

The Pelican

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

Volume 63, Number 1 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
January, 2017



The President's Message

Thoughts and Concepts

I'm pleased to report that our annual beginner bird watcher's workshop was a wonderful success. Twenty seven students signed up on the first day and we had twenty five in attendance at the last class. There were three classroom sessions and three field trips. The success is largely due to our wonderful teacher, Ray Scory. Ray has a great ability to communicate information in an enthusiastic and lighthearted manner. His knowledge is evident and he provides interesting tidbits of information along with his bird pictures. Ray told us after the last session that this successful endeavor would not have gone as smoothly without the assistance of some of our members. John Roessler was there for every session and was constantly solving problems as they arose. David Hartgrove handled the marketing and is responsible for the wonderful turnout that we had. Peggy Yokobonus, Marion Monaghan, Becky Tate and Joan Tague were present when needed to assist Ray and John. It was truly a group effort and each should be proud of this successful workshop.

I'm pleased to let everyone know that our own Joan Tague has agreed to be our webmaster. She has already redone much of our website and if you have not looked at it recently please do so. I think you will be pleased with the improvements that she has already made.

The Space Coast Birding Festival dates are January 25 - 30, 2017. In past years they have mailed a wonderful booklet to past attendees. The booklet contains the schedule for all of the events that take place during the festival. It really is a wonderful tool to help when you register for the events that you have decided to attend. This year they are mailing the booklet only to those who request it. If you wish one call 321 268 5888 and they will take your address and send one to you. All of the information about the festival is on line at this [link](#). Therefore the booklet isn't essential. However I really like having a hard copy with all festival activities at my fingertips.

Every February, Palm Coast and the Flagler Beachs are transformed into bird central as birders from all over gather for the three day "[Birds of a Feather Fest](#)." With guided field trips, expert led birding workshops and family activities, the festival is perfect for beginners and experts alike. The 2017 Festival will be February 10 thru the the 12th. There is no registration fee. Famed birder Greg Miller will be leading a group to Lyonia Preserve and our own David Hargrove will be leading another group to Merritt Island NWR. These two events are on Friday the 10th. On Saturday Greg Miller will lead a group to Sweetwater Wetlands and David Hartgrove will head up a group going to Viera Wetlands. Many other birding activities are also scheduled. To learn more about this festival go to the website linked above.

Jim O'Shaughnessy

Calendar & Events

Monday, January 23rd, Program Meeting- Note a slight change for this meeting, it's the 4th Monday of the month due to Sica Hall being closed for the Martin Luther King holiday on the 16th. Join us for a program by our own Dan Gribbin, who will talk about photographing birds from his kayak. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. The presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. A brief business meeting follows.

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Field Trips

Tuesday, January 10th thru Friday, January 13th. There's still barely time to go on our overnight trip to St Marks NWR. We will leave Tuesday January 10th, carpooling to St Marks, FL (approx. 260 miles). We will stay at [Shell Island Fish Camp](#), 850- 925-6226. They have 1 and 2 bedroom cabins, motel rooms and RV sites (if you want to bring your RV). Dinners will be as a group at local seafood restaurants. Stay from 3, 4, or 5 nights, whichever is better for you. If interested, please contact Betty Butcher, 863-224-4922, for more information.

Wednesday, January 25th- Spruce Creek Boat Tour- Join Celine Sullivan at [Cracker Creek](#) for a 1 hour pontoon boat ride on this Outstanding Florida Waterway. Cracker Creek Concession is located at [1795 Taylor Rd., Port Orange](#). The tour is from 10-11 am with lunch following at the Olive Garden Restaurant located in the Pavillion Shopping Center, Port Orange. The fee for the boat trip is \$10.00 (please bring exact fee in cash). Limit 20 persons. The deadline for this trip is Mon., 1/23/17. Questions? Call Celine at 386-523-4809.

Friday, February 3rd- Viera Wetlands- We wouldn't want this one to sneak up on anyone being so early in the month. Join David Hartgrove for a trip to this water treatment wetlands in Brevard County. Wintering ducks, nesting Great Blue Herons and possibly Least Bitterns are birds we're likely to see, along with Crested Caracara, hawks and others. Very little walking for this trip. Bring a lunch and meet at 7:30 am in the Target parking lot on Dunlawton Ave., east of I-95, behind Panera Bread. Questions? Call David at 386-235-1249.

Field Trips With Others

Saturday, January 14th- Lake Apopka- Join our friends from our sister chapter, the West Volusia Audubon Society, for a trip to this excellent birding destination. From Bald Eagles to Savannah Sparrows this site offers a wealth of birding opportunities. Bring a lunch. For more information and where to rendezvous, contact Eli Shaperow, 407-314-7965.

Conservation Notes

Big Sugar is trying to buy state legislators again. Since the end of 2014 they've contributed 11.5 million dollars to campaigns and political committees. By contrast, the Everglades Foundation and Everglades Trust, the two main nonprofits pushing for a massive land buy to store excess lake water, raised just 561,000.00 for their lobbying efforts. As reported in [Eco Voice](#), this discrepancy bodes ill for a resolution to the problems of the Everglades and the estuaries on both of South Florida's coasts. "It is vital that South Florida farmers have a voice in local, state and national governments that can greatly impact our businesses," U.S. Sugar spokeswoman Judy Sanchez said via email. "We will always oppose those intentionally pitting coastal interests against our farming communities and seeking to fix their problems at our expense."

To be fair, not all of the pollution being dumped into the two coastal systems that have caused the loss of thousands of acres of sea grasses and the deaths of pelicans, manatees and millions of fish comes from sugar farming. But its land holds the chance for an end to the dumping of so much damaging water by becoming a holding area for the polluted water from farms, towns and other sources that end up in Lake Okeechobee. So if that means the "fix" ends up being at "their expense", so be it. It's not like they won't be paid a fair price for the property. If anything the tax payers will get hit with inflated land prices because the deal that would have saved us money was allowed to expire due to more lobbying by Big Sugar. If this seems to you like yet another spin on the merry go round, you wouldn't be wrong. Some day we might have legislators willing to buck the system that's been in place for so long. One that rewards party hacks for continually protecting the benefits for a few subsidized sugar barons at the expense of millions of coastal residents and the Everglades.

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The Christmas and Hanukah season is just behind us and sometimes the presents we get for ourselves turn out to be the best ones. If you haven't already done so you might consider getting a present for yourself that will help improve your birding skills. And best of all, it's **free**. You'll need a smart phone or i-Pad and as soon as you have "Merlin" installed the fun can begin. Merlin is an application developed by Cornell Lab, Google, Visipedia, Jacobs Technion and the National Science Foundation. It will help you identify birds by asking a simple set of questions or by comparing a photo you took with a library of photos provided and image recognition software. It's quite simply amazing. Here's a [link](#) to the site where you can get started.

David Hartgrove

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Audubon Adventures Needs Your Help

Yes, that means we need your money. Supplying Volusia County school classrooms with Audubon Adventures is a major HRA project. The cost to supply one classroom with this exceptional educational material is \$46.00. Please donate what you can to this special project. We are currently serving forty five teachers in sixteen schools. Make your generous check payable to HRA and designate it's for Audubon Adventures. Mail it to Halifax River Audubon, PO Box 166, Daytona Beach, FL 32115. And Thank You!

Chapter Education Co-Chair, Marion Monaghan

Time For The Birding Festivals In Florida

Everglades Birding Festival

Here's a smaller festival, limited to just 60 participants, that offers excellent opportunities to see South Florida specialties like Snail Kite, Short-tailed hawk, Red-whiskered Bulbul, White-crowned Pigeon and exotics in South Florida hotspots: the Everglades, Corkscrew Swamp, the Keys and STA 5. Birding on full day field trips with Expert Guides. The focus is on YOU gaining advanced skills with workshops applied in the field in small groups. Evening talks, lunch, transportation, snacks & water included. Contact [Paddy Cunningham](#), 754-201-1141, for all the information.

Birdapalooza Birding Festival

The Lake Apopka Wildlife Festival & Birdapalooza Birding Festival, January 20-22, 2017 is sponsored in part by our friends in Orange Audubon. Add to your life list at an amazing birding area, the 20,000-acre [Lake Apopka North Shore](#). Two full-day trips and nine half-day trips led by well-known local birding guides are offered, along with two dinners and keynotes, including one by Greg Miller of The Big Year fame. For details and to register, see <http://orangeaudubonfl.org/birdapalooza>. On Saturday participate in the 5th annual FREE family-oriented Birdapalooza festival with photo walks, bird banding and guided bus tours. For more, see www.birdapalooza.com. Facebook events to share are at <https://www.facebook.com/Birdapalooza/>.

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The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival

The 20th annual [Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival](#), January 25th thru the 30th, is the largest of its kind in the country and it's headquartered just 40 miles to our south at the Titusville campus of Eastern Florida State College. Click [here](#) for a map. There are field trips, work shops on bird identification and photography and a huge selection of cameras and optics in the gym, along with live bird shows and guided birding tour companies from all over the world. Here's a [link](#) to download a PDF version of the festival program with all of the information. You won't want to miss this exciting event.

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Birds of a Feather Fest

As Jim mentioned in his column above, [Birds of a Feather Fest](#) is yet another local opportunity to learn and have fun at a birding festival. Sponsored by the City of Palm Coast, it runs from February 10th thru the 12th and offers field trips, workshops and family fun activities. There's no registration fee so check the website linked above and plan to attend.

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Welcome to Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Cassandra Ballard, Carolyn Brewer, Sonia Cryan, Bonnie Filenius, Carol Lehman, Alma More, Mary Peine-Lemay, Susan Plimpton, Wanda ward and Andrea White. We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting or on one of fabulous field trips.

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From the Quotable Birder

"The early bird who catches the worm works for someone who comes in late and owns the worm farm"

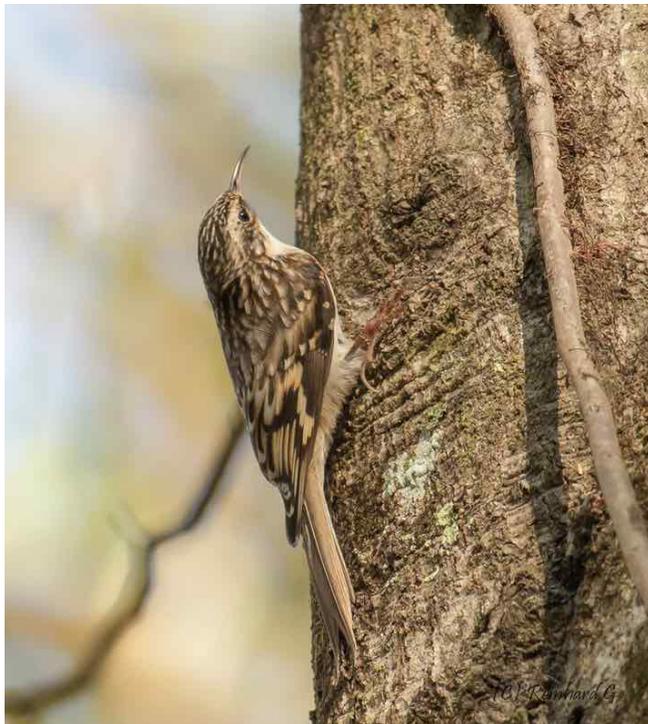
Travis McGee

Chasing Unusual Birds

Every winter we get birds here in Florida that are seldom seen in our state. Some are annual visitors, though in small numbers and not seen by many, if any, birders. So we were all lucky when photographer extraordinaire, Reinhard Geisler, went up in the panhandle area in search of several reported rarities. Horned Larks range across most of North America but are rare visitors to Florida. Brown Creepers nest in Canada and parts of the mountain west. Their secretive ways and good camouflage mean that even though they're here each winter, few birders see them. The same is true for the Golden-crowned Kinglet.



Horned Lark, photo by Reinhard Geisler



Brown Creeper, photo by Reinhard Geisler

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WINNERS CHOICE – either:

- Sony a7r II camera body
- Nikon D5 camera body
- Canon 1Dx Mk II camera body
- BlackMagic Design Ursa Mini (EF Mount) with 4.6K Digital Cinema Camera body - (camera selected by winner from Hunt's Photo)

***Total Value of Scope + Camera over \$10,000

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RAFFLE TO BE HELD DURING THE 20TH ANNUAL
SPACE COAST BIRDING and WILDLIFE FESTIVAL

January 25-30, 2017

Eastern Florida State College, Titusville, FL, located on Florida's Space Coast

Tickets will be available for a suggested donation of
\$100.00 each

Random Ticket Drawing will be held on
Saturday 1:00 pm, January 28, 2017

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Brevard Nature Alliance is a 501(c) (3) tax-exempt organization. A copy of the official Registration & financial information may be obtained from the Division of Consumer Services @ 800-435-7352. Registration #: CH19903. Florida Solicitation of Contributions Act.

The Birder's Raffle of a Lifetime

Swarovski is about as good as birding optics get and here's your chance to own a complete set up. Plus, as part of the package, your choice of a camera valued at 6,000.00. When you're down at the Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival you can purchase tickets for this once in a lifetime prize. Granted, the tickets aren't cheap but that just means the odds of winning are better.

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Golden-Crowned Kinglet, photo by Reinhard Geisler

A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors

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The Ormond Beach Garden Club, Spruce Creek Garden & Nature Club
and Colonial Colony**

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

Our website is www.halifaxriveras.org For information on upcoming field trips, etc.

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Volume 63-Number 2 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
February, 2017



The President's Message

Thoughts and Concepts

I don't think there is any single subject about birds that is more fascinating and complex than migration. Birds arriving in the spring or fall and departing months later on their predetermined schedule is a familiar pattern to birders and non-birders alike. Seasonal migration enables birds to avoid unfavorable climates and to utilize food supplies that are available for only limited periods each year. Many species can breed at high latitudes during the brief arctic summer, when insects abound, then fly south to more welcoming climates in the southern United States or even Central and South America.

Seasonal migration is thought to have evolved as a means of increasing lifetime reproductive output. Daylight periods in spring and summer are longer at higher altitudes resulting in more hours in which birds can gather food. Preparation for migrating often requires birds to accumulate fat which is then burned off on their long and arduous journeys. Passerines are known to lose up to one-half of their body weight during migration.

The majority of long-distance migrants fly at night. Some birds travel continuously while others land daily to forage and rest. Migrants that travel relatively short distances usually travel only in the daytime and spend a few hours in the mornings migrating then foraging and resting till the next morning. Aerial foragers, such as swifts and swallows, feed in flight and do not stop.

Migrating in North America is essentially north-south along four principal flyways. The Pacific, which is along the Pacific coast from Canada to Central and South America. The Central, which parallels the Rocky mountains. The Mississippi flyway is in-between the Central and the Atlantic flyways. It's the Atlantic flyway bringing us most of our winter visitors.

How birds find their way between breeding and wintering grounds has puzzled birders and scientists alike for generations. Birds must be able to orient, that is determine compass direction and to also navigate, that is judge their position while traveling. Birds use a variety of cues to accomplish their incredible feats. Scientists have determined the birds acquire directional information from five primary sources: topographic features, stars, the sun, the Earth's magnetic field and odors. It seems evident that ornithologists, while solving a number of parts of the puzzle, still have much to learn. One conclusion that appears evident is that birds do not rely on a single source of information to guide them on their travels. They possess the ability, to use a variety of clues from numerous sources. This complex system, shaped over evolutionary time, enables birds to find their way under most conditions.

I relied on the ***Birder's Handbook*** for much of the information in this article.

Jim O'Shaughnessy

Calendar & Events

Monday, February 20th, Program Meeting- David Baker, from Southeast Volusia Audubon and the Hudson River Valley, has birded all over the world. Arizona is one of the birding **hot spots** in the US. Many species from Central America and Mexico show up here and it's a hummingbird magnet, with 18 species on the state's checklist. David will take us on a trip to this birding Mecca via his photographs. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. The presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. A brief business meeting follows.

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Field Trips

Friday, February 3rd- *Viera Scratched* Lake Apopka- Join David Hartgrove for our second trip to this outstanding birding location. Due to the closure off Viera for road maintenance. Bring a lunch and meet at 7:30 am at International Square, east of I-95 on International Speedway Boulevard behind Krystal, 2500 W International Speedway Boulevard Daytona Beach FL 32114 Questions? Call David at 386-235-1249.

Friday, February 10th- MINWR- Join Peggy Yokubonus for a trip to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, one of the premier winter birding sites in the country. Very little walking for this trip. Bring a lunch and meet at 7:30 am in the Target parking lot on Dunlawton Ave., east of I-95, behind Panera Bread. Questions? Call Peggy at 386-316-4085

Saturday, February 11th- MINWR- Every year we schedule back to back trips to this outstanding spot to facilitate participation by those unable to come on a week day. Join Ray Scory for our second trip to this section of birding paradise. Very little walking for this trip. Bring a lunch and meet at 7:30 am in the Target parking lot on Dunlawton Ave., east of I-95, behind Panera Bread. Questions? Call Ray at 386-763-4260.

Friday, February 17th- Oakland Nature Preserve- Join Betty Butcher for this, our first time trip. A nature preserve on the south shore of Lake Apopka, west of Orlando, just 30 minutes from the attractions and nestled between Winter Garden and Clermont in the beautiful Town of Oakland, lies a "hidden gem". A 128-acre preserve offering environmental education and ecotourism activities. Bring lunch and meet at International Square, east of I-95 on International Speedway Boulevard behind Krystal 2500 W International Speedway Boulevard Daytona Beach FL 32114 Questions? Call Betty, 863-224-4922.

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From The Quotable Birder

"For most bird watchers the coming of the warblers has the same effect as cat nip on a cat."

Arline Thomas, in "Audubon's Birds"

Backyard Birding- One Winter Morning

It is here. A new year. A time of new hopes and dreams of good cheer. Refreshing. A new year to clear out the debris of the old.

But the birds in my yard. Where were they during the Fall and early Winter migration? They did not come. I waited and checked my past year's records to confirm their appointed arrival at the feeding station in my backyard. They should have been here. I waited and hoped and watched for the wave of migrating birds to pass. But they did not show.

Is it any wonder that they may not adhere to the whims and provocations of the human will or are they programmed to a different system that we may only be on the threshold of understanding? These answers may be revealed as we continue to research the wonderful lives of birds. However, the mystery of it all. The surprises. Isn't this, also, the wonder of it all. All so special.

And then they came. A flock of speeding Cedar Waxwings over the trees in my backyard, pointed South. On this second day of January, I estimated close to seventy-five birds flying. A cheer echoed through my mind, "Hallelujah".

The next day, Tuesday January 3, heralded in the granddaddy bird migration day of them all. On this day more birds flew over and came into my yard than any other day of this past migration season. Around mid-morning I looked out my back yard window and saw three Downy Woodpeckers at the feeder all at once (uncommon). Five Tufted Titmice, two Carolina Wrens and a Red-bellied Woodpecker jockeyed for position to the feeder trays (common) A Carolina Chickadee joined the foray at the feeder (quite uncommon - only twice in the last sixteen years). A few American Robins flitted among the backyard pine trees. I grabbed my binoculars and dashed outside. In time to catch a flock of 75 Cedar Waxwings whizzing by, again pointed South, just like the day before. A few more American Robins trickled into the yard, and then, an explosion of American Robins covered my yard and the yards around my house and across the pond. Over six hundred American Robins, active, frantic and excited raced to different trees, different yards, all noisily screaming out alarm notes (peek, peek, peek, tut, tut) and flight calls (zeeeeup, zeeeeup, zeeeeup) and mixed into this cacophony of excited calls was their familiar whinny.

After one and a half hours of this elevated rambunctiousness, I did spot a lone Common Grackle in the mix. I thought maybe - a scout. Eventually, the American Robins whooshed out of the neighborhood and in flew about two hundred Common Grackles. Only to repeat the incessant calling and wild antics of the American Robins. And then, they too, all flew out. To round out the excitement on this rarest of rare days, my favorite winter migrant, the diminutive Chipping Sparrow appeared at the feeder. Many of them - feeding, all so quietly. I would like to think that they came down from my former backyard in Connecticut to stay for the winter in my Florida backyard. They have been back every winter since for the past sixteen years.

I rejoice in the energy and determination of migrating birds. But when things quiet down, it's nice to be with good and familiar friends.

