-No.6 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon  
December, 2014



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Thoughts from on High*

Audubon Assembly, the annual meeting for Audubon Florida, was held on October 17-18. It was a jam-packed 26 hours, beginning with an amazing photo presentation during the welcome lunch. Award-winning photographer, Mac Stone, told his story of growing up exploring the springs, swamps and hammocks of north central Florida. His presentation featured a portion of the photos from his newly-released book, "[Everglades: America's Wetland.](#)"

We moved on to workshops where we discussed how the funds from the (at the time hoped for) passage of Amendment 1 should be used. Data was gathered from chapter leaders and members who attended the session. This information will be used by Audubon Florida staff when they interact with legislators.

A second break-out session featured panelists who were successful in engaging community participation in environmental issues. They spoke about how to spark an interest in nature among young people, particularly children and young families. Our Board will be discussing these suggestions going forward and planning new and creative activities for our chapter.

Another session featured a video series on the Rising Seas to support climate change messaging. Click [here](#) to view or download the three brief videos. Miami is already feeling the impact of sea level rise. Miami-Dade County has more people living less than 4 feet above sea level than any US state, except Louisiana. Sea-level rise has caused prolonged flooding, so much that Miami Beach city officials are considering a \$206 million renovation to their drainage system. This is an issue which will become more and more important all over Florida. All in all, it was an energizing event.

*Paula Wehr*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Audubon Academy In February

The Central Florida Audubon Academy is scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 28, 2015. This one-day event will be held at the University of Florida's Mid-Florida Research and Education Center (<http://mrec.ifas.ufl.edu>) which is located across the street from an American Bird Conservancy Globally Important Birding Area (Lake Apopka Restoration Area.) This year's Academy had workshops on land acquisition through bequests, pelican and other birds monofilament entanglement, "apps" for birding and birding as an introduction to conservation issues. We'll keep you apprised of the details as they are confirmed.

*Paula Wehr*

## Calendar and Events

**Monday, December 15th:** "Eagle Flight: A New Beginning" Steve Brown, a film-maker and photographer who lives in Holly Hill, became fascinated with the Bald Eagles nesting in Centennial Park. Although Steve considered himself to be retired at the time, he spent about four months – sometimes 16 hours a day – shooting video for a documentary about the courtship of the parents, nest-building and hatching of the eaglets. Join us to view this 50-minute movie. The doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. **This being our holiday meeting we will have coffee and beverages to go with some sweets. Bring cookies or snacks to share if you wish.** Our speaker begins at 7:00 p.m. A brief business meeting follows.

### Field Trips

**Friday, December 5th:** Merritt Island NWR. Join our Field Trip Co-Chairs, Chuck & Joan Tague to this incredible birding destination. For those who aren't fond of long walks this is an excellent trip. We meet at 7:00 am at the Target on Dunlawton east of I-95. Bring lunch. Questions? Call 386-253-1166.

**Friday, December 12th:** Viera Wetlands. Join Chuck & Joan for another great trip to this waste water treatment facility in Melbourne. Again, this trip has very little walking and offers an opportunity to see birds like American and Least Bittern, Crested Caracara and others. Meet at the Target on Dunlawton, east of I-95 and bring lunch. Questions? Call 386-253-1166.

**Wednesday, December 17th:** Gull Watch. We'll meet Chuck & Joan at Frank Rendon Park, 2705 South Atlantic Avenue, Daytona Beach Shores at 3:30 pm to see the largest concentration of larids (gulls) in the western hemisphere. This incredible avian spectacle takes place every afternoon in winter along a 1.5 mile stretch of shoreline here and it's a great opportunity to expand your birding knowledge. Questions? Call 386-253-1166.

### Field Trips With Others

**Wednesday, December 10th:** Join West Volusia Audubon for their trip to Merritt Island NWR. Meet at 7:45 am at the northeast corner of the DeLand Post Office parking lot at 336 East New York Ave. If you wish to rendezvous with the group at the refuge, call Eli Schaperow, 407-314-7965 for directions. Bring lunch.

**Saturday, December 13th:** Join our friends from Southeast Volusia Audubon for their trip to Viera Wetlands. This is a great opportunity for those whose schedules don't permit Friday and mid week trips. Meet the group to carpool down to Melbourne. Meet at 7:00 am in the Florida Shores Plaza parking lot in Edgewater, (at the corner of Ridgewood Ave and Indian River Blvd), south of the new Dunkin Donuts building. Questions? Call Gail Domroski at 386-428-0447.