Ray Scory



An American Robin and a pair of Chipping Sparrows
photos by Ray Scory

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Pinellas Birding Guide Revised

Long before he retired from the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, Ron Smith was one the county's premier birders. He has now completely revised his "Birds of Pinellas County" and offered it to St Pete Audubon free of charge as a fund raiser for their chapter. Judi Hopkins, St Pete Audubon President, writes that this book is essential if you're planning a birding trip to Pinellas County. The book contains a birding history of the county, lists of parks and birding sites, including extensive information on Ft DeSoto and of course a checklist of all 413 species reported in the county. The book is available from the chapter's [website](#) for 25.00 plus 4.75 shipping and handling. There's a lot more to bird there than just the Fort and this book will be your indispensable guide to locating spots you'd otherwise never find.

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Welcome to Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Ann Atkinson, Michelle Bartel, Carol Kline, Elizabeth Fernekess, Barbara Hermann, Theresa Hutt, John LaForte, Stephen Lang, Janice Lowry, Judy Ludwin, Susie O'Neill, Joann Schurman, Dyanne Strange, Randall Whitney, and Juli Wight. We hope to see you at a meeting or on one of our field trips.

Conservation Notes

Our new President has some rather strange ideas about how to "Make America Great Again." His choices for leadership positions at the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of the Interior, which oversees our national parks and refuges, seem to signal a desire to sell off our national treasures and to return to the days of robber baron capitalism that lead to our air and water being a source of death for wildlife and humans alike.

Tapping Scott Pruitt for EPA Administrator is like asking Mr. Fox to take over security duties at the nation's largest henhouse. As Attorney General of Oklahoma he has sent letters to the EPA that were written by lobbyists for energy companies and signed them as if they were his own words when writing in support of proposals to weaken standards under the Clean Air Act. On the issue of climate change, the website for his 2014 campaign for the position of Attorney General of Oklahoma claimed "flawed science" is used to "promote a dangerous no-growth agenda, which has the potential for disastrous consequences domestically and with respect to our national security." This flies in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary and mimics the position of the Koch Brothers and other oil and coal industry lobbyists. How returning the country to the days of polluted air and water will make it "great again" have not been explained by the President.

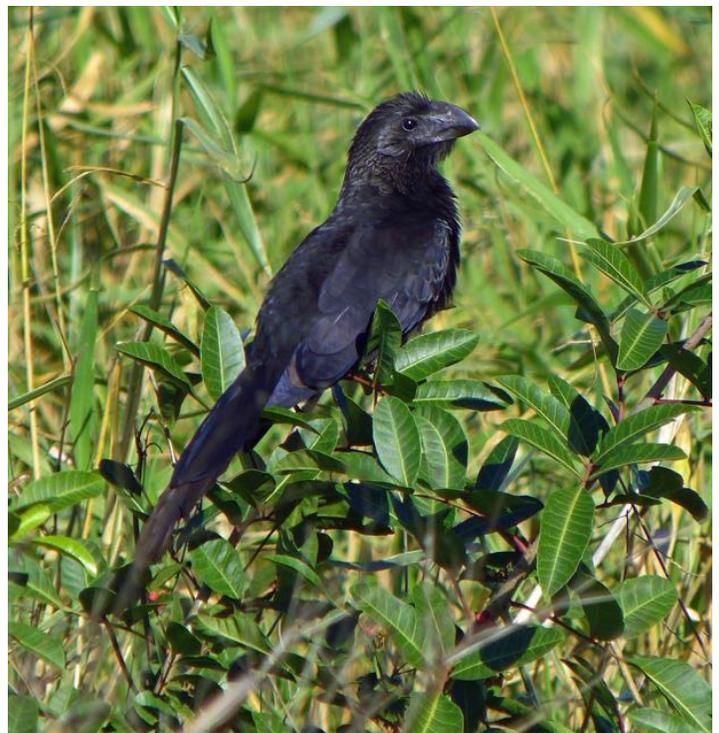
The President's choice for Interior Secretary offers a small ray of hope in this otherwise bleak picture. Montana Congressman, Ryan Zinke, has voted against the Republican Party's agenda when it included turning over millions of acres of federal forest lands across the west to states for use as they see fit. The House Natural Resources Chairman, Rob Bishop, (R-Utah) has tried in the past to transfer millions of acres of public land from the U.S. Forest Service to the state. This policy is written into the Republican Party's platform. It's doubtful that as Interior Secretary, should he be confirmed, Zinke will be able to stop this assault on our nation's parks and refuge system. Besides, he's been rumored to be a top contender for a Senate seat in Montana in 2016. So he may not be in office long enough to have much of an effect one way or the other.

We in the environmental movement face a long four years. We face a bleak prospect where what we all thought were inviolable treasures are sacrificed on the block of quick profits for industry. Could anyone watch the Ken Burns series, "The National Parks: America's Best Idea" and agree with these destructive proposals. I don't see how. Perhaps if we sent a DVD set to the President...

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The latest news on the shorebird nesting and migration front is not encouraging. Since 1973 some species of shorebirds have seen a 70% drop in their numbers. Red Knots, several species of plovers and others have moved steadily down a path toward extinction. Now from Bird Studies Canada comes news that one issue effecting shorebird nesting success is the sudden increase in the population of Snow Geese. Their population has gone from about 1.6 million in the 1960's to near 20 million today. The feeding habits of the geese can turn acres of productive habitat into ruined space not much good for vegetation or birds alike. Researchers are using new improvements in monitoring technology to track shorebirds, both as they migrate and as they move about the nesting range. Here's a link to an interesting article in [Nature](#) that was linked from the Bird Studies Canada site. It contains links to even more articles on birds and migration that are sure to improve your understanding of this complex and fascinating subject.

David Hartgrove



Smooth-billed Ani, *photo by Tom Ford*

We're hoping to see the Smooth-billed Ani on our trip to Lake Apopka. This one was found at Viera Wetlands and seen by chapter Membership Chair, John Carr and his daughter, Becky, on January 15th. Once fairly common in Florida it's now a rare event when one is found. Fortunately there have been several reports of the birds here in the state this winter. Join us on our field trip to Lake Apopka on February 3rd where another one has been found.

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Walks With Don

Don Chalfant moves in some pretty rarified company. As a birder whose life list stands at 770 species, he's listed as one of the top one hundred birders in North America. On Tuesday mornings he leads a bird walk as part of the partnership between our sister chapter, the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society and The Marine Discovery Center. The walks are from 8:00 to 10:00 am and begin at the [Indian River Lagoon Reserve Park](#). Weather permitting you're guaranteed a good time and a chance to learn from one of the best in the business.

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Winners of the Great Backyard Bird Count Photo Contest

There are some stunning photos of birds and their behavior from the 2016 Great Backyard Bird Count Photo Contest. From courting Trumpeter Swans to a bathing Herring Gull to a Common Gallinule photographed here in Florida the photos are sure to delight you. See them all [here](#).

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"1001 Secrets Every Birder Should Know"

Sharon "Birdchick" Stiteler has a book by that title and from it we learn that the highest flying bird in the world is the Bar-headed Goose. Reliably reported at an altitude of 27,800 feet flying over Mount Makalu there's even an unconfirmed report of a flock flying over Mount Everest, at just over 29,000 feet! Sharon has been a speaker and trip leader at birding festivals around the country. Her ["Birdchick"](#) blog has many followers.

St Marks Trip Was As Good As Could Be

Fourteen members of HRA and their guests travelled to St Marks National Wildlife Refuge from January 10th through January 14th. The weather could not have been better. Betty Butcher was hostess and guide for the trip to this beautiful refuge on the Gulf Coast. The troops gathered the first afternoon at the visitor center to check the bird lists, gather maps and information and get a feel for the park. Making their way quickly to the cars, the group was anxious to see what was down the road. For the next 3 days, they were not disappointed.

The first afternoon yielded Bufflehead, American Bittern, Black-crowned Night-Herons, Brown-headed Nuthatches and Sedge Wren just to name a few. After 4 hours of exploring, the birders checked in at the Shell Island Fish Camp. For our first evening, we were hosted for dinner by Mary and Steve Blackledge for pulled pork barbecue and all of the fixin's right at the camp. The group gathered in their camper and at the picnic tables along the water and watched hundreds of Double-crested Cormorants pass by on their way to evening roosts.

The next day the birding continued in earnest through Thursday where all efforts were focused on the refuge. Starting at the lighthouse at the southern most point of the road. Here the first Common Goldeneye were seen, along with Common Loons, Black and Surf Scoters in the bay. The pond at the same parking lot held Redheads and Canvasbacks, Greater Scaup and others. The ducks were out in force and that morning saw most of the 19 duck species that were tallied.

Other outstanding sightings were Vermillion Flycatcher, Henslow's and Clay-colored Sparrows and a very entertaining and animated American Bittern pursuing frogs right below the observation overlook at the Headquarters Pond. A Whip-poor-will almost eluded us overhead on the return from one of our fruitless hikes out to catch a glimpse of a reported American Black Duck. John Roessler spotted the bird sunning high in an oak tree.

Our final morning, after check out, the group drove to Wakulla Springs State Park and took a boat ride from the springs down and back on the river. Other than the tour boats, there are no other boats on that section of the river. This resulted in some very close views of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons and other species that are not threatened by the passive tourists. Photographers had some great opportunities.

Thanks to Betty Butcher for a trip that provided life birds for many, lots of good company and great pancakes. And a special thanks too to Mary & Steve Blackledge. The hosts with the most. Who opened their RV to the whole group for meals. We are ready to go back!

Final species count for the trip - 118. Check "News" link on our [website](#) for the full list.

Joan Tague

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The Birds of a Feather Fest

Flagler's birding festival, "[The Birds of a Feather Fest](#)" starts on Friday, February 10th and runs through Sunday, February 12th. Field trips, photography workshops and family friendly activities abound. There's no charge for registration and there are free bird walks daily. Click the link above for all the information.



Top photo, a sleeping Whip-poor-will. Above is a rare to Florida, Vermillion Flycatcher. Photos by David Hartgrove

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

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

Our website is 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 63 Number 3 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
March, 2017



The President's Message

Thoughts and Concepts

Each year the American Birding Association (ABA) selects a bird of the year. I don't know the criteria they use but I did read that they are now selecting birds that are familiar to many of their members. This year's bird was recently selected and it is our shorebird friend, the Ruddy Turnstone. As is the case with all our feathered friends, the more you learn about them the more you are awed by their behavior and their complexity.

Travel to a beach just about anywhere in the world and you are likely to see Ruddy Turnstones. A chunky, short-legged sandpiper with a bright harlequin pattern and a spike like upturned bill, they are flashy in a family known for its subtlety. It is one a few birds to be found on the six non-ice-covered continents.

The ABA recently moved their headquarters to Delaware and that may have been a factor in selecting this bird. Ruddy Turnstones congregate on the Delaware Bay in very large numbers in spring to take advantage of the Horseshoe Crab spawn. They rely on the on this biological and gastronomical plenty to refuel as they continue their journey to the nesting territories primarily in Northern Canada and Greenland.

These opportunistic feeders feed on rocky and sandy beaches during winter and in migration by turning over stones (hence the name), pebbles, seaweed, shells and other items with their strong and slightly upturned bill, which is also used to probe, jab, and dig for food in both winter and summer. Its diet when breeding in the tundra is primarily insects. During the rest of the year their diverse diet ranges from small fish, carrion, human garbage, and unattended eggs of other birds.

According to the Birds of America publication by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the North American population is somewhat over a quarter of a million breeding birds. Ruddy Turnstones reach their breeding grounds in late May or early June. They are monogamous and territorial and occupy dry, open tundra flats near ponds, lakes, and streams. In courtship, the male pursues the female, often performing visual displays both on the ground and in the air. The nest is a simply depression with a rim to prevent eggs from rolling away. It is lined with leaves. They usually lay a 4 egg clutch. Incubation averages 22 days, mostly by the female, with the male serving as sentinel-guard to detect predators. Eggs hatch in 22 to 24 days. About three weeks later the chicks leave the nest and feed by themselves. In another month they depart the breeding grounds and begin flying to their winter quarters. We are so thankful that many chose to be our winter guests.

Jim O'Shaughnessy

Calendar & Events

Monday, March 20th, Program Meeting- Don Picard, President of the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society will, through the magic of photographs, take us to the Galapagos Islands with the National Geographic tour he and his wife took. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. The presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. A brief business meeting follows.

* * * * *

Field Trips

Wednesday, March 15th- Blue Heron Boat Trip- SOLD OUT ! Join Celine Sullivan for this cruise on the St John's River. If you've been on this trip with us before there's been a change in dock location. The boat is now docked at the St Johns Marina and Resort, 2999 W. State Road 44. The trip is from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm and the boat doesn't wait for stragglers. Dinner afterward at the Stockyard, 1915 Old New York Ave., a short distance from the marina, is optional. **Reservations are required.** Call Celine at 386-523-4809. **If you made reservations and are unable to attend please call Celine so that those on the wait list can be contacted. Thanks!**

Friday, March 17th- Ocala National Forest- Join John Roessler for this trip to see, among other things, Red-Cockaded Woodpeckers and Florida Scrub Jays. Meet at 7:30 am at Ormond Town Square - Granada & Williamson Blvds behind Chick-fil-A. Bring lunch. Questions ? Call John, 386-212-6957.

Friday, March 24th- Orlando Wetlands- Celine Sullivan will be our leader for a trip to this outstanding location. Purple Gallinule, Least Bittern and others will be on the watch list. While we couldn't reserve the tram the ranger has assured us that transportation won't be a problem. Bring a lunch and meet at 7:30 am in the Target parking lot on Dunlawton Ave., east of I-95, behind Panera Bread. Questions? Call Celine at 386-523-4809.

* * * * *

Field Trips With Others

Friday, March 10th- Viera Wetlands- Join our friends from the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society for a trip to this outstanding location. Meet the group 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 at 7:30 am. Bring a lunch. Questions, call Don Picard, 307-699-2536.

* * * * *

From the Quotable Birder:

"Trying to get a fast ball past Hank Arron is like trying to get the sun past a rooster."

Curt Simmons

Conservation Notes

Here's a question. How does eliminating standards for clean air and water make America great again? Here's another. How does signaling the opening of vast expanses of now pristine lands to oil and gas drilling make America great again? I guess that last one can be answered easily if you own a lot of oil company stocks and your entire frame of reference for outdoor recreation consists of playing a round of golf. I'm reminded of the scene in the John Sayles film, "Sunshine State", where a character played by Alan King extolls the virtues of golf courses as being, "nature on a leash."

While the Trump administration lurches along daily out of control, equally amusing and horrifying us with its antics, the Republican Congress quietly works to undo 50 years of environmental advancement. Freshman Congressman Matt Gaetz (R) from Florida's first congressional district (Pensacola) has filed a bill to completely do away with the Environmental Protection Agency. Three Congressmen from Texas have filed a bill to amend the Endangered Species Act. The bill (HR 717) will require a review of the economic costs of adding a species to the endangered or threatened species list. Writing in [The Hill](#), Sarah Willey concluded, "The definition per the Endangered Species Act is, "any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range." By definition, a species is endangered if those conditions are met, and is threatened if it is likely to meet those criteria within the foreseeable future. If a species meets the criteria as defined, it is endangered; it is endangered regardless of how convenient it is to any of us. Science cannot be dictated by politics or economics."

Alas, I'm afraid her cogent argument will fall on deaf ears. The majority of the Republicans in Congress have been through the indoctrination classes at the America Legislative Exchange Council. This group specializes in crafting legislation that can be passed off as having been written by an individual Congressman or state legislator. None of it is any good for the average citizen.

Congressman Gaetz just recently won election with the help of 28,000.00 from fossil fuel industry political action committees and over 100,000 from one oil company in Texas. In a letter seeking co-sponsors for his ill conceived bill he trots out the old lines so popular with opponents of the EPA that job killing regulations are suffocating our economy. The fact that these arguments have been debunked years ago by a number of rigorous economic studies is ignored in these new times of "alternative facts."

And the Congressman will have help on the inside of the agency he wants to eliminate. Scott Pruitt, the new EPA Administrator, has spent his entire adult life working in service to the fossil fuel industry, even when he was Attorney General of Oklahoma. His office closely coordinated its actions with the oil and gas industry and he stated at the recent Conservative Political Action Conference that those seeking to kill the EPA were "justified" since the Obama administration was too concerned with climate change.

Killing the messenger isn't the way to deal with bad news. The most recent prediction from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration suggests a sea level rise of 3 to 6 feet by 2100. Burying our collective heads in the sands of beaches that will soon be under water won't protect us or our grandchildren from the catastrophe that's coming. Eliminating the EPA and gutting the Clean Air and Water Acts might sound good to those with a financial stake in maintaining the status quo on energy consumption practices. Those actions only doom any chance we have to make positive contributions to the future of the planet and our progeny. Our elected officials owe us more in their efforts to "Make America Great Again."

David Hartgrove

Looking For Flamingoes With Orange Audubon

Orange Audubon Society has invited us to come along on their South Florida Birding & Flamingo Quest II, April 22-23, 2017. They will be birding in Broward and Palm Beach counties with top Florida birder and popular birding guide David Simpson. The meeting place to hopefully see American Flamingos (STA-2) is 3 1/2 hours from Orlando and we will meet there at 1pm on April 22nd. After four hours birding in STA-2, we will head south to Fort Lauderdale, stopping at Markham Park. On Sunday we will bird Fort Lauderdale and possibly Miami in search of new species for everyone's life lists. Audubon of the Everglades, the only group authorized to take birders into the site where American Flamingoes have been seen recently, needs to keep the location secret. After making your reservations you'll be given directions to the location of the meeting place. So in addition to hopefully seeing flamingoes in the wild there's an element of mystery in the mix. Fee, covering guide and field trip fees, is \$40 Audubon members/\$55 non-members; Sat. only: \$25 for Audubon members/\$40 non-members. Meals and lodging not included.

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Volusia County's Field Trips

Volusia County's Environmental Management Department has some excellent trips to spots all around the county. Kayaking, bicycling, hiking, eco buggy rides and nature photography are just some of the offerings. And they're free. Click [here](#) and scroll down for all the information.

* * * * *

Welcome Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Linda Adams, Suzanne Allen, Robert Auth, David & Sharon Baker, Russell Boner, Jonathan & Karen Boorrem, Janice Darr, Dorothy Delrose, Anthony & Edna Di Pardo, Fay Gallagher, Michelle McLauren, Violet Nolte, Timothy O'Keefe, Tammy Olson, Jim & Ellen O'Shaughnessy, Kitel Outlaw, Pam Pennella David Peshek, Patricia Sample, Linda Simpson, Herbert Spar and Louis Villalon. We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting or on one of our excellent field trips.

* * * * *

A Photographic Trip To Yellowstone

Chris Fairey, President of the Merritt Island Wildlife Association, sends along a link to the [Yellowstone Photo Contest](#) winners. Some real knockout shots. Enjoy!

* * * * *

How About A Springtime Vacation In Maine?

Acadia National Park is one of the most beautiful places in America. The [Acadia Birding Festival](#) is headquartered there and here's a [link](#) to a short video to help you decide to go. There will be great bird trips lead by some of the best guides and the scenery is beyond belief. Even though it'll be warm here, be sure to pack some warm clothes for up there.

* * * * *

Or A Trip To The Dry Tortugas

The Dry Tortugas, a cluster of islands 70 miles west of Key West, is one of the great birding spots in the world in April and early May. Trans Gulf migrants swarm the island in search of food and water. [Florida Nature Tours](#) has been leading birders there longer than anyone else. You owe it to yourself to experience this unique spot.

Red Knot- A Grand Experience

Pat Leahy, a birding friend from Connecticut visited me recently. He wanted to experience the Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival with me and stay around my home to see some local Florida birds. "Sure, Pat, you just never know what you will see close by the house", I said.

Now "everyday birding - close by" is a favorite birding topic of mind and I enjoy the experiences - some expected, as Northern Cardinals at the feeder. Some remarkable, as the onetime appearance of a Loggerhead Shrike on the same feeder, or a Brown Booby at the Dunlawton Bridge. All close by. Wonderful.

However, what I experienced that day (January 27, 2017) when Pat and I went out looking for local birds led to a mind-blowing surprise. After birding the varied habitats of Spruce Creek Park and the rich and abundant waterbird life at the Dunlawton Bridge, we stretched my "close by" boundary to include Canaveral National Seashore.

Here we drove the length of the road to Parking Lot #5. Exiting the car, we quickly scanned the majestic ocean scenery before us and spotted a tangle of Red Knots. Pat and I immediately went to the beach, Pat with his scope and me with my camera set to its 1200mm lens. The Red Knots were quiet skittish, moving and landing to feed up and down the beach.

Continued in the next column



A flock of Red Knots at the shoreline and a pair with one showing its identifying leg flag. The green color indicates it was banded in the U.S.