## Conservation Notes

On April 20th, 2010, the Deepwater Horizon oil drilling platform in the Gulf of Mexico exploded, killing 11 workers and eventually causing the discharge of 4.9 million gallons of oil into the Gulf. British Petroleum claims that this was caused by an unfortunate series of events over which they had no control. U.S District Judge Carl Barbier, who is presiding over the civil trial against the companies responsible for the largest oil spill in America's history, found that BP, through "gross negligence" and "willful misconduct", committed a litany of negligent acts and used unsafe practices causing millions of barrels of oil to spill into the Gulf and directly contributing to the deaths of the workers. Under the Clean Water Act, penalties for accidental spills are levied at a lower rate than those caused by "gross negligence." The judge's finding of "gross negligence" and "willful misconduct" on BP's part could end up costing them 18 billion dollars in fines and penalties. In addition, there are serious questions about how and why BP and the Coast Guard responded to the spill by flooding the area with a chemical dispersant called Corexit. This chemical is toxic to marine life and when mixed with oil (its only real use) its toxicity is increased. Judge Barbier is expected to issue his findings next year, just before the 5th anniversary of the spill.

\* \* \*

Our chapter has signed on to participate in Project H2O. This is a new group whose focus is water quality enhancement. It's comprised of members from Volusia County's Environmental Management team, all three Audubon chapters, the area's colleges and universities and eventually local municipalities. The impetus for this came from a water quality workshop hosted by Volusia County in June of this year and the fertile imaginations of two of Volusia County's most respected environmentalists, Clay Henderson and Stephen Kintner. Project H2O will be looking for ways to leverage grant funds and other financial resources to monitor and improve water quality in our area. Environmental resource students at local colleges will be involved in water quality testing since funding for that from government sources has all but dried up in recently. A resolution passed by the County Council lists three ambitious objectives: removal of the 91,000 septic tanks in the county, elimination of the discharge of treated waste into surface water bodies and passage of a fertilizer ordinance. That last one has been done already. One of Project H2O's first assignments is to seek ways to implement that ordinance.

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## Christmas Bird Count Notice

The Daytona Beach Christmas Bird Count is scheduled for Saturday, December 27th. This is the oldest citizen science project in the world and your participation will help make it even better. You do not have to be an "expert" (whatever that is) to participate. In fact, coming out for a CBC is a great way to improve your birding skills. A CBC is done in a 15 mile in diameter circle. Ours is centered at I-95 and the Tomoka River. We'll meet at 7:00 am in the parking lot at Ormond Town Square at Granada & Williamson Boulevards, behind Chick-Fil-A to organize teams. This is an all day event. So bring a lunch and if you have to leave early we can easily accommodate your schedule. We'll have dinner afterward at a restaurant to be determined later.

And ours isn't the only CBC in which you can participate. The West Volusia CBC is Saturday, December 20th. Contact Harry Robinson, 386-943-8342 or by [e-mail](#). The Ponce Inlet CBC will be on Saturday, January 3rd. Contact Richard Domroski, [e-mail](#), or by phone, 386-428-0447. Have a great holiday everyone and look for a report on our Cuba trip next month.

David Hartgrove

## Birding Festivals

This is the time to begin planning for your participation in one or more of the birding festivals around our state. The venerable Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival is now the largest of its kind in the country. There are others to think about too. Here's the line up for the next several months.

[Everglades Birding Festival](#), January 15th thru 19th.

[Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival](#), January 21st thru 26th.

[Birds of a Feather Fest](#), February 6th thru 8th

This last one is brand new and takes place in Palm Coast. The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival offers its usual opportunity to sample new optics from around the world. If you've been thinking of buying a new pair of binoculars, this is the place to check them out.

\* \* \* \* \*



Turkey Vulture, *Cathartes aura* Photo by Chuck Tague

Chuck Tague, our Field Trip Co-Chair, took this photo and posted it on his Facebook page. That prompted one of his friends, Lauri Evans, to send along a story of why the Turkey Vulture has no feathers on its head.

"Native Americans tell a legend about the vulture's lack of feathers on its head. Apparently in the early times no birds had feathers. They were all very cold and miserable. They had no protection at all! As a group they cried to the Great Spirit begging for something to cover their naked little bodies. Eventually the Great Spirit answered their cries by getting ready a large container with all types and sizes of bird clothes but He was not able to deliver and distribute them. The only bird with enough stamina and strength to reach the location of the Great Spirit's gift and bring back the much needed coverings was the vulture. Taking the journey was not without danger. It took a very brave bird to fly so close to the sun. He became sunburned all over his naked body. When the vulture returned with the beautiful clothing for all the birds, he personally saw to it that they were taken care of first and he refused to choose his suit of feathers until all others had received their special covering. In the end, there was only one suit left. The vulture squeezed into it and found that it was not large enough to cover his head. That is why the vulture's head is very red and inflamed looking and why there are no feathers on the head of a vulture."

Vultures provide a valuable service by removing and recycling the dead animals that often appear along our roads and elsewhere. Our thanks to Chuck and Lauri for their contribution.

Editor

Our chapter Historian and Membership Chair, John Carr, has a long memory and wrote this for the Pelican. Ed.