Photos by Ray Scory

At first I tried to catch up to them. However, my speed did not match their speed. Keen observation and reality convinced me that these tactics were hopeless. Best not to look like a "Looney Tunes" cartoon character, just stay in place and hope. Hope worked. The tangle of Knots landed in front of us and began their rapid feeding activity.

I recognize that Red Knots are monitored and called out to Pat to count the number of birds in the flock and if any had bands on their legs. I need to know the color, code signature of the band and position on their legs. He called back as I clandestinely moved towards the flock, "Sixty-eight birds and two with bands. One I can't read but the other is (2E7) on a lime green band left leg and a silver on the right. I can't read the code on the other bird." However Pat did give me the colors of the bands and positions on their legs. Also, he directed me to the location of the banded birds in the flock. I dared not get too close to these skittish birds and miss what might be my only opportunity to photograph these two special banded birds. Crouching low with my elbows tucked against my body and my camera glued to my face, I followed his verbal instructions and I clicked away and hoped that I was pointed at the right spot in the flock.

I was. I photographed the diagnostic information on one of the birds. It was Red Knot (2E7). When I opened to the Red Knot (2E7) page in the www.bandedbirds.org program, I was dumbfounded. I had photographed the same bird three years earlier on the beach, December 22, 2013, while doing the Ponce Inlet Christmas Bird Count with David Hartgrove.

This bird has been recorded from the bottom of the Hudson Bay in Canada to Canaveral National Sea Shore in Florida and west to Tampa Bay in Florida. On the east side of our hemisphere Red Knot migration extends from the upper reaches of Canada to the tip of South America. Quite a journey for a ten to eleven inch bird. I'm glad I got to know one.

Some luck, some hope, some birding close by.

The wonder of it all.

Ray Scory

* * * * *

Nesting Season Is Just Around The Corner

Look for male Anhinga's like this one the next time you're out.



digiscoped photo by David Hartgrove

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The Pelican

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

Volume 63 Number 4 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
April, 2017



The President's Message

Thoughts and Concepts

At our last monthly meeting we were fortunate to have a great presentation on the Galapagos Islands by Don Picard, President of the Southeast Volusia Audubon Society. He did a wonderful job of showing us many of the surprises that await a first time visitor to the islands.

My wife and I, along with several friends visited the Galapagos Islands seven years ago. It was a marvelous experience and we would recommend it to anyone who enjoys the the wonders of nature found on no other place on the planet.

The Blue-footed Booby was my favorite bird! It waddles somewhat like a duck but with less grace. The name booby is derived from the Spanish word bobo, which means fool or clown. On land they have an almost clownish appearance as they clumsily wobble about. Its blue feet are striking. It is difficult to stop admiring them. They are a pelagic bird and require land only to rear and breed young. However, they in fact spend much of their lives on land. They are incredible divers. With a pointed, tapered bill and a torpedo shaped body these birds are built for penetrating air and water. They have sacs between their skin and muscles and in the skull which inflate when they dive to function as a shock absorber. The sacs cushion the impact of their dive protecting the brain from the pressure it must endure. They also have to ability to completely close their nostrils to prevent any water from being forced into their nose and lungs.

My wife were awakened at sunrise, on the second to the last morning, to the sounds of the birds splashing into the water with their torpedo like dives. We quickly threw on some cloths and rushed to the deck to witness several dozen Blue-footed Boobies diving, over and over again into the ocean, often not more than several feet from our boat. We learned that a school of fish had come near our boat and the birds were diving and having a great breakfast. I have since learned that they typically dive from heights of 33 feet to 100 feet. They accelerate their dive by flying towards the water before folding their wings into their body and effectively transforming into an arrow, hitting the water at about 60 miles per hour. Once in the water, these powerful swimmers can dive depths of 80 feet.

We were fortunate enough to witness the famous blue-footed courtship dance, The dance centers around the blue feet of the male. To best display his most attractive trait, the male parades around the proposed nest site, strutting his very blue feet for the female and lifting them high in the air while holding his beak downward. The feet of the male is an essential part of this ritual. Females chose their mate based on the size and luminosity of the male's feet.

Continued on the next page

Calendar & Events

Monday, April 17th, Program Meeting- Any of you who are members of the Nature Conservancy might remember a photo on the cover of last year's April/May issue of their magazine. It showed a young woman in climbing gear ascending a large pine tree to band Swallow-tailed Kite chicks. The woman in the photo was Gina Kent, a researcher at the Avian Research and Conservation Institute. Gina will be giving a presentation on ARCI's efforts on behalf of the kites and other species in trouble. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. The presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. A brief business meeting follows.

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Field Trips

Thursday, April 6th- Tiger Bay State Forest- Join Ray Scory for a trip through this close by birding hot spot. Pine Warblers, Brown-headed Nuthatches and Bachman's Sparrows are likely to be seen and who knows what else. Meet at 8:00 am at the [Forest](#) headquarters: 4316 W International Speedway Blvd. Daytona Beach, FL 32124. Bring lunch. Questions, call Ray at 386-763-4260.

Sunday, April 9th- Dunlawton Bridge- Ray Scory will be guiding this easy walk around Port Orange Causeway Park, located below the west side of the Dunlawton Bridge. Meet in the parking lot below the bridge at 3:00 pm. Brown Pelicans, Great Egrets and others are nesting on nearby Rookery Island. It will be low tide and the large sandbar west of Rookery Island can be full of all sorts of shorebirds, gulls, etc.

Friday, April 21st- Washington Oaks- This place can be a magnet for migrant warblers in Spring. Join Joan Tague on the hunt for them and others. The rose garden should be in its glory and a good time will be had by all. Meet at the [park](#), 6400 N Oceanshore Blvd, Palm Coast. A short ride up to Matanzas Inlet to look for nesting Least Terns, among others, will cap off the day. Bring lunch. Questions, call Joan: 386-871-6049.

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Field Trips With Others

Our friends in the [Southeast Volusia Audubon Society](#) have one more trip this season. Check the link above for the details.

And our friends in the [West Volusia Audubon Society](#) have several trips this month, including one to the Alligator Farm (be sure to bring your camera) that requires reservations. Check the link above for all of the details.

Volusia County's [Explore Volusia](#) program offers a little something for every taste, including hiking, biking, paddling and eco buggy rides. Click the link above and scroll down to the "Upcoming Events" section.

The brilliant blue feet are the result of carotenoid pigments which are obtained from the birds' diet of fresh fish. These birds are even more unique because they can enhance the color of their feet, and therefore their mating success, through abstinence, a trait possessed by very few animals. Studies have shown that if the male does not reproduce for a year his feet will a more brilliant and pronounced blue the next year. Scientists owe this to the energy exerted during courtship and child rearing. The mating ritual is completed then he presents nesting material to the female. He then spreads his wings and lifts his beak upward making a distinctive whistling noise while doing another dazzling foot display. We witnessed this incredible mating performance while being not more than 30 feet away. It was a show never to be forgotten.

Jim O'Shaughnessy

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DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING?

A question delved into by Bob Dylan in 1965 in his song, "The Ballad of a Thin Man" on the album, "Highway 61 Revisited." If you want to know what's happening, to learn more about issues that seldom make the nightly news but have huge impacts on our lives and the environment here in Florida, this item is for you.

With so many forms of news today, it's very difficult to stay current on what is happening in the environmental world around us. Even with government in the sunshine, we end up learning about a potentially harmful issue only days, or sometimes hours, before decisions will be made or votes will be taken. Audubon Florida summarizes up-to-the-minute developments in environmental issues in an e-newsletter called the **Advocate**. The **Advocate** is published once a month, except when the Florida legislature is in session. Then the **Advocate** is mailed weekly (on Fridays.) It's free. [Sign up to receive the Advocate](#) for yourself – and always be in the know.

Paula Wehr, Audubon Florida RCC, Chair

* * * * *

Welcome To Our New & Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Jonathon & Karen Booraem, (apologies for the misspelling last month) Robert Bosco, Joan Grennan, Ed Kocis, Ellen Sherman, Marylyn Simpson, Robert Thadani and Nicole Triantafellu. We hope to see you at a meeting soon or on one of our excellent field trips.

* * * * *



Male Boat-tailed Grackle
Photo by Dan Gribbin

Chan Robbins, A Man For All Seasons

Chandler S Robbins was one of the most influential birders in the history of birding. In June of 1940 he graduated from Harvard with a degree in physics. However his real love was birds and he devoted his life to their study. Along the way he revolutionized birding through the amazing amount of research he published.

After a brief stint as a high school math and science teacher in Vermont (during which time he published the first record of a Barred Owl in Massachusetts) he joined the staff at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland in December, 1945. He served there for the next 60 years, retiring in 2005. Though he kept a small office there until his death. He started banding birds in 1937 and his duties with PWRC took him all over the country and much of the Pacific. His landmark studies of several species of albatross represents some of the most important on these birds ever done.

The first field guide I ever bought was in 1973. It was his "A Guide To Field Identification- Birds of North America" published in 1966 by Golden Guide. In it Wood Stork was still referred to by its old name, "Wood Ibis." I later bought a Petersen guide but hung onto my little Golden Guide for years. Here's a [link](#) to an excellent piece by Laura Erickson that details his life's work. He was an amazing man.

David Hartgrove

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Ospreys, Master Fishermen

If there's any doubt, here's a link to a [short video](#) that will make you a believer. The bird's average weight is 3 1/2 pounds. At one point in this film, which appears to have been shot in Alaska, the bird captures and flies off with 5 or 6 fish. Their combined weight has to greater than the bird's. Later he pulls a steelhead trout from the water that appears to weigh 5 pounds at least. Notice that as soon as possible the bird turns the fish so it's going head first into the wind, thereby making it more aerodynamically stable. Just the slow motion view of the bird shaking off excess water is worth the price of admission. Thanks to Captain Jim Boyle for sending this item along for us all to enjoy.

Editor

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There's Still Time To Go To The Dry Tortugas

There are still a few openings on this month's trips to the Dry Tortugas. The Dry Tortugas is a cluster of islands 70 miles west of Key West. It is one of the great birding spots in the world in April and early May. Trans Gulf migrants swarm the island in search of food and water. [Florida Nature Tours](#) has been leading birders there longer than anyone else. You owe it to yourself to experience this unique spot.

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In honor of our passing into Spring...

From The Quotable Birder

"When we behold two males fighting for the possession of the female, or several male birds displaying their gorgeous plumage and performing strange antics before an assembled body of females, we cannot doubt that, though led by instinct, they know what they are about, and consciously exert their mental and bodily powers."

Charles Darwin, The Descent of Man

Conservation Notes

April 22nd marks the 47th anniversary of Earth Day. Now, with the president and the majority of Congress hell bent on wrecking the environment so their big donor pals can squeeze more profits out of our quality of life, it's hard to believe that the idea for Earth Day was a bi-partisan effort. For all his faults, Richard Nixon was the one who signed into law the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act. All of which Trump and his dull witted accomplices in Congress are about to wipe off the books.

Much of what passes for rational thought in Washington these days can be summed up by the following sentence, "My mind's made up, don't confuse me with the facts." Unfortunately the idiocy up there is matched by the idiocy here in Florida.

In Tallahassee, the House Agriculture & Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee voted to zero out this year's funding for all conservation lands purchase. This in spite of 75% of Florida voters approving Amendment 1 three years ago. The St Johns River Water Management District and the Southwest Florida Water Management District both just voted to allow huge withdrawals of water from the Silver Springs and Rainbow Springs watersheds respectively. Their mandate is to be sure that there's enough water to continue feeding the rampant development expected to take place here that will see Florida's population balloon to an estimated 21.5 million people in 8 short years.

On the page above is a piece urging you to get involved by signing up for the [Audubon Advocate](#). This is not the only source of information on how you can help save our quality of life but it's a good one. Please, for your sake and that of your children and grand children, sign up, get involved, write letters, call our legislators. We can make a difference.

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There's a plant commonly sold in garden centers across the state that should be banned. Known as Heavenly Bamboo, *Nandina domestica* is poisonous from its roots to its bright red berries. Cedar Waxwings, among other species, are killed by eating those red berries, which contain hydrogen cyanide. If you have this plant in your yard you might want to think about replacing it with something native. And to help you do that, see the next paragraph.

Our local Pawpaw Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society will have native plants for sale at the Volusia County Master Gardener Plant sale on Saturday, April 8. Since there is no longer a local nursery dedicated to native plants, this will be an excellent opportunity for homeowners to obtain those hard to find natives for easy maintenance and wildlife attraction. The plant sale will take place at the Volusia County Agricultural Center, 3100 E. New York Ave.(just east of I-4), DeLand from 8:30 am to noon.

David Hartgrove

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Shorebird Identification Primer Online

The [American Birding Association](#) has published links to two primers on shorebird identification that may help you with your birding skills. Written by Cameron Cox they are comprehensive and easy to understand.

[Peep identification #1](#)

[Peep identification #2](#)



Seeing An Old Friend Again

Last month's article by Ray Scory about Red Knots brought to mind a memory of a different bird. Ray reported on having seen Red Knot number 2E7, in 2013 when he and I were doing the Ponce Inlet Christmas Bird Count. Then in January of this year he saw and photographed the same bird again.

In January of 2013 I was leading a trip to Merritt Island NWR for our chapter. We were at Stop #4 on Black Point Wildlife Drive. One of my favorite shorebird spots if the water levels are right. They were that day and I photographed the bird above, number 053, along with several other banded Red Knots. A couple of days later I was sitting at my desk about to type in the info from the bands on the [Banded Birds](#) website and I had the nagging feeling that the number 053 was familiar. I happened to look up and saw that the same bird was in a photo above my desk. No wonder it seemed familiar. I'd been looking at it almost daily for 5 years! The photo was taken by Paul Rebmann when we were doing the Fall Migration Count in 2008. I almost fell off my chair. It really is a wondrous thing to think that you've seen a bird again that in the time between sightings has flown a distance equal to half way to the moon.

David Hartgrove

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Here's a White-rumped Sandpiper. A key field mark is the wing tips extending beyond the end of the tail. Keep an eye out for them as they migrate through this month on their way north.

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The Ormond Beach Garden Club, Spruce Creek Garden & Nature Club
and Colonial Colony**

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Our website is 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 63-Number 5 *Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon*
May, 2017



The President's Message

Thoughts and Concepts

The [Marine Discovery Center](#) in New Smyrna Beach organizes a Tuesday morning birding outing at Indian River Lagoon Park during the winter months. I have joined them numerous times over the years. We frequently heard a Screech Owl but until late last season no one had seen the bird. And then somebody spotted the it. We all were fortunate enough to see this smallest of our local owls, a beautiful bird. This year we again spotted the owl on several Tuesdays and I was even able to get a good photo of this tiny creature. My wife and I spent Easter weekend in Atlanta with our daughter and her family. We were able to see a pair of Barred Owls in their back yard. They have brown eyes and a roundish face. Almost all owl species have yellow eyes. I recently saw an episode of Nature, on PBS, entitled "Owl Power." The program follows the lives of two Barn Owl chicks, from the moment they hatch until they develop into super-powered owls. The show beautifully illustrates how owls fly so silently and slowly as they hunt for mice and voles.

These three owl incidents have caused me to read several articles about these amazing creatures. Permit me to share some of what I have learned. There are 19 owl species in North America. Many of these owls have asymmetrical ears. When located at different heights on the owl's head, their ears are able to pinpoint the location of sounds in multiple dimensions. The eyes of an owl are not true eyeballs. Their tube-shaped eyes are completely immobile, providing binocular vision which fully focuses on their prey and boosts depth perception. To compensate for their inability to move their eyes they can rotate their heads 270 degrees. A blood pooling system collects blood to power their brains and eyes when neck movement cuts off circulation.

Owls hunt other owls. As a matter of fact, Great Horned Owls are the top predator of the smaller Barred owl. The tiniest owl in the world, the Elf Owl, is 5-6 inches tall and weighs all of 1 1/2 ounces, a bit less than a golf ball! They reside in southwest Texas, Arizona and New Mexico. They winter in warmer Mexico, live in holes in trees and return to their U.S. home to mate in early March. The largest North American owl is the Great Grey Owl, which is up to 32 inches tall. With it's long, ear like tufts, intimidating yellow eyed stare, and deep hooting voice, the Great Horned Owl is the quintessential owl of storybooks. This powerful predator can take down birds and mammals even larger than itself. It's one of the most common owls in North America, equally at home in deserts, wetlands, forests and even cities. These nocturnal creatures and be found throughout the United States and most of Canada.

Continued below on page 2

Calendar & Events

Monday, May 15th, Program Meeting- Join us for a presentation by chapter member, Steve Underwood. Steve's program is titled, "Fun With Birds" and will to show the beauty of Florida birds found mainly in the St. Johns River and its tributaries. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. The presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. A brief business meeting follows.

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Field Trips

Friday, May 26th, [St Augustine Alligator Farm](#)- First, note that this is a change from the original date of May 19th. Join Peggy Yokubonus for a trip to this extraordinary spot for some of the best bird photography opportunities in Florida. The rookery will be full of squawking, flapping birds and their youngsters, many within arms reach. No need for a big lens on your camera. You'll be up close and personal with the birds. And the gators are cool too. They're why the birds are there. They keep the birds and their nests safe from raccoons and other predators. Meet at 7:30 am at Ormond Town Square - Granada & Williamson Blvds behind Chick-fil-A. Admission is 24.99 for adults There are discounts available (10% for AAA, seniors and military). There's plenty of food available too. Questions ? Call Peggy, 386-316-4085.

This is our final field trip of the 2016/2017 season. Remember to check the [chapter website](#) for updates on next season's field trip offerings beginning in September.

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Roseate Spoonbill in flight

photo by Dan Gribbin

Conservation Notes

It seems that each new day brings yet another alert from one environmental organization or another. The president has declared war on nature and the well being of our planet. Things haven't looked this bleak since the mother of our newest Supreme Court justice sat in the chair now occupied by Scott Pruitt. A man singularly unqualified to hold his position as EPA Administrator.

In 1981 President Reagan (today to his right wing base) appointed James Watt as Interior Secretary and Ann Gorsuch as EPA Administrator. Mr. Watt, by virtue of his position, was in charge of all our national parks. He was quoted as saying that he became bored after 2 days on a raft trip down the Colorado River. Ms. Gorsuch spent her 2 years at EPA trying to destroy it. We survived those two. Hopefully we can survive the lunacy that passes for Trump's environmental policy.

So instead of passing along a litany of the idiotic plans for our planet being put forward in Washington, here's a book review of one of the best books I've read in a long time. It was given to me by field trip regular, Harris Maclay, after he'd finished it. The book is "The Narrow Edge A *Tiny Bird, An Ancient Crab & An Epic Journey*", by Deborah Cramer.

It begins with a drive on a rutted road at the bottom of South America, in Tierra del Fuego. Cramer went there to begin following the northward migration of Red Knots (*Calidris canutus*). These small birds weigh around 5 ounces and fly from the southern most point of South America to near the Arctic Circle in northern Canada to nest. The bird's population has seen a precipitous decline since 1970 and the future of many other bird species are linked to its future.

Deborah Cramer's gift for description is unparalleled. When she's standing on a gravel beach on Coats Island, in the north end of Hudson's Bay, shivering in a cold, damp wind and so covered in mosquitoes she looks slightly furry, you're there with her. When she's explaining how horseshoe crab blood is used by researchers to verify the safety of medical appliances, it's done in such a way that even the most scientifically challenged among us will understand the issue.

Her commitment to conservation can be summed up in this paragraph. "We are but tenants on this planet, sharing the Earth with others who were here long before us and who, though less powerful, have tenancy as well. If there is any place where the well being of horseshoe crabs, shorebirds and other wildlife should be assured, it's in the nation's national parks, national wildlife refuges, and wilderness areas where, no matter how poorly we understand or value these animals, they can live and thrive- for their sake, not ours- and find sanctuary." Though book of science, it reads like a novel and is highly recommended.

Having now included articles on Red Knots in our last 3 issues I promise we'll give this issue a rest.

David Hartgrove

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Doing Your Own Research

If you've been hearing a bird song you're unfamiliar with or seeing a new bird at your feeder and its identity has you stumped, here's a place to start looking for answers to your questions. The [Macaulay Library](#) at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology offers the largest selection of its kind in the world. There are links to test your bird song knowledge as well as ways to help you solve a backyard mystery. Check them out.

Editor

Owls are capable of hearing prey under leaves, plants, dirt and snow. Some owls have flat faces with special feather patterns called facial disks, that focus sound to their ears. Barn Owls swallow their prey whole and they eat up to 1,000 mice a year! Owls swallow their prey whole. Getting killed by an owl is gruesome. First the owl grabs the prey and crushes it to death with its strong talons. Then it eats the prey whole. Unless it's too big, then it rips it up. The owl's digestive tract processes the body. Parts that can't be digested, like fur and bones, are compacted into a pellet which the owl later regurgitates.

I'm sure many of you now want to have an owl or two as a pet. Unfortunately, the United States does not allow private individuals to keep native owls as pets. Only trained, licensed individuals may rehabilitate an owl. Even in these instances the person licensed to keep the owl does not "own" the bird. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service retains "stewardship" of the birds so that they may recall them at any time if permit conditions are not being met.

Finally, a group of owls is called a parliament. This originates from C.S. Lewis' description of a meeting of owls in the Chronicles of Narnia. Your friends will no doubt be impressed when you casually inform them about your new found use of the word "parliament".

Jim O'Shaughnessy

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Volunteering at the Ormond Beach Environmental Discovery Center

Celebrating its first anniversary, the City of Ormond Beach's Environmental Discovery Center (EDC) provides visitors with a glimpse into the diverse ecosystems of Ormond Beach, specifically Central Park (601 Division Avenue). This 2,000 square foot facility is designed to be self-guided. The building serves as a hub for the programming and special events that will immerse visitors in these ecosystems and provide hands-on education.

The facility has several exhibits featuring live fish and reptiles and an active bee hive. There are several hands on stations with optics and replica skeletons. A fully equipped classroom greets teachers and presenters.

The staff of the EDC is currently looking for volunteers for a variety of tasks, including docent, field trip leaders for school children, presenters and nature walk guides. The staff is also working to develop activity modules for school field trips and welcome any and all ideas for these type of workshops. If you are interested, contact the staff at 386-615-7081. Check the [website](#) for more information.

Joan Tague

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You Too Can Contribute to Citizen Science

Ospreys are large, easy to identify and their nests are probably the easiest to locate of any species in the area. The Center for Conservation Biology began in 1992 at the College of William and Mary. One of its many projects is called [Osprey Watch](#), and it's tailor made for beginning citizen scientists. Simply locate an Osprey nest in your neighborhood, at the field where your kids or grandkids play ball, or in a Walmart parking lot. Click on the link above and follow the simple instructions for registering your nest. Then you make periodic visits to the nest to monitor its success and post the information in the easy to follow fields on the website. It's fun, you'll learn more and you'll be helping the birds.

A Great Day Birding- Tiger Bay

Lightning, thunder and a driving rain mashing up miles of dirt roads does not make for the beginning of a good birding day at Tiger Bay State Forest. However, with the enthusiasm of six stalwart members of Halifax River Audubon and the use of storm tracking i-Phones we decided to move on to Spruce Creek Park and Sugar Mill Gardens to save our field trip day.

By ten o'clock the storm had past and a cool breeze followed. A radiant sun burst through exposing the glittering colors of very active wood warblers. High in the trees, they were feeding voraciously - frantically, never stopping, short flights up and reckless drops down, scooting, diving, whizzing, quick starts and screeching stops, straight up and upside down, performing their warbler feeding acrobatics.

That was the show of the day. The warblers high in the trees: Northern Parulas, Pines, Prairies, Yellow-rumped, Yellow-throated, Palms, Black- and-Whites, Worm-eatings. Eight species in all, hundreds in numbers, all moving through in migration: magical, mesmerizing, exciting!

While the warblers were the show, other species captivated our attention as well, such as: a Swallow-tailed Kite, a Great Crested Flycatcher lustily singing, a Bald Eagle, a Marsh Wren, Red-winged Blackbirds, many water birds and others of equal importance and interest.

Needless to say, but always necessary to be remembered, all birds are important. There are no trash birds. All birds need to be recognized, protected. They bring joy and wonder to our lives. I once read that Roger Tory Peterson said that birds were the barometer to the health of our planet. If that isn't important, I don't know what is. As the slogan of the Halifax River Audubon reminds us, "We need to be the stewards of this natural world, not its destroyers"

Migration brings forth excitement and adventure in the lives of our birding community. We get a nice dose of both Fall and Spring migration here in Florida. During Spring migration we get to see most birds in their breeding plumage, guaranteeing us fresh vibrant colorful birds more magnificently displayed than any images that will ever appear on the pages of periodicals or on digital monitors.

Autumn offers another interesting facet of migration, intriguing and challenging identification. Autumn birds are on their way to their wintering grounds. Most have molted into their non-breeding colors and special body design patterns, thus hiding some diagnostic features.

Rain and sun bring forth the energies of the natural world and we certainly had plenty of both on this remarkable field trip day. In the morning we prepared to get wet. In the afternoon we closed the trip cool and dry. A birding trip fulfilled.

For me, a validation - another example of what "Everyday Birding close by" has to offer. "Close by", near to your home, quick access and short distance to a favorite birding hotspot. "Everyday Birding" affords the opportunity to visit your hotspot everyday with short or no travel time with a longer time at your hotspot for the distance traveled.

On this day that began with heavy rain, thunder and lightning and ended with a soft, cool breeze and glowing sunshine. We, all six of us, felt the energy of this migratory birding day.

Ray Scory



Great Crested Flycatcher at Sugar Mill Gardens



Joan Tague and Peggy Yokubonus on the dock at Spruce Creek Park

Photos by Ray Scory

* * * * *

From The Quotable Birder

"At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy unlimited
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small
In blast - beruffled plume
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom."

Thomas Hardy, "The Darkling Thrush"

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The Pelican

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

Volume 63- Number 6 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
June, 2017



The President's Message

Thoughts and Concepts

THE JOURNEY OF GOING NATIVE

When my family moved into our brand-new Ormond-by-the-Sea home in 1965, it was one of the first houses built on a dune that had been clear-cut to make room for a new subdivision, soon to be home to many families and their many children. While awaiting the cement trucks, the surrounding vacant lots were undergoing recolonization by citron melon, lantana, blanket flowers, prickly pear and sand spurs. It was a scene I would become increasingly familiar with, right up to today. Back then, as now, the early-morning calls of the mourning doves seemed both hopeful and melancholy, perhaps signaling the complicated relationship between nature and man that I was learning about.

As a new homeowner, my Father enthusiastically embraced the challenge of landscaping on sand, close to the sea and its ceaseless misting of salt spray. Three ideas guided his gardening decisions: put the right plant in the right place, choose drought-tolerant specimens to minimize the need for water, and avoid herbicides, pesticides and broadcast fertilizers that would soak into our porous limestone substrate and pollute our ground water. Somehow, his ministrations produced a beautiful yard with little help from these modern day "garden essentials."

My parents are both gone now. Last summer, I returned to Ormond-by-the-Sea, to their home on the dune. The yard has been largely neglected for decades. There is virtually no turf grass but there are many volunteers, some desirable and some not. For months, I have sat on my patio and contemplated all the wonderful things I could do to my tangled yard while watching the lizards, the bees, the butterflies and the birds flitting around the cabbage palms, the spiderwort, the Spanish needles, the beach daisies, the cape honeysuckle, the four o'clocks, the laurel trees and the many other plants whose names I do not yet know. I've realized that as enlightened as my Father was, there was something missing from his gardening guidelines: the notion of providing habitat for the wildlife whose homes were (and still are) being replaced by ours. This realization made me amend my landscaping plans. In addition to no turf grass and no irrigation system, I have decided to plant mostly natives that are good for birds, butterflies and bees. Imagine my surprise when I first saw this [Audubon video](#) that sums it all up and this good, quick [Audubon tutorial](#). Although not adapted to our local setting, it references a wonderful resource, "Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants" by Doug Tallamy. Once I made my decision to "go native", the resources appeared. I have learned that we have an active Native Plant Society to help guide me. You will find lots of information and a link to our local Paw Paw chapter [here](#).

Continued below on page 2

Calendar & Events

It's time for our annual summer hiatus from meetings and field trips until September. But that doesn't mean there's nothing to do.

Volunteers needed: Least Terns are nesting on the roof at City Island Library and several other spots around town. We need folks who can check these locations for babies that fall off the roof. Then we can get them back up onto the roof safely. Call David Hartgrove at 386-788-2630 or 386-235-1249 if you can help out with this.

Volusia County Land Management has all kinds of activities from hiking to biking to snorkeling. Check out their [website](#) and scroll down to the "Upcoming Events" section.

The June Challenge- The 14th Annual June Challenge begins on Thursday, June 1st. Started by Alachua Audubon, originally it was limited to that county. It has now expanded to 23 other Florida counties and three other states. The idea is to see as many bird species as possible in your county between 12:00 am June 1st and 12:00 midnight June 30th. The easiest way to keep track of your sightings is this [website](#) set up by Miami birder, Trey Mitchell. Being on the coast we have an advantage over inland counties. If you have questions send me an [email](#) and I'll forward instructions from Alachua compiler, Rex Rowan.

Canaveral National Seashore Turtle Watch- Beginning June 7th Canaveral National Seashore will host their popular sea turtle watch program, Wednesday through Saturday. You'll have a very good chance of watching a sea turtle lay her nest and trundle off back into the ocean. Programs are limited to thirty (30) persons per night with a maximum of six (6) persons per reservation call. The fee for this program is \$14.00 per person ages 16 and above, 15 and under are free. Persons with Access or a Senior Pass receive a 50% discount for the cardholder only. **Children must be 8 years old to participate.** Call (386) 428-3384 ext. 223 to make your reservation. No cameras, flash or cell phone use is permitted. The programs for 2017 will be provided in both ends of the seashore, the Playalinda District in Titusville and the Apollo district in New Smyrna Beach. The programs will run from 8:00 p.m. until Midnight, weather permitting.

* * * * *

Welcome To Our new & Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: John Agett, Carol Bernard, Curtis Canard, Pat Carey, Geraldine Clark, Kate Corbett, Linda England, Preston Garrison, Marie Harrison, Donna McLachlin, Bryan Lambert, Shirley Lieberman, Jacques McNett, Robert Neetz, Thaddeus Prydrozny, Alexis Robinson, Penny Scott, Louise Segner and Magna Stein. We hope to see you in September at our next general membership meeting or, as are all members, you're welcome to come to our board meetings the first Monday of each month at 1:30 PM in meeting room #1 at the Ormond Beach Regional Library.

And most important, I have been helped by local experts in Florida native plants (I'm happy to share names).

I hope you'll join me in making some of your habitat hospitable to birds and other winged creatures. Let's all Go Native!

Melissa Lammers

As our new President, Melissa took office on June 1st

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Conservation Notes

In yet another amazingly stupid move our new EPA Administrator, Scott Pruitt, has voided a decision by the Obama administration to ban all use of the pesticide chlorpyrifos. It's proven to cause irreparable brain damage in children but the pesticide manufacturers were big donors to the Trump campaign. So it's pay back time. And just to make sure they get their money's worth, Congress rolled back regulations on pesticide run off into streams and lakes. We're making America great again, one brain damaged child at a time.

With things like that going on it's easy to be overwhelmed and think all is lost. But there are good things going on too. Like the nesting of American Oystercatchers down in the area around the Port Orange Bridge. American Oystercatchers were just upgraded to "Threatened" status here in Florida. Their numbers have dropped over 50% since 1970. One of the birds is banded with bright blue bands on each leg with the letters "DP". I sent this information in to the Banded Birds [website](#) run by the Pawtuxent Wildlife Research Center. I discovered the bird was banded near Charleston, SC on July 16th, 2011 just before it was able to fly. Based on its overall size relative to its mate and the length of its bill I think it's a female and she had three chicks hatch on or about the 18th of May. One of the chicks has gone missing. It was probably the victim of avian predation: a night heron, a Great Blue Heron or Fish Crows. The remaining chicks are growing fast and as I write this, on May 28th, they're still roaming around the north end of Rookery Island. You might have noticed the new signs and string marking off the nesting area. I assisted several FWC and Volusia County staffers installing those on May 4th.

There was also a nest on a small island across the river from Rookery Island. That island is best viewed from behind Our Deck Down Under restaurant. That nest produced two chicks and one of them has gone missing too. I was there May 23rd checking on the birds and saw a Great Blue Heron fly over to the south end of the tiny island. I had a bad feeling about this but hoped for the best. I went back the following day and saw neither adults nor the chick. A Great Blue Heron was standing on the south end of the island again. I thought surely the chick had been eaten and the parents had flown off. Then on the 26th I was at the bridge and looked across the water to see a much larger chick and one of the adults. I was thrilled. The chick is too young to fly so I don't know where it was but it had clearly not been eaten. There are a few small plants in which it could have hidden.

Another nest on a small island on the west side of the channel, north of the bridge failed early. I'm not sure why but several years ago a pair of birds nested there. Incubation time for oystercatchers is between 3 and 4 weeks. I'd been monitoring their progress from below the bridge with my spotting scope. One day I set it up and as I dialed in the focus I saw a Fish Crow snatch and swallow a little white puff ball. It was one of the chicks. Probably not more than 24 hours old. It's a hard life being a bird and though we hate to see a threatened species like the oystercatcher lose its offspring, the Fish Crows are part of the balance of nature and have their own chicks to feed. Life goes on and we watch the passing parade.

David Hartgrove



American Oystercatcher with a chick. *Photo by Dan Gribbin*

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A young girl in Cuba, *Photo by Diane Rickman-Buckalew*

Another Story About the Cuban Coloring Books

Diane took along 30 books on a paddling trip to Cuba in April

On the first 4 days of the tourist part of the trip, I was joined by a lady from Munich who spoke Spanish. She and I and my guide passed out the books, each with a small box of 12 crayons. We engaged not only the children, but the parents. Mylen, my guide, made a big issue of the fact that a Cuban ornithologist was involved in making the books. I watched the absolute PRIDE this caused. It immediately got the parents involved. She also told the parents that they needed to be involved in helping their children and to read it with them. She and Isabelle both showed the children the small colored pictures so that they would know how to color the birds. I know that your project is to educate the children of Cuba. A byproduct was the education of an American with a MS in education and a German lady. I can't tell you the joy we personally received.

Diane Rickman-Buckalew

Dunlawton Bridge Field Trip

I say "it" every time I take a group of bird watchers to the Dunlawton Bridge. And I tell "it" to anyone or everyone who wants to talk to me about birding at the bridge. I inform my inquisitive friends exactly what I mean by "it". I take pride knowing the bridge has not yet let me miss the mark of my "it" prediction and challenge my birding guests to help me keep the tradition of my "it" intact. The challenge of extending the truth of the "it" is a game of birding adventure, discovery, fun and takes place - close by.

I maintain that any day of the week, any week of the month, any month of the year whether the day is inclement or sunny, or in the morning or afternoon, or when the sun is rising or setting, an observant birder intent on discovery can list from 25 to 30 species of birds in an hour and a half to two hours of time at the Dunlawton Bridge. That my birding friends is the truth of the "it".

Harking back to my first memorable birding experience under the bridge begins with my drive down under the bridge just before sunrise in October. It was my first "The Big Sit" survey and my first year living in Florida. A new adventure and about to be a surprise and glorious sighting. As I slowly drove to the parking area by the pavilion, I faintly heard the repeated barking of two Great Horned Owls. In one determined motion I parked my pickup, grabbed my binoculars and quietly but rapidly exited. High in the trusses supporting the bridge, these two owls displayed a performance long ago ingrained into the very fabric of their eternal existence. The expression of their body language was beautiful and awesome. Beaks touching, shoulders touching, bodies intertwining and weaving into a lyrical tapestry of elegance and energy presented a moment in the thread of their life. Exposing the now and primordial behavior of time. There before sunrise, under the bridge, I made my first contact for "The Big Sit" but received so much more - a gift, a magnificent gift.

I have had the good fortune to observe Roseate Spoonbills and Magnificent Frigatebirds fly over the bridge and exhausted Black-throated Blue Warblers rest at my feet. I have watched with John Carr a Brown Booby fight through the penetrating winds and rain from the No-Name Hurricane. Diving terns and feeding gulls, probing sandpipers and roaming ospreys are always there at the bridge.

Our recent Halifax River Audubon field trip allowed no exceptions to the plethora of special sightings witnessed at the bridge. We welcomed back a flock of Least Terns, and observed a Common Loon stretching out the last few days of its winter visit to our Florida waters. Turkey Vultures and a Bald Eagle over head and American Oystercatchers down on the oyster bars complimented the ever-present Brown Pelicans.

Fifteen satisfied members of our chapter witnessed a wonderful afternoon at the bridge and my "It" prediction still stands and continues - 32 species of birds in a 1.5 hour period.

Ray Scory

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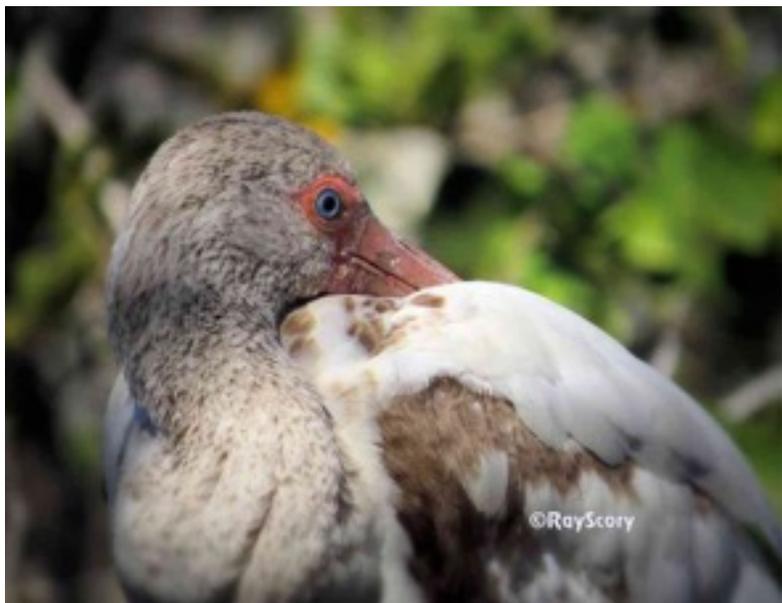
Bird Video Viewing Opportunity

If you were unable to attend our May meeting you missed an excellent presentation by chapter member, Steve Underwood. His photos and those taken by his wife, Marge, are set to music mostly supplied by his brother. The music and the photos are captivating and most of the photos were shot locally. So you might even see a location you recognize. Here's a [link](#) to the film.

Editor



Brown Pelicans on Rookery Island



Immature White Ibis

Photos by Ray Scory

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Neta Harris, Photo by Jim Eager

Neta was the long time Executive Director of the Brevard Nature Alliance and the force behind the Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival. She passed away early in May after a brief bout with cancer. She will be missed by all who knew her. Editor

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The Pelican

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

Volume 63- Number 7 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
July, 2017



The President's Message

Thoughts and Concepts

A NOTE OF GRATITUDE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Thank you. I am incredibly fortunate to be the incoming President of the Halifax River Audubon chapter, entrusted with helping further a conservation heritage that goes back almost 100 years. It is a great honor and a great responsibility to participate with our leadership and members in carrying out our mission:

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

The dictionary tells us that *stewardship* is the *responsible overseeing and protection of something considered worth caring for and preserving; the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.*

For me, being a member of Audubon means that I ask myself every day how I can actively help protect and preserve our earth. Its care has been entrusted to me, as it has been to each of us, for the living beings who have no voice and for the future generations who come after us. It also means that I am not alone in my acceptance of this awesome responsibility. Audubon's website explains...*No other conservation organization matches the size, reach, scale, influence, diversity, and creative energy of our chapters, nature centers, volunteer leaders, and partners. At its best, our network has the knowledge and authenticity to care for birds and the places they need in communities across the country.*

Audubon's conservation work is driven by science, advocacy and its vast network. We have the scientific resources to understand the needs of birds and the habitats that support them and other wildlife, and to understand the harms that are done daily to those special creatures and places. We use our voices to educate and as advocates, collectively and individually, to protect the remaining wild places in our own community and beyond. And we can always do more.

As I embark upon my journey as your President, I hope it will be a journey we take together to devote ourselves to being true stewards of our wild places, to find opportunities however small or grand, to preserve the beauty of nature for all living creatures. Thank you.

Melissa Lammers

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"One has only to sit down in the woods or the fields, or by the shore of the river or the lake, and everything of interest will come around to him,- the birds, the animals, the insects..."

John Burroughs, American naturalist and essayist

Calendar & Events

While we're still in our summer hiatus as far as chapter events, there's plenty to do to keep you active...

The Marine Discovery Center- [The Marine Discovery Center](#), in New Smyrna Beach, has a full schedule of activities that are both fun and educational. Guided kayak tours of Brown's Bay and the Indian River Lagoon, full moon boat rides on their 40' pontoon boat as well as day trips around Ponce Inlet and the surrounding area are all available to fit anyone's schedule. Click on the link above and then navigate around the site for all of the information.