### Early Ornithology with T. Gilbert Pearson

T. Gilbert Pearson was born in Tuscola, Douglas County, Illinois in 1873 to a Quaker family. His family moved to Archer, Alachua County, Florida, to grow oranges and vegetables. At that time, Archer was surrounded by lakes, forests and marshes. Some of the area had been cleared and converted to small farms, but most of the land was still undisturbed. Pearson had met some older boys when he was about 12, who were interested in birds and wildlife. He learned the ways of egg collecting (a popular hobby at the time) and was shown how to make a small hole in the egg shell to remove the contents. By 1888, an article he had written appeared in The Oologist. He was 14 at the time. In a restaurant in Gainesville, he met Frank Chapman, head of the Museum of Natural History in New York and founder of the Christmas Bird Count.

In 1891; he applied to several colleges and offered the use his collections of bird skins, eggs, and other objects in lieu of payment for admission. He got one letter sent from Lewis Lyndon Hobbs who was President of Guilford College, a Quaker institution in North Carolina. Dr. Hobbs wanted to enlarge a natural history cabinet that had been begun by a member of the faculty who had resigned. He arrived and was examined for his academic abilities and assigned to the two year preparatory program. Dr. Hobbs agreed to provide tuition, board and a room for 2 years. He was enrolled for six years before he earned a bachelor's degree. He then worked for various departments of the University of North Carolina to earn advanced degrees not available at Guilford.

When I as 10 years old, T. Gilbert Pearson met with members of the Piedmont Bird Club and I met him. He had long been active and held offices in the Audubon Society and was well known in the birding world. By the time I met T. Gilbert Pearson, I was pretty well acquainted with many of the leaders in the field of ornithology, but he was the first one I had actually met. He was very supportive of all the teenagers who were present at that meeting. I attended Guilford College during the early 1950s and was exploring some of the boxes in the basement of both King Hall and of Memorial Hall. I was almost overwhelmed to find T. Gilbert Pearson's collection of bird skins and some of the eggs of his collections. I could hold an Ivory-billed Woodpecker, a Passenger Pigeon, and the remains of a Caroling Parakeet in my hands. I examined many more skins and marveled at how well preserved some of them were.

In 1903 Mr. Pearson founded the first Audubon chapter in North Carolina and in 1905 was one of the founders of the National Association of Audubon Societies. He served as President of that group from 1920 until 1935. It's the national organization now known as Audubon. He also served on the advisory committee on the Migratory Treaty Act for 20 years, authored numerous books and magazine articles and mentored countless ornithology students.

While attending Guilford College I met and married my wife, Fran. Her father had attended Guilford College when T. Gilbert Pearson taught there. In her home I discovered an autographed copy of Pearson's, "The Birds of North Carolina." When she was a child her dad asked her to recite a poem, "To A waterfowl", for Mr. Pearson. She did her best but Mr. Pearson had to prompt her on the poem's final verse.

John Carr

Over the course of his long involvement in birding, John has met a number of ornithology's pioneers. Look for more stories in future issues of the Pelican. Ed.

### BIRD STEWARDS NEEDED

For a short time during the summer of 2014 a colony of Least Terns and some solitary Wilson's Plover nests were found on Disappearing Island. You may remember that almost all of the nests were destroyed by a couple who allowed their dogs to run freely in the nesting area. In anticipation of nesting taking place again in 2015, Volusia County Shorebird Partnership Coordinator, Jennifer Winters, wants to be prepared with trained volunteers to help educate people to keep dogs and people away from the nesting area. County officials are looking for interested individuals to call when training is scheduled in February or March 2015.

Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission is the official volunteer organization, but Jennifer is the local coordinator. For more information on what stewarding entails, please visit the guideline link at [http://flshorebirdalliance.org/media/5939/bird\\_steward\\_manual-final\\_2012.pdf](http://flshorebirdalliance.org/media/5939/bird_steward_manual-final_2012.pdf). If, after reading the volunteer requirements, you'd like to get involved, click on Volunteer Agreement and Volunteer Application, fill them out and submit the forms to Jess Rodriguez, [Jess.Rodriguez@MyFWC.com](mailto:Jess.Rodriguez@MyFWC.com). In addition, let Jennifer, [jwinters@volusia.org](mailto:jwinters@volusia.org), know that you have volunteered.

Note that volunteers at Disappearing Island may have to provide their own transportation to the island; i.e.: your own boat, kayak or canoe. Depending upon shorebird nesting activity, there may be stewarding opportunities at other locations in the County.

Paula Wehr

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### Welcome To Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Atticus Black, Madeline Burns, Michael Carson, Barbara Davis, Kent Gibbens, Bonnie Garson, Nile & Joan Harter, Margaret Jones, Audrey Klancke, Barbara Loomis, Carol Rust and Julie Sipes. We hope to see you all at a meeting soon or on one of our excellent field trips.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Quality Optics For Sale

Pentax PF ED II 20-60 zoom 65 mm angled spotting scope with Manfrotto 3001 BD tripod, Manfrotto 3130 head and gear bag in mint condition. For more information, contact Peggy Yokubonus, 386-673-7619 or by [email](mailto:peggy@yokubonus.com). An \$800.00+ value, just \$500.00.

\* \* \* \* \*

### A Different Kind of Snowbird



This Great Cormorant has been seen south of Aunt Catfish's. Note the white throat and large size. Photo by Michael Brothers.

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

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