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* * * * *

Have you ever wondered what to do when you have a free day? **The Volusia County Parks and Trails app** shows you where to hike, bike, paddle, swim or be a tourist. This free app is available for download on both Android and iPhones.

All the local birding hotspots from the Great Florida Birding Trail are listed, as are trails, paths, museums, springs, ocean parks and more. Navigate through the app by selecting an index icon such as Do, See, Know & Services, which will provide a list of categories. Or navigate by "Guidebooks" which are broken into chapters and sub-chapters. A mapping option gives turn-by-turn directions to the venue selected from wherever the user is at the time. Details about how the app works, with graphics, can be found on the Volusia County website. Click [here](#) for the link on the County's website to download the app or Search for this free app using the Google Play or iPhone App Store icon on your mobile device.

Paula Wehr

* * * * *

"Of all the classes of animals by which we are surrounded in the ample field of nature, there are none more remarkable in their appearance and habits than the feathered inhabitants of the air."

Thomas Nuttall, English botanist, ornithologist and naturalist

Conservation Notes

President Trump sent out another of his mysterious Tweets the other day. I say mysterious because it's a mystery as to how what he wrote bears any relationship to what he's actually doing. "We're going to have the cleanest water..."

Ever since before he took office he's been whining about how terrible the EPA is and how he couldn't wait to gut the Clean Water Act. In 2015 The EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers settled long standing disputes and agreed on which and how water bodies in the US should be cared for. The resulting document was called the Clean Water Rule. Ever since the Clean Water Act was passed in 1972 states and corporations had used various ambiguities in that landmark piece of legislation to avoid cleaning up pollution in water all across the country. Scott Pruitt, Trump's new EPA Administrator and an unprincipled shill for the energy industry, has wasted no time in setting into motion the the process of doing away with the Clean Water Rule. Eighty percent of small business owners, eighty-three percent of hunters and fishermen and eighty percent of the voters nation wide approve of the Clean Water Rule and its goals. One guess as to who's against it.

Yes, it's Big Oil, and Big Ag and states whose legislatures are controlled by right wing groups bent on drilling and damming and mining anywhere they please and to hell with the environmental consequences. Many of us remember seeing the Cuyahoga River burning like mad on television in June of 1969. And this wasn't the first time that river had caught fire. Back then corporations and state and local governments treated our water ways like sewers. Many rivers and streams were devoid of life entirely. In 1970 Cleveland Mayor, Carl Stokes, spoke out and testified in Washington pleading with Congress to do something on the national level since states and local municipalities were incapable of dealing with the powers of industry and their own lack of funding. In 1972 Congress passed the Clean Water Act. President Nixon vetoed the bill and Congress promptly overrode his veto. The Clean Water Act, flawed though it may have been, became the law of the land. Suddenly there were federal dollars to match with state and local funds to pay for cleaning up the nation's polluted waterways.

The 1969 fire on the Cuyahoga was the last river fire in our history but it certainly wasn't the first. Going back to the 1880's this was number 13 for the Cuyahoga. Rivers in other major cities had river fires of their own. If Trump and his administration have their way we'll see river fires again some day. This simply doesn't make any sense. Surely even the Congressmen we have representing us can be made to see the tragic folly of going along with these greedy, insane plans. Their numbers are easily found in the phone book or on the web. It will only take a minute to call their office. You'll probably have to leave a voice mail but those are tracked by staffers and provide the best and easiest way to register your feelings. And you'll know you did your part for clean water for all of us.

David Hartgrove

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Of Youth & Birds & Enthusiasm

There are a number of young birders making their mark in the field in which we endeavor. Each in our own way. One of them is the grandson local Sierra Club and Environmental Council member, Betty O'Laughlin. Eddie Kasper lives in the Chicago area with his parents and like many savvy teens he has a [website](#). On it you'll learn that he did a junior Big Year back in 2013 and totaled 466 species, That was when he was age 10-11! It's filled with some of his great photos and his blog. He's headed down to Ecuador right now. So that should make for some interesting blog posts. Check it out and wish him well.

NEWS FROM AUDUBON FLORIDA

Hi Audubon Members and Friends,

My name is Paula Wehr and I am your representative on the Audubon Florida Board of Directors. There are seven geographic groupings called Regional Conservation Committees (RCCs) which cover all 45 chapters in the State. The Central Florida RCC includes Halifax River, Highlands, Lake Region, Kissimmee Valley, Oklawaha Valley, Orange, Ridge, Seminole and West Volusia Audubon chapters. Southeast Volusia Audubon Society, although technically assigned to the Indian River Lagoon RCC, is also included in the Central Florida RCC mailings so they can participate when issues arise in their area. It is my intention to send brief updates on what is happening in the Central Florida RCC at least quarterly, and more often if events dictate.

Each Chapter Representative on the Audubon Florida BoD participates in the Chapters Committee which meets monthly to discuss how Audubon Florida can assist local chapters to be as successful as possible. Last year our committee created and distributed a Chapter Leader/Board Manual which includes templates for agendas, budgets, Board member applications and the like as well as how-to instructions for basic chapter operations and best practices from chapters which have created successful programs or fund-raising events.

Since 2005 National Audubon Society has provided funding for collaborative grants to chapters, a process run by our Chapters Committee. With matching funds from Audubon Florida via a grant from FP&L, this year our Chapters Committee was able to fully fund all 10 applications for amounts between \$520 and \$1,000. Programs funded by these grants ranged from purchasing optics for a young bird steward program to coastal dunes restoration.

Each year at Audubon Assembly in October, the Conservation Action Agenda is adopted. Once approved, these goals focus the work of State staff. Audubon Florida is unique in inviting local chapters to participate in the agenda-setting process. Each RCC selects one or two broad-based conservation goals for the entire RCC geography which is included in the Conservation Action Agenda. Click on this [link](#) to read the entire document. The Central Florida RCC goals for 2017 are shown on pages 19-20. Look for updates soon

Paula Wehr



Welcome To Our New & Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Cheryl Allen, Carol Chillemi, Brian Deaton, Susan Dodge-Donnino, Carol German, Janet Mills and Alyce Switzer. We hope to see you in September at our next chapter meeting or on one of our field trips.

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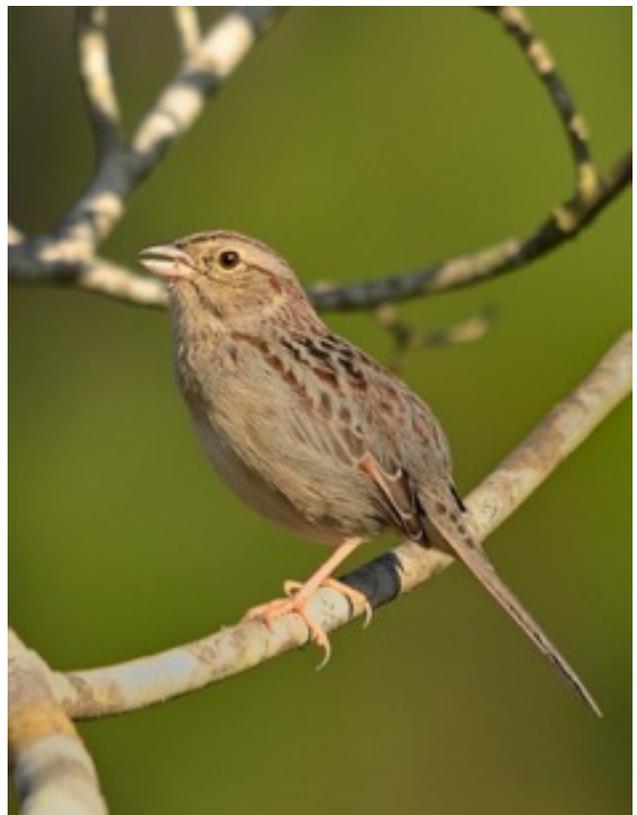
Least Terns On Rooftops

I know, it sounds like the beginning of a lost stanza from a song in *Sound of Music*. Actually it refers to what has become a fairly successful survival strategy for what are normally beach nesting birds. As was mentioned in last month's Pelican, Least Terns are once again nesting on the roof of the City Island Library. It's one of several buildings locally that are hosting these smallest of the tern species. As part of our chapter's commitment to being good stewards we're affiliated with the [Florida Shorebird Alliance](#). The FSA is a partnership between state and county government agencies and local volunteers who monitor beach and rooftop nesting birds. In addition to beaches and rooftops these opportunistic little birds will adopt any space that gives them a substrate they can adapt to their needs. So in addition to the rooftops and beaches already mentioned, Michael Brothers discovered a new location in a vacant construction site on the east side of the Tanger Outlet Mall property. I met Alex Kropp (of FWC) there last month and we installed about a dozen signs to mark off the nesting area after conferring with the site manager. If you're in the neighborhood there's a convenient spot to park and you can see them for yourself from a safe distance near the stop sign as you turn into the mall. Look for the small white signs just off the road at a 3 way stop.

David Hartgrove



Least Tern *Photo by Dan Gribbin*



Bachman's Sparrow *Photo by Peter May*

Iconic Bird of the Pine Woods

Named by John James Audubon for his friend, the Rev. John Bachman, this little sparrow has been the bane of many a birder who happen to be here in winter. In early spring when they're beginning to nest, males sing from an exposed perch and can be relatively easy to find in the right habitat. In winter they act more like mice, running along under the cover of low growing vegetation and can be found in gopher tortoise burrows on cold nights.

Reverend John Bachman (who pronounced his name "BACKman") was a Lutheran clergyman who settled in Charleston, S.C. in 1815 and served the same church there for 56 years. In 1831 Audubon lived with the Bachman family for about a month and this was the beginning of a lifelong friendship. He was coauthor with Audubon on the latter's book on the mammals of North America and was the discoverer of what Audubon named the Bachman's Warbler in 1833. Bachman presented Audubon with skins and mounted specimens and it was based on these that Audubon included the bird in his "Birds of North America." He never saw the bird in the wild.

And there aren't too many folks around now who have seen a Bachman's Warbler. The last confirmed sighting was in the Charleston area in 1962, though unconfirmed reports include one from Brevard County of a possible young female in 1988. The only person I know who's seen one is our own John Carr, who as a young boy was on a birding trip with T. Gilbert Pearson and saw the bird in its native habitat in the late 1930's. Pearson was one of the founders of the National Audubon Society and a professor at the University of North Carolina.

David Hartgrove

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A Big Price Increase Next Month

The senior pass for the US National Parks system, sometimes referred to as the "Golden Age Pass", is about to go from 10.00 to 80.00 on August 1st. If you qualify and don't have one now's the time to get yours.

Editor

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The Pelican

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

Volume 63- Number 8 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
August, 2017



The President's Ruminations

THE FIRST BIRD – A LOVE STORY THAT ALMOST WASN'T

When I was a little girl, I was first enchanted by Brown Pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) flying in a V formation overhead as I played in the surf. Their broad wings and long bills looked prehistoric. I imagined they were pterodactyls, brought back to life by some benevolent mad scientist who found this to be the perfect place for them and we were the chosen ones to appreciate their odd magnificence. I would watch them for long stretches of time as they skimmed the waves, always staying just above the curling lips of the whitecaps. At times they reminded me of pairs of figure-skaters, gliding along in perfect synchronicity. I was fascinated as they dived from on-high straight into the sea, magically re-appearing perfectly composed, to float on the surface. They were part of the traffic flowing north and south along SR A1A. Stately and dignified, they flew single-file above the cars, trucks and motorcycles, adding an elevated third lane to the two-lane thoroughfare. They were fast but never rushed. They were purposeful and serene. They quickly became my favorite bird. I fell in love.

It's heart-wrenching to think we came close to losing them in my lifetime. Brown Pelicans are found along the Atlantic, Pacific and Gulf Coasts of North and South America, and in some inland areas, including lakes here in Florida. They breed in a number of different environments. In Florida, they primarily use mangrove islets. Males gather materials while females build the nests. Pelican parents incubate their eggs with their feet, standing on them to transmit the warmth from their skin. This parental attention almost killed them off.

In the mid-twentieth century, the pesticide DDT got into the pelicans' food chain and caused them (and other birds, like the Bald Eagle) to lay thinner shelled eggs that cracked under the weight of the nesting adults. They almost disappeared before we took action. In 1970, Brown Pelicans were federally listed as endangered and in 1972, because of the impact on pelicans and other species, DDT was banned. Pesticide bans and controls, conservation and reintroduction efforts all have allowed Brown Pelican populations to recover. By 1985, Brown Pelicans along the Atlantic and eastern Gulf coasts had come back enough to delist them. In Louisiana, they were finally delisted in 2009, less than a year before the Deepwater Horizon oil spill threatened their habitat again. On our own shores, fishing line left behind continues to take a toll on brown pelicans and other sea creatures. Because of some careless fishermen, I had my one very close encounter with a wild Brown Pelican. Fishing line was wrapped around its bill. I held the ensnared bird while another person quickly untangled the line. As I raised it aloft, I could feel its power. I released it to fly away over the ocean, taking my heart along with it. Here's a [link](#) to more information.

Melissa Lammers

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* * * * *

Though our complete field trip schedule hasn't been finalized we thought you'd want to know about this opportunity as soon as possible so you can begin planning.

We're Going To Gainesville In November

Several years ago our chapter took an overnight birding trip to Gainesville. Alachua County has a number of excellent birding hot spots and we had a great time. We got a behind the scenes tour of the avian collection at the Museum of Natural History. We also watched the nightly flight of the thousands of bats from the University's huge bat house as a Red-tailed hawk tried to make his dinner of one. We're happy to report that we're doing this trip again on **Wednesday and Thursday, November 8th and 9th**. We have a block of rooms reserved at the La Quinta Inn. Each is a double room for our discounted rate of just 62.10 per night. More information regarding the itinerary will be forthcoming. To make your hotel reservation, call the La Quinta Group Reservations number: 1-866-527-1498 and tell them your group reservation number is: **0669 GRSIMO 767**, Halifax River Audubon. The cut off date for this trip is October 15th. You must have made your reservation by then. Contact David Hartgrove by phone, 386-235-1249 or [email](#) to add your name to the list of those going. In addition to Paynes Prairie and the Museum's avian collection, we'll be going to the new Sweetwater Wetlands where we'll have a catered picnic lunch. You don't want to miss this one.

Conservation Notes

When my wife and I visited the Santa Ana NWR some years ago, we were greeted in the parking lot by a flock of raucous [Plain Chachalacas](#). It's a jewel in the crown of our national wildlife refuge system. It's also in the sights of our myopic commander in chief and his long touted border wall. Established in 1943, the Santa Ana Wildlife Refuge is one of the top birding destinations in North America, home to at least 400 bird species and 450 species of plants. The refuge is located on the Texas-Mexico border about 10 miles southeast of McAllen in the Rio Grande Valley. Construction plans from Customs and Border Protection call for an 18 foot levee topped by a solid steel fence. Soil testing by the contractor has already begun and construction could begin as early as January. If built, this monstrosity will essentially destroy the refuge. Yet another piece of our natural heritage sacrificed to the paranoid ravings from the White House. Congressman Filemon Vela (Dem. from Brownsville) is working with other House members to try to head off this outrage. Let's hope he's successful.

* * *

Last month EPA Administrator, Scott Pruitt, testified before Congress that the EPA is not authorized to regulate carbon pollution from factories, power plants and oil refineries. The Supreme Court has ruled otherwise three times, in 2007, 2011 and 2014. But hey, why let the facts get in the way when you're doing the boss's bidding. Trump and Mr. Pruitt have called for cutting the agency's budget by about one-third, reducing funding to 1990 levels while slashing agency staff by nearly 3,800. That's a 25 percent reduction in the scientists and experts we depend on to protect us from toxic pollution, contamination, and environmental harm that threatens the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat. Apparently these clowns believe that "Making America Great Again" involves dragging us back to the days of the robber barons while we choke on their pollution.

* * *

Kelli McGee, former Director of Volusia County Growth Management and now President of [Natua Strategies](#), reports that at their July 20th meeting, the Volusia County Council voted to support [Project H2O](#) and its mission of securing clean water for us all. A partnership involving The Marine Discovery Center, Audubon, most of our area's colleges, and state and local government entities, Project H2O works to promote clean waters in both salt and fresh water bodies. As a non profit they can apply for grant funding not available to government bodies to fund studies that will point the way a cleaner Indian River Lagoon, our troubled springs and the entire Volusia watershed.

One of those partners is the [Institute for Water and Environmental Resilience](#) at Stetson University. Headed by long time environmental activist, former County Councilman and state legislator, Clay Henderson, the Institute offers a yet another platform for making the general public aware of the magnitude of the problems facing our community with regards to threats to our waters and the environment. We have all kinds of tools and organizations to lobby for us in Washington, Tallahassee and with local governments. Now we just need to get the politicians to listen to us instead of the folks paying for their re-elections.

David Hartgrove

* * * * *

From The Quotable Birder

"There is nothing in which birds differ more from man than in the way in which they can build and yet leave the landscape as it was before."

Robert Lynd, American Sociologist

A Report From Cuba

Gary Markowski, President of [Caribbean Conservation Trust](#), just returned from Cuba and penned this report on his efforts to distribute the Cuban Coloring Book our chapter produced.

I wanted to let you know that I just returned from the Birds Caribbean Ornithological conference in Cuba. I donated my last load of coloring books to an urban Havana program. We will be bringing crayons and Cornell Bird Sleuth curriculum materials in November to support the educational program that the students will experience.

I saw Liz Gordon* there, and talked at length with her about our structured plans to use the books as a important component of a community education program that is one of our strategies to try and change perceptions towards the caged bird trade in Cuba, which has become a growing problem. I had mentioned to Liz some time ago that we were starting a community education program to inform kids about the value of birds & the detriment of capturing wild birds. We were a [Birder's Exchange](#) partner for many years, and have dedicated this education component to Betty Peterson, who passed away 3 years ago. During the ABA's relocation from Colorado to Delaware, that program was dormant. It looks like it is making a comeback finally, so I will be in touch with Liz to try and include BEX with our efforts in Cuba, which will likely be popular among donors. Since the coloring books were printed, CCT groups have facilitated the delivery of more than 50 pairs of binoculars, 800 coloring books, a couple of cases of crayons, and more than 70 field guides, including 30 Spanish edition Kaufman guides (North American birds).

At the conference I presented a workshop on the growing caged bird trade. As a result we formed an International Working Group of more than 20 people, the majority of whom are Cuban. This team includes several scientists and a few key government officials who are advocates of birds in Cuba. My presentation featured the coloring books as a key resource in changing the perception of youth, who are often the first link in the caged bird business. Hopefully, we will begin to have an impact. In short, my belief is that there may be a need for a second printing of the original book. We may end up with more Cuban endorsements, although I don't think that will be needed. I will tell you that the book was very popular at the conference. I was able to send a few to Eastern Cuba as well with 3 biologists who work at Humboldt National Park. This is a very important park biologically, where Cuba's bio diversity is broadest, and where the rate of endemism in both flora & fauna peaks. It is also quite remote in terms of location and overall resources, especially following the devastating blow that Hurricane Matthew left in it's wake a little less than a year ago. I would love to get this program going at that end of the island.

One idea I had was to solicit crowd funding among past CCT participants specifically for this purpose. I am interested in your thoughts and on HRA's interest in expanding this project. Thanks to the members of HRA for their support.

Gary Markowski

**Liz Gordon is the new Director of the Birder's Exchange program of the American Birding Association. Betty Peterson was the program's Director from its inception until her passing.*

* * * * *

Welcome to Our New Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new members: Lauren Herzog, Brenda Levine, R Turner Ragsdale, Amy Swenson and Barbara Townsend. We hope to see you at our next meeting or on one of our field trips. These both resume in September. Check our [website](#) or this newsletter for all the information.

**NEWS FROM THE CENTRAL FLORIDA REGIONAL
CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

Audubon Florida and the Central Florida Regional Conservation Committee (RCC) believe that advocating for land acquisition in 2017-2018 may best be achieved by identifying specific properties to showcase to legislators rather than asking for approval for a pot of money. Chapter leaders in the CFL RCC are now identifying important properties from the Florida Forever and the Rural and Family Lands priority lists. Legislators and decision-makers will be invited to visit these properties and see first-hand why they are special places and have economic, ecological and recreational value to their constituents. We believe they will then be more apt to say, "We need to purchase this land (or conservation easement) because it is important to my district's residents and to my priorities."

As you may remember from previous newsletters, Audubon Florida is defending Little Estero Island Critical Wildlife Area (west coast near Ft. Myers) from a proposal to erect a private boardwalk across a state-owned mangrove lagoon and into the heart of nesting and wintering habitat for declining coastal birds, including Least Terns and Snowy and Wilson's Plovers. The case is progressing and we are hopeful for a good outcome, but legal fees may exceed \$40,000. Two members of the AF Board of Directors have been instrumental in raising nearly \$14,000. Click [here](#) to read more about the background of this issue and how you can help.

Charles Lee and chapter leaders from Orange and Kissimmee Valley Audubon have been advocating alternate expressway routes for the SR 408 extension, Osceola Parkway Extension, and the Southport Expressway. In each case, the objective is to steer proposed expressways away from important conservation lands. At risk are conservation lands along the Econlockhatchee River, the Split Oak Mitigation Preserve, and the Disney Wilderness Preserve.

Paula Wehr

CFL RCC Representative on AF Board of Directors

* * * * *

Blackpoll Warblers, Another Master of Migration

A research team, led by the University of Guelph and Bird Studies Canada, recaptured 27 Blackpoll Warblers that had been fitted with geolocators to track their migration routes. These tiny birds, weighing less than half an ounce, have now been shown to fly non stop over 1,700 miles of open ocean on their way from the northeastern US to the Antilles and northern South America. Here's a [link](#) to this fascinating article.



Blackpoll Warbler, *photo by Christian Artuso*

Solar Co-op Coming to Volusia County!

The non-profit Florida Solar United Neighborhoods (FL-SUN), in partnership with the League of Women Voters of Florida are coming together as a community service to create a solar co-op in Volusia County. A solar co-op is a group of homeowners in a defined geographic area who use their combined bulk buying power to save on the cost of going solar. The Volusia County Solar Co-op will be the 14th co-op initiated in Florida.

A solar co-op is a completely voluntary program that helps homeowners understand the benefits of solar photo voltaic cells and the process of going solar. Installation of solar PV saves homeowners money, promotes economic development of alternative energy companies and installers, and reduces use of fossil fuels which can improve air and water quality. Volusia County's Sustainability Action Plan has a goal of promoting the development and use of alternative energy, with action steps like educating residents about renewable energy opportunities.

FL-SUN is launching the Volusia County Co-op with a press conference on August 30th in downtown Deland and then hosting four informational sessions around the county. Stayed tuned for more information!

Nancy Vaughn, Co-chair, Solar and Water Action Team, League of Women Voters Volusia County

Nancy will be making a short presentation to us about the co-op and photo voltaic cells at our meeting in October.

* * * * *



Osprey with a redfish, *photo by David Hartgrove*

The photo above was taken from the observation tower at Spruce Creek Park while teaching a group of kids from Spruce Creek High School about birds at the Biology Kickoff camp. For a look at some truly great photos of birds, here's a link to the top 100 entries in this year's [Audubon photo contest](#). When the page opens click on the tab at the right or left sides of the photo to advance to the next one. Enjoy!

A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors

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

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

Our website is 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 63- Number 10 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
September, 2017



The President's Ruminations

The Accidental Birder

This month's letter is a cautionary tale about not wasting precious time. If you suspect you are a birder-in-the-making, this is for you.

I never set out to become a birdwatcher or birder. For many years, I have begun each day with a long walk outdoors, no matter where I have found myself. I am an indiscriminate omnivore for nature's sights but it turns out that the birds have sneaked up on me, insisting I pay them greater attention.

I bought my first bird book when I lived in Puerto Rico. I was very casual about observing the birds and only looked up the ones that seemed unusual. Of those, I particularly remember non-native Java Finches and a wayward Brown Booby. When I moved to South Florida, I was taken with the "invaders" first, giant macaws and Monk Parakeets, both pet shop escapees. Then it was the Cattle Egrets hunting in the boulevard medians, the White Ibis pecking at lawns, the Screech Owl that sat with me for 15 minutes on my balcony one New Year's Eve, the lethal hawks with deceptively sweet, high calls, and the fearless Anhinga and cormorants in the Everglades. I bought my second bird book.

Then I returned temporarily to Ormond-by-the-Sea. What was that odd bird on the beach every morning waiting by the ghost crab holes? No one seemed to know. I found out he is a Yellow-crowned Night Heron. I watched the Osprey catch breakfast, carefully turning its catch lengthwise under its body as it flew back to a condo-top nest. An early morning walk down High Bridge rewarded me with views of Roseate Spoonbills, Wood Storks, Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets and some birds I didn't know. I bought my third bird book.

When I returned to Ormond-by-the-Sea for good, my husband and I joined Halifax River Audubon and signed up for a birding class. Please, just do this. If my story sounds even remotely like you, you will love the class! Although I am still one of the least experienced birders in our chapter, I know so much more than I did. My enjoyment of birds has grown exponentially. Whether you take the birding class, go on our great field trips or just bird on your own, there are a few basics that are helpful to know:

- * Move as quietly as you can to get a look at a bird
- * Speak softly, if at all
- * Don't point. Waving your arms like a scare crow is...you get it, right?
- * Realize that birds (and all animals) have a safety zone. If you enter that zone, they will run or fly away. You'll develop a feel for it over time

The article continues on the next page

Calendar & Events

September's here and that means we're into our new season of field trips and meetings. Please come out and join us.

Monday, September, 18th, Program Meeting- Join us for a program on Volusia and Flagler's special places with award winning News-Journal reporter, Dinah Voyles-Pulver. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. The presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. A brief business meeting follows.

* * * * *

Field Trips

Wednesday, September 20th- Dunlawton Bridge- Join David Hartgrove for this easy walk. We will meet at 4:00 pm in Port Orange Causeway Park, below the west side of the bridge. Bring your binoculars, etc. and we'll look for migrating shorebirds and the young pelicans on Rookery Island. Questions ? Call David at 386-235-1249.

* * * * *

How About An Ocean Voyage ?

Saturday, October 7th- The Marine Science Center is sponsoring a pelagic birding trip that will leave from Port Canaveral aboard the 85 foot "Canaveral Princess" to look for birds like Band-rumped Storm Petrels, Pomarine Jaegers and Cory's Shearwaters. Cost is 245.00 per person. Contact Michael Brothers for all of the information: mbrothers@volusia.org

* * * * *

Due to necessary changes in our plans for the Gainesville trip, information in last month's Pelican has been updated below.

We're Going To Gainesville In November

Several years ago our chapter took an overnight birding trip to Gainesville. Alachua County has a number of excellent birding hot spots and we had a great time. We got a behind the scenes tour of the avian collection at the Museum of Natural History. We also watched the nightly flight of the thousands of bats from the University's huge bat house as a Red-tailed hawk tried to make his dinner of one. We're happy to report that we're doing this trip again on **Wednesday and Thursday, November 8th and 9th**. We have a block of rooms reserved at the Hampton Inn with a price for these double queen rooms of 119.00 per night. Hampton has set up a special website for our group to make reservations. Click on this [link](#) and follow the instructions. The cut off date for this trip is October 8th. You must have made your reservation by then. Contact David Hartgrove: birdman9@earthlink.net by phone, 386-235-1249 to add your name to the list of those going. In addition to Paynes Prairie and the Museum's avian collection, we'll be going to the new Sweetwater Wetlands where we'll have a catered picnic lunch. More information on possible carpooling, etc. to follow. You don't want to miss this one.

* Get a good field guide and read a little each day

* Wear muted colors

* HAVE FUN!

Our next Beginning Birding Class starts on October 24th and runs through December 7th. It includes three classroom sessions and three outdoor workshops. See the announcement here on page 4 and if you wish, print it and register for the class. We hope to see you at our September meeting.

Melissa Lammers

* * * * *

Conservation Notes

Martin County, on Florida's east coast just north of Palm Beach County, was ground zero for the massive algae blooms in the Indian River two years ago. Septic tanks, which leach nitrogen into ground water, are a major source of the nutrients feeding these algae blooms. So when debating the choice between eliminating the septic tanks or switching to a sewer system, guess what the Martin County Commission voted to do. That's right, they voted to more than double the allowable size of septic tanks, from 2,000 gallons to 5,000 gallons. The reason for this incredibly dumb decision is so that development can continue paving over and covering what's left of Martin County with more houses. The costs associated with switching to a sewer system are huge and tax payers and home owners will be saddled with footing the bill. But to continue the use of septic tanks is a myopic choice that assures continued pollution; fetid, smelly water unfit for human contact and loads of dead fish whose aroma is even worse than that of the water. Actions have consequences and the folks in Martin County and the other counties along what was once the nation's most productive estuary will have to live with these consequences for a long time.

* * *

On the other side of the state there's another threat brewing that needs our attention and if possible, a little bit of our money. Little Estero Island is a dedicated bird sanctuary that hosts nesting herons and egrets along with nesting shorebirds like Wilson's and Snowy Plovers and Least Terns and Black Skimmers. An out of state corporation owns a large seasonal rental complex nearby and they asked the state for permission to build an elevated board walk out to the island from their development. This will allow the renters access to the island's beach. If built, it will also allow predators like coyotes and raccoons access to the island's nesting birds. This is such a stupid idea that the Town of Fort Myers Beach joined Audubon Florida in pleading with the state to deny the application. But the developers are well connected and the Department of Environmental Protection (in this case perhaps it should be called the Department of Environmental "Prostitution") granted the permit. Audubon Florida has no choice but to seek redress in the courts and that's not a decision they take lightly. Litigation is expensive and we always try to negotiate a compromise but this time that's not an option. If you'd like to contribute to the legal fund for this cause, click on this [link](#). Audubon Florida really needs the support. Thanks!

David Hartgrove

* * * * *

Curmudgeon Quote of the Month

"Anti-intellectualism has been a constant thread winding its way through our political and cultural life, nurtured by the false notion that democracy means that "My ignorance is just as good as your knowledge."

Isaac Asimov

Help Out With The International Coastal Cleanup

On Saturday, September 16th, 9:00 am-11:30 am join volunteers from all over the county to help remove trash from beaches, rivers and parks during the 2017 International Coastal Cleanup and Halifax/Indian River Cleanup. Last year, 1,683 Volusia County residents came together to remove over 7,700 pounds of trash. We're a bit late getting the word out and registration for this event closes September 1st. However you can simply show up at one of the collection sites listed below to do your part. Participants are asked to bring garden gloves, drinking water, and buckets for collecting trash. Wear a hat, sunscreen, comfortable clothing and outdoor footwear. Here's a list of the places to show up at 9:00 am:

- * Bicentennial Park, 1800 Oceanshore Blvd., Ormond-By-The-Sea
- * Sanchez Park, 329 Sanchez Ave., Ormond Beach
- * Cassen Park, 1 S. Beach Street, Ormond Beach
- * Sunrise Park North, 1135 Riverside Drive, Holly Hill
- * Daytona Beach City Island Park, 105 E. Magnolia Ave., Daytona Beach.

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Audubon & The League of Women Voters

Partners For Sensible Solutions

The Volusia Solar Coop is coming soon. So what's a solar coop you're asking yourself ? To quote from the LWV press release, "Solar co-ops consist of homeowners who are bundling their buying power to secure a discounted price for solar PV arrays on their respective homes." PV stands for photo voltaic, the magical little panels that make electricity from sunshine and lower your electric bill. The League of Women Voters of Florida is partnering with FL SUN, a new statewide nonprofit bringing solar co-ops to communities across Florida. Local organizations, like Halifax River Audubon, will be invited to become local partners to help publicize and provide public support for the co-op. Here's a chance to become a part of the solution to climate change and lower your monthly electric bill a lot. Nancy Vaughn, Co-Chair of LWV's Solar and Water Action Team, will speak on this at our meeting on October 16th. A list of local workshop locations appears below.

Editor

LET THE SUN PAY YOUR ENERGY BILLS!

Come to one of our info sessions!

- 9/20 6-7:30pm Stetson University
Lynn Business Center Auditorium
345 N. Woodland Blvd., Deland
- 10/5 5:30-7pm Deltona Regional Library
2150 Eustace Ave., Deltona, FL
- 10/21 1:30-3pm Port Orange Regional Library
1005 City Center Circle
Port Orange
- 11/15 12 - 1pm Daytona Beach Library
105 E. Magnolia Ave., Daytona Beach
- 11/15 5:30-6:30pm New Smyrna Beach Regional Library
1001 S. Dixie Freeway
New Smyrna Beach, FL

FIND OUT MORE BY VISITING FLSUN.ORG/VOLUSIA



Florida Solar United Neighborhoods

In partnership with: LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF FLORIDA

flsun.org

A Bird Feeder and Apple Pie

When my mother made an apple pie, I think she took more pleasure in watching her young family dive into her delicious creation than she did in actually taking part in the gourmet feast. I guess my remembrance of those past apple pie treats can today apply to my backyard birding obsession. I really enjoy watching the antics of birds at my backyard bird feeder station. To the birds it is a necessary act of feeding, positioning and posturing, to me it is a wonderful feeling of satisfaction and delight. The effort is simple. Keep the feeder full, clean and standing.

However, first you must have a bird feeder and a window. A window to look out of and a feeder to look at. You can place your feeder anywhere outside. I prefer to have mine ten feet from my house and in front of a window and at least five feet off the ground.

There are many acceptable bird feeders in the market place that will attract birds to your window. Some are ready to go and some require minor assembly. All seem well designed and should bring you years of service and satisfaction. However, I prefer to make my own. I can be more creative and customize it as desired, for the seasons and avian migration. At the beginning of the winter season at my Connecticut home I would go to my friendly apple orchard, select a short section of an apple tree limb, drill holes in it, stuff it with suet and attach it to my self-made pipe feeder station. Throughout the winter season this arrangement would attract Hairy, Downy, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatches and Yellow-shafted Flickers. An occasional European Starling would try it but the Copper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks patrolling my yard would keep their numbers low.

In my Florida yard I now use two inch white PVC pipe to make my bird feeder station. I found that the steel water pipe rusted too fast and came down during heavy winds. I do not use glue to attach the various pieces together.

You have the freedom to design it as you please. Just adhere to my few recommendations and you will enjoy your own apple pie treat.

Tools: sledge hammer, block of wood, saw, phillips head screw driver, electric drill, step ladder.

Material: two 10 foot x2 inch PVC pipe, 2 inch fittings, stainless steel screws, bolts nuts, tray, 6 inch stove pipe with cap.

To Proceed: From the ladder pound the 10 foot pipe (cushioned by the wood block) 2 feet into the ground. Have someone sight the vertical position when pounding and use a carpenter level for vertical accuracy. Drill a 2 inch hole into cap and attach to the stove pipe with stainless steel sheet metal screws. Drill screws into the upright pipe to anchor the stove pipe (squirrel proof) in place. Slip it over upright pipe, then attach feeder assembly to top of pipe.

During the time that I have used this feeder station, I have been surprised, flabbergasted and charmed by the various birds appearing and the uniqueness of their individual behaviors. I observed that a Tufted titmouse will take one seed at a time, fly to a nearby branch, place the sunflower seed between its toes, rapidly peck at the seed and finally break away the husk to get to a well deserved treat. Whereas a mourning dove will stay at the feeder and just gobble down one seed at a time while protecting its position at the feeder ferociously. Lastly, suspend a flower pot tray below the large feeder to lessen fallen seeds, attach your feeders (your choice), add bird food and enjoy your hypothetical apple pie feast.

Ray Scory



The photos above show Ray's feeder from two angles. The three birds in the second photo are male and female Northern Cardinals and a male Painted Bunting. *Photos by Ray Scory*

* * * * *

Audubon Adventures

[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, our chapter has been donating to provide this valuable program to Volusia County school kids since its inception. Donations from members fund this program. Send your donation to Halifax River Audubon, P.O. Box 166, Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166. Please specify on your check that your donation is for Audubon Adventures. And thank you!

HALIFAX RIVER AUDUBON

Presents

BEGINNER BIRD WATCHING CLASS

2017



Cardina

Learn how to identify birds, how to find birds, how to develop birding skills, how to improve your binocular use and many other birding facts. Join our class for fun, information and fellowship.

Donation: \$25.00 check, payable to **Halifax River Audubon**, noting "Bird Class" in the comment section. Mail to:

Halifax River Audubon
PO Box 166
Daytona Beach, FL 32115



Crow

Place: Port Orange Public Library Auditorium, 1005 City Center Circle, Port Orange.

Classroom instruction will be held on **Tuesday October 24, November 14 and December 5 at 9:00 to 12:00 p.m.** Sign up with a friend, or make a new one, and have lunch after the class.



Dabbling C

Outdoor workshops to practice techniques learned in the classroom will be held on Thursday mornings following the Tuesday morning class; i.e.:

Thursday, October 26 – 8:00 a.m. at Port Orange Causeway Park*

Thursday, November 16 – 8:00 a.m. at Tomoka State Park*

Thursday, December 7 –7:00 a.m. at Merritt Island NWR*

* Outdoor workshop details are subject to change. Instructor will confirm time/location at the prior class. Students who miss the class should contact instructor for details. Outdoor workshops are limited to registered class members only.



Bring your **binoculars** to all classes, especially the first class, as well as to all outdoor workshops.

Contact **David Hartgrove 386-788-2630** or birdman9@earthlink.net.

Class size is limited to 28, so sign up early. You do not have to be a member of Halifax River Audubon to attend.

✂Cut here and mail with your check-----

BEGINNER BIRD WATCHING CLASS - 2017

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors

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

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Our website is 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 63-Number 10 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
October, 2017



The President's Ruminations

Gone With The Wind

I am afraid that I almost missed the deadline for this note due to *Hurricane Brain*, a phenomenon in which predicted wind speeds, wind fields and storm surges reduce higher cognition in inverse proportion to their numeric ratings. Simply put, my brain is on half-power.

Our area has historically avoided direct hits from the Atlantic thanks to the Bermuda High. However, this year and last, we have experienced the destructive power of the outer bands of Category 3 hurricanes as well as the even greater destruction wrought by storm surge. In Volusia County, Irma did not give us the severe lashing we feared but many people and businesses suffered heavy losses from flooding.

Florida has always been on the hurricane highway but Nature, or Providence, provided Florida with two incredible defenses: dunes and wetlands. These two features, properly conserved, can extensively mitigate the damage from hurricanes.

Florida has 2,276 Statute Miles of Tidal Shoreline, 663 miles of beaches and more than 11,000 miles of rivers, streams and waterways 1. There are more than 900 freshwater springs2 and 276,070 acres of functional wetlands3. These geographic features are "living". Untouched by the hand of man, they change in response to differing conditions. Absent hurricanes, our beaches lose sand each winter and gain sand each summer. Hurricane Matthew eroded thirty to forty feet of dune in some places, overnight. Human activity (walking on dunes) subsequently hampered plants from re-establishing on the dune to help it rebuild itself. Further erosion took place in Hurricane Irma. As a result parts of State Road A1A and the homes west of it are now vulnerable as never before. But we are not the only ones affected. Sea turtles (loggerhead, green, leatherback and the rare Kemp's Ridley) return to our beaches yearly to lay their eggs as their parents, grandparents and beyond have done. Shorebirds nest in the vegetation of upper dunes. Dumping sand along our beaches to shore up A1A is a nice quick fix for man but it's not so great for our animal and vegetable brethren who depend upon a healthy dune for food, shelter and reproduction.

Our wetlands are Nature's retention ponds, absorbing storm surge. Wetlands take one for the team, expanding and contracting as necessary for the greater good. When we change their course or fill them in, water has no choice but to enter our backyards and homes. Wetlands are also important habitat for many of the birds we see along the seashore, like snowy egrets, great blue herons, yellow-crowned night herons and brown pelicans as well as roseate spoonbills, wood storks, white and glossy ibis and more.

The article continues below on the next page.

Calendar & Events

Monday, October 16th- Program Meeting- Join us for an evening of bird photography and education as our own Dan Gribbin gives a presentation on White-tailed Tropicbirds of Bermuda and American Oystercatchers here at home. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. The presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. A brief business meeting follows.

Field Trips

Friday, October 13th- Washington Oaks- Join Joan Tague for a walk through this lovely state park looking for migrant warblers and others. Meet at the park at 8:00 am, 6400 N. Oceanshore Blvd. Palm Coast. There is a fee for entrance to the park. Bring your lunch. Questions? Call Joan, 386-871-6049

Wednesday, October 25th- Mead Gardens and the Birds of Prey Center- *Sorry, this one's already filled.* You can call Peggy Yokubonus, 386-316-4085 to see if there's been a cancellation.

Gainesville Trip

This is your last chance to sign up for our trip in November. Reservations must be made by October 7th.

Several years ago our chapter took an overnight birding trip to Gainesville. Alachua County has a number of excellent birding hot spots and we had a great time. We got a behind the scenes tour of the avian collection at the Museum of Natural History. We also watched the nightly flight of the thousands of bats from the University's huge bat house as a Red-tailed hawk tried to make his dinner of one. We're happy to report that we're doing this trip again on **Wednesday and Thursday, November 8th and 9th**. We have a block of rooms reserved at the Hampton Inn with a price for these double queen rooms of 119.00 per night. Hampton has set up a special website for our group to make reservations. Click on this [link](#) and follow the instructions. The cut off date for this trip is October 8th. You must have made your reservation by then. Contact David Hartgrove: birdman9@earthlink.net by phone, 386-235-1249 to add your name to the list of those going. In addition to Paynes Prairie and the Museum's avian collection, we'll be going to the new Sweetwater Wetlands where we'll have a catered picnic lunch. More information on possible carpooling, etc. to follow. You don't want to miss this one.

* * * * *

Field Trips With Others

Trey Hannah and the staff at Volusia County Land Management have a number of interesting field trips planned for October. You can learn about geocaching, take guided kayak trips, ride their eco-buggy and go on guided bike rides on the County's ever expanding bike trail system. Here's the [link](#) to the webpage. Once there scroll down to the "Upcoming Events" section.

I hope you'll take the nudge from Harvey, Irma and Maria and do some research of your own to learn about how important and how fragile our dunes and wetlands are for every living creature in Florida and beyond. Below are links to three webpages with information.

- www.stateofflorida.com/facts.aspx/
- www.dep.state.fl.us/springs/faq.htm
- www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/stats/geographical.htm

I hope to see some of you at the [Audubon Assembly](#) later this month. It'll be in St. Augustine so it's a short drive.

Melissa Lammers

* * * * *

Conservation Notes

The carnage continues at the Environmental Protection Agency as Secretary Pruitt (having squandered 25,000.00 on a sound proof phone booth for his office so that staffers located nearby can't overhear as he sells out our environmental heritage to oil, gas and coal companies) announced four new appointments that require Senate confirmation. It would be hard to find a more inappropriate collection of unqualified candidates than these clowns.

Andrew Wheeler, nominated as Deputy Administrator, is a long time coal lobbyist and former staffer for Senator James Inhofe, the loudest climate change denier in Congress. Mr. Wheeler has represented one coal company whose environmental and mine safety record is the beacon for the industry on how to mine coal in the dirtiest and most unsafe ways possible.

Bill Wehrum was nominated to lead the EPA's Office of Air and Radiation, which oversees Clean Air Act compliance. He's an attorney whose client list reads like a who's who of the country's worst polluters. He was nominated for this position in 2006 but there weren't enough senators then willing hold their nose tight enough to vote for this guy so his nomination was pulled. It's doubtful we can count on them to reject him this time around.

David Ross has been nominated to head the Office of Water. Another industry shill, he's sued the EPA countless times over their enforcement of the Clean Water Act. A suit he filed trying to stop the clean up of Chesapeake Bay was tossed out of court. In his comments on why, the judge wrote that the suit was "long on swagger, but short on specificity".

Finally we come to Michael Dourson. Mr. Dourson has long standing ties to the chemical industry and earlier in his career to big tobacco. As the sole spokesperson testifying in the case of a chemical spill in the Elk River in West Virginia he failed to report that he had previously done paid work for both of the companies that produced the chemicals involved in the spill. He was also paid by Dow Agrosience to downplay concerns about a pesticide that causes developmental problems in children of farm workers exposed to it. Now, if confirmed, he'll be in a position to do some real damage. Apparently making America great again will involve us drowning in toxic sludge, drinking fouled, polluted water and gasping for breath breathing polluted air.

And Interior Secretary, Ryan Zinke, not wanting to be seen as slacking in fulfilling the President's wish list, has announced he wants to roll back portions of several national monuments that have been attacked by ranching and mining interests. Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante in Utah, Gold Butte in Nevada and Cascade-Siskiyou in Oregon have all been referred to the President for some form of executive action to reduce or eliminate their national monument status under the Antiquities Act. Write to Senators Nelson and Rubio with your comments.

David Hartgrove

Here's an invitation to a special event. Those of you who know Charley DuToit already know how good this will be. Editor

ORMOND SCENIC LOOP & TRAIL and FRIENDS OF TOMOKA BASIN STATE PARKS PRESENT



Do you love the history of Ormond Beach and surrounding areas? Come see Charles DuToit do what he does best- SHARE HISTORY. Meet us at Tomoka State Park's recreation hall facility (climate-controlled) on **Saturday, October 14 at 11:00 a.m.** DuToit is retired from the Florida Park Service and a volunteer for the Ormond Beach Historical Society. Charley worked as an Environmental Specialist in state parks and preserves in southwest and northeast Florida, including Tomoka and Bulow Creek State Park. Contrary to his job title as a "specialist," Charley was involved in a diversity of projects involving the management and restoration of natural habitats as well as assisting historians and archaeologists at state cultural sites.

So gather up the family, friends and neighbors and make this a day of fun facts, history and an exploration back in time. Then enjoy the park the rest of the day and re-connect with nature.

The Ormond Loop – Off the Beaten Path

Charley DuToit, former biologist for the Tomoka Basin State Parks, explores abandoned homesteads, lost cemeteries, moonshine camps, and other vestiges of the "Bulow" community in the shade of live oaks and islands in the swamps of the great hammock north of Ormond Beach

Park entry fees apply: Annual pass or Daily fee of \$5/car and \$4/single driver



* * * * *

Shorebirding in Canadian Summer

Long time readers of the Pelican may remember articles in years past about Jean Iron, a volunteer with the Canadian Wildlife Service. Jean has spent portions of the last nine summers on the shores of James Bay in northern Ontario counting shorebirds. The [James Bay Shorebird Project](#) is doing vital work monitoring these very susceptible species on their nesting grounds and areas where they stop over as they migrate. Jean's [website](#) has tons of great photos you're sure to enjoy.

Editor

* * *

Audubon Adventures

[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, our chapter has been donating to provide this valuable program to Volusia County school kids since its inception. Donations from members fund this program. Send your donation to Halifax River Audubon, P.O. Box 166, Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166. Please specify on your check check that your donation is for Audubon Adventures. And thank you!

* * *

"The red breast whistles from the garden croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies."

John Keats, "To Autumn"

Memorable Birding Experiences

Birding has been good to me and for me and here is why.

* John Carr relating to me how he was invited to look for Bachman's Warblers by Dr Archibald Rutledge, poet laureate of South Carolina. Dr Rutledge took John to a swampy area on his 2000 acre South Carolina property. They observed two Bachman's Warblers in a cat-briar patch. The Bachman's Warbler is now extinct. John may have been the last boy to see one alive.

* Witnessing a long flight of Roseate spoonbills straight-lining south along the Halifax River, glowing brightly against a dusky setting sun.

* Watching a Brown booby maneuver against pounding rain and fierce winds during "The Hurricane with No Name."

* Welcoming friends and inquisitive visitors to my "under the bridge" [The Big Sit](#) circle on the second Sunday of October.

* Sitting quietly under the bridge before sunrise listening to the winds, water and sounds of birds.

* Watching two Great Horned Owls hooting, displaying and flying between the trusses of the bridge until the sun just peaked above the horizon. Then, silently they were gone.

* Surprised by a flock of American Woodcocks swirling under power lines before dawn.

* Doing THE BIG SIT in Port Orange, Florida and on the Farmington Canal in Connecticut. These experiences I own forever. They cloak me in everlasting warmth and happiness.

However, this is not the end of my story, just the beginning. Because to go birding, whether looking out a window or being part of a huge birding event, is a beginning. It is adventurous, exciting and refreshing. Commit to birding and newness will prevail.

Birding offers the chance to expand your individual talents and desires - to fit them to the many facets making up the birding experience. You can become a teacher, a leader, an expert, a connoisseur, an artist, an inspiration, a volunteer, a world traveler and, yes, even a great backyard birder. It will give you so many things to do while you experience the wind and the rain and watch something wild and beautiful.

I carry with me many wonderful experiences from my bird watching adventures going back to my younger days watching Eastern bluebirds going in and out of the tiny, wooden bird house just outside my parent's kitchen window, and my active involvement with the New Haven Bird Club, the Halifax River Audubon, and the wintery Christmas Bird Counts in Connecticut. My participation in recent years with Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge's water bird survey, photographing for the Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival and heading up the Beginner Bird Watching Workshops for the Halifax River Audubon have stoked my burning passion for birding.

You're welcome visit me under the Dunlawton Bridge in Port Orange, October 7, 2017. I will be there from 6:30AM until 6:00PM sitting The Big Sit. Also, you might want to print the page below to take part in or to suggest to a friend to register for our Beginner Bird Watching Workshops beginning October 22, 2017.

As I have often said in the past - bird watching is fun, exciting and adventurous aiding in the enjoyment of memorable and wonderful experiences.

Ray Scory



My First Photograph (1948). This Scarlet tanager rested on a hedge in the yard of my parent's Connecticut home and inspired this young boy into a lifetime of birding.



Each year, faithfully and annually, a Spotted Sandpiper stops by the backyard pond behind my Port Orange home twice a year. I, faithfully, awaiting each return.

Photos by Ray Scory

* * * * *

Welcome to Our New Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new members: Lauren Hertzog, Brenda Levine, R. Turner Ragsdale, Amy Swenson and Barbara Townsend. We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting or on one of our excellent field trips.

* * * * *

Pelagic Birding Opportunity

On Saturday, October 7th, The Marine Science Center is sponsoring another pelagic birding trip. Sailing out of Port Canaveral at 7:00 am. Here's your chance to see birds like Black-capped Petrel, Cory's Shearwater, Red and Red-necked Phalarope and others. The cost is 245.00 per person. For all the information contact Michael Brothers: mbrothers@volusia.org

HALIFAX RIVER AUDUBON

Presents

BEGINNER BIRD WATCHING CLASS

2017



Cardinal

Learn how to identify birds, how to find birds, how to develop birding skills, how to improve your binocular use and many other birding facts. Join our class for fun, information and fellowship.

Donation: \$25.00 check, payable to **Halifax River Audubon**, noting "Bird Class" in the comment section. Mail to:

Halifax River Audubon
PO Box 166
Daytona Beach, FL 32115



Crow

Place: Port Orange Public Library Auditorium, 1005 City Center Circle, Port Orange.

Classroom instruction will be held on **Tuesday October 24, November 14 and December 5 at 9:00 to 12:00 p.m.** Sign up with a friend, or make a new one, and have lunch after the class.



Dabbling C

Outdoor workshops to practice techniques learned in the classroom will be held on Thursday mornings following the Tuesday morning class; i.e.:

Thursday, October 26 – 8:00 a.m. at Port Orange Causeway Park*

Thursday, November 16 – 8:00 a.m. at Tomoka State Park*

Thursday, December 7 – 7:00 a.m. at Merritt Island NWR*

* Outdoor workshop details are subject to change. Instructor will confirm time/location at the prior class. Students who miss the class should contact instructor for details. Outdoor workshops are limited to registered class members only.



Bring your **binoculars** to all classes, especially the first class, as well as to all outdoor workshops.

Contact **David Hartgrove 386-788-2630** or birdman9@earthlink.net.

Class size is limited to 28, so sign up early. You do not have to be a member of Halifax River Audubon to attend.

✂Cut here and mail with your check-----

BEGINNER BIRD WATCHING CLASS - 2017

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

www.halifaxrivers.org

A Special Thanks To Our Sponsors

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

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

Our website is www.halifaxriveras.org For information on upcoming field trips, etc.

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	David Hartgrove	386-788-2630	birdman9@earthlink.net
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The Pelican

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

Volume 63- Number 11 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
November, 2017



The President's Ruminations

Water Woes

Last week, I attended the annual Audubon Florida Assembly. The theme for the Assembly and for all our work in the coming year is Water for Florida's Future. Water is essential for life and the Floridan Aquifer that supplies all our water --- what you drink and bathe in as well as what you draw from your well to put on your lawn, is in trouble. We are using it faster than it can be replenished and we are poisoning it drop by drop. Two thirds of water districts in Florida don't meet State standards. The assault on Florida's water has been long and relentless and takes many forms.

Paving over land prevents our often-abundant rainwater from reaching the Aquifer. One of the presenters said that Hurricane Irma dumped the equivalent of five years' water consumption by the entire State in just one storm. We lost two thirds of that water to run-off as there was no ground to absorb it. This first-world deforestation brings to mind what I saw overflying the border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. The former was verdant and fertile; the latter, sere and brown and unable to grow crops to feed her people.

More than half of water used in Volusia County and Florida goes on turf grass lawns. Not only is overuse of the water a problem, but keeping that grass growing in our Florida climate and ecosystem requires us to add things to it, like poison to get rid of pest bugs and plants, and nitrogen-laden fertilizer to feed it. These chemicals end up in our Aquifer and in our drinking water. The water that is absorbed through our lawn to the Aquifer below is chemical-laden. The water that runs off our lawns, into storm drains, is carrying a toxic load with real health and economic consequences. Google Indian River Lagoon.

You've heard that nature abhors a vacuum. As we draw water from the Floridan Aquifer faster than it gets put back, sea water flows into portions of our porous limestone substrate, increasing the salinity of our fresh water.

If there is no fresh water replenishing the Aquifer and no sea water fills in the gap, the karst structures through which our Aquifer flows collapse, forming sinkholes that increasingly jeopardize homes.

What Can We Do? There is a lot we can do. Each small step we take adds up and helps us to take another, perhaps greater, step. Examples of small but important steps are installing faucet aerators and checking toilet(s) for leaks. Bigger steps could include installing low-flow toilets and removing turf grass lawns. You can also get involved with your Water Management District. Halifax River Audubon, as part of Florida Audubon, will offer you ways to help us all take care of Water for Florida's Future.

Melissa Lammers

Calendar & Events

Monday, November 20th, Program Meeting- Join us for an informative presentation about the Tomoka Marsh Aquatic Preserve and its ongoing restoration. Our speaker will be Deborah Shelley, manager of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Wekiva River and Tomoka Marsh Aquatic Preserves. We'll learn about FDEP's efforts to clean up the Tomoka River, Bulow Creek, the Tomoka Basin, Halifax River, and Halifax islands. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. The presentation begins at 7:00 p.m. A brief business meeting follows.

* * * * *

Field Trips

Wednesday & Thursday, November 8th & 9th- Gainesville- **The trip is full and we're not accepting any more applicants.**

Wednesday, November, 15th- Buschman Park- Join Joan Tague for a relaxed walk through this local gem. Meet at the park at 7:30, 4575 Spruce Creek Road, Port Orange. We'll be finished by 10:30. Questions: Call Joan, 386-871-6049.

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Field Trips With Others

Friday, November 17th- Lake Woodruff NWR w/SEVAS- Join our friends from Southeast Volusia Audubon for this trip one of the area's better locations. This one involves several miles of walking. Meet to carpool 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 Joe Montpelier at 386-882-8679.

Sunday, November 5th- Orlando Wetlands Park w/ WVAS- Our friends in West Volusia Audubon Society are going to this excellent spot where Purple Gallinule, Limpkin, and Crested Caracara are seen regularly. Information on their website is somewhat sketchy so call Eli Schaperow, 407-314-7965.

* * * * *

The Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival

It's time once again for the biggest and best birding festival in the country. Between January 24th and the 29th, 2018, the festival will be held at the East Florida State College, in Titusville, just 40 miles south of us. Field trips, photography work shops and events to please every taste will be held in a variety of locations around Central Florida. Here's a link to the [website](#). Registration is now open and the field trips and classes are filling up quickly. Early enrollment closes December 5th and prices will increase after that date. This is the place to buy that new pair of binoculars or that spotting scope you've been promising yourself. This is as much fun as can be had anywhere. Be There!

Conservation Notes

The dismantling of our nation's environmental regulatory safety structure is really moving into high gear now. There's a think tank called the "Heartland Institute" and the Environmental Protection Agency has now reached out to them to provide scientists to help them replace the ones dismissed by EPA Administrator, Scott Pruitt. Mr. Pruitt cleaned house of any remaining scientists at the Agency who still advocated a belief in global climate change.

The Heartland Institute, founded in 1984, has a long history of providing "scientists" who provide opinions that are very business friendly. They have received millions of dollars from oil companies but their willingness to prostitute themselves isn't limited to oil companies. In the early 90's they took millions from tobacco companies to provide "scientists" who would cast doubt on the cancer causing properties of the tobacco. It seems appropriate that a group with such a warm, fuzzy sounding name would be in the business of providing misleading information to the public on a variety of topics. So far they've sent an envoy to the Vatican to try to persuade the Pope that his beliefs on climate change are wrong. They've sent teachers across the country a curriculum to teach kids that climate change is a hoax and in 2012 they funded a series of bill boards around the country comparing those who believe in climate change to the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski. These clowns will be providing the rationale for dismantling the pathetic climate change legislation our country has passed at this point. We're so far behind the rest of the world that we'd be the laughing stock of the globe if the consequences of our intransigence weren't so serious.

The Heartland Institute has as one of its chief funders a man who's suddenly been in the news lately, Robert Mercer. He's the hedge fund billionaire who funds Breitbart News and was involved in the funding opposition research into Donald Trump for use by Marco Rubio's campaign for president. But as the old saying goes, "Politics makes for strange bedfellows." So having worked against Trump's election originally, he's now supporting Trump's anti-environment agenda. And so it goes...

David Hartgrove

* * * * *

Welcome to Our New and Returning Members

National Audubon has been experiencing some problems in managing their membership lists. Notifications to chapters on new and returning members has been slow to nearly nonexistent and while we've tried to keep up, we're sure we've missed acknowledging some of you. This month we're trying to correct that. So now we want to extend a warm welcome to all of our new and returning members: Cheryl Allen, Nancy Barber, Donald Bertch, John Buglione, Marilyn Burhoe, Anne Catinna, Carol Chillemi, Joyce Davidson, Brian Deaton, Judy Eaton, Becky & Mike Ely, Zach Foster, Nancy & Joe Galdo, Carol German, Nathaniel Goddard, Richard Goudey, Nancy Govoni, Mal-Sherry Graham, Lauren Herzog, Alan Hovey, Julia Kain, Dan Kalis, Brenda Levine, Richard Lohmann, Linda McQuaig, Janet Mills, Kathy Molholm, Tom Moran, Fred Ormand, R. Turner Ragsdale, Janet Reese, Trish Reonas, C. Richardson, Carol Roberts, Camille Sanabria, Barbara Townsend, Thomas Troutman, David Walsh, Geri Willett and Kim Zechnowitz. We hope to see you at a meeting or on one of our excellent field trips soon.

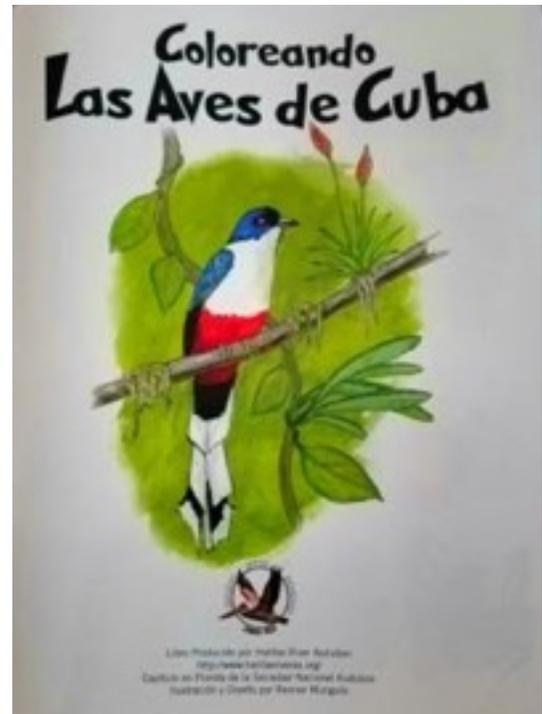
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"I arise in the morning torn between a desire to improve the world and a desire to enjoy the world. This makes it hard to plan the day."

E. B. White



Chapter President, Melissa Lammers, accepts the Conservation Project Award for 2017 from Audubon Florida Executive Director, Eric Draper with Chapter Liaison Jacqui Sulek. Our chapter was recognized for our project on the Cuban coloring book we funded. We printed 2,000 copies of the book in Spanish and they are gradually being taken down to Cuba and distributed to Cuban children by people going there for birding trips and other reasons.



* * * * *

Audubon Adventures

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, our chapter has been donating to provide this valuable program to Volusia County school kids since its inception. Donations from members fund this program. Send your donation to Halifax River Audubon, P.O. Box 166, Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166. Please specify on your check that your donation is for Audubon Adventures. And thank you!

Time for another in our continuing series, "Everyday Birding" by Ray Scory.

Northern Pintail with Memories

They shot through the sky like arrows from a bow - just at roof top height. I looked up from bagging fallen debris in my yard, trashed by Hurricane Irma. For a split second I saw them. Two speeding Northern Pintail ducks. The image, fitting of duck stamp vintage, locked in my memory so powerfully that it brought back Northern Pintail stories long silent in the deep recesses of my mind.

My first look at Northern Pintails occurred at a picturesque Connecticut swamp alongside the smooth flowing Connecticut River. Tall forest trees stood boldly naked in a sea of shallow waters, like ghostly sentinels watching over a land long ago influenced by age and ancient environmental demons. I came to this spot because it was noted for Eastern Bluebirds who made their nesting holes in these majestic tall wooden poles. Much to my chagrin, the bluebirds had departed their summer home for southern climes. However, rafts of migrating Northern Pintails, busily feasting on food rich, swampy waters, soon captured my attention. I was fascinated with their activity, their individual behavior, their numbers, (hundreds) and their uniquely diagnostic body markings (white line running up the neck on both sides). My birding day to the swamp did not produce as expected. However, it triggered a life time of Northern Pintail memories.

The migration of birds is a fascinating study and offers many interesting possibilities: on a global or local level; on a once-in-a-lifetime level to a migrating hotspot; on a yearly survey level, keeping data for one particular location or more; on an avian photography level or just being there. Watching bird migration is an event impossible to forget.

One time I watched millions of black birds rushing through a north/south valley in upper New York state. The sight was exhilarating. The noise was deafening. Another time, I watched flocks of Snow Geese flying south at five miles high (a Christmas Bird Count estimate). Close by, I have observed American White Pelicans circling over Spruce Creek Park on their way down from their breeding grounds in central border states between America and Canada.

For many years I conducted a Waterbird Survey at Merritt Island NWR in Titusville, Florida. I especially enjoyed watching the thousand and thousand of ducks migrating into the 190,000 acre refuge for the winter months.

I have waited in anticipated excitement for migrating birds by the hundreds or sometimes by the handful appear in my yard, clean out my feeders and pounce on the natural foods in my trees and bushes, then dramatically whoosh out in a fit of controlled frenzy. Cedar waxwings, Common Grackles, American Robins, a lone Spotted Sandpiper, Chipping Sparrows, Yellow-rumped warblers, Hooded Mergansers and others have all contributed to (what I consider) the finest hour of my backyard birding. Sometimes they stop and go, other times they stay longer than an hour.

The unencumbered thrill of these migratory memories becomes more profound as I develop my backyard birding skills. And as age continues its relentless course, I continue to abide by its rules.

So look up, any time, when you are outside, especially during migratory times. Just to enjoy a moment in time with our avian wonders.

Ray Scory



Top photo, a flock of Northern Pintails at MINWR; Bottom photo is a pair of Northern Pintails, male and female.

Photos by Ray Scory

* * * * *

Fall Trail Walk at John's Island

Saturday, November 18, 2017, 10:00AM. Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail Fall Trail Walk at John's Island. Meet at Gate T3 along northbound US Highway 1 (N Yonge St), east side of the highway, 2.3 miles north of SR 40 (Granada Blvd) and just south of the Tomoka River Bridge. Explore this normally non-public area of Tomoka Park with Park permission under the guidance of Dr Don Spence, Certified Arborist and plant pathologist, learning about the botany and natural history of the area. Admission free. Bring water and insect repellent. We may walk over soft, wet, or uneven terrain or in deep grass. For further directions to location contact Rob Bird, rbird1@cfl.r.com

* * * * *

Harry Robinson continues his sea watch daily at Tom Rennick Park, in Ormond By The Sea. And as the following note from Harry attests, some days are better than others.

Today (October 2nd) I did a ten hour seawatch at the park; Eli Schaperow was with me for the first half. It was a very and I mean a very good day. We Had 23 Cory's Shearwaters (this included five Scolopi's), 15 Greater Shearwaters, 16 Sooty Shearwaters, 1 Band-rumped Petrel, 1 Merlin, 19 Peregrine Falcons, 1 Red-necked Phalarope, 1 Red Phalarope, 3 Pomarine Jaeger, 28 Parasitic Jaegers, 3 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, 1 adult Sabine's Gull, 4 Common Terns, 1 Arctic Tern, 3 Bridled Terns, 2 Sooty Terns, 2 Black Terns and two Brown Noddies. *Editor*

In an effort to keep our members informed on how Audubon chapters work together on environmental projects, here's an explanation.

NEWS FROM CENTRAL FLORIDA REGIONAL CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

The Audubon Assembly opened at lunch on Friday, October 20, and concluded following full membership approval of the 2018 conservation action agenda. Three workshops—Water Policy Bootcamp, Landscaping for Water & Wildlife and Changing Hearts & Minds: How to Effectively Influence Policymakers—were well-attended and included lively discussions between chapter members, AF staff and State and local decision-makers. As written in the last RCC update, the new lobbying strategy of educating a legislator about a particular piece of conservation land and arranging a site visit were recommended again and again.

State conservation priorities include:

- Coastal conservation and stewardship
- Greater Everglades ecosystem
- Climate Change
- Important bird areas and waterways conservation
- Water for the environment

Plus, individual goals for the 7 Regional Conservation Committee (RCC) geographies.

Central Florida RCC obtained membership approval of the following two goals:

Promote Lake Apopka Restoration, Visitor Access, & New Audubon Nature Center

Chapters will focus joint resources and efforts to assure continued progress on restoration of the Lake Apopka North Shore marshes and to increase appropriate public access to the marshes for birdwatching, nature study, and compatible recreation activities. Chapters will work with Audubon Florida and Orange & Oklawaha Audubon Societies to promote the long-term goal of building and operating a new Audubon Center to showcase Lake Apopka as Florida's most important inland bird habitat.

Monitor and Act on Local & State Government Land Use Decisions Impacting Wildlife Habitat

Chapters will work together to advocate for greater funding for Florida Forever and the Rural and Family Lands Protection Act to secure money to purchase identified conservation property (such as those listed below) by meeting with legislators to build support for specific properties rather than lobbying solely for the umbrella programs.

1. Lenholt Farm: a vital property which links Ocala National Forest and the extensive state holdings along the Wekiva River
2. Conlin Lake X/Kirchman Tract: an 11,000-acre, pristine property at the headwaters of the Econlockhatchee and Kissimmee Rivers watershed
3. Purchase of conservation easements on Kissimmee Valley ranchlands where owners are interested and willing to participate

A copy of the full approved agenda will be posted to the AF website soon, if it hasn't been posted already. This agenda will direct AF staff and volunteers on where to place emphasis in utilizing funding, lobbying the legislature and continuing research in the coming year. Audubon Florida is unique in including input from members when setting action priorities. If you have an environmental concern or a worthy project that is not covered by the 2018 agenda, contact your local chapter leadership and/or participate in the next RCC meeting so we can discuss it.

And, finally, Central Florida RCC is home to two chapters which received awards at Audubon Assembly on Saturday morning. Congratulations to Halifax River Audubon for winning the 2017 Best Conservation Project for a Chapter Under 500 Members and to West Volusia Audubon Society for winning the 2017 Best Education Project for a Chapter Under 500 Members. Well done to everyone in both chapters who work so diligently to achieve success in our communities.

[Paula Wehr](#)

CFL RCC Representative on AF Board of Directors

* * * * *



A pair of adult Brown Pelicans in basic or non breeding plumage. In nesting season, when they're in breeding or what's called alternate plumage, the birds would have brown feathers along the back of the neck.
Photo by Steve Underwood

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and Colonial Colony**

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The Pelican

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

Volume 63-Number 12 Newsletter of Halifax River Audubon
December, 2017



The President's Ruminations

The upcoming holidays should be top-of-mind for me but recently I've become involved in a few local efforts to preserve valuable habitat and I confess it feels quite uncomfortable at times. So instead of wrapping presents and decorating my home, I have been thinking about Marjory Stoneman Douglas and taking comfort and inspiration from her. She didn't let anything – not even old age or angry County Commissioners – get in the way of her mission to save the Everglades and more.

Marjory was born in 1890 and moved to South Florida in 1915 to work as a reporter at what would eventually become "The Miami Herald". In 1928, she explored the Everglades with Ernest Coe, Horace Albright, National Park Service director, assistant director Arno Cammerer, Audubon Society President, Gilbert Pearson, Yellowstone National Park Superintendent Roger Toll, botanist David Fairchild, and U.S. Representative Ruth Owen. The expedition was to assess the feasibility of protecting the Everglades as a National Park. During their stay, a man told them that as soon as they left, all the egrets would be killed. They spoke directly to the hunters, but once the party left, the adult birds were killed and the young left to die in the heat. "I think that it was the death of those birds that most convinced the commission that this area must be protected as a national park," Douglas said.



Calendar & Events

Monday, December 18th, Program Meeting- Join us for our annual Christmas/holiday party. Bring a dish (appetizer or dessert) if you wish but the chapter is providing finger foods, beverages, etc. We'll see bird videos and maybe swap a few bird stories. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. at Sica Hall, 1065 Daytona Avenue, Holly Hill. The business portion of the meeting will be especially short.

Friday & Saturday, December 8th & 9th, MINWR- Once again we're having back to back trips to Merritt Island NWR. In winter it is one of the premier birding spots in North America and we want to make sure our members (including those of us still working) get a chance to go along and share the many scopes we'll have on hand. On Friday join Peggy Yokubonus and Joan Tague for the trip. On Saturday join David Hartgrove. This is a trip with minimal walking and lots of birds. Bring your lunch and meet either or both days at the Target on Dunlawton Ave. just east of I-95, behind Panera Bread. Questions, call Peggy, 386-316-4085 or David, 386-235-1249. More information is also on the [website](#).

Wednesday, December 20th, Maribed Flats- Join Joan Tague for a trip to wild Florida cow country and some great birding. This one does involve walking and you'll want to bring shoes or boots that can get wet. You'll walk through a nice oak hammock with warblers and other small birds. Then out onto a wet prairie with the promise of excellent shorebird activity. Bring a lunch and meet at the Target on Dunlawton Ave. just east of I-95, behind Panera Bread. Questions, call Joan, 386-871-6049.

* * * * *

The Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, December 23rd- The Christmas Bird Count is the oldest citizen science project in the world. It's done in an established 15 mile in diameter circle. It's gone from just a few participants (27) on that first CBC on Christmas Day, 1900 to over 71,000 participants on the CBC done in 2012. The highest species count recorded in the US was 250, in Matagorda County, TX in 2005. The highest species count in the world was set in 2013 on the Cosanga-Narupa count in Ecuador, a whopping 529 species! Here on the Daytona Beach CBC we average around 105 species. We'll meet at 7:00 am at Ormond Town Square, Granada & Williamson Blvds., behind Chick-fil-A to break into teams. This is an all day event and will be followed by dinner at the Red Bowl Chinese Restaurant in that same shopping center where we'll collect the data from everyone. If you can't devote the whole day we can arrange to get you back to your car. If you plan to participate, **please call** David Hartgrove, 386-235-1249 so that I can begin assigning teams. And if one CBC isn't enough for you, we have 3 more: Flagler CBC, 12/15; West Volusia CBC, 12/16 and Ponce Inlet CBC, 12/30. If you're interested in participating in any of those contact David Hartgrove, 386-235-1249. for further information.

Marjory later wrote "The Everglades: River of Grass," published in 1947, the same year the Everglades became a National Park. The book came out in November and sold out by Christmas, catapulting Douglas into her new, and lifelong, role as a spokeswoman for the Everglades. In her lifetime, it went from a wilderness on the brink of irreparable development, to a National Park, a Wetland of International Significance, an International Biosphere Preserve, and a legislatively designated wilderness area.

How did she persevere? Here are some clues in her own words, which I hope inspire you as much as they do me:

"You can't conserve what you haven't got."

"There must be progress, certainly. But we must ask ourselves what kind of progress we want, and what price we want to pay for it. If, in the name of progress, we want to destroy everything beautiful in our world, and contaminate the air we breathe, and the water we drink, then we are in trouble."

At this time in our national history, it seems our valuable shared patrimony, our natural places, are under assault as never before. If you are so inclined, please consider rising to their defense. As Marjory said before she died at 108:

"I would be very sad if I had not fought. I'd have a guilty conscience if I had been here and watched all this happen to the environment and not been on the right side."

"Be a nuisance where it counts, but don't be a bore at any time....Do your part to inform and stimulate the public to join your action....Be depressed, discouraged, and disappointed at failure and the disheartening effects of ignorance, greed, corruption and bad politics-but never give up."

Melissa Lammers

* * * * *

Welcome To Our New and Returning Members

We extend a warm welcome to our new and returning members: Betty Butcher, Becky Carr, Fran Carr, Rod Eaton, Maureen Fitzpatrick, H L Funkhouser, Betty Kelly, Marita Kelly, Pauline Kurpinsky, Marion Monaghan, Harriet Nolan, Nancy Robinson, John Strawn, William Sweeters, Mary Vinson, Ken & Margo Wenzel, Robert White, Greg Wilson and Ted Yeatts. We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting or on one of our excellent field trips.

* * * * *

Audubon Adventures

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, our chapter has been donating to provide this valuable program to Volusia County school kids since its inception. Donations from members fund this program. Send your donation to Halifax River Audubon, P.O. Box 166, Daytona Beach FL 32115-0166. Please specify on your check check that your donation is for Audubon Adventures. And thank you!

* * * * *

The [Space Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival](#) is coming next month, from January 24th through the 29th. Headquartered at the East Florida State College campus in Titusville, it's the largest birding festival in the country. Photography workshops, field trips and exhibits to please any birder. It's the best place around to buy binoculars and scopes since all of the manufacturers are represented there. Don't miss it!

Conservation Notes

One of the best ways to promote bird and habitat conservation that I know of is to purchase a Federal Duck Stamp. The new edition goes on sale each July 1st and competition for whose art goes on a stamp is fierce. The current stamp features 3 Canada Geese in flight and costs 25.00.

The Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act was signed into law by President Roosevelt in 1934. It was guided through Congress by its founder, J N "Ding" Darling. Darling was a political cartoonist whose work appeared daily in over 100 newspapers. He was also the chief of the U.S. Biological Survey (forerunner of the US Fish & Wildlife Service) and an excellent wildlife artist. His art work for the first stamp depicted a pair of Mallards about to land in a marsh. It sold for 1.00. Today, if you could find one in good condition, it sells for about 2,000.00.

So why should birders be supporting something called the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp? That's its new name. The answer is easy. Ninety-Eight cents of every dollar spent on Duck Stamps goes to the purchase of wetland habitat for use as part of the national wildlife refuge system and for maintenance of those refuges. The stamp also grants entrance to all national wildlife refuges across the country. In short, it's the best 25.00 you'll spend all year.

* * *

Rookery Island, the little bird covered island just off the south side of the Dunlawton Bridge, will soon become the state's newest Critical Wildlife Area. Its designation is scheduled to be voted on by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at its board meeting in Gainesville on December 6th. This long overdue protection was supposed to have been granted last year but a last minute objection caused a postponement until now.

* * *

Over the past year our chapter was asked to send comments to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission requesting a new, more aggressive management plan for menhaden. Menhaden are a small fish that swim in huge groups and are a key species providing food for a number of sport fish, like cobia, stripped bass and red drum. They're also on the menu of a lot of sea birds. The problem is that they're also harvested by commercial fishermen and sold for fertilizer and pet food. Currently there are no limits on this harvest. Ninety-Nine percent of the of the over 150,000 comments sent in to the Commission by anglers and conservationists, like us, were ignored and the Commission voted to maintain the status quo. Will we see a collapse of the menhaden population altogether? The chance to prevent it has just passed us by.

* * *

There's good news from the Constitutional Revision Commission. Commission member, Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch, introduced an amendment that would mandate a "right to a clean environment." When and if it appears on the ballot it will pass by 75% or more. The problem then becomes will the Legislature honor it? Like they have Amendment 1.

* * *

Finally, our recent overnight field trip to Gainesville was a success, if you discount the trouble we had finding the building with the avian collection. As trip leader I was more than embarrassed by the snafu but it all turned out okay. We had an excellent behind the scenes tour conducted by Avian Collections Manager, Dr. Andrew Kratter. We also saw lots of good birds at both Paynes Prairie and Sweetwater Wetlands and watched 400,000 bats fly out at dusk from the 3 large bat houses on campus. They eat 1.5 tons of insects per night, mostly mosquitoes.

David Hartgrove

The Big Sit Feeling



The sunrise glow at Dunlawton Bridge. Photo by Ray Scory

Peacefully dark, the night light held, offering another morning framed by the graceful dimensions of the Dunlawton Bridge. Shadowed by the backdrop of a fiery sunrise sky, the ambiance of that moment was quietly electrifying.

Screeching, whistling birds rise from their nighttime roosts covering the sky like rippling sheets of white designed lace. Awakening land and coastal waters signal the start of a new day and announce that an annual event, "The Big Sit", is again about to begin - a signature moment for many birders in the bird watching community.

I have sat The Big Sit under the Dunlawton Bridge for the past seventeen years sharing the experience with many birding friends, relatives and bridge visitors. John Carr, from Halifax River Audubon, has been a loyal partner for many years. We have shared many wonderful moments watching waterbirds, shorebirds, gulls, terns, raptors and songbirds that visit and live at this noted birding hotspot.

This day, the second Sunday in October, was not much different from any past Big Sit days. Some birds are always at the bridge, some pass through and others stop occasionally. This was not a day of record numbers, (a total of 36 different species were recorded), but a day of record joy. It was a day to witness the beauty of avian life and to wonder about the mysteries of their very being - to enjoy the pleasure of just being there, unlocking age-old memories and creating new ones - with the birds from around the Dunlawton Bridge. So much beauty, so many memories popping with each flashing moment. Openness was the personality of the day.

A Franklin's Gull was spotted among a small flock of Laughing gulls with the estimated number of Laughing Gulls for the day listed at three hundred and fifty. White gulls silhouetted high against a striking blue sky - always there. The Halifax River drifted slowly by - always there. Mangrove islands and river edge growth - always there. The birds - always there. Let it be. Once in a while, we need a big sit day.

I now look at my bird checklist for this day and see a sheet of folded paper with my penmanship in the English language and check marked bird names. But it is more than a written account to forget.

It is a story of this day on October 8, 2017 at the bridge - listing birds, feeling the wind, seeing the land, hearing the birds call and sounds of the ocean - forming lasting memories. Beginning in the dark with active Yellow-crowned Night-herons and an evening ending sighting of a lone Franklin's Gull. In between - Bale eagles, Rudy turnstones, Caspian terns, Black-bellied plovers, Rock Pigeons, a Reddish egret and twenty-eight other species of birds graced our attention.

Can any day be better than when the spirit of a day meets the reality of an experience? That day - The Big Sit was the day.

Ray Scory



A study in the size and shape comparison of a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron and a White Ibis in early morning back-lighting at the bridge.
Photo by Ray Scory

* * * * *

Apologies for the short notice but this should be a great trip.

North Florida Birding and Botany Field Trips and North American Wolf Encounter

December 7-10, 2017 Orange Audubon is hosting this adventure to Tall Timbers Research Station (TTRS), Tallahassee and St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. This one is coming up quickly but there are still spaces available. Orange Audubon would love you to join us on a weekend trip to the Florida Panhandle's Red Hills area, called one of America's "last great places" by The Nature Conservancy, hosted by TTRS' vertebrate ecology program director (and weekend birding guide) Jim Cox. The weekend includes 4 birding/botany field trips, other natural history pursuits and a private, hands-on tour at Seacrest Wolf Preserve near Chipley. Early Bird Registration for the entire weekend including guides, admission to Seacrest, 3 lunches and a cookout dinner at TTRS is just \$80 for Audubon members/\$95 non-members. You can also pay a partial fee for the Seacrest-only or the birding/botany-only portions. Participants are responsible for lodging, other meals, transportation and incidentals. A full description of the events can be found on [Meetup](#), in the Orange Audubon Society November [newsletter](#), or by contacting Teresa Williams for more information, including lodging options, and to reserve field trip spots: (407) 718-1977 or mwilliams@cfl.rr.com.

* * *

Speaking of field trips, next month's overnight trip to St Marks (January 9-11) is now full and registration is closed.

